

HEGEL'S CONCEPTION OF THE HISTORY OF
PHILOSOPHY

HEGEL'S CONCEPTION OF THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

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Lay Abstract:

In this thesis I attempt to fill in a gap in Anglophone scholarship on Hegel by presenting an account of a much neglected aspect of Hegel's system, namely, Hegel's account and conception of the history of philosophy. I begin by attempting to dispel some misunderstandings that have distorted the Anglophone reception of this aspect of Hegel's thought, and by emphasizing the importance of understanding Hegel's views on the history of philosophy if one wishes to understand later developments in the historiography of philosophy. I then present the principles by which Hegel evaluates development in the history of philosophy, and I attempt to attenuate some of the tension which seems to exist between Hegel's methodological prescriptions and his actual practice as a historian of philosophy. I conclude with an account of Hegel's views on continuity in the history of philosophy, and their relation to contemporary views on continuity in the history of philosophy.

Abstract:

The main aim of this thesis is to present an account of Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy and to demonstrate its relevance to contemporary issues in the methodology of the history of philosophy both insofar as Hegel still has interesting things to say to contemporary historians, and insofar as an understanding of Hegel's views helps us understand later developments in the historiography of philosophy. In the first chapter, I present the conceptual scaffolding which enables us to compare Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy with contemporary approaches to the history of philosophy. I also criticize some of the myths that have developed around Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy. In the second chapter, I present the principles that constitute Hegel's evaluative framework: coherence or non-contradiction (in relation to the concept of *Aufhebung*), concreteness, systematicity, autonomy, and the use of clear conceptual language in philosophical discourse. Aside from these formal principles, I also identify a substantive philosophical thesis which Hegel seems to use in order to evaluate development in the history of philosophy, namely, the identity of thought and being. In the third chapter I attempt to attenuate the tension that exists between Hegel's methodological prescriptions, especially the claim that we should be on guard against anachronistic readings and that critique should be internal, with the manner in which he seems to consistently read past philosophers through his own system. I suggest two perspectives which can help attenuate this tension. First, I emphasize that Hegel is trying to write an anti-individualistic history of philosophy, where philosophical systems are presented as public culture achievements and the individual idiosyncrasies of philosophers are suppressed. Second, I show how Hegel's semantic and epistemic holism helps us make sense of the way that he approaches the history of philosophy. In the fourth and final chapter I discuss Hegel's conception of the relationship between philosophy and its socio-cultural milieu, and based on this discussion, I show that Hegel did not think that there is continuity in the kinds of problems that philosophers have been interested in, and that he thought that the main purpose of the history of philosophy is to provide metaphilosophical reconstructions and justifications of shifts in the kinds of problems that philosophers have been interested in.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: The Aims of Hegel's Account of the History of Philosophy and the Historical Significance of Hegel's Historical Work.....	8
Section 1.1: Necessary Scaffolding for the Exposition of Hegel's Account of the History of Philosophy.....	8
Subsection 1.1.1: The Concept of Development and the Concept of Progress.....	8
Subsection 1.1.2: Two Types of Evaluative Frameworks in the Construction of Narratives in the History of Philosophy.....	11
Section 1.2: Debunking Some Myths about Hegel's Conception of the History of Philosophy: Understanding Hegel's Motivations and his Significance as a Historian of Philosophy.....	14
Subsection 1.2.1: Hegel's Account of the History of Philosophy as a Defence of Philosophy.....	16
Subsection 1.2.2: Hegel the Historian as a Rectifier of Myths.....	25
Subsection 1.2.3: Hegel's Attitude towards Anachronism in Writing the History of Philosophy.....	32
Subsection 1.2.4: Hegel's Role as the Founder of the History of Philosophy as Sub-Field of Modern Academic Philosophy.....	39
Chapter 2: The Elements that Comprise Hegel's Evaluative Framework.....	41
Section 2.1: The <i>Aufhebung</i> of Contradictions.....	41
Section 2.2: Concreteness as a Principle.....	46
Section 2.3: The Principle of Systematicity.....	52
Section 2.4: The Principle of Autonomy.....	60
Section 2.5: Conceptual Language as the Proper Medium for Philosophical Discourse.....	69
Section 2.6: The Substantial Component in Hegel's Framework: The Identity of Thought and Being as the "Fundamental Idea" of Philosophy.....	76
Appendix to Section 2.3.....	84

Chapter 3: Attenuating the Tension between Hegel's Historiographic Strictures and his Historiographical Practice.....	93
Subsection 3.1: Hegel's Conception of the Relationship between his Philosophical System and the History of Philosophy: Narrating the History of Philosophy from an anti-Individualistic Standpoint.....	93
Subsection 3.2: Hegel's Holism and its Significance for Understanding his Approach as a Historian.....	102
Chapter 4: Hegel's Account of Philosophy's Relation to Human Culture and his Conception of Continuity in the History of Philosophy.....	115
Subsection 4.1: Hegel's Views on Discontinuity in the History of Philosophy and the Explanation of Discontinuities.....	115
Subsection 4.2. The Metaphilosophical Role of the History of Philosophy.....	124
Bibliography.....	139

Introduction:

In this thesis I aim to provide an account of some of the main features of Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy, which despite the recent renaissance in Hegel scholarship in the Anglophone world still remains largely neglected. As Vittorio Hösle has noted, "Hegel's philosophy of the history of philosophy probably can be regarded as the part of his system most neglected today in the Anglo-Saxon World" (Hösle 2003, 185). While my main aim is to attempt to fill in this lacuna in Anglophone Hegel scholarship, I will also attempt to show the contemporary relevance of Hegel's account of the history of philosophy. This will not take the form of attempting to show that Hegel had the correct answers to the questions that are being raised by contemporary philosophers reflecting on the historiography of philosophy. Instead, I will attempt to show how careful reflection on Hegel's account of the history of philosophy (and more, specifically, on his conception of what a philosophically interesting history of philosophy should look like), can raise interesting questions about methodology in the history of philosophy - especially in relation to the metaphilosophical roles that can be played by histories of philosophy. To this end, I will attempt, whenever possible, to bring Hegel into dialogue with contemporary philosophers who have written on methodological issues in the history of philosophy. I will argue that reflection on Hegel's approach to the history of philosophy is especially important because of his seminal role in founding the history of philosophy as a sub-discipline of modern academic philosophy. In particular, I will argue that some of Hegel's metaphilosophical views regarding what counts as proper philosophy have had significant consequences with respect to who is considered a "real philosopher"

(in particular, anti-systematic philosophers have been marginalized because of a particular Hegelian conception of philosophy proper as being necessarily systematic).

The main focus of this thesis will be on the exposition of Hegel's account of the history of philosophy (which, as I have noted above, has received little attention from Anglophone scholars of Hegel). In the first section of the first chapter, I present two concepts, the concept of development and the concept of progress, which can serve as conceptual scaffolding for any discussion of the history of philosophy. These two concepts are used to provide the basic framework for my exposition of Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy. I then introduce Hegel's evaluative framework, i.e., the set of principles which he employs in order to evaluate development in the history of philosophy. I do so by distinguishing between two types of evaluative frameworks; a formal evaluative framework and a substantive evaluative framework. I identify five elements in Hegel's formal evaluative framework: concreteness, non-contradiction (which I argue is the principle of evaluation that carries the most weight for Hegel), systematicity, autonomy (from traditional authority), and the use of clear conceptual language (as opposed to imaginative, mythological language) as the medium of philosophical discourse. In the second section of the first chapter, I attempt to dispel some myths that have grown around Hegel's account of the history of philosophy, and that have distorted its reception in the Anglophone world. I attempt to complicate the received view of Hegel as someone who runs roughshod over historical details in order to accommodate history within his philosophical system. I do this by showing that while Hegel sometimes distorted the past (as every historian inevitably does to some extent), he could also be a

very careful historian. In particular, I show how Hegel's detailed account of Aristotle helped rehabilitate Aristotle as a thinker worthy of attention by demolishing the myths that had distorted the reception of Aristotle's views (especially the equation of scholasticism with Aristotelianism by early modern philosophers). I argue that Hegel thought that one of the primary tasks of the historian is to unmask the myths that have distorted the past and its reception.

In the second chapter, I provide a detailed account of the elements that comprise Hegel's evaluative framework. In the first section I provide an exposition of the Hegelian conception of contradiction and non-contradiction in relation to the concept of *Aufhebung*. I argue that while it is true that, for Hegel, contradictions are the motor behind progressive development, their very presence indicates that we have not achieved the final goal of knowledge. In particular, I argue that, for Hegel, a philosophical system is progressive (in relation to its predecessor) in so far as it resolves the contradictions which were found in its predecessor. In the second section, I provide an account of Hegel's conception of concreteness. I argue that what Hegel describes as the transition from the abstract to concrete can be understood in this context as a transition from the implicit to the explicit. So one way in which we can describe the history of philosophy from Hegel's perspective is to say that the history of philosophy (in so far as it is a history of progress) shows a pattern of development according to which philosophical claims become more specific and the conceptual determinations and distinctions that philosophers employ become more refined.

In the third section of chapter two, I provide an account of Hegel's conception of systematicity (which according to him is both a necessary condition for proper philosophy and a principle by which progress can be assessed). I argue that Hegel brackets his own anti-foundationalist conception of systematicity when he is evaluating past philosophies. I argue that Hegel thinks that if one studies the history of Western philosophy one can discern two main conceptions of systematicity that have been prevalent: a metaphysical conception of systematicity and an epistemic conception of systematicity, and that it is these two conceptions of systematicity that he uses to evaluate past philosophies. In the appendix to this section, I argue that Hegel's conception of systematicity as a necessary condition for philosophy proper has had the consequence of marginalizing anti-systematic philosophers (e.g., Diderot). I also show that this Hegelian conception of philosophy as essentially systematic is evident in some strands of twentieth century historiography of philosophy (especially in Ernst Cassirer's historical work). In the fourth section of chapter two, I provide an account of Hegel's use of autonomy as a principle for evaluating past philosophies. I argue that for Hegel philosophy is autonomous when it sets internal standards for the evaluation of philosophical claims rather than accepting external standards for the evaluation of philosophical claims (e.g., those of the Catholic Church, or those of the reigning political authorities). I also point out that Hegel connects the possibility of autonomous philosophy with the existence of political and social freedom, which allows philosophers to set internal standards for the evaluation of philosophical claims. I also show how Hegel's conception of the autonomy of philosophy is relevant to contemporary debates in comparative philosophy. In the fifth section, I discuss the fifth

principle that Hegel uses in order to assess development in the history of philosophy. I argue that Hegel thinks that one way by which we can assess development in the history of philosophy is by examining the extent to which philosophical discourse sheds the use of imaginative representations and instead comes to employ conceptual language. I also emphasize that Hegel, perhaps surprisingly to some, placed a premium on clarity (claiming that clarity is the very essence of thought), and that he was opposed to any kind of mystification in philosophy.

In the sixth and final section of chapter two, I introduce the principle which comprises Hegel's substantive evaluative framework, namely the doctrine of the identity of thought and being. I show how Hegel thinks that in so far as the history of philosophy is one of progressive development, we can think of this doctrine as the endpoint of the direction in which the history of philosophy is moving. I then turn to a problem that seems to afflict Hegel's approach to the history of philosophy. The issue is how are we to reconcile Hegel's repeated insistence that we must always be on guard against committing anachronism, and that critique (and evaluation in general) must proceed from an internal standpoint, with the manner in which Hegel seems to consistently read past philosophers through his own system.

