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HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY OF REALITY, FREEDOM, AND GOD

In this book, Robert Wallace shows that the repeated pronouncements of the death of Hegel's philosophical system have been premature. Wallace brings to light unique arguments in Hegel for the reality of freedom, of God, and of knowledge – each of them understood as intimately connected to nature, but not as reducible to it – and for the irrationality of egoism. And Wallace systematically answers many of the major criticisms that have been leveled at Hegel's system, from Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, and Marx through Heidegger and Charles Taylor.

The book provides detailed interpretations of the major works of Hegel's mature system – his entire *Philosophy of Spirit*, most of his indispensable *Science of Logic*, and key parts of his *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Right*.

With the exception of Chapters 4 and 5, which will particularly interest advanced students, *Hegel's Philosophy of Reality, Freedom, and God* is written for students of philosophy at all levels. Wallace explains Hegel's terminology thoroughly, analyzes many important passages from Hegel's works in detail, and outlines alternative approaches (Plato's, Hume's, and Kant's, among others), so that the distinctiveness of Hegel's solutions becomes apparent.

Robert M. Wallace is a writer and scholar who has taught at Colgate University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Goddard College. He has translated and written introductions to Hans Blumenberg's *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, *Work on Myth*, and *The Genesis of the Copernican World* and has published papers on Blumenberg and on Hegel.

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Robert M. Wallace
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*For my father and mother,
Robert S. Wallace, Jr., and Margaret M. Wallace*

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> xv
<i>Publication Citation Style</i>	xvii
<i>Preface</i>	xxiii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 OUR COMMITMENT TO INDIVIDUALISM AND OUR PROBLEMS WITH IT	1
1.2 HEGEL ENDORSES INDIVIDUALISM – AS A POINT OF DEPARTURE	5
2. Naturalism, Plato, Kant, and Hegel on Reason, Freedom, Responsibility, Ethics, and God	10
2.1 KANT AND HEGEL ON THE WILL	10
2.2 IS THIS “FREEDOM” ACTUALLY <i>SLAVERY</i> (FOR THE “INCLINATIONS”)?	18
2.3 IS THIS “FREEDOM” ETHICALLY <i>EMPTY</i> ?	20
2.4 IS THIS “GOING BEYOND . . .” REALLY “ <i>FREEDOM</i> ”?	22
2.5 INDIVIDUALISM AND ETHICS: HOBBS AND GAUTHIER	27
2.6 AN EARLY CRITIC OF HOBBS AND GAUTHIER: PLATO ON THE WILL AND JUSTICE	31
2.7 KANT ON INDIVIDUALISM (“AUTONOMY”) AND ETHICS: THE APPARENT FAILURE OF A GREAT ARGUMENT	39
2.8 HEGEL’S REFORMULATION OF KANT’S ARGUMENT FROM AUTONOMY TO ETHICS	42
2.9 KANT AND HEGEL ON GOD AND THE WORLD	44

x	CONTENTS
3.	Reality, Freedom, and God (<i>Science of Logic</i> I) 48
3.1	INTRODUCTION 48
3.2	OBJECTIVE THINKING 53
3.3	BEING 54
3.4	DETERMINATE BEING, QUALITY, AND THE BEGINNING OF THE SUBJECT 59
3.5	“NEGATIVITY,” OR THE “NEGATION OF THE NEGATION” 64
3.6	FINITE BEING 66
3.7	THE FINITE AND THE INFINITE 69
3.8	INFINITY, FREEDOM, AND NATURE 73
3.9	SPURIOUS INFINITY AND TRUE INFINITY 76
3.10	EMPIRICISM, DUALISM, AND TRUE INFINITY 80
3.11	HOW HEGEL’S POSITION RELATES TO “COMPATIBILISM” AND “INCOMPATIBILISM” 82
3.12	TRUE INFINITY, “STRIVING,” AND “ACTUALITY” 83
3.13	TRUE INFINITY AND THE “NEGATION OF THE NEGATION” 86
3.14	SUBSTANCE AND SUBJECT 88
3.15	MODERNITY AND “METAPHYSICS”: HEGEL AND HIS PREDECESSORS 91
3.16	REALITY AND IDEALITY, “REALISM” AND “IDEALISM” 92
3.17	TRUE INFINITY AND GOD 96
3.18	TWO CONTRASTING CRITIQUES OF HEGEL’S THEOLOGY: HEIDEGGER AND MAGEE 103
3.19	KNOWLEDGE, SKEPTICISM, AND TRUE INFINITY 109
3.20	KNOWLEDGE AND “FAITH” 116
3.21	EARLIER VERSIONS OF THESE IDEAS, IN HEGEL’S DEVELOPMENT 118
3.22	CHARLES TAYLOR’S INTERPRETATION OF TRUE INFINITY 122
3.23	HEGEL NOT AN “ATOMIST” 126
3.24	BEING-FOR-SELF AND THE “COLLAPSE” OF TRUE INFINITY 127
3.25	ATOMISM 132
3.26	SOCIAL ATOMISM 136

