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0521205662 - Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction

Hegel

Excerpt

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GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH  
HEGEL  
LECTURES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF  
WORLD HISTORY

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*INTRODUCTION: REASON IN HISTORY*

EDITED BY  
JOHANNES HOFFMEISTER

JOHANNES HOFFMEISTER'S EDITION

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## *Preface*

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The present editor is the fourth to edit Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of world history. They were originally edited by Eduard Gans in 1837 as part of the 'Complete Edition' ['Vollständige Ausgabe'] of Hegel's works produced 'by an association of friends of the deceased'; they were re-edited in 1840 by Karl Hegel; and the last edition, which underwent three impressions (1917, 1920, and 1930), was prepared by Georg Lasson as part of the 'Critical Edition' ['Kritische Ausgabe'] of Hegel's works in the 'Philosophical Library' ['Philosophische Bibliothek'] series. The text was modified by each of these editors in turn, and although the last of them, Georg Lasson, reproduced his version of the text unaltered in the second and third impressions of the 'Philosophical Library' edition, he expanded it to such an extent in the light of subsequently discovered manuscripts and lecture notes, from which he incorporated several important sections, that the manner in which he presented the work as a whole could no longer be justified and yet another revised edition became necessary.

Hegel held this course of lectures at two-yearly intervals, with four hours of lectures per week, from the winter semester of 1822–3 onwards; he delivered them for the last time during the winter semester of 1830–1; so that the course was given five times in all. But over the years, Hegel accumulated so much new empirical historical material of so varied a kind that, by the winter semester of 1830–1, he was no longer able to cope with it in its entirety and accordingly announced only 'The Philosophy of World History: *Part One*' as the title of his course for that year. The first editors, however, failed to do justice to this wealth of historical material; in both the first and the second edition, this lecture course, as compared with those of Hegel's other courses which, as in the present case, were not laid out in book form or in paragraph sections, occupies only a slim volume. One of the main achievements of my predecessor was that he remedied this deficiency and was the first to give Hegel's 'Philosophy

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of World History' a shape in some measure commensurate with its weighty substance, its formal organisation, and above all, with its empirical breadth.

In his postscript 'On the Composition of the Text', Lasson himself gives an adequate account of how he achieved these ends by returning to the sources, i.e. to Hegel's own manuscripts and the rough lecture notes and fair copies made by his students. Those sections of the postscript which are still relevant and which show the ways in which both Lasson's text and the present version deviate from those of Eduard Gans and Karl Hegel are reproduced at the end of this volume; Lasson's other remarks, however, have been deleted or abridged.

Lasson's edition first appeared at a time of general lack of interest in Hegel, and it accordingly placed pedagogic and didactic considerations uppermost. Since then, however, the demands on editors of Hegel's works have become considerably more exacting. Nowadays, we expect a more rigorous philological approach in matters of detail, especially where students' lecture notes and fair copies are concerned, for much of what was taken down or subsequently enlarged upon by Hegel's pupils is demonstrably inaccurate or beside the point. In particular, we expect exact information on the provenance of individual expressions, sentences, and paragraphs, which certainly cannot always be pieced together like a mosaic, but at times vary considerably over the different years in which the course was delivered. And finally, we expect a closer overall insight into the thought structure of each set of lectures on which the complete text is based.

In my foreword to the introductory volume of Hegel's 'History of Philosophy' (Philosophische Bibliothek vol. xv, 1940, second impression 1944), I have discussed at length the philological and methodological consequences which the peculiar character of Hegel's thought has for any edition of his lectures. These consequences are such that they ought really to have transformed the shape of the present volume. But since I have not yet had a chance to evaluate the original or newly discovered source material with a view to producing a more authentic version of the text as a whole, the existing version, which Lasson constructed from the lecture notes he had at his disposal, had to be retained in essence. I have not been able to determine the exact manuscript sources and years of origin of these portions of the text. This meant that I also had to dispense with checking or altering the order in which they may have occurred in Hegel's original version. And it was not possible either to integrate the additions which Lasson took from two sets of lecture notes of the winter semester of 1826–7 after he had completed his text, and which he published as an appendix to his edition (although the material on which his

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main text was based had included another set of notes of the same year). These additions had once more to be placed at the end of the volume.

It was nevertheless possible to set out the volume in a more *uniform* manner, *firstly*, by restoring Hegel's own subdivisions. For closer inspection showed that the section numbers in the margins of Hegel's main manuscript (that of the 'Second Draft' in this edition), which Lasson had taken for nothing more than marks made by Hegel to aid his memory during lectures, correspond very closely to the methodological progression of the treatise as a whole, whereas Lasson's subdivisions are largely derived from the material he collected from students' lecture notes. I have accordingly restored Hegel's own divisions – at times supplying appropriate section headings in square brackets – and have left spaces and inserted asterisks\* at points where Lasson considered further subtitles necessary to bring greater order into the mass of material. In addition, I have omitted Lasson's note on variants 'On the Text of Hegel's Manuscript' (i.e. of the 'Second Draft'); everything of value in it concerning Hegel's own subdivisions, remarks, and textual idiosyncrasies has been included in this edition in the form of notes to the appropriate parts of the text. And finally, the *second* respect in which the present edition is better integrated than its predecessor is that the chapter on 'The Varieties of Historical Writing' has been brought back into the main text, from which Lasson had excluded it.