In the first section of chapter three, I argue that this tension between Hegel's methodological commitments and his practice was mitigated, from Hegel's own point of view, by the fact that he thought that his system was the outcome of a historical process whereby different philosophical systems have emerged from one another through the process of internal (or immanent) critique. I argue that one of Hegel's main aims is to find

a way in which our recognition of the fact that past philosophical positions have had to be abandoned because of the difficulties that they faced (i.e., their contradictions, according to Hegel) and our recognition of the fact that there is progress in philosophy does not lead us to thinking that past philosophers were failures. In particular, I show that when Hegel re-describes past philosophical systems in his own terms, he does not think of himself as distorting them, but rather as describing them in terms of the system which makes the history of philosophy intelligible as the history of the progress of human reason. I go on to show how Hegel is attempting to write the history of philosophy from an anti-individualistic point of view. Specifically, I attempt to show how Hegel is always at pains to emphasize that, in the final analysis; philosophical advances are public cultural achievements rather than expressions of individual idiosyncrasies.

In the second section of chapter three, I discuss Hegel's holism and how it can help us gain a better understanding of why Hegel thinks he is justified in re-describing past philosophy in his own terms (and why he thinks that this re-description does not amount to distortion). I argue that Hegel's holism, in so far it is applied to the history of philosophy, implies that each individual philosophy gets its significance from the place that it is assigned to in the series of philosophical systems that comprise the progressive development that is the history of philosophy. However each individual philosophy, in order to be assigned such a place, has to first be re-described in terms of the system which enables the presentation of the history of philosophy as a progressive development (which, according to Hegel, is his own system).

In the fourth and final chapter, I present Hegel's conception of the relationship between philosophy and human culture ("Spirit"/"Geist"), as well as his conception of continuity in the history of philosophy. In the first section, I argue that Hegel thought that there is continuity in the history of philosophy, but that this continuity does not necessarily take the form of co-referentiality (i.e., philosophers in different historical periods picking out the same referents with same terms), nor does it take the form of continuity at the level of problems (i.e., philosophers in different historical periods dealing with the same problems). I argue that Hegel held a dialectical conception of continuity in so far he thought that a new philosophy emerges when the inadequacies of the preceding philosophy cannot be remedied without a change in its overall theoretical framework which may include a change in the set of problems around which philosophical discourse is oriented. Hegel thinks that there is continuity in so far as this re-orientation of philosophical discourse can be reconstructed and accounted for in terms of rational considerations (i.e., the adherence of a philosophical position to the standards of success that are endorsed by its proponents). Finally, I show how emphasis on discontinuity at the level of problems and referents allows Hegel to attempt to provide justification for the overall framework of the philosophy of his day. I argue that it is in this sense that the history of philosophy plays an important metaphilosophical role for Hegel.

Chapter 1: The Aims of Hegel's Account of the History of Philosophy and the Historical Significance of Hegel's Historical Work

The aim of this chapter is twofold, first to provide the necessary conceptual scaffolding which would enable us to provide an account of Hegel's history of philosophy that would render comparison with other accounts of the history of philosophy possible. In other words, I am seeking to present Hegel's account of the history of philosophy on Hegel's own terms (i.e., present his arguments and claims as faithfully as possible), but not in Hegel's own terms (i.e., not in the difficult language which renders Hegel almost impossible to read and makes his views difficult to compare with the views of contemporary writers on methodology in the history of philosophy). The second aim is to clear away certain misconceptions about Hegel's account of the history of philosophy which have distorted its reception in the Anglophone world.

1.1. Necessary Scaffolding for the Exposition of Hegel's Account of the History of Philosophy

1.1.1 The Concept of Development and the Concept of Progress

Before discussing Hegel's account of the history of philosophy, it will be helpful to introduce two concepts that can serve as framing devices for our exposition, namely, the concept of development and the concept of progress. Since development is a necessary but not sufficient condition for progress, we can begin our exposition with the concept of development. I take development to be change over time that has a discernible structure and direction. The concept of development is commonly used in historiography

in general. For example, John Haldon, a well known historian of the Byzantine Empire, thinks that the main task of social and economic historians is to explain "the development and evolution of. . . societies" or "historical evolutionary trajectories" (Haldon 1993, 95). A development in this sense would be a change in the relevant domain (depending on one's interest as a historian, this domain could include property relations, conceptions of race, or conceptions of logic, etc.) in a determinate direction over periods of time. An example of development, drawn from John Haldon's work, would be the change in the position of peasants in the Byzantine Empire where, from the tenth century onwards, power over the peasants increasingly came to be in the hands of private landlords rather than the state (Haldon 1993, 136). Another example of development is the fact that over the last thirty years there has been an increase in interest in Hegel's work among English speaking scholars. Note that this concept of development is a very broad one (as can be seen from the fact that it applies to such different things as changes in the networks of power within which Byzantine peasants were embedded and changes in Hegel's position in North American academic philosophy). In this sense, development can also be attributed to natural processes. For example one can say that, according to thermodynamics, the universe is developing towards states of greater entropy. The key thing to note is that the attribution of development does not carry with it any evaluative judgements (hence, it is "neutral" in this sense). Two individuals can still agree on the attribution of development to a given process while adopting very different positions as to the value of this development (or even while adopting diametrically opposed positions as regards its value). For example, a philosopher who thinks that Hegel's philosophy is

essentially incomprehensible rubbish that could not possibly be of any use to contemporary philosophy could still agree with a Hegel enthusiast that there has been a development in recent Anglo-American philosophy towards an increased attention to Hegel. However, our two philosophers have different positions regarding the value of this development, presumably because they resort to different evaluative frameworks or norms when it comes to assessing changes in history. The first (anti-Hegelian) philosopher might see this development as constituting a regression and thus something bad, whereas the second (Hegelian) philosopher might see this development as constituting progress and thus something good. The key point to note is that the attribution of progress or regression to a given development always implies both the attribution of development to this process *and* its positive (or negative) assessment in relation to the evaluative framework or norm that one is employing, whether or not the latter is explicit. Hence, development is a necessary but not sufficient condition for progress. These two concepts apply to any account of history; they can provide the basic framework within which the narrative structure of any account of history can be analyzed. I will use these two concepts in order to provide a framework that can be used to present Hegel's account of the history of philosophy in such a manner so as to make it amenable for comparison with non-Hegelian conceptions of the history of philosophy. In other words, I employ these two concepts not as distinctively Hegelian concepts but as concepts that can be used in the exposition of any general account of the history of philosophy. When I say that for Hegel there is progress in the history of philosophy, what I am saying is that (1) he is ascribing a developmental structure to the history of philosophy and (2) he

is providing a positive assessment of this development using the evaluative framework that he is employing.

1.1.2. Two Types of Evaluative Frameworks in the Construction of Narratives in the History of Philosophy

In relation to the history of philosophy, one can distinguish between two types of evaluative frameworks (I should say that Hegel himself does not make this distinction, I am introducing it here in order to provide an aid for the exposition and examination of Hegel's views). The first type of evaluative framework I will call a "formal evaluative framework". This type of evaluative framework employs evaluative principles that are formal in the following sense: they do not specify a set of specific philosophical doctrines the approximation to which constitutes progress in the history of philosophy. An example of this type of evaluative framework would be a framework that upholds, for instance, clarity, technical competence (in relation to developments in logic and the sciences in general), and anti-individualism (a conception of philosophy as a communal activity) as the principles by which progress in the history of philosophy can be judged.

The second type of evaluative framework is what I will call a "substantive evaluative framework". This type of evaluative framework, in contradistinction to formal evaluative frameworks, specifies a doctrine or a set of doctrines (which are taken to be true, and central to any good philosophy) approximation to which is taken to constitute progress in the history of philosophy. A historical example of this type of evaluative framework would be the evaluative framework that was adopted by Kantian historians

starting in the 1790s, who evaluated past philosophies in relation to how closely they approximated Kant's own system of transcendental idealism.¹ The case of the Kantian historians is particularly instructive in trying to understand the possible motivations of those who hold a formal evaluative framework. Those who employ a formal evaluative framework might do so because they recognize that it is much easier (though not easy!) to get philosophers to agree on formal principles for measuring progress rather than to get them to agree on specific doctrines or theses (e.g., the doctrine of external relations or some other specific philosophical position such as naturalism). Moreover, those who adopt a formal evaluative framework might also be motivated by concerns regarding putting forward a substantive philosophic system as the goal in relation to which progress in the history of philosophy is to be judged. For one of the main difficulties associated with adopting a substantive evaluative framework is that it presupposes that the truth has already been discovered, and this can lead to a distortion of the historical record and a heavy handed (uncharitable) treatment of past philosophers. If one thinks that a past (or contemporary) philosopher has attained the most important philosophical truths, then it becomes tempting to write histories of philosophy in an oversimplified way that criticize past philosophers for essentially not being one's favourite philosopher. This was a persistent problem for Kantian historiographers of philosophy. Hegel himself criticized Tennemann precisely because the latter's Kantian evaluative framework led him to

¹ Peter K. J. Park notes that "within a decade of the completion of Kant's philosophical project, there arose a coordinated effort among Kantian philosophers to rewrite the history of philosophy so as to remake it into the unfolding of the Critical Philosophy" (Park 2013, 24). As T. I. Oizerman and A. S. Bogomolov have noted, for Kantians like Karl Heinrich Heydenreich and Karl Leonhard Reinhold "to bring out the historical process from a Kantian standpoint, therefore, meant above all to reveal the mistakes and errors made by the philosophy of the past in trying to go beyond experience (1986, 219). Beiser has also noted the same development (Beiser 1995, xiv-xv).

criticize all past philosophers for essentially not being Kantians: "he praises philosophers, their work and genius, and yet the end of the lay is that all of them will be pronounced to be wanting in that they have one defect, which is not to be Kantian philosophers" (Hegel 1995a, 113-114). Hegel was clearly dissatisfied with this manner of writing history. Nonetheless, as we shall see, he does not favour a completely formal evaluative framework. There is a strong substantial element in the evaluative framework that he adopts: Hegel does specify a key doctrine/thesis in relation to which progress in the history of philosophy is judged. In the second chapter, I attempt to specify the evaluative framework that Hegel employs. In the course of doing so I will seek to answer the following question: how does Hegel incorporate elements of substantive evaluative frameworks in his own evaluative framework while also attempting to avoid the pitfalls that he himself associates with this type of framework?

The two different types of evaluative frameworks need not be mutually exclusive. For example, not all (or even most) of those who adopt a formal evaluative frameworks think that the attainment of specific, true doctrines or theses is unimportant in philosophy and that only formal elements like clarity or literary flair matter. In fact, it is probably the case that most of those who advocate for, e.g., clarity, technical competence, etc. do so precisely because they think that the presence of these formal elements makes the attainment of truths much more likely (and not because they think that true content as such is unimportant). In other words they think of the formal principles as what we can call epistemic virtues (and perhaps of some of them as discipline specific epistemic virtues). Moreover, as we will see in chapter two, it might be possible to employ an

evaluative framework that combines elements of both (as Hegel attempts to do). Hegel's evaluative framework incorporates elements of both substantive and formal evaluative frameworks. The formal elements are: non-contradiction/coherence (though Hegel's understanding of this concept is a bit unorthodox), concreteness, systematicity, independence from traditional authorities (e.g., independence from religion and political authorities), and the articulation of philosophy in conceptual language as opposed to the use of images or allegorical language. Each of these elements will be discussed in detail in the second chapter. However, before we present Hegel's evaluative framework it will be useful to present and criticize some common misconceptions about Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy.