CONTENTS xi

4. Identity, Contradiction, Actuality, and Freedom (<i>Science of Logic II</i>)	141
4.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTERS 4 AND 5	141
4.2 QUANTITY AND THE THEME OF “UNITY”	143
4.3 MEASURE	147
4.4 ABSOLUTE INDIFFERENCE	152
4.5 BEYOND ABSOLUTE INDIFFERENCE: ESSENCE	154
4.6 INTRODUCTION TO ESSENCE: BEING-IN-AND-FOR-SELF	155
4.7 ESSENCE AS SHINE AND NEGATIVITY: HEGEL’S NEW CONCEPTION OF IMMEDIACY OR BEING, AND HIS CRITIQUE OF “THE GIVEN”	159
4.8 ESSENCE AS REFLECTION	169
4.9 THE REFLECTION-DETERMINATIONS: IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE	175
4.10 THE REFLECTION-DETERMINATIONS: DIFFERENCE	178
4.11 THE REFLECTION-DETERMINATIONS: FROM DIVERSITY TO OPPOSITION	180
4.12 THE REFLECTION-DETERMINATIONS: FROM OPPOSITION TO CONTRADICTION	184
4.13 FROM REFLECTION TO ACTUALITY	190
4.14 FROM ACTUALITY TO ABSOLUTE NECESSITY	192
4.15 THE ACTUAL AND THE RATIONAL	197
4.16 SUBSTANCE AND CAUSALITY	199
4.17 FROM RECIPROCAL ACTION TO FREEDOM	202
4.18 WHAT SORT OF “FREEDOM” IS THIS?	208
 5. Freedom, God, and the Refutation of Rational Egoism (<i>Science of Logic III</i>)	 214
5.1 FROM SUBSTANCE TO THE “CONCEPT”	214
5.2 THE CONCEPT AS “FREE LOVE” AND TRUE INFINITY	216
5.3 WHY CALL THIS A “CONCEPT”?	218
5.4 SUBSTANCE AND SUBJECT	224
5.5 PARTICULARITY AND SINGULARITY; “ABSTRACTNESS” AND “EMPTINESS” VERSUS “CONCRETENESS”	228
5.6 THE “EMPTINESS” OF KANT’S PRINCIPLE OF ETHICS	231

xii	CONTENTS
5.7	THE CONCEPT AND THE WILL (<i>PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT</i> , INTRODUCTION) 233
5.8	FROM THE CONCEPT (“SUBJECTIVITY”) TO OBJECTIVITY 237
5.9	FROM OBJECTIVITY TO THE “IDEA” 239
5.10	THE “IDEA,” REASON, AND ACTUALITY 243
5.11	CAN METAPHYSICS, LIKE THIS, BE RATIONALLY DEFENDED? 246
5.12	THE IDEA, THE “CUNNING” OF REASON, AND “GOD” 247
5.13	THE IDEA AS LIFE 249
5.14	THE “GENUS”: UNIVERSALITY AND “IDENTITY WITH THE OTHER” 250
5.15	THE “DEATH” OF THE LIVING INDIVIDUAL 253
5.16	THE IDEA AS “COGNITION,” OR SPIRIT 258
5.17	THE ABSOLUTE IDEA AS A REFUTATION OF EGOISM 260
5.18	“METHOD” AS BEING AND AS RESULT: THE CIRCLE CLOSES 265
6.	Nature, Freedom, Ethics, and God (<i>The Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of Spirit</i>) 268
6.1	FROM LOGIC TO NATURE TO SPIRIT 268
6.2	SUBJECTIVITY WITHIN NATURE 270
6.3	SPIRIT 276
6.4	SUBJECTIVE SPIRIT: “SOUL” 279
6.5	SUBJECTIVE SPIRIT: “CONSCIOUSNESS” 283
6.5.1	SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, “RECOGNITION,” AND REASON 285
6.6	SUBJECTIVE SPIRIT: “SPIRIT AS SUCH,” THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND FREE 292
6.7	OBJECTIVE SPIRIT: INTRODUCTION 298
6.8	OBJECTIVE SPIRIT: ABSTRACT “RIGHT,” PROPERTY AND WRONG 298
6.9	OBJECTIVE SPIRIT: “MORALITY,” CONSCIENCE AND EVIL 299
6.10	OBJECTIVE SPIRIT: “ETHICAL LIFE” (<i>SITTlichkeit</i>) 302
6.11	ABSOLUTE SPIRIT: INTRODUCTION 308

Cambridge University Press
0521844843 - Hegel's Philosophy of Reality, Freedom, and God
Robert M. Wallace
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS	xiii
6.12 ABSOLUTE SPIRIT: ART	312
6.13 ABSOLUTE SPIRIT: REVEALED RELIGION	313
6.14 ABSOLUTE SPIRIT: PHILOSOPHY	316
7. Conclusion	319
Index	323

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All translations from the works listed here are my own (though they are often much indebted to previous translations). I have not always preserved all of Hegel's italics in my translations. Standard English translations, indicated in the list, are normally cited along with the original, with English pagination following German pagination, separated by a slash (/). References simply to volume followed by page number (as in "2:320") are to TWA. Where paragraph numbers are available, I cite them (§). Hegel's "Remarks" (*Anmerkungen*) are indicated by "R," and editorial "Additions" (*Zusätze*), drawn from lecture transcripts, are indicated by "A."