When Lasson set about reconstructing the text of Hegel's Introduction in 1917, the only evidence he could find that Hegel had ever begun his lectures with this chapter was that of the old edition and some sets of students' notes. This did not seem conclusive enough, especially since the one original manuscript of Hegel's at his disposal – the 'Second Draft' of the winter semester of 1830–1 – quite clearly indicated a different beginning; he therefore simply relegated this chapter to the end of the volume as the first part of a 'Separate Introduction'. But soon afterwards, two different sheets of manuscript from this chapter, in Hegel's own handwriting, were discovered (one in private ownership in Zurich, the other in the Schiller Museum in Marbach), and from entries by Hegel on the first of these, it emerged that the lectures had begun with this section on at least two occasions, in 1822 and 1828. Admittedly, there was still every justification for continuing to use Hegel's second, fuller and more definitive draft of the Introduction as the main basis of the text and for leaving the lecture notes 'On the Varieties of Historical Writing' – along

\* No asterisks appear in the German edition of this volume, and it would appear that Hoffmeister omitted to add them.

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with the reflections on 'The Natural Context or the Geographical Basis of World History' – at the end of the volume. But it would nevertheless have been worth using these notes, along with the other material, to prepare a new critical text of this particular chapter. Instead, Lasson retained them unaltered as part of his 'Separate Introduction' in the form in which he had taken them from his original sources and from the old edition, and printed Hegel's manuscript observations separately as 'Addenda'. The same material therefore appeared twice, at two different places in his edition. A further complication was that the editor succeeded only partially in overcoming the difficulties with which the second (Marbach) sheet confronted him in his efforts to decipher it.

The real reason why it was imperative to prepare a new critical text of this chapter was, of course, that Lasson had failed to notice that the two newly discovered sheets were not merely, as he thought, 'originally fairly closely connected, probably separated by half a sheet at most', but in fact followed on *in unbroken sequence* from one word ('its') to the next ('consciousness'). I have marked the point at which the two manuscripts meet in a note to the text. Given the intimate connection between these sections, of which Lasson's predecessors were likewise ignorant, along with the missing concluding paragraphs, which had to be supplied once again from students' notes or from earlier editions, it is possible to piece together a self-contained treatise based almost entirely on Hegel's own manuscripts. This can legitimately be called the 'First Draft', since, on the evidence of Hegel's entries on the Zurich sheet, it really does contain the ideas with which he began his first lecture course on the philosophy of world history; and for the same reason, it deserves to be restored to the position the earlier editors accorded it in their editions. And finally, as can be seen even from the present table of contents, the content of the 'Second Draft' also follows on immediately from that of the first; but I did not consider it either necessary or justifiable to make any kind of alteration to the source material as it occurred in the original documents (as, for instance, Karl Hegel did on pp. 11f. of his edition) in order to make the direct connection between the ideas expressed in the two drafts clearer still.

The third newly discovered sheet of manuscript which Lasson published had to be excluded from the present volume; it belongs in content to the chapter on 'The Oriental World', and hence to the second half-volume in this edition of the lecture course.\*

\* Hoffmeister refers, of course, to his own German edition of Hegel's lectures. The present volume contains, in English translation, only the Introduction to the Philosophy of History, not the detailed survey of world history which followed it.

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PREFACE

Hegel's original text is printed in italics, whereas the passages which Lasson added from students' notes appear in Roman type. Finally, I am greatly indebted to Dr Rolf Bachem for helping me to read the proofs and for preparing new indexes to the text.

*Bonn*

*15 January 1955*

JOHANNES HOFFMEISTER

First Draft (1822 and 1828)

## *The Varieties of Historical Writing*

[begun] 31. x. 1822;

[repeated] 30. x. 1828

Gentlemen,

*The subject of these lectures is the philosophical history of the world. We shall not occupy ourselves with general reflections abstracted from world history and illustrated by concrete historical examples, but rather with universal world history itself.*

*I have no text book<sup>1</sup> on which to base my lectures; but in my 'Elements of the Philosophy of Right' ['Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts'], §§341–360 (i.e. the conclusion), I have already defined the concept of world history proper, as well as the principles or periods into which its study can be divided. This work should enable you to gain at least an abstract knowledge of those moments of world history with which we shall be concerned here.*

*By way of an Introduction, I shall begin these lectures with a (general, determinate\*) representation† of what constitutes a philosophical history of the world; with this provisional object in mind, [I shall] first of all enumerate and describe the other methods of dealing with history and compare them with the philosophical method.*

\* *bestimmte*. Here and on most other occasions, I have followed the usual practice of writers on Hegel in the English-speaking world in rendering *bestimmt* as 'determinate', *Bestimmtheit* as 'determinateness', and *Bestimmung* as 'determination', except in those few cases where the more common senses of 'definite', 'definition', etc., seem intended. The noun *Bestimmung*, it should also be remembered, often carries with it the associations of the English word 'destiny'.