1.2. Debunking Some Myths about Hegel's Conception of the History of Philosophy: Understanding Hegel's Motivations and his Significance as a Historian of Philosophy

An attempt at explicating Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy must first begin by a criticism of some basic errors that have distorted the reception of Hegel's account of the history of philosophy. These errors (or perhaps one can call them myths) are not the products of scholarship on Hegel, but rather they belong to what we can call "the lore" or "oral tradition" of philosophy (though, we can also find such misrepresentations in other fields such as sociology, art history, and cultural anthropology). These basic errors have to do with presenting Hegel's history of philosophy as being amongst other things: a priori (or speculative) and indifferent to empirical complexities, outrageously whiggish, uncritically accepting of the

interpretations of his contemporaries, and lacking in any attention to the sort of things that competent historians are interested in doing (e.g., uncovering the history of the reception of texts, etc.).² In short, Hegel's account of the history of philosophy has been taken to be everything that a good history of philosophy should not be. Kenneth Westphal is correct to note that the "received view" of Hegel's philosophy "has largely been that of his detractors, who were untroubled about accuracy or considered assessment", (Westphal 2013, 193), I would only add that this is especially true of his account of the history of philosophy. I am not interested in defending Hegel against all criticism; I am interested in defending Hegel against poorly informed criticism. Superficial criticisms (which are really more accurately described as myths masquerading as criticisms) have not only harmed the reception of Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy, they have also harmed the *critical* reception of Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy. For one of the main problems with poor, sloppy criticism is that it leaves little room for well-informed criticism (it does this by forcing those who are interested in providing well-informed criticism to first clear away misconceptions before they proceed with their own critique).

It seems to me that the best way to criticize these caricatures is to historically situate Hegel's history of philosophy so that we can understand what Hegel was reacting against. Take for example the charge of triumphalism or whiggishness which has often

² The most unflinchingly distortive caricature of Hegel's views on history and his method of writing history that has been produced by an eminent philosopher in the Anglophone world is that which has been produced by Karl Popper in his *The Open Society and its Enemies*. For a discussion and criticism of Popper's complete caricature (which in many ways surpasses anything that Russell ever wrote on Hegel) see Walter Kaufmann's essay *The Hegel Myth and its Method* (Kaufman 1972).

been framed in terms of a claim to the effect that Hegel's views on the history of philosophy were expressions of his megalomania. According to this thesis, Hegel's view of history is that human history in general (and the history of philosophy in particular) is to be understood as only having existed so that Hegel's philosophy can come into being and enlighten the world. Lest I be accused of caricaturing a caricature, here is what Russell says about Hegel's conception of history: "[in order to make sense of it one must] adopt the blasphemous supposition that the Universe was gradually learning Hegel's philosophy [!]" (Russell 1945, 732).³ Elsewhere Russell claimed (by way of supposed "criticism") that Hegel believed that in the history of philosophy "everything proceeds by thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, and what moves it is the self-development of the Idea, and the Idea is what Hegel happened to believe [!]" (quoted from Willis 1987, 137). As we shall see, at best this is an oversimplification, at worst it is a blatant misrepresentation.

1.2.1. Hegel's Account of the History of Philosophy as a Defence of Philosophy

There is no doubt that Hegel attempted to present the history of philosophy as the history of progress where philosophers have (for the most part) made progress in their field by developing and discarding theories according to rational considerations (as

³ If the reader thinks that this is probably the most outrageous claim that Russell has ever made about Hegel, then I would have to inform them that they are mistaken. To really get a good grip on the superficiality which has historically characterized discussions of Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy (and his conception of history in general, for it is important to note that Hegel thought of his account of the history of philosophy as part of his account of history in general, and this is at least one thing that Russell got right about Hegel), the reader should examine this following passage from Russell's essay *How to Read and Understand History*: "According to him [Hegel], there is something called 'The Idea', which is always struggling to become the *Absolute* Idea. The Idea embodies itself first in one nation, then in another. It began in China, but finding it couldn't get very far there, it migrated to India. Then it tried the Greeks, and then the Romans. It was very pleased with Alexander and Caesar - it is noteworthy that it always prefers military men to intellectuals...[the passage continues in the same vein]" (quoted from Willis 1987, 133). Clearly this is does not amount to anything like well reasoned critical engagement.

opposed to other considerations such as considerations regarding what philosophical positions would best advance one's career, or what philosophical positions would ingratiate one with the powers that be, and so on). However, he did not attempt to do so because he suffered from megalomania (as Russell seems to think). Hegel is arguing for the claim that, in the history of philosophy, the primary causes of development are rational philosophical considerations. In other words, Hegel is claiming that the factors which have governed theory choice in the history of philosophy have been rational considerations. This is what Hegel means when he says that "the acts of the history of philosophy are not adventures—no more than the history of the world is merely romantic—it is not merely a collection of contingent (or accidental) events, journeys of wandering knights, who knock one another around and whose efforts are unintentional and have disappeared without a trace. No more is it the case that one has thought carefully whereas another acts arbitrarily. Rather, in the movement of thinking spirit there is real connection [*Die Taten der Geschichte der Philosophie sind keine Abenteuer - sowenig die Weltgeschichte nur romantisch ist -, nicht nur eine Sammlung von zufälligen Begebenheiten, Fahrten irrender Ritter, die sich für sich herumschlagen, absichtslos abmühen und deren Wirksamkeit spurlos verschwunden ist. Ebensowenig hat sich hier einer etwas ausgeklügelt, dort ein anderer nach Willkür, sondern in der Bewegung des denkenden Geistes ist wesentlich Zusammenhang. Es geht vernünftig zu*] "(Hegel 1995a, 19). Hegel's claim is that what causes development (at least in philosophy) are the attempts of rational individuals (philosophers) to abide by rational principles, (with the resolution of contradictions being the paramount principle). Hegel's assumption is that

philosophical practice mobilizes cognitive resources that are subject to rational norms and hence the history of philosophy is driven for the most part by rational considerations. For Hegel, development in the history of philosophy constitutes progress but not because he does not make a conceptual distinction between development and progress. Rather he thinks that rationality is efficacious in history. This means that philosophical positions have been abandoned and replaced with others, in the history of philosophy, due to rational considerations.⁴ As he puts it in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, philosophy when it examines history brings with it the idea that "reason governs the world"(Hegel 1975, 27), i.e., that normative standards of rationality are abided by in the world. In fact, Hegel's belief that we can narrate the history of philosophy as driven by internal philosophical factors rather than external non-philosophical factors (with some exceptions that I will discuss later) only if we believe that philosophers are in general driven by rational considerations is shared by some contemporary writers on the methodology of the history of philosophy. For example, Calvin Normore claims "that an internal history of philosophy is possible depends on it being the case that philosophers adopt and change views on the basis of philosophical considerations and reasons" (Normore 1990, 38)⁵. This is essentially Hegel's point, though we should add that Hegel thinks that this is a hypothesis that can only be verified by carefully examining the historical record. One can start out with it as a methodological assumption, but its

⁴ Incidentally, we may note that the idea that rationality is efficacious in history is essentially what Hegel means by the often misunderstood claim that "what is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational" (Hegel 1991, 20). This interpretation was shared by some Hegelians, including Eduard Gans who thought that it meant that "the rational has the power to actualize itself" (Toews 1980, 132).

⁵ Daniel Graham also makes the same point (Graham 1988, 166). So does Sandra Lapointe (Lapointe 2017 forthcoming, Lapointe and Pincock 2017 forthcoming).

justification can only come through a detailed examination of the historical record, because in history we have to proceed empirically: "We have to take history as it is; we have to proceed empirically"[*Die Geschichte aber haben wir zu nehmen, wie sie ist; wir haben historisch, empirisch zu verfahren*] (PGh 21).⁶

With regard to this point, we should recall that one of Hegel's primary motivations in his account of the history of philosophy is to undermine positions which draw on the diversity of conflicting philosophical views in the history of philosophy (and the seemingly apparent lack of any structure in the history of philosophy) in order to argue that philosophy is a worthless and futile enterprise. Hegel notes that "the proof that the efforts of philosophy are futile is derived directly from the usual superficial view taken of its history; the results attendant on that history make it appear to be a process in which the most various thoughts arise in numerous philosophies, each of which opposes, contradicts and refutes the other" (Hegel 1995a, 16-17). Hegel here is not attacking a strawman. The idea that the history of philosophy presents nothing but a spectacle of folly and error was common in the eighteenth century. For example, this was the view of Christian Garve (1742-1798) who is perhaps best known today as the author of the first review of Kant's *KrV*. Garve's review was first published in an abbreviated form by Johann Georg Heinrich Feder in the *Göttinger Gelehrten Anzeigen*, the abbreviated version, along with Kant's reaction to it, set the polemical tone which characterized the early reception of Kant's *KrV* (Sassen 2000, 6). In 1768 Garve described his initial interest and passion for

⁶ That Hegel is essentially trying to verify a hypothesis in his account of the history of philosophy is a point that is made, albeit rather obliquely, by Kenneth L. Schmitz (Schmitz 1988, 255).

Philosophie-geschichte only to be disappointed when "out of that great and splendid apparatus [the history of philosophy] nothing has issued except the lives of philosophers and the listing of dry opinions" (quoted in Kelley 1996, 123). Turgot (1727-1781), who is best known today for his writings on economics, also held this view of the history of philosophy. Turgot expresses the then common view of the history of philosophy: "but what a spectacle the succession of men's opinions presents, I seek there for the progress of the human mind, and I find nothing but the history of its errors" (Turgot 1973, 44). Johann Jakob Brucker, whose five volume *Historia Critica Philosophiae* (1742-1744) was very influential in the mid-18th century, is another representative of this view of the history of philosophy as the history of competing sects who have accomplished nothing of significance. In Brucker's words the history of philosophy was "the index of its [the human mind's] errors" (quoted in Rée 1985, 12).⁷ Kant also seems to have imbibed this

⁷ Jonathan Rée (1985a) provides a very interesting account of histories of philosophy from Georg Horn to Russell. His main claim is that the idea that the history of philosophy presents us with nothing other than futile conflicts (which can only be resolved through the revolution which the narrator and his friends are inaugurating) has been the dominant way in which the history of philosophy has been conceived. However, I think that Rée makes a mistake when he claims that Hegel belongs to those who "have seen themselves, even obsessively, as inheritors of an empty and disreputable patrimony" (Rée 1985a, 21). Hegel was arguing against precisely this view. Interestingly, Rée himself, in an earlier piece, recognized that Hegel was an opponent of the "disreputable patrimony" account of the history of philosophy! In this earlier piece, Rée recognizes, correctly, that Hegel thought that if we have a correct understanding of the history of philosophy, "any attempt to tell the history of philosophy in terms of sectarian battles about unchanging question could be seen as absurd" (Rée 1978, 11). Interestingly, Anthony Manser in a response to Rée (1985a), notes that Rée, in so far as he criticizes the prevalence of the eighteenth century conceptions of the history of philosophy, is really attempting to replace this conception of the history of philosophy (which was inherited by analytic philosophers until fairly recently) with "one that is rather more Hegelian" (Manser 1985, 41), and yet Rée responds to this criticism by insisting that Hegel is not really an opponent of eighteenth century conceptions of the history of philosophy as the history of futile wars between sects (Rée 1985b, 48). I really do not understand why Rée changed his mind in such a dramatic manner, especially given the fact that in Rée (1978) he offered extensive textual evidence to support the claim (which is correct in my view) that Hegel was opposed to the warring sects interpretation of the history of philosophy, whereas he offers no textual evidence in Rée (1985a, 1985b) to support the opposite thesis which he comes to hold.

view (with some qualifications), when he claimed in the final chapter of the *KrV* that the history of philosophy presents to his view "edifices, to be sure, but only in ruins" (B 880).⁸ In general, as Knud Haakonssen has noted, it was quite common in the eighteenth century to portray the history of philosophy as the history of feuding sects whose only accomplishment has been to make philosophy look ridiculous (Haakonssen 2006, 17).⁹

This background can help us make sense of why Hegel's thinks that showing that the history of philosophy is, for the most part, the history of progress is important. According to Hegel, the view that the history of philosophy is a "mere collection of chance events, of expeditions of wandering knights, each going about fighting, staggering purposelessly, leaving no results to show for all their efforts" (Hegel 1995a, 19), in the eyes of the detractors of philosophy "justifies its neglect and demonstrates conclusively the powerlessness of the endeavour to attain to philosophic knowledge of the truth" (Hegel 1995a, 16).¹⁰ Hegel characterizes his opponents as those who think that "this

⁸ For the requisite qualifications for this characterization of Kant's view of history and for an argument to the effect that there are proto-Hegelian elements in Kant's view of the history of philosophy see (El Nabolsy 2016).