Citations of Hegel's *Science of Logic* begin with WL (TWA) page numbers, followed after another slash by GW page numbers, followed after another slash by the Miller translation page number. Together with the GW page number, I often also give line numbers (as in "GW 11:251, 13–18"). Unlike the page numbers, however, these line numbers are *not* those in GW itself, but those from the corresponding page in the widely used "study edition" (edited by Hans-Jürgen Gawoll) of the same text, listed under WL. Gawoll's edition gives the GW page numbers and its own line numbers. Though the reference of these line numbers, in my citations, will occasionally be *ambiguous* (because Gawoll's pagination doesn't coincide with GW's, so that sometimes a given line number in Gawoll may indicate two different passages on one page of GW), I think they will still provide a significant convenience to readers who use Gawoll's edition, while the GW page numbers are, of course, essential for completeness.

Writings of G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831)

Diff *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*. Translated by H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf. Albany: SUNY Press, 1977.

EG *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften III* (1817, rev. 1827, 1830), TWA vol. 10.

Hegel's Philosophy of Mind. Translated by William Wallace and A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971. In the text, I refer to this book, consistent with present-day translation practice, as Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit*.

EL *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften I* (1817, rev. 1827, 1830), TWA vol. 8.

The Encyclopedia Logic. Translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991.

EN *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften II* (1817, rev. 1827, 1830), TWA vol. 9.

Hegel's Philosophy of Nature. Translated by Michael J. Petry. New York: Humanities Press, 1970.

EPW27 *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften (1827)*, GW vol. 19. Edited by W. Bonsiepen and H.-C. Lucas. Hamburg: Meiner, 1989.

ETW *Early Theological Writings*. Translated by T. M. Knox. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971.

FK *Faith and Knowledge*. Translated by W. Cerf and H. S. Harris. Albany: SUNY Press, 1977.

GW *Gesammelte Werke. Kritische Ausgabe*. Hamburg: Meiner, 1968–.

LPRel27 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. One-Volume Edition. The Lectures of 1827*. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

PUBLICATION CITATION STYLE xix

LPR *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. 3 volumes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–1987.

LPWH *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*. Translated by H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

NR *Ueber die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts, seine Stellung in der praktischen Philosophie und sein Verhältnis zu den positiven Rechtswissenschaften* (1802–1803), TWA vol. 2.

Natural Law. Translated by T. M. Knox. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975.

PhG *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), TWA vol. 3.

Phenomenology of Spirit. Translated by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

PR *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1821), TWA vol. 7.

Elements of the Philosophy of Right. Translated by H. B. Nisbet, edited by Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Skep “On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy, Exposition of Its Different Modifications and Comparison of the Latest Form with the Ancient One.” In *Between Kant and Hegel. Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*. Translated by George DiGiovanni and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000.

TWA *Werke in zwanzig Bänden: Theorie Werkausgabe*. Edited by E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970. Cited by volume and page number.

VPR *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie*. Edited by K.-H. Ilting. Stuttgart: Frommann Verlag, 1974. 4 volumes; cited by volume and page number.

xx

PUBLICATION CITATION STYLE

VPR17 *Die Philosophie des Rechts: Die Mitschriften Wannenmann (Heidelberg 1817–1818) und Homeyer (Berlin 1818–1819).* Edited by K.-H. Ilting. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta Verlag, 1983.

VPR19 *Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819/1820.* Edited by Dieter Henrich. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983.

VPRel *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion.* Edited by Walter Jaeschke. 3 volumes. Hamburg: Meiner, 1983–1985.

Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. 3 volumes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–1987.

WL *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1832), TWA vols. 5 and 6, and GW vols. 21, 11, and 12. Page numbers cited; see the headnote at the beginning of this list of abbreviations.

Wissenschaft der Logik. Edited by Hans-Jürgen Gawoll. 3 volumes. Hamburg: Meiner, 1990, 1994, 1999. Philosophische Bibliothek 376, 377, 385. Line numbers cited; see beginning headnote.

Hegel's Science of Logic. Translated by A. V. Miller. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1989. Page numbers cited; see beginning headnote.

WLfe *Wissenschaft der Logik. Das Sein* (1812), in GW, vol. 11.

Writings of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

A/B *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781/1787). Edited by Raymund Schmidt. Hamburg: Meiner, 1956.

Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Translated by Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's, 1963. Cited by first edition (A) and second edition (B) page numbers.

G *Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785), Ak. 4. Cited by Ak. page number.

Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals. Translated by H. Paton. New York: Harper, 1964.