† *Vorstellung*. On the meaning of this term for Hegel, cf. J. N. Findlay, *Hegel, a Re-Examination*, second impression, London, 1964, p. 343: 'It [*Vorstellung*] is not exactly the same as an image or mental picture. . . but is an image "raised to the form of universality, of thinking". What Hegel means is that Representations are thoughts which, despite their essential differences from mental pictures, none the less have some of the properties of the latter.' It can also denote the faculty or mode of representational thinking. The term, except when Hegel uses it in the more general sense of 'idea' or 'impression', is translated throughout this volume as 'representation', 'representational thinking', or 'faculty of representation'.



## FIRST DRAFT (1822 AND 1828)

*I distinguish three different modes of historical writing:<sup>2</sup>*

- α. original history*
- β. reflective history*
- γ. philosophical history*

*α. As to the first mode, the mention of a few names should give a definite picture of what I mean. Herodotus, Thucydides and their like belong to this class – that is, to the class of historians who have themselves witnessed, experienced and lived through the deeds, events and situations they describe, who have themselves participated in these events and in the spirit which informed them. They have compiled a written record of these deeds and events, thereby transferring what were previously mere extraneous happenings into the realm of intellectual representation. What was originally mere existence thereby takes on an intellectual aspect and becomes a representation of the internal and external faculties of mind. In the same way, the poet works on the material supplied by his emotions, creating from it an object which can be represented to the senses. Admittedly, such historians also make use of the narratives and reports of others;<sup>3</sup> but these are simply the more scattered, fortuitous and subjective of their raw materials, of less significance than the rest. The poet has a ready-made mother tongue [as an ingredient of his work and] owes much to the knowledge he has gained through education, but the greater part of his achievement is nevertheless his own; in the same way, the historian in question fashions a whole out of material from the past, of material scattered here and there in subjective and fortuitous reminiscences, or indeed preserved [only] in the shape of fleeting recollections, and sets it up in the Temple of Mnemosyne, thereby investing it with immortal life.<sup>4</sup> Such historians transplant [the past] into a better and more exalted soil than the soil of transience in which it grew, into the realm of the departed but now immortal spirits (as the Ancients describe their Elysium), so that their heroes now perform for ever the deeds they performed but once while they lived.*

*From this category of original history I would exclude all legends, folk-songs, traditions, and poems;<sup>5</sup> for legends and traditions are but obscure records [of actual events], and are accordingly the product of nations – or parts of them – whose consciousness is still obscure. But I shall return later to the relationship between nations and their history. Nations whose consciousness is obscure, or the obscure history of such nations, are at any rate not the object of the philosophical history of the world, whose end is to attain knowledge of the Idea in history – the spirits of those nations which [have] become conscious of their inherent principle, and have become aware of what they are and of what their actions signify,<sup>6</sup> are its object.*

## THE VARIETIES OF HISTORICAL WRITING

[We shall] later examine [the relationship between] *historia* [and] *res gestae*; the real objective history of a nation cannot be said to have begun until it possesses<sup>7</sup> a written historical record. A culture which does not yet have a history has made no real cultural progress [, and this applies to the pretended history] of India over three and a half thousand years.

Such original historians, then, transmute the events, deeds and situations they have witnessed into a work of representational thinking for the representational faculty.\*

[Several] conclusions [follow directly] from this:

αα. The content of such historical narratives cannot therefore be very comprehensive in scope.<sup>8</sup> Their proper subject matter includes all that is of living and immediate interest in the personal experiences and external environment of men.

The author<sup>9</sup> describes events in which he has himself played some part, or which he has at least witnessed as a contemporary. He covers short periods of time, and depicts individual human beings and events. He works from the immediate intuitions<sup>†</sup> of his experience, assembling a series of separate, unreflected elements into a composite picture, in order to give to posterity a representation as determinate as that which he experienced through his own intuition or through the intuitive<sup>‡</sup> narrative of someone else.

ββ. With historians of this kind, the author's personal development and the events on which his work is based, or the spirit of the writer and the spirit of the actions he relates, are one and the same. His first concern, therefore, will not be to reflect upon his subject; for he is immersed in the spirit of the events he describes, and does not rise above it to reflect upon it. This unity of author and events also means [that, if] the historian lives in an age in which the social classes have become more clearly differentiated [and in which] the culture and maxims of each individual are related to his social class, he will himself have to belong to the class of statesmen, generals, and the like, whose aims, intentions, and deeds are part of the political world he describes.<sup>10</sup> When the spirit of events is fully developed, it becomes aware of itself; one of the main characteristics of its life and activity is its<sup>11</sup> consciousness of its own ends and interests and of the principles which underlie them – and another is the way in which it interprets itself to others and acts on their powers of representation<sup>§</sup> in order to manipulate their will.

\* ein Werk der Vorstellung für die Vorstellung.

† Anschauungen. The usual English translation of the term *Anschauung* as used in German philosophy is 'intuition', although the word *Anschauung* also carries with it the idea of direct visual perception of external reality.

‡ anschaulich.

§ auf ihre Vorstellung.