⁹ In this respect, when Russell declared in 1922 that "I should take 'back to the 18th century' as a battle-cry if I could entertain any hope that others would rally to it" (quoted from Westphal 2010b, 173), his choice of battle-cry was quite apt because it referred not only to an epistemological position (empiricism), it also referred to a view of the history of philosophy as a history of embarrassing failures (a view which has historically been associated with early analytic philosophy).

¹⁰ As David R. Hiley has noted, it is the case that historically speaking skeptics regarding the power of human reason to attain truth have drawn on history in order to support their conclusions: "From Sextus through Montaigne and Bayle [and Hume], historical evidence had become the chief support to undermine confidence in the results of inquiry and the claims of reason" (Hiley 1988, 31). It is not difficult to see why the history of philosophy could be used for such purposes if it is presented as the history of consistent failure to attain agreement regarding the answers to philosophical questions (or even the questions themselves). Though it should be added that the common eighteenth-century view of the history of philosophy as the history of failure was not always motivated by any kind of global skepticism (one can think that philosophy is identical with worthless nonsense without being skeptic; e.g., scientific rejections of philosophy).

history [i.e., the history of philosophy] [is] a gallery of downright follies" (Hegel 1985, 15). While he thinks that this view is held by philosophers and non-philosophers ("people who avow their ignorance of philosophy") alike, his focus is on the former, especially those "who write and have written the history of philosophy" (Hegel 1985, 15). Hegel seeks to undermine this view of the history of philosophy by showing that the history of philosophy (once it is correctly understood) does show that philosophy has made progress, and that it is not the case that philosophers (for the most part) are Don Quixotesque figures, per Hegel's reference to "wandering knights" (Hegel 1995a, 19), who have been talking past one another in a futile attempt to solve problems that cannot be solved (or even, pseudo-problems that have arisen through the abuse of language).¹¹ In order to do this Hegel must not only show that there are rational principles which can be used to assess developments in the history of philosophy, he must also show that (for the most part) philosophers have abided by these principles.

Hegel claims that the rhetoric of certain philosophers who have maintained that everything that has come before them is worthless confusion has ended up harming philosophy by providing support for the view of the history of philosophy which is

¹¹ I think that Hegel's talk of "wandering knights" who accomplish nothing at all is a clear reference to Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Cervantes has Don Quixote describe himself as "a knight-errant" for whom it is "necessary to wander about the world" (Cervantes 1992, 158). Those who encountered Don Quixote "were fully convinced that Don Quixote was out of his wits" (Cervantes 1992, 89), which is precisely the accusation that is brought against philosophers by those who think that philosophy is a nonsensical and fruitless activity. What is especially interesting in this reference to Don Quixote is that Don Quixote is first and foremost an anachronism (he is trying to be knight-errant in a socio-economic world that no longer has any place for that particular social role), and in this sense Hegel is picking out a certain critique of philosophy that is still with us today, namely the critique of philosophy from the standpoint of scientism. According to the proponents of scientism, modern science is sufficient to answer all of the questions that are worth asking and consequently philosophy is no longer needed and, in so far as it is still around, it presents us with the appearance of a farcical anachronism. Hence Hegel's reference to Don Quixote is quite apt.

espoused by the detractors of philosophy (Hegel 1995a, 17-19). When discussing this point Hegel does not mention any philosophers by name, but it is possible that he might have had someone like Descartes in mind, who claimed to "raze everything to the ground and begin again from the original foundations"- incidentally this anti-historical attitude that is often associated with early analytic philosophy actually has a very long history in philosophy (Descartes 1998, 59).¹² To those philosophers, Hegel offers a biblical *momento mori*: "behold the feet of them that shall carry thee out are at the door" (Hegel 1995a, 17).¹³ In other words, Hegel would say that those who adopt a contemptuous or dismissive attitude towards the history of philosophy perpetuate a misleading conception of the history of philosophy and of philosophy as such which in turn might, in the long run, lead to the neglect and dismissal of their own contributions to philosophy: when the inevitable happens and their philosophy becomes a part of the past (i.e., a part of the history of philosophy which they have held in contempt), it will be replaced by a new philosophy whose adherents will proceed to declare all other past philosophies to be valueless and confused.¹⁴ "Behold the philosophy by which thine own will be refuted and

¹² George R. Lucas argues that the idea that the history of philosophy constitutes a disreputable inheritance is not found among ancient and medieval philosophers, and that it is only with the emergence of modern philosophy that this idea takes hold (he does not say why, but perhaps the so-called quarrel between the moderns and the ancients can provide a suitable context for answering this question). He takes Descartes as the paradigmatic figure when it comes to thinking that the history of philosophy constitutes a disreputable inheritance. A line followed by some key figures in the history of analytic philosophy: Husserl, Russell, Carnap, and Reichenbach (Lucas 1993, 105).

¹³ This is a clear reference to the fifth book of the New Testament: "behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out" (KJV, Acts 5:9).

¹⁴ It is interesting to note in passing that the contemporary boom in historical work on the origins of analytic philosophers would not have occurred had contemporary analytic historians of philosophy taken the views of early analytic philosophers on the history of philosophy seriously.

displaced shall not tarry long as it has not tarried before" (Hegel 1995a, 17).¹⁵ Hegel's full response to this attitude is his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, wherein he seeks to show in detail that this contemptuous attitude towards the history of philosophy is based on a misguided view of both the history of philosophy and philosophy itself. It is worth remarking that Hegel's critique of narratives of the history of philosophy which represent it as the history of failure has been recently echoed, albeit perhaps unknowingly, by historians of analytic philosophy. Gary Hardcastle and Alan Richardson in their editors' introduction to a volume on the reception of logical empiricism in North America fully embrace- perhaps clandestinely? - Hegel's criticisms of -the-history-of- philosophy-is- the -history-of- object -failures approach to the history of philosophy. I will quote a rather lengthy passage from their introduction because it shows the remarkable similarities between their criticisms and Hegel's criticisms (both in terms of content and rhetorical style):

"Philosophers' unreflective willingness to speak of their own history in terms of death and failure gives other disciplines both motive and opportunity to find philosophy a very strange and irrelevant discipline, a demoralized discipline giving off the scent of decay. Historians of philosophy come to look like spectators caught up in the grandeur of a historical procession of death and failure; philosophers come to look like cheerful or dutiful marchers *in* that procession. "Join us," we seem to say to our students, "so that someday soon your work, too, can be seen as dead and failed." (Richardson and Hardcastle 2003, xxii).

What this shows is that the attitudes to the history of philosophy which Hegel's own account was meant to refute are still discussed and criticized today, and in so far as

¹⁵ Hegel would have agreed with the view advanced by his friend Victor Cousin, that "it is a melancholy wisdom which has universal folly for its condition; and to defend ourselves [as philosophers] only by accusing everybody else [i.e., all past philosophers] is to accuse and condemn ourselves" (Cousin 1838, 100).

we can show that Hegel had some interesting things to say about the counterproductive character of narratives which characterize the history of philosophy as the history of failure, we can show that Hegel still has something to contribute to contemporary discussions of these issues.

1.2.2 Hegel the Historian as a Rectifier of Myths

In order to see that Hegel was not some kind of speculator about history who ignored empirical facts and complexities, and to show that he was seriously engaged in what historians would regard as good, scrupulous historical scholarship, we can point to Hegel's important historical role in reviving interest in Aristotle's philosophy. Hegel thought that one of the historian's tasks is to act as a rectifier of myths. Thus he justifies his lengthy discussion of Aristotle in the following terms: "one reason for treating Aristotle in detail rests in the fact that no philosopher has had so much wrong done by him by the thoughtless traditions which have been received respecting his philosophy, and which are still the order of the day. For to him views are ascribed diametrically opposite to his philosophy "(Hegel 1995b, 118). He also emphasizes that in order for this to be accomplished we must turn to a thorough examination of the primary texts and not simply rely on secondary sources. The example that Hegel chooses to illustrate this point is interesting. Hegel notes that Aristotle's *Poetics* has been misread in France. In particular he notes that the attribution of the three unities of French classical drama (unity of action, unity of time, and unity of place) to Aristotle, they were referred to as "règles d'Aristotle, la saine doctrine" (Hegel 1995b, 119), is based on a mistaken reading of

Aristotle, since Aristotle never says anything about unity of place in his *Poetics*.¹⁶ As is often his habit, Hegel does not mention names, but he might have had the Abbé d'Aubgnac (1604-1676) in mind.¹⁷ Interestingly, contemporary historians of French drama and French dramatic theory have vindicated Hegel regarding the prevalence of misreadings of Aristotle's *Poetics* in 17th century France.¹⁸ I bring up this rather minor example because it shows that Hegel does take his task as a historian quite seriously, in so far as he does not think that detailed engagement with primary sources in order to correct misreadings and myths that have grown around certain philosophical texts and traditions

¹⁶ If anyone is puzzled by how French dramatic theorists could have made such an obvious error, they are invited to contemplate the fact that many people today continue to think that the triad of "thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis" is central to Hegel's philosophy despite the fact that "in all twenty volumes of Hegel's 'complete works' he does not use this 'triad' once nor does it occur in the eight volumes of Hegel's texts, published for the first time in the twentieth century" (Mueller 1958, 411). Georgi Plekhanov had made this point much earlier and much more polemically in 1895: "we do not mention the triad [of thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis] for the simple reason that it *does not at all play in Hegel's work the part which is attributed to it* by people who not the least idea of the philosophy of that thinker....filled with sacred simplicity, these light-hearted people are convinced that the whole argumentation of the German idealists was reduced to references to the triad...This is simply *lunatic nonsense*..." (Plekhanov 1947, 99). I bring up this point about the inadequacy of providing an exposition of Hegel in terms of the triad of "thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis" because some contemporary work that is interesting in so far as it attempts to relate Hegel's dynamic conception of epistemology to contemporary issues in the epistemology of science suffers from this defect. For example, Alexander Bird attempts to relate Hegel's dynamic epistemology to Kuhn's account of the history of science suffers from precisely this defect in the exposition of Hegel's views (Bird 2008, 130, Bird 2015, 27). As Allen Wood notes, "to use this jargon in expounding Hegel is almost always an unwitting confession that the expositor has little or no first-hand knowledge of Hegel" and it is difficult to see how one could successfully draw connections between Hegel's epistemology and contemporary epistemology, if one does not have adequate first-hand knowledge of Hegel's writings (Hegel 1991b, xxxii). At any rate, It seems that misreadings (or rather non-readings disguised as misreadings) have a far greater capacity to resist scholarly refutation than is commonly supposed.