Ak. *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*. Berlin: Ausgabe der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1910–.

KprV *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (1788), Ak 5. Cited by Ak. page number.

Critique of Practical Reason. Translated by Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956.

KU *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), Ak. 5.

The Critique of Judgment. Translated by J. C. Meredith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

MS *Metaphysik der Sitten* (1797), Ak. 6. Cited by Ak. page number.

The Metaphysics of Morals. Translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

R *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (1793–1794), Ak. 6.

Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone. Translated by Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson. New York: Harper and Row, 1960.

Writings of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814)

SW *J. G. Fichte's Sämmtliche Werke*. Edited by J. H. Fichte. 3 vols. Berlin: Veit, 1845.

PREFACE

Modern philosophy and social thought are preoccupied with the individual, or (as philosophers often entitle her) “the subject.” We analyze and address ourselves to a person who either does or should *think for herself*, seek to satisfy *her own preferences*, seek to *be herself*, and possess *her own freedom and rights*. On the other hand, we wonder whether in this preoccupation we might be missing something of fundamental importance. Empirical scientists tell us that what we call “thinking for ourselves” is really just another causally determined process in nature; skeptics tell us that we have no reason to think that thought of this kind can give us access to reality; post-modernists tell us that the subject or the self, itself, is an illusion; defenders of “traditional values” tell us that there is nothing to deter a subject or a self that sets its authority above that of tradition from disregarding the rights and interests of others; and religious thinkers tell us that insistence on one’s own freedom and independence may prevent one from experiencing the affiliation with reality as a whole, and the resulting meaning, value, and identity, that can be found through a relationship with God. All of these critics are likely to suggest that the mere existence of an individual, as such, gives no access to any authoritative conception of value.

These critics raise important issues. It is indeed difficult to know how to relate the idea of “free” thought to nature as we normally understand it, or to defend the claim that such thought gives us access to reality; the “subject” or “self” does often seem almost vanishingly abstract; it is not clear that the challenge that rational egoism poses to ethics has yet been effectively met by ethical theory; and it does sometimes appear that people with access to religious or “spiritual” sources of nurture can flourish in ways that atheistic humanists may not flourish. The gap

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between “fact” and “value” seems wide (even if philosophers now are somewhat less likely to make dogmatic assertions about it than they were in the first half of the twentieth century). In fact, it does not seem unreasonable to imagine that these apparent intellectual and practical failures of modern individualism may contribute to modern people’s frequent failures to feel “at home” in their social and natural worlds, and to the lapses into selfishness, ideological *idées fixes*, violence, and despair that are sometimes associated with these failures.

The problem is that the alternative modes of life and thought that are projected by these critiques of modern individualism – the “homes” to which they explicitly or implicitly advise us to return – all seem, in their various ways, to threaten individuals’ *freedom*, which is something that many of us are loath, and feel that we have good *reasons* for being loath, to give up or to compromise.¹

How can we address these issues, intellectually, without merely lapsing into one schematic extreme or the other, or settling for a merely formless and unprincipled “compromise”? In the history of modern thought on these subjects we find one major thinker who not only refuses to lapse into any schematic extreme position on these issues but addresses them in a uniquely constructive way. That thinker is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

To cut through the confusion that, for many educated people, surrounds Hegel’s name, and that results from the great ambition, complexity, and novelty of his undertaking, combined with the religious and political controversies in which it has, almost from the beginning, been caught up, one of the first things to realize is that the conception of rational freedom that is Hegel’s point of departure in his ethics and social philosophy and that runs through his metaphysics and philosophical theology is very closely related to that of his great predecessor, Immanuel Kant. Whatever else they may think of Kant’s philosophy, few people will question his credentials as an individualist. His “motto of enlightenment: . . . Have courage to use your *own* understanding!” and his identification of rational autonomy – “the property which will has of being a law to itself” – as the foundation of morality are usually sufficient

1 There is a long tradition in modern thought of seeing modernity as homeless or estranged and in need of a “return” to something else. The German Romantic poet Novalis wrote that “philosophy is actually homesickness” (*Werke und Briefe*, ed. E. Kellertat [Munich: Winkler, 1962], p. 422; cited by David Adams, *Colonial Odysseys. Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003], p. 51). Adams provides a rich discussion of this theme in his chapter 2.

to establish those credentials.² Interpreters of Hegel naturally devote a lot of attention to his *criticisms* of Kant, and to the ways in which his theories of reality, God, knowledge, ethics, and society differ from Kant's; but if we compare Hegel, instead, with really different thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, Edmund Burke, or Friedrich Nietzsche, it becomes evident that rather than starting from completely different principles, Hegel relates to Kant in much the same way that Aristotle did to Plato: He is an ambitious and independent student, who wants to avoid what he sees as the errors and build on what he sees as the accomplishments of his teacher.³