¹⁷ According to Tindemans, d'Aubignac mistakenly attributed the unity of place to Aristotle and he mistakenly interpreted the unity of action "against Aristotle's [own claims], as the need for one action, without any thinkable sidetracks" (Tindemans 2008, 331).

¹⁸ For a discussion of Pierre Corneille's misreading of Aristotle's *Poetics* see (Lyons 2012, 31). For a more detailed discussion of 17th Century French misreadings of Aristotle's *Poetics* see (Tindemans 2008). It should be noted that neither author mentions Hegel as having recognized this point. Which is not to say that Hegel's critique of such misinterpretations was original; both Lessing and Herder had already pointed out French misinterpretations of Aristotle (Forster 2012, 874). The point is that Hegel was very much concerned with not only past philosophical texts but also with the history of their reception (as well as with attempting to rectify common misconceptions about purportedly well known texts).

is beneath him. In fact, the idea that one of the historians' main tasks is to criticize and demolish myths about the past is accepted by many (general) historians working today. For example, the *Annales* historian Roger Chartier has noted that in order for history (as a scholarly vocation) to maintain its intellectual integrity, historians "must resist the mythical constructions of the past governed by the needs of communities [and these, I would add, might include academic communities], imagined or real, national or not, that create or accept historical narratives to suit their drives and expectations" (Chartier 1996, 26).¹⁹ We can see that Hegel thinks that this task of criticizing myths about the past is also one of the tasks that must be taken up by historians of philosophy (in so far as they wish to remain historians at all). The key point to note is that, from a Hegelian perspective, methodological discussions about the nature and goals of the history of philosophy should aim to show how it is possible to write histories of philosophy that aim at both criticizing myths about philosophy's past and producing histories of philosophy that are philosophically interesting. In other words, the demand for philosophically interesting histories of philosophy cannot be used to justify the construction of mythical accounts about philosophy's past.

While this is a minor example about a fairly minor event in the history of the reception of Aristotle, it should be noted that Hegel's attempt to take on the historian's mantle as a critic of myths was largely successful. In fact, Hegel played a key role in reviving Aristotle's reputation as an important philosopher who is worthy of serious study. By the time of Hegel's lectures, not only was Aristotle's reputation in decline

¹⁹ Also see (Evans 1997, 191) on this point.

because of his association with scholasticism (an association which Hegel wanted to show was a mistake) and modern philosophy's rejection of scholasticism, Aristotle was also being denigrated by some of Hegel's most influential contemporaries such as Schleiermacher (Forster 2012, 901).²⁰ Hegel aimed to show that Aristotle had been largely misinterpreted (or even not read at all) by his most dismissive critics and he was largely successful in that effort.²¹ Hegel's approach was to make a distinction between Aristotle's philosophy and the scholastic philosophy which presented itself as Aristotelian: "The Aristotelian philosophy is quite opposed to this scholastic procedure" (Hegel 1995c, 100). Hegel's strategy here is rendered intelligible and cogent once we recognize that early modern philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes had identified the scholastic philosophy which was taught at the universities with Aristotle's philosophy. In Chapter 46 of his *Leviathan* Hobbes refers to scholastic philosophy as "vain philosophy" and he claims that "the particular Tenets of Vain Philosophy derived to the Universities [...] partly from Aristotle, partly from Blindnesse of understanding" (Hobbes 1996, 462). Hobbes thinks that this scholastic philosophy is a source of obscurity and absurdity (the chapter is entitled "Darknesse from Vain Philosophy, and Fabulous Traditions"), and because he identifies scholastic philosophy with Aristotle's philosophy, because according to him "the Authority of Aristotle is onely current there [in the universities], that study is not properly Philosophy, (the nature whereof dependeth not on Authors,) but Aristotelity" (Hobbes 1996, 462), his criticism of scholastic philosophy as absurd and

²⁰ Hegel notes that "through insufficient knowledge [of Aristotle's work], the scholastic philosophy was designated Aristotelian" (Hegel 1995b, 130).

²¹ John Herman Randall Jr. has also noted that Hegel "was the first to re-establish living contact with Greek thought, after the temporary rupture in the seventeenth century" (Randall 1963, 87).

useless leads him to conclude that Aristotle's philosophy itself is absurd and useless. "I believe that scarce any thing can be more absurdly said in natural Philosophy, than that which now is called Aristotles Metaphysicques" (Hobbes 1996, 461). Interestingly enough Hegel does not reject Hobbes' scathing critique of scholastic philosophy. He claims that "though there were noble, earnest and learned individuals in their ranks, yet this scholasticism on the whole is a barbarous philosophy" (Hegel 1995c, 94) and more scathingly he says that "this barbarous use of the understanding is utterly irrational; it is like putting a golden necklace on a sow" (Hegel 1995c, 90).²² Hegel's point, however, is

²² Hegel's view of medieval philosophy should be situated within the context of his very negative attitude towards the European Middle Ages and Medieval Catholicism. He speaks of the "infinite falsehood which rules the destinies of the Middle Ages" (Hegel 1900, 366). Hegel even says that in the Middle Ages "that which is most irrational, coarse and vile, [was] established and strengthened by the religious sentiment - this is the most disgusting and revolting spectacle that was ever witnessed" (Hegel 1900, 382). The key to understanding Hegel's very critical attitude towards the Middle Ages is to recognize that Hegel was responding to the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment's rejection of everything that was medieval. By the beginning of the nineteenth century a kind of reactionary romanticism had developed in response to the alleged shallowness, coldness, individualism, and destructiveness of Enlightenment reason. If the Enlightenment as embodied in the French Revolution had attempted to erase the existence of anything that was remotely medieval, reactionary romanticism would attempt to revive the medieval past by celebrating medieval culture as it was embodied, for example, in Gothic art and architecture (Blanning 2010, 131-132, Fritzsche 2004, 123). This explains the otherwise inexplicable phenomenon of German princes building for themselves medieval castles in the early nineteenth century! (Fritzsche 2004, 105). Hegel observed this reactionary romanticism with alarm and much of what he says about the Middle Ages should be read as a defence of the Enlightenment's negative assessment of medieval culture against this reactionary romanticism. Hegel himself is almost explicit about this: "So self-contradictory, so deceptive is this medieval period; and the polemical zeal with which its excellence is contended for [by reactionary romantics], is one of the absurdities of our times" (Hegel 1900, 382). Hegel is here clearly taking romantics like Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis to task for idealizing the medieval period. For example in 1815 Friedrich Schlegel claimed that "for very many of the best and noblest productions of modern genius, we are entirely obliged to the inventive spirit of the middle age" (Schlegel 1861, 160). Novalis in turn waxes poetical about medieval Europe in his *Christianity or Europe*: "those [i.e., the middle ages] were beautiful, magnificent times, when Europe was a Christian land, when *one* Christianity dwelled on this civilized continent, and when *one* common interest joined the most distant provinces of this vast spiritual empire" (Novalis 1996, 61). Hegel obviously did not think much of "the inventive spirit" of medieval Europe and he probably thought that only someone who lacked any sense of historical reality could have thought that serfs, for example, experienced the Middle Ages as "magnificent times". Hegel's negative attitude towards medieval culture provides the wider context within which to understand his attitude towards medieval philosophy (and his negative characterization of medieval culture should be understood as a defence of Enlightenment historiography against reactionary romanticism, though it should be added that the late

that scholastic philosophy is a distortion of Aristotle's philosophy, and hence that early modern philosophers were mistaken when they thought that Aristotle himself was not a philosopher worthy of serious consideration. Hegel's strategy was quite successful and he was instrumental in the rehabilitation of Aristotle. As Forster puts it: "it was in large part thanks to Hegel's perception of great value in Aristotle's philosophy that subsequent nineteenth-century historians of philosophy likewise saw it as valuable and devoted much attention to it" (Hegel 2012, 902).²³ Alfredo Ferrarin has also noted Hegel's importance to the rehabilitation of Aristotle as a thinker worthy of serious study in modern philosophy: "Hegel, whose knowledge of Greek is astounding, is the first philosopher in modern times who engages in a thorough study of Aristotle in the original" (Ferrarin 2011, 434). Not only was Hegel's account of Aristotle based on considerations which should be congenial to contemporary historians of philosophy, i.e., his desire to overturn misinterpretations of Aristotle by engaging in a detailed study of Aristotle's own writings in the original language, its successful outcome (the rehabilitation of Aristotle) offers an important example of the importance of the history of philosophy to philosophy itself (demonstrating the importance of the history of philosophy to philosophy was also one of Hegel's primary concerns in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*). Hegel's efforts as a historian of philosophy, by reviving interest in Aristotle, helped increase the number of

romantics never really took an active interest in scholasticism as such, though they certainly took an active interest in medieval Catholicism). For Hegel, medieval philosophy is barbaric to the extent that it expresses a barbaric culture. It should also be added that the use of the word 'barbaric' to describe scholastic philosophy has a very long history in humanist and in Enlightenment thought. For example, in 1520, Erasmus published a critique of scholasticism entitled *Book Against the Barbarians*. When Hegel uses the word 'barbaric' [*barbarische*] he is invoking this history of criticisms of scholastic philosophy and situating himself within a specific historical polemical context.

²³ Forster also adds that "Aristotle's secure place in the history of philosophy *since* the nineteenth century can in no small part be traced back to Hegel's rehabilitation of him as well" (Forster 2012, 902).

options (philosophical positions and argumentative strategies) available to philosophers who might not have otherwise had access to these additional options (which is not to say that this was Hegel's primary concern. At any rate, for Hegel's work on Aristotle to be considered an important achievement it is not necessary for it to accord with Hegel's own intentions in undertaking that work).²⁴ Aristotle's secure place in the philosophical canon is a well established fact today, and so is the relevance of his philosophy to contemporary issues (for example in ethics, where Aristotelian virtue ethics is very much considered a live option). It is interesting to note that Hegel's successful strategy of de-associating Aristotle from scholastic philosophy is still adopted by philosophers today who want to make Aristotelean positions respectable while taking into account early modern philosophers' criticisms of scholasticism (the question of the validity of the early modern criticisms of scholasticism cannot be discussed here, Hegel assumed them to be valid, but it is not necessary for me to take a position on this issue). For example, here is Jonathan A. Jacobs' version of the Hegelian strategy: "the Aristotelianism that was the target of so much destructive critique was not precisely the philosophy of Aristotle but the use of his of his philosophy in ways that were peculiar to medieval Europe [. . .] The medieval philosophers respected certain kinds of epistemic authority and accepted certain dogmatic claims (e.g., about God, creation, providence) that Aristotle simply did not recognize. In that regard, Aristotle was no scholastic Aristotelean" (Jacobs 2004, 7). Hence we can see how Hegel's strategy has also been revived, perhaps unknowingly, by contemporary philosophers seeking to rehabilitate Aristotle.

²⁴ I will return to this point in the section on Hegel's conception of continuity.

1.2.3 Hegel's Attitude towards Anachronism in Writing the History of Philosophy

The misconception which associates Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy with a rejection of empirical investigation also associates it with some form of unreasoning anachronism. It must be conceded that the charge of anachronism is perhaps the fairest charge that can be directed at Hegel. However, it is important to note that Hegel makes an implicit distinction between ascribing a concept to a philosopher who did not have such a concept, and using a concept that a philosopher did not have access to in order to provide a clearer exposition of the views of the philosopher in question.²⁵ From Hegel's own point of view, the first kind of anachronism is clearly bad historiography, but the second kind of anachronism (if we may call it that) is not as obviously problematic. In fact, the latter is a form of an approach that is referred to as 'rational reconstruction' by contemporary historians.

Hegel is very much on guard against the first kind of anachronism. For example, when he is introducing the way in which he intends to read Plato, he notes that "we find in Tennemann [Tennemann is a favourite target in these lectures] and others an obstinate determination to lead back that Platonic philosophy to the forms of our former metaphysics [i.e., pre-Kantian early modern metaphysics], e.g., to the proof of the existence of God" (Hegel 1995b, 19). Hegel also actively tries to undermine readings of Plato as advocating for the immortality of the soul in the Christian sense: "immortality has not then the interest to Plato which it has to us from a religious point of view" (Hegel

²⁵ Hegel discusses this distinction albeit implicitly when he talks about different interpretation of Thales' philosophy (Hegel 1995a, 175-184).

1995b, 37). Hegel does not mention a specific target here, but I think that he is targeting Moses Mendelssohn's reading of Plato in his *Phaedon or on the Immortality of the Soul* (1767) a work which would have been known to his audience (of course, the question of whether Hegel was correct to read Mendelssohn as primarily attempting to interpret Plato is a separate question; it is quite possible that Hegel simply misunderstood Mendelssohn on this point).²⁶ I said earlier that the charge of anachronism is perhaps one that is on target. I say this because while Hegel is definitely interested in avoiding the first kind of anachronism (which he regards as harmful), he was also interested in making a distinction between what belongs to the "representation" [*Vorstellung*] from what is "essential" [*Wesentliches*] or speculative [*spekulativ*] (Hegel uses the term 'speculative' [*spekulativ*] as a synonym for 'philosophical', or better yet 'properly philosophical').²⁷ In other words, Hegel wants to make a distinction between what belongs to prevailing ordinary/ imaginative representations at a given period in a given society (this how he is using the term '*Vorstellung*' in this context; we should note that most of the time '*Vorstellung*' means something like 'imaginative representation' for Hegel, and not as with, e.g., Kant, 'representation' without qualification) which can be found in the philosophical work of the author whose work is being examined and the significant philosophical ideas which are found in that work. For example, when he discusses how Plato's dialogues ought to be approached, he emphasizes that if one does not understand the philosophical issues involved and if one is unaware of the prevailing ordinary/ imaginative representations

²⁶ *Phaedon* was quite well known at the time; in fact it was the work that made Mendelssohn famous (Goodman 2005, 585).

²⁷ As Michael Inwood notes, '*spekulativ*' or '*Spekulation*', are not terms which carry a connotation of risk or recklessness, in Hegel's vocabulary (Inwood 1992, 272). In this sense, Hegel's use of these terms is quite different from the way in which they are commonly used.

which Plato had to employ in order to express his philosophical views (because he did not have access to a well developed philosophical vocabulary), then one might attribute to Plato views that he did not hold (including, in Hegel's view, philosophically inadequate views). "If we do not recognize what is the concept [*Begriff*], or what is speculative [i.e., what is truly philosophical], we may draw out a whole collection of theorems out of the dialogues and display them as Platonic philosophical propositions, when in fact they entirely belong to the manner of representation [*Kennt man nicht für sich, was Begriff, was spekulativ ist, so kann man eine ganze Menge Theoreme aus den Dialogen ziehen und sie also Platonische Philosopheme ausgeben, die durchaus nur der Vorstellung, der Weise derselben angehören*]" (GP II, 29). Hegel gives several examples of mistakes in the interpretation of Plato which have occurred because this point has not been recognized. For example, he thinks that Plato's use of the conception of God as a demiurge in the *Timaeus* has been taken too literally which has led to the mistaken interpretation (in Hegel's view) of Plato on this point: "Plato makes use of the form [*der Form*], God created the world, and the daemons had a certain share in the work; this is spoken quite after the manner of imaginative representation [*es ist ganz in der Weise der Vorstellung gesprochen*]. If, however, it is taken as a philosophical dogma on Plato's part that God made the world, that higher beings of a spiritual kind exist, and, in the creation of the world, lend God a helping hand, we may see that this stands word for word in Plato, and yet it does not belong to his philosophy [*so steht dies zwar wörtlich in Platon, und doch ist es nicht zu seiner Philosophie gehörig*]" (Hegel 1995b, 20-21). What is especially interesting in this passage is that Hegel is not opposed to abstracting from the

historical context of the text and focusing on the logical structure of the arguments that are presented in the text (in other words, he is not really opposed to what we would call rational reconstruction).²⁸ However, he (correctly, in my view), recognizes that this act of abstraction presupposes knowledge of the context from which one is abstracting (and in his emphasis on the importance of having knowledge of the historical context he may be said to be closer to the advocates of contextualist approaches). In other words, if we are to make a distinction between the ordinary conceptions which Plato employed in order to convey his philosophical ideas and the key philosophical points which Plato wanted to convey, then we really must have a well developed understanding of: (i) the sort of vocabulary that was available to an Athenian aristocrat in 4th century BC Athens, (ii) the religious views of the Greeks (especially those who belonged to Plato's social class), (iii) the intended audience of the text, and so on.²⁹ According to my interpretation, Hegel does not view the choice between (what we would call) rational reconstruction and contextualization as a kind of Kierkegaardian "either/or", but rather he views them as complementary approaches. On this view, they are complementary in the sense that the success of the act of abstraction which is presupposed by the proponents of rational

²⁸ Here is Garber's gloss on rational reconstruction, which is perhaps a bit uncharitable: "taking the argument or position as given and making sense of it in terms that make sense to our own philosophical sensibilities, whether or not the reformulation captures anything the philosopher himself could have acknowledged" (Garber 1988, 31).

²⁹ Volker Peckhaus notes that Hegelian historians of philosophy like Johann Eduard Erdmann recognized this point, namely that "'abstraction' is 'abstraction from something'. This 'something' has to be known before the methods of analogy and abstraction can be applied" (Peckhaus 2000, 180). The fact that Hegelian historians of philosophy have recognized this point should not be at all surprising; for this was Hegel's own approach to the history of philosophy. In contemporary debates in the historiography of philosophy we can find Joanne Waugh and Roger Ariew providing a compelling account of the importance of situating philosophical discourses within their respective "forms of life" (Waugh and Ariew 2013, 108-114). If one reads Hegel's use of '*Geist*' as referring to forms of life, then we have a clear point of contact between Hegel's historiography and contemporary positions in the historiography of philosophy.

reconstruction requires well developed knowledge of the historical context of the text in question. Moreover, Hegel seems to be quite flexible in his approach in the sense that sometimes he seems to lean towards an approach that we can describe as involving proportionally more elements of rational reconstruction than historical contextualization, while in other times he seems to adopt a more contextualist approach. The latter happens especially when he is concerned with rectifying what he regards as flagrant misreadings that have resulted from ignorance of the context of the text (for example, his reinterpretation of Plato's "Ideas").³⁰ In this sense, we can say that Hegel thinks that even though rational reconstruction and historical contextualization are approaches that complement one another, the historian of philosophy is justified in adopting approaches that lean more heavily in one or the other direction, depending on the specific case in question. Hegel agrees with the contextualists, like Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, who defend the importance of contextualization because, as they point out, "we must certainly understand past philosophies [and hence interpret them in their historical context] before we can learn from their insights or from their mistakes" (Garber and Ayers 1988, 4). However, he would not agree with the contextualists, like Mogens Laerke, who claim that the historiography of philosophy "is concerned with the correct historical interpretation of past philosophical texts, not with the philosophical merits of the doctrines it reconstructs" (Mogens 2013, 10).

However, Hegel's distinction between what belongs to "imaginative representations" and what is philosophically essential in the writings of a given author can

³⁰ See the discussion of this point in my account of Hegel's view of continuity.

also lead to questionable practices. For instance, it seems that Hegel sometimes uses this distinction in order to impose his own views on the philosopher in question. To return to the case of Plato, it is suspicious, to say the least, that Hegel uses this distinction in order to avoid ascribing to Plato views which he (i.e., Hegel himself) dislikes. For example, he uses this distinction in order to argue that Plato did not actually believe that there is an immortal human soul: "when he [Plato] represents knowledge or learning as a process of recollection, this may be taken to mean that the soul exists before man's birth. . . . such a representation of Plato's philosophy can be supported by Plato's own words; but one who knows what philosophy is, cares little for such expressions, and recognizes what was Plato's true meaning" (Hegel 1995b, 21). As one of Hegel's earliest critics, Bernard Bolzano, pointed out, Hegel's distinction between what Bolzano calls the "essential content" [*wesentlichen Inhalten*] of a philosophical system and its garb or outer appearance [*Einkleidung*] (note that these are Bolzano's terms, not Hegel's, but they are meant to express the same distinction), can very quickly lead to a slippery slope, such that all of the elements of a given philosophical system that do not accord with Hegel's interpretation are relegated to what belongs to the "*Einkleidung*" of the system (Bolzano 1984, 73). In fact, as Bolzano also adds, one can use (or perhaps abuse) this distinction in order to show that a given system contains no errors, because all the elements that we take to be erroneous can be relegated to the status of an "inessential appendage" [*ausserwesentliches Anhängsel*]. In support of Bolzano's criticism, I would add that while it is perhaps not problematic to choose to adopt the most philosophically interesting interpretation of the text (as determined by the historian of philosophy), if the wording of

the text is ambiguous (though it should be added that sometimes doing so involves begging the question regarding what it is that we take to be philosophically interesting).³¹ However, it is problematic (from a historiographic point of view) to choose to adopt the most philosophically interesting interpretation of the text despite the fact that the literal wording of the text in question not only does not support such an interpretation but actually contradicts it. Hegel cannot appeal to esoteric considerations such as those that have been appealed to by Leo Strauss and his followers. He cannot say that "the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines [. . .] it is addressed, not to all readers, but to trustworthy and intelligent readers only" (Strauss 1941, 491). The reason why Hegel cannot use this justification to provide support for his interpretations, if his interpretations contradict the literal wording of the text, is that Hegel himself thinks that esoteric readings are in general, to use his exact words, "fatuitous [*einfältig*]!" (Hegel 1995b, 11). Hence, it cannot be denied that Hegel sometimes goes against his own methodological prescriptions.³² However, it does not follow from this that Hegel did not care about empirical details and just bulldozed his way through the history of philosophy. This only shows that, like any historian, Hegel was sometimes unable to meet his own methodological prescriptions. The really interesting issue is not pointing out that such inconsistencies are detectable, but rather it is attempting to understand why they occurred. I investigate this issue in greater detail in the third and fourth chapters.

³¹ On the issue of begging the question regarding what is philosophically interesting, see (Garber 1988, 52).