Indeed, what Hegel attempts to do with Kant's fundamental ideas – and with individualism in general – is to *preserve what is true* in them, while *reformulating* them in such a way as to avoid the problems in which they otherwise become bogged down.⁴ In this way, Hegel's project is precisely to overcome the schematic dualism of individualism and its opposites, in order to get at and do systematic justice to the truth both of individualism and of the important objections that are raised against

2 Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question, 'What is Enlightenment?'" in *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 54; *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. Paton (New York: Harper, 1964), p. 114 (Ak. 447). It is true that some jaundiced observers have thought that they saw in the notion of autonomy the germ of later totalitarian developments, but I am not aware of anyone who thinks she can show such developments taking place within Kant's own thinking. There are limits, of course, to Kant's grasp of the practical implications of autonomy in connection with "marginal" groups such as women, non-Europeans, and people who possess no property, but these limits do not follow from his conception of autonomy itself, nor does he make a serious effort to show that they do.

3 Hegel didn't literally study with Kant, but Kant was the single most important influence on every student of philosophy in Hegel's generation in Germany. Here are a couple of Hegel's strong endorsements of Kantian ideas: "It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity* which constitutes the nature of the Concept is recognized as the original synthetic unity of apperception, as unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness" (WL 6:254/GW 12:17–18/584); and "Knowledge of the will first gained a firm foundation and point of departure in the philosophy of Kant, through the thought of its infinite autonomy" (PR §135R). I discuss Hegel's controversial doctrine that "the actual is the rational" in Chapters 4 and 5, and his critique of Kantian "morality" in 5.6. For an account of Hegel's theories of freedom and ethics that makes clear their close affinity to Kant's conceptions of autonomy and of morality, see Kenneth Westphal, "How 'Full' is Kant's Categorical Imperative?" *Jahrbuch für Recht und Ethik* 3 (1995): 465–509, in particular pp. 491–509. On the side of theory of knowledge, Robert Pippin's *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) focuses on the continuity between Kant's project and Hegel's.

4 Hegel has a favorite term, *aufheben* (translated as "supersede," "sublate," and so on), which has the dual meaning that I have just sketched.

it. If he succeeds in doing this, his structure of thought presents a constructive alternative to, and a model of how to improve upon, a great deal of present-day debate in the philosophy of knowledge and the will, ethics, social and political theory, and philosophy of religion, and in endeavors as various as scholarship, political debate, personal self-examination, and spiritual life.

Because of the centrality of freedom in all of the issues that I listed, what enables Hegel both to overcome the schematic dualisms into which we are inclined to fall, in connection with these issues, and to avoid mere unprincipled “compromise,” is, precisely, his theory of freedom. The underlying idea of that theory is to understand freedom as finding itself not only in what it directly proposes to pursue and in the thought process that this reflects, but also in what at first seems opposed to these: in (for example) the mechanisms of one’s own bodily existence, or the intentions and desires of other people. Freedom, Hegel argues, is being “with oneself *in* the other” (paraphrase from PR §7A) – in what initially appears to oppose, conflict with, and detract from one’s freedom. This general idea is, of course, familiar to everyone who comments on Hegel’s thoughts about freedom. However, the background of the idea – what it is based on, how it is developed, and thus *what it really means* – is not so familiar. This is because that background and development are presented mainly in Hegel’s *Logic* (I use the capitalized term “Logic” to refer both to Hegel’s *Science of Logic* and to his shorter *Encyclopedia Logic*, which present substantially the same doctrines). What he develops there is then presupposed throughout his system, including the *Philosophy of Spirit* (the third volume of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*) and the *Philosophy of Right*, in which he presents his account of human affairs, including ethics and politics. Hegel’s *Logic* is notorious both for its difficulty and for the controversiality of many of its prominent claims, and these circumstances deter many scholars from engaging with it in detail. Consequently, many discussions of Hegel’s thinking about freedom, including almost all of those published in recent decades in English, neglect its foundation in the *Logic*.⁵

5 The exception is Will Dudley, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and Philosophy: Thinking Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), which connects Hegel’s ethics in the *Philosophy of Right* to his analysis of the Concept, in the *Science of Logic*. Allen Wood’s *Hegel’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Alan Patten’s *Hegel’s Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Paul Franco’s *Hegel’s Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); and Frederick Neuhouser’s *Foundations of*

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 Robert M. Wallace
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel explains (1) the relationship between freedom and finitude or nature – the problem that Kant's “two-worlds” or “two-standpoints” (“noumenal”/“phenomenal”) account of freedom left, in the eyes of many of us, essentially unsolved – and thus shows what freedom involves and why it is reasonable to regard it as real. When it is understood, Hegel's position on this issue will be seen to be one of the major historical proposals, on a par with those of St. Thomas Aquinas, David Hume, Thomas Reid, and Kant, and having apparent advantages over each of them. It will also turn out that understanding Hegel's account of the relationship between freedom and nature enables us to interpret (2) his position on the nature of knowledge – the reality that the free mind *achieves*, and therefore has access to – in a way that frees it of the grandiosity that's often attributed

Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) interpret and defend a good deal of what Hegel says about freedom in the *Philosophy of Right* and in parts of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*, but they neither interpret nor defend his discussions of freedom in the *Logic*. Likewise, Peter J. Steinberger, *Logic and Politics: Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), does not examine Hegel's treatment of freedom in the *Logic*; nor does Robert Pippin's “Hegel, Freedom, The Will,” in L. Siep, ed., *G. W. F. Hegel. Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Berlin: Akademie, 1997). Among scholars writing about the *Logic* in particular, Justus Hartmann, *An Introduction to Hegel's Logic* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1998); Clark Butler, *Hegel's Logic: Between Dialectic and History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), and Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels Analytische Philosophie. Die Wissenschaft der Logik als kritische Theorie der Bedeutung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1992) touch on freedom more often than most do, but none of them consider the relevance of the Doctrine of Being, and of “Quality,” in particular, to the topic. Bernhard Lakebrink, *Die Europäische Idee der Freiheit: I Teil, Hegels Logik und die Tradition der Selbstbestimmung* (Leyden: Brill, 1968), and Emil Angehrn, *Freiheit und System bei Hegel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), give extended attention to the discussions of freedom in the *Logic*, including the Doctrine of Being; and Brigitte Bitsch, *Sollensbegriff und Moralitätskritik bei G. W. F. Hegel* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977), elucidates important aspects of Hegel's relation to Kant on this issue. But none of the writers I have mentioned in this note, including Will Dudley in the book that I mentioned initially, brings out the train of thought by which Hegel links determinate being to true infinity; nor do they show how that train of thought serves to defend Kant's basic conception of freedom against the criticism that it leaves us without an understanding of the relation between freedom and nature; nor do they show how Hegel's argument for the Concept and the Idea serves to defend true infinity and ethics against the challenges posed by skepticism and “rational egoism.” Nor do Dieter Henrich, in his publications on the *Logic*, or Michael Theunissen, *Sein und Schein. Die kritische Funktion der hegelschen Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), or John Burbidge, *On Hegel's Logic: Fragments of a Commentary* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981), or Klaus Hartmann, *Hegels Logik* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1999), or Christian Iber, *Subjektivität, Vernunft und ihre Kritik. Prager Vorlesungen über den Deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), or Andreas Arndt and Christian Iber, eds., *Hegels Seinslogik. Interpretationen und Perspektiven* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), or any other work on the *Logic* that I have found.

to it, and shows it to be strikingly original and suggestive; and also to interpret (3) his closely related “idealism” – his doctrine that “substance” is “subject,” or that being and thought are inseparable – in a way that makes it (again) non-grandiose, non-dogmatic, and, given the problems of alternative views, quite attractive. His argument for his idealism includes, as well, his critique – which is frequently referred to, but has seldom been well understood – of the idea of a non-conceptual “given” that is essential to knowledge. (4) Hegel’s idealism connects “value” to “fact” in a way that allows the desert of modern science to bloom with meaning, precisely through the free, rational thought that is widely supposed to have deprived it of meaning. (5) In the same manner, Hegel’s philosophical theology – which generations of “Left Hegelians” have tried to transform, ignore, or interpret out of existence, and which is founded on his account of “true infinity,” in the *Science of Logic* – turns out not to threaten, but rather to presuppose, the freedom of individual humans, while showing how that freedom does connect them with something that goes beyond their finite, merely individual existences. In this way, Hegel’s theology shows how we can get beyond the apparently interminable war between theism and atheistic naturalism. (6) Hegel’s famous “dialectic,” including his doctrine of the reality of “contradiction,” turns out to be not an unmotivated departure from normal logical principles, but a way of articulating his account of the reality of freedom and God. And finally (7), through his idealism and his theology – which underlie his much-discussed argument for “mutual recognition” – Hegel demonstrates what Plato and Kant also sought to demonstrate: that practical egoism is irrational, so that a practical attitude that amounts to *love* is, in fact, the most *rational* attitude to take toward others. Thus, rather than being a baroque collection of claims that are so exotic that it’s hard to imagine taking them seriously, Hegel’s main doctrines in the *Logic* turn out to illuminate one another and to resolve fundamental issues in a way that lends credibility to all of them.⁶

6 I should note that the *Science of Logic* contains some doctrines that I have not been able to consider in detail – in particular, its analyses of “Judgment” and “Syllogism.” My neglect of these topics means that I can’t discuss the relationship between Hegel’s *Logic* and the formal logic of Frege, Russell, et al., though I do provide, in Chapter 4, a fairly detailed interpretation of Hegel’s account of “contradiction,” in which I show that it should be understood primarily as a thesis about ontology and theology rather than as a thesis about discourse or argument, as such. I have also skipped quickly past most of Hegel’s lengthy and rich discussion of mathematics, in “Quantity,” and a good deal of his discussion of “Ground,” “Existence,” and “Appearance,” in the Doctrine of Essence.