³² In my view, Beiser is entirely correct to note that often (perhaps too often!) Hegel, when writing the history of philosophy, "did not practice what he preached" (Beiser 2008, 10).

1.2.4. Hegel's Role as the Founder of the History of Philosophy as Sub-Field of Modern Academic Philosophy

The inconsistencies which we have identified above should be understood within their historical context. In other words we should remember that Hegel was attempting to found a new discipline, namely, a discipline that aimed at providing philosophically relevant history of philosophy. As Alfredo Ferrarin puts it, this discipline "did not exist before him [Hegel]. It was neither a recognized discipline in the university curriculum nor an established genre. There were, to be sure, several histories of philosophy; but a philosophical treatment of the history of philosophy was never practiced, let alone theorized" (Ferrarin 2004, 34).³³ In fact, Hegel's instrumental role in making the history of philosophy a respectable philosophical activity is clearly seen in the work of his successors. When Karl Marx submitted his doctoral dissertation entitled *On the Difference between the Demoritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature* in 1841, he spoke of Hegel's account of the history of philosophy in the foreword to that dissertation in the following terms: "his [Hegel's] history of philosophy, [is that] from which alone the

³³ Hegel's role as a key figure in the development of the history of philosophy as a sub-field of contemporary academic philosophy is acknowledged by many philosophers. For example, R.G. Collingwood has claimed that "all modern treatment of the history of philosophy goes back to Hegel as the great master of the subject" (Collingwood 1994, 126). Georg Lukács notes that "Hegel was the first person to tackle the problem in all seriousness [the problem of how to produce a history of philosophy that is philosophically interesting without sacrificing historical accuracy] and to try to produce a comprehensive history philosophy and to provide it with a methodological basis which would show how it unfolds logically by virtue of the inner dialectic of thought, of human progress" (Lukács 1975, 265). Walter Kaufmann also repeats this claim (Kaufman 1972, 21). While Vittorio Hösle claims that Hegel "is the first philosopher who can claim to have offered a philosophical theory [of progress in the history of philosophy] corroborated by a remarkably knowledgeable overview of the whole history of philosophy. . . Hegel was, indeed, even the first great philosopher who was also an original historian of philosophy" (Hösle 2003, 186). Helmut Heit (2014) shows how even nineteenth century historians of philosophy who are traditionally regarded as more scientific (or less "speculative") than Hegel, such as Eduard Zeller, have adopted key Hegelian theses about the history of philosophy.

history of philosophy can in general be dated" (Marx 1975, 29-30). The point here is not that Hegel was the first to write a history of philosophy as such, for indeed he was certainly not and Marx certainly knew this because in his dissertation he cites Johann Brucker's *Institutions of the History of Philosophy* which was published in 1747 (see Marx 1975, 57). Nor is it the case that Marx says this because he agrees with Hegel's interpretation of ancient Greek atomism. In fact, he thinks that Hegel "was hindered by view of what he called speculative thought par excellence from recognizing in these systems [i.e., the systems of ancient Greek atomism] their great importance for the history of Greek philosophy and for the Greek mind in general" (Marx 1975, 30).³⁴ Rather the point is that Hegel is considered by Marx as the first to have really shown that the history of philosophy can be a philosophical activity, and consequently he had given this activity a sufficient level of prestige in academic philosophy to the point where young doctoral students could earn a doctorate in philosophy by writing a dissertation on a topic in the history of philosophy (in Marx's case, on ancient Greek atomism). In other words, what Marx and others recognized was that Hegel had given the history of philosophy a certain prestige at the institutional level that made it respectable for philosophers qua philosophers to engage in this activity. Of course, to tell the full story about how the history of philosophy came to be an important sub-discipline of modern academic philosophy, one would have to look at the institutional factors that enabled this development, however, this is beyond the scope of this discussion.

³⁴ As an aside, it is interesting to note that despite the fact that Marx thinks that Hegel failed to recognize the importance of ancient Greek atomism for ancient Greek thought; he still accepts Hegel's methodological view that philosophical positions should be studied as systems (so, by the way, did Bolzano).

Chapter 2: The Elements that Comprise Hegel's Evaluative Framework

2.1 The *Aufhebung* of Contradictions

For Hegel, a philosophical system makes an advance over its predecessor when it resolves the contradictions that were present in its predecessor. In fact, of all the formal elements that make up Hegel's evaluative framework, non-contradiction is the one which Hegel emphasizes the most. The significance of the resolution of contradictions as a principle for the evaluation of philosophical systems is evidenced by the importance that Hegel assigns to it as a driving force in philosophical development. Hegel describes contradiction as "the impelling force in development" (Hegel 1995a, 25). There is currently no consensus amongst scholars regarding what exactly Hegel means by 'contradiction' [*Widerspruch*] and his attitude towards it. In particular, there is an unsettled dispute over Hegel's attitude towards the law of non-contradiction; on the one hand there are those who think that Hegel rejected the law of non-contradiction and affirmed the existence of true contradictions, e.g., Graham Priest (1989), on the other hand there are scholars who think that Hegel does not at all reject the law of non-contradiction and that in fact he "places it at the very center of his thought" (Brandom 2002, 179). The approach that I will take here is to attempt to describe Hegel's view of the role that contradiction plays in development in the history of philosophy by looking at how he thinks the presence of contradictions affects a given philosophical standpoint. Perhaps the clearest way to present this approach is to think of philosophical standpoints as research programs. This will enable us to explain Hegel's conception of contradiction by spelling it out in epistemological terms (i.e., in terms of the relationship between the

knowledge claims advanced by the proponents of a specific philosophical standpoint or research program and the justification of those knowledge claims).³⁵ For Hegel, revealing a self-contradiction in a philosophical standpoint does not show that one who adopts that philosophical standpoint does not in fact know anything (or cannot explain anything), but rather that their account of knowledge is inadequate for explaining how they know what they in fact know. Hegel would attempt to justify this claim by pointing out that if the detection of contradictions in a system of epistemic justification or a system of explanation leads to the total abandonment of the epistemic gains that have been obtained by way of that system, then it would be impossible to make sense of human intellectual endeavours (which historically have often contained contradictions). This is how we should understand Hegel's claim that philosophical thinking does not allow itself to be dominated by contradiction, i.e., that it does not allow the revelation of contradiction to lead to "nothing" (i.e., to the explosion of an inferential chain). Rather revelation of a contradiction employs the contradictions which it detects in order to develop, e.g., a more adequate account of knowledge (Hegel 1969, 440-441). Note that Hegel's point is that ordinary thinking yields too much, as it were, to contradiction by allowing the detection of contradiction to lead to "nothing" i.e., to the complete collapse of what has been found to be contradictory. Another way we can put this is by pointing out that (according to Hegel) to think that the detection of a contradiction between say the claim of the proponents of a scientific paradigm that their research methods allow them to explain all phenomena of kind x, and their inability to explain a sub-class of phenomena of kind x,

³⁵ A helpful presentation of Hegel's views on contradiction in epistemic terms is provided in (Kinlaw 2015).

leads to the collapse of that scientific paradigm is simply incorrect. It does not model how humans respond to contradictions and it does not model how progress happens in human intellectual endeavours. Hegel's view on this issue seems to be supported by empirical studies of the history of science (see Barnes 1974, 39). Hegel is rejecting the explosion principle in the standard formal logic of his day, i.e. "ex contradictione quodlibet" which is the rule of inference that states that from a contradiction, everything follows. Hegel is pointing out what he regards as the expressive poverty of a logic which incapable of modelling the structure of thinking. Some have thought that this means that Hegel can be read as making a demand for the development of a paraconsistent logic, though this all by itself does not in any way indicate that Hegel was a dialetheist.³⁶

This is how Nathan Ross reads Hegel on this point. He claims that, for Hegel, when we show that some position suffers from contradiction, "we show not just that it is not fully true, but we [also] show what about it must be different" (Ross 2015, 34).³⁷ In other words the detection of contradictions does not only show that we are not where we want to be epistemologically, it also shows us what we should do in order to improve our epistemological situation. In this sense the demonstration of contradiction, for Hegel, is not purely destructive, because it also points out what we have to remedy in order to

³⁶ For a helpful account of Hegel's engagement with traditional formal logic and his views on its limitations see (Redding 2014).

³⁷ Charles Taylor also emphasizes this point. Though, he seems to commit Hegel to an unnecessary claim to the effect that the contradiction makes it "clear what changes have to be undertaken to overcome it" (Taylor 1975, 134). I do not think that it we need to commit Hegel to the claim that it is "clear" what changes have to be made, though I do think that he must be committed to the claim that the transition from one formulation to another must be necessary in character and therefore not arbitrary (but it does not follow from this that the required changes become "clear" if by that we imply that they are easy to identify).

overcome the defects that are indicated by the presence of contradiction. This is also why Hegel uses the term '*Aufhebung*' to refer to what should be done with contradictions. The verb '*aufheben*' has three senses: (1) it means to raise up/elevate, (2) to annul or abolish, (3) to preserve and to keep. The usual English translation of this verb has been 'to sublimate', this English seems to have at least two of the three sense mentioned above, (2) and (3). It's understandable why this term was chosen as an English translation, for Hegel himself whenever he gave an explicit account of '*aufheben*' only referred to senses (2) and (3) (Inwood 1992, 284). The first sense is only implicit and it is detectable when we look at how Hegel narrates the history of philosophy. We can understand why Hegel wants to use a term which has these opposite meanings, i.e., (2) and (3), to refer to what should happen when we detect contradictions, by recognizing that Hegel thought that the activity of thinking involves thinking through contradictions in such a manner that the achievements of a philosophical standpoint (or more generally, a research program) that is afflicted with contradictions are not relinquished by allowing that philosophical standpoint to collapse. Hegel does not want to speak of the elimination of contradictions, but rather of their resolution or *Aufhebung*, precisely because he wants to ensure that the detection of contradiction does not lead to the complete annulment of the philosophical standpoint which has been revealed to be self-contradictory; instead, he wants to emphasize that when we discover that a philosophical standpoint is self-contradictory we ought to attempt to resolve this contradiction by replacing it with another more adequate philosophical standpoint while retaining whatever was insightful in the preceding philosophical standpoint (Hegel advances this claim as both a normative claim and a

descriptive claim). In this sense, progressive development occurs by making contradictions explicit and resolving them. Thus, the discovery of self-contradiction does not lead to a complete collapse (and an attempt to start over from the beginning). The process of philosophical development stops when there are no more contradictions, at this point one has reached the standpoint of "Science" [*Wissenschaft*], according to Hegel. "The *goal* is as necessarily fixed for knowledge as the serial progression; it is the point where knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself" (Hegel 1977, 51).

Knowledge no longer needs "to go beyond itself" when there are no more contradictions. Thus while Hegel thinks that contradictions are important insofar as they are "the impelling force in development", this does not mean that he thought that contradiction was a good thing, if by that we mean that he thought that contradictions should be preserved qua contradictions. The whole point of using the term '*Aufhebung*' is to emphasize that the abolition of contradictions should be done in such a manner so as to preserve the achievements of the philosophical standpoint that has been shown to be contradictory (hence it involves both abolishing and preserving).