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 Robert M. Wallace
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PREFACE

xxix

From the Logic, I proceed in Chapter 6 to the *Philosophy of Nature* and then to the *Philosophy of Spirit*, in which Hegel elaborates the implications of his analysis for human life – the mind, ethics, economics, politics, history, art, religion, and philosophy – where again I will show that his main doctrines articulate the content and implications of individual freedom in a way that is very helpful in getting beyond the schematic oppositions that pervade our thinking and debate about these matters.

Thus my investigation of Hegel's theory of freedom, while it doesn't attempt to clarify all of the controversial issues in Hegel's philosophical system, will clarify many of the best-known ones and will deal with most of the major texts that expound the system. I hope that by doing so it will encourage readers to take Hegel's philosophy as a whole more seriously than it has been taken, for almost a century in (at least) the English-speaking world, by anyone except a relatively small number of specialists. Where, by "taking Hegel's philosophy seriously," I mean: taking it not merely as a major historical influence on all sorts of other thinkers, but as a major candidate for truth.

As I mentioned, two main obstacles to a sympathetic reception of Hegel's thought, since the 1830s, have been the political and religious controversies in which it has been involved. The last several decades of scholarship have done a lot to remove the political misunderstandings that afflicted the *Philosophy of Right*, especially in the English-speaking world, up through the 1960s – though there is certainly room for additional productive clarification.⁷ On the religious and "metaphysical" side, despite valuable recent work, there is still a major lack of understanding. "Left Hegelians," who hope that Hegel's most important ideas are compatible with atheist or agnostic humanism, propound their

7 Good recent work on Hegel's social and political philosophy includes the books by Wood, Patten, Franco, Neuhouser, and Steinberger listed in note 4; Z. Pelczynski, ed., *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Stephen C. Bosworth, *Hegel's Political Philosophy: The Test Case of Constitutional Monarchy* (New York: Garland, 1991); Michael Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ludwig Siep, ed., *G. W. F. Hegel. Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), with detailed bibliographies; and Dudley Knowles, *Hegel and the Philosophy of Right* (London: Routledge, 2002). My own contributions to this effort include "Hegel on 'Ethical Life' and Social Criticism," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 26 (2001): 571–591, and "How Hegel Reconciles Private Freedom and Citizenship," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 7 (1999): 419–433.

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 Robert M. Wallace
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xxx

PREFACE

ideas, while “Right Hegelians,” who see Hegel as continuing the theistic tradition, propound theirs, and a third group describes Hegel’s theology (with a notable lack of endorsement) as heretical, occultist, and/or irrationalist. And the general intellectual public can be excused for being thoroughly uncertain about what Hegel’s position, if he even has one, really is. My book doesn’t examine the full range of Hegel’s writings that are relevant to theology and religion; it barely touches on his lectures on the philosophy of religion and on his early writings about religion. But by presenting a comprehensive interpretation of the philosophical theology that Hegel presents in his *Logic* and his *Encyclopedia* – which is a philosophical theology that he essentially takes for granted, rather than developing once again, in his lectures on the philosophy of religion – the book aims to put readers in a position to understand how the controversies about Hegel’s philosophical theology, from Christian Hermann Weisse, Bruno Bauer, and Ludwig Feuerbach, in the 1830s and 1840s, down to Charles Taylor’s *Hegel* (1975) and Michael Theunissen’s *Sein und Schein* (1994), in our time, have arisen, to a large extent, from a failure to understand the subtle and powerful way in which Hegel’s philosophical theology, beginning with his conception of “true infinity,” goes beyond the traditional opposition between theism and naturalistic atheism, and between “transcendence” and “immanence.”⁸ Many discussions of Hegel’s philosophical theology are preoccupied with the question of whether it is compatible with traditional or genuine Christianity. As a member of the large group who view Christianity with great respect but not as the sole or even, necessarily, the primary representative of religious truth, I am more interested in the less commonly discussed question of what Hegel’s theology can show us about the truth-content of religious experience in general; and there, as I try to show, it is very illuminating indeed.

A result of this interest of mine, and of the fact that I simply lacked the time and space to deal with Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, is that although I have important things to say about Hegel’s relation to theism, in general, I can’t claim to have dealt comprehensively with

8 This crucial accomplishment of Hegel’s philosophical theology is not made clear even in such outstanding studies as Dieter Henrich, *Der ontologische Gottesbeweis: Sein Problem und seine Geschichte in der Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967) (which contains a valuable chapter on Hegel); Walter Jaeschke, *Reason and Religion: The Foundations of Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and Stephen Crites, *Dialectic and Gospel in the Development of Hegel’s Thinking* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

Hegel's relation to Christianity, in particular. That will have to wait for another occasion.

Besides clarifying Hegel's relation to theism, I also aim to show how his metaphysics and philosophical theology are intimately linked to his ethical, social, and political thinking, not in the way that his "left" critics fear (namely, by imposing an order on humans that originates in a power that is separate from and opposed to them), but rather in that they provide his argument for the crucial thesis that full freedom and individuality require ethics – that a truly free agent cannot be unconcerned about others. The tendency of commentators on Hegel's ethical thinking to avoid his controversial philosophical theology, along with his idealism and his metaphysics in general, has prevented them from appreciating much of what he has to offer with regard to this fundamental issue in ethical theory – the question of whether sheer, unethical selfishness isn't perfectly rational – which is centrally important for such predecessors of Hegel as Plato, Hobbes, Hume, Rousseau, and Kant, and is equally important for any thoughtful person who wants to understand *why* moral standards are important to her.⁹

A third major obstacle to understanding Hegel's proposals has, of course, been the great difficulty of assimilating his specialized terminology, his dense arguments, and his long books. I am grateful to all of the scholars who have preceded me in this effort and whose work I have been able to study, including – and, often, especially! – those with whom I have major disagreements. I certainly don't imagine that my interpretations are the last word on any of Hegel's arguments, and I

9 I have not found any commentator who explores Hegel's critique of "atomism," "external reflection," "diversity," "mechanism," and so forth, in his *Logic*, as his most fundamental response to the putative rationality of egoism. Allen Wood identifies Hegel's account of "recognition," in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*, as Hegel's rebuttal of rational egoism, but concludes that in fact this account "gives me no reason for respecting the rights of others if I happen to prefer freedom in the ordinary sense to self-certainty or absolute freedom in the Hegelian sense" (*Hegel's Ethical Thought* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], p. 92). Robert R. Williams, in his account of *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), does not identify rational egoism as a challenge that Hegel's philosophy addresses. I discuss some of the history of social atomism, "rational egoism," and responses to them, in Chapter 2, and I discuss Hegel's treatment of the issue in Chapters 3–6. Paul Redding's *Hegel's Hermeneutics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996) is the only book I'm aware of that suggests that Hegel's account of "recognition," in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Spirit*, is an elaboration of ideas that first emerge (in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*) in his *Logic*. (See *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, pp. 156–165.) It will be clear from Chapters 5 and 6 that I have found this to be an extremely fruitful hypothesis.

look forward to a wider and deeper discussion of these arguments as people become aware of how richly the long effort that is needed to penetrate them can be rewarded.

To readers who are not familiar with Hegel's *Logic* or his other works, and are perhaps not familiar with some of the other philosophical classics that I refer to in the book, I would say that one doesn't have to be a scholar to appreciate and be inspired by these ideas. Their relevance is so broad that any thoughtful person should find something here that speaks to her. The unavoidable fact is that parts of the book – especially, I suspect, Chapter 4 – will be challenging for most non-specialist readers. These parts try to untangle some very difficult texts, and they do so in detail because it turns out that it's only through a detailed understanding of (some of) Hegel's texts that one gets a proper understanding even of his *overall* intentions. There are innumerable "summaries of Hegel" in circulation – of which the triad of "Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis" is only the most famous – that only distract attention from what he is really up to in particular arguments and in his system as a whole, so the only way to get a sense of what's really going on is to dive into some of those particular arguments. So with my book, as with Hegel's, I encourage you to pick and choose, skip forward and go back to the harder parts when you have the time and the energy to tussle with them. I have tried to give a sufficiently detailed account of most of the key arguments in the *Logic* (with the exceptions mentioned in note 5) to enable a motivated student to pick out, in Hegel's text, the major turning points and the reasons that Hegel gives for them. In the case of the *Philosophy of Nature*, I have dealt in detail (in Chapter 6) only with the later portions of the work; and in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, of which I present a complete precis in Chapter 6, I have provided no critical discussion of some of the major issues (for example) in Hegel's political theory. Good discussions of many of these issues are available in recent books in English. My analyses of Hegel's "Anthropology," his account of mutual recognition, his "Psychology," his critique of "Morality," and his transition to "Absolute Spirit," on the other hand, though condensed, are more thorough, in important ways, than what I have seen elsewhere, because they trace the way in which these discussions develop from the *Logic*.

Finally, a sketch of my wider hopes. It seems to me that it should be possible, in our time, for Hegel's project to be understood and to be appreciated more for what it is, and less for the stereotypes to which it is easy to assimilate isolated dicta or parts of it. (1) The destruction

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 Robert M. Wallace
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PREFACE

xxxiii

of logical positivism or logical empiricism (which was the dominant program in Anglo-American philosophy in the twentieth century) by its own self-criticism; (2) the renewed interest in other philosophical and theological traditions that resulted, and the great work that has been done by historical scholarship on them; together with (3) the ongoing self-examination and self-criticism of European and American politics, culture, and religion that has occurred, spurred on by painful experience, in the same period, have made us open to learning about new ways of thinking and new ways of understanding our habitual ways of thinking. Hegel has a lot to offer to people in this situation. If I have contributed to the appreciation of what he has to offer and to the possibility of truly appropriating what he has to offer and improving on it, I will be happy.

NOTE. In order to be able to use the references to Hegel's texts that I give in the course of my discussion, readers should consult the head-note under "List of Abbreviations." This will enable them to interpret a system of reference which, though I think is effective, is definitely *not* self-explanatory.