Strictly speaking it is incorrect to say that contradictions, on their own, are the driving forces behind progressive intellectual development, but rather we should say that, for Hegel, it is the *Aufhebung* of the contradictions which is the driving force behind progressive development. As Hegel puts it: "the innermost source of all activity, of animate and spiritual movement, the dialectical soul that everything true possesses and through which alone it is true[.....] is the *Aufhebung* of the contradiction" (Hegel 1969, 835). Hence, while contradictions are the motor behind progressive development, their

very presence indicates that we have not achieved the final goal of knowledge. A philosophical system is progressive (in relation to its predecessor) in so far as it resolves the contradictions which were found in its predecessor while at the same time preserving whatever insights were attained by the proponents of that predecessor.³⁸

2.2. Concreteness as a Principle

The second principle, concreteness, is, as we shall see below, closely connected to the first principle (i.e., the *Aufhebung* of contradictions). To say that a philosophical system is more concrete [*konkrete*] than its predecessor, in this context, is to say that the

³⁸ Note that Hegel does not claim that the participants in the process already have some conception of the endpoint which then serves as an ideal towards which they strive (and which consequently is not casually inert in relation to the intellectual progress). I bring this point up because Jeffery Reid in his account of Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy claims that, for Hegel, "the endpoint is already pre-conceived intuitively at the beginning" (Reid 2015, 145). In fact, Hegel makes no such claim about the causal role of a pre-conceived endpoint, and Reid does not provide any textual evidence in support of this (rather Kantian) reading of Hegel's account of the history of philosophy. I think that Alan Richardson's reading of Hegel on this point is quite correct. As Richardson puts it: "there is an ideal endpoint of knowledge on this view [Hegel's view]. But that endpoint is not the motive force in the dynamics of reason - that, rather, is given by inconsistencies or incoherencies in the content of knowledge. . . . We only can know that we have not reached the endpoint of reason because there continue to be such epistemic problems in our knowledge of nature [Richardson is talking about the Hegelian conception of the dynamics of knowledge in relation to the natural sciences, but this point also applies to the Hegelian conception of knowledge in any domain]" (Richardson 2010, 287). Indeed this is exactly what Hegel himself says in the passage that has been quoted above: we will know when we get to the endpoint of the process of knowing because there will be no more contradictions, and then "knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself" (Hegel 1977, 51). I think that Reid conflates the standpoint of the participants with the standpoint of the narrator (i.e., who in Hegel's narrative is, of course, Hegel himself). Hegel concedes that whoever is to narrate the history of philosophy as a rational progressive development must have attained the standpoint of science (i.e., the correct philosophical system): "In order to obtain a knowledge of its progress as the development of the Idea in empirical, external form in which philosophy appears in history, a corresponding knowledge of the Idea is absolutely essential" (Hegel 1995a, 31). However it does not follow that the participants in the process have a vague intuitive pre-conception of the endpoint of the process.

claims that are being made by the proponents of a given philosophical system or position are more specific than the claims that were being made by their predecessors. For instance, Hegel thinks that even though we ordinarily employ terms such as 'reason' [*Vernunft*] and 'belief' [*Glaube*] in both philosophical and ordinary discourse without explicitly specifying what we mean by these terms, it is important to attempt to specify concretely what we mean by these terms if we are to make significant gains in our philosophical comprehension. "For instance, if in more recent times belief and reason are discussed as the subjects of present intellectual interest, everyone pretends that he knows quite well what reason, &c., is, and it is considered ill-bred to ask for an explanation of this, seeing that all are supposed to know about it" (Hegel 1995a, 399). However, Hegel continues, "if I say I know what reason, what belief is, these are only quite abstract ideas; it is necessary, in order to become concrete, that they should be explained, and that it should be understood that what they really are, is unknown" (Hegel 1995a, 400). This is also one of the reasons why Hegel thinks that Socrates' irony constituted an important advance in philosophy. According to Hegel, Socrates by questioning his interlocutors regarding their claims to knowledge and essentially asking them to give a concrete form to their knowledge claims, helps them recognize that they do not in fact know what they think they know: "the irony of Socrates has this great quality of showing how to make abstract ideas concrete and effect their development" (Hegel 1995a, 400). In this passage, we see that Hegel draws a connection between concreteness and (progressive) development. Presumably the point here is that by attempting to make our claims more concrete we give ourselves a better chance to detect contradictions in our philosophical

standpoint, which in turn allows us to develop a more coherent philosophical standpoint that resolves the contradictions of our present standpoint. This is how we should understand the connection between the *Aufhebung* of contradiction and the importance of concreteness for Hegel.

It should be emphasized Hegel is not using the terms 'abstract' [*abstrakt*] and 'concrete' [*konkret*] in the way that they were usually used by his contemporaries. Hegel sometimes speaks of the transition from the abstract to the concrete in terms of a transition from the implicit to the explicit: "the concrete must become for itself [*fürsich*] or explicit" (Hegel 1995a, 25). By this Hegel means that a philosophical standpoint is rendered concrete when the logical presuppositions and implications of its core tenets are drawn out and rendered explicit. For example, this, according to Hegel, is what Plato did in his *Timaeus* with respect to the doctrines of the Pythagoreans: "Frequently Plato does nothing more than explain the doctrines of earlier philosophers; and the only particular feature in his representation of them is that their scope is extended [*sie erweitert zu haben*]. His *Timaeus* is, by unanimous testimony, the amplification [*Erweiterung*] of a still extant work of Pythagoras" (Hegel 1995b, 14). In this passage, Hegel speaks of '*Erweiterung*' which in this context seems to mean widening or extension by means of the drawing out of the logical implications (and presuppositions) of the claims that have been advanced by the Pythagoreans regarding the relationship between mathematical objects and the physical world (note how this can lead to the detection of contradiction in the sense that we have described above, i.e., a recognition that there is a contradiction between the actual explanatory power of, in this case, a metaphysical theory, and the

claims that have been made for it on behalf of its proponents). In the same passage Hegel also draws the aforementioned connection between increases in concreteness and progressive development. Thus he tells us that Plato's "amplification of the doctrine of Parmenides is of such a nature that its principle is sublated in its one-sidedness [*seine Erweiterung ist auch bei Parmenides so, daß sein Prinzip in seiner Einseitigkeit aufgehoben ist*]" (Hegel 1995b, 14). Here Hegel is claiming that because Plato proceeds to render Parmenides' doctrines more concrete, he is able to discover their limitations (here Hegel is not explicitly speaking of contradictions, but the same point holds), and resolve them.

According to Hegel, a subsequent system whose proponents would draw out the logical implications (and presuppositions) of the claims that were advanced by the proponents of the preceding system constitutes an advance. This principle is closely connected to the first principle because an increase in the specificity of the claims that are being made makes contradictions detectable and hence it affords opportunities for the development of positions that resolve those contradictions. To give one example, Hegel, in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is very critical of Schelling who he takes to be claiming that "in the Absolute everything is the same". For Hegel this claim is "vacuous" because it is less specific than the claims that were advanced by proponents of previous philosophical standpoints. Hence Schelling's theory cannot be considered a progressive development (Hegel 1977, 9). To better understand Hegel's point about concreteness, we can look at a schematic example: there are proponents of system x, and according to the proponents of system x, all phenomena of kind z are similar to all

phenomena of kind *y*. If the proponents of a rival system, system *w*, advance the thesis that all phenomena of kind *z* are similar to all phenomena of kind *y* in a more determinate way (e.g., by explicitly identifying a property or set of properties that the phenomena of the two kinds share), then they would have made a more concrete claim than the proponents of system *x*.

When Hegel claims that the history of philosophy is subject to progress, one of the things he means is that "the latest, most modern and newest philosophy is the most developed, richest, and deepest" (Hegel 1995a, 41). This should not be taken to mean that he thinks that the latest philosophy is *always* better than earlier philosophy, but only that this is for the most part true. For example, he clearly thought that on some points Aristotle was closer to the truth than some subsequent philosophers (Hegel 1995a, 148).³⁹ One way in which we can describe the history of philosophy from Hegel's perspective is to say that the history of philosophy shows a pattern of development according to which philosophical claims become more specific and the conceptual determinations and distinctions that philosophers employ become more refined, and that this greater specificity leads in turn to the detection and *Aufhebung* of contradictions.⁴⁰ If, as Hegel holds, increased concreteness is one of the principles that can be used to measure progress, then, at least in this respect, one can claim that there is progress in the history of philosophy: "Philosophy is what is most antagonistic to abstraction, and it leads back to

³⁹ In the introduction to the *Science of Logic*, Hegel claims that with respect to understanding the relationship between thinking (specifically the categories of thinking) and mind-independent objects, the ancients (he probably means Aristotle in particular) had a superior understanding than the moderns: "Ancient metaphysics had in this respect higher conception of thinking than is current today" (Hegel 1969, 45).

⁴⁰ My interpretation agrees with Quentin Lauer's reading of Hegel on this point (see Lauer 1971, 34).

the concrete" (Hegel 1995a, 25).⁴¹ Hegel frequently justifies his dismissal of non-Western philosophy by pointing out that its key concepts are too abstract. For example, here is Hegel's judgement on the concept of Tao (or Dao): "*Die Bestimmungen des Tao bleiben vollkommene Abstraktionen*" (Rel I, 329). Whether Hegel is correct in his assessment in this particular case, and whether he is correct to even employ concreteness as a principle of assessment in this manner are issues which do not concern us here.⁴² Nonetheless, this shows the importance of concreteness for Hegel.

It is also interesting to note that Hegel's claim that the history of philosophy shows a pattern of development from abstract [*abstrakt*] discourse to more concrete discourse and clearer conceptual distinctions is not original to Hegel. In fact, one of Hegel's philosophical heroes had already made this claim more than 2000 years before Hegel did.⁴³ In Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, we encounter the claim that "the earliest philosophy is, on all subjects, like one who lisps, since it is young and in its beginnings" (993a15-18). However, as we shall see in the concluding chapter, it would be a mistake to think Hegel also follows Aristotle in thinking that subsequent philosophers always clarify and discover only what earlier philosophers had attempted to discover (but were only able to

⁴¹ Hegel also advances this claim in a more unhelpful form when he makes the seemingly paradoxical claim that "*ist das Wahre abstrakte, so ist es unwahr*" [if the true is abstract, then it is untrue] (GPI, 43). This is just Hegel's idiosyncratic manner of emphasizing the importance of specificity and explicitness in philosophical discourse: I agree with A. Robert Caponigri's reading of this seemingly paradoxical claim as emphasizing the relative inadequacy of conceptions which contain implicit distinctions which have not yet been posited in an explicit manner (Caponigri 1972, 10)

⁴² We can briefly note that one explanation for why Hegel's interpretation of the *Daodejing* is so superficial is that the French translation which he used only contained five chapters (1, 14, 25, 41, and 42) out of the eighty-one chapters of the *Daodejing* (Kui 2011).

⁴³ Hegel lavishes very high praise on Aristotle: "he was one of the richest and deepest of all scientific geniuses that have as yet appeared - a man whose like no later age has yet produced" (Hegel 1995b, 117).

articulate in an inchoate form), and that consequently subsequent philosophy always deals with the same problems as earlier philosophy.⁴⁴

2.3. The Principle of Systematicity

Hegel's third principle, systematicity, is conceived as both a necessary condition for a body of thought to be recognized as philosophy and a principle by which progress in the history of philosophy can be judged. However, there are several issues that arise when dealing with Hegel's use of the concept of systematicity in his account of the history of philosophy. The first issue has to do with the fact that Hegel, as an anti-foundationalist (i.e., someone who thinks that a philosophical system should not have axiomatic foundations), could not have used 'systematicity', when he described his own philosophy as having the form of a system, to refer to the characteristic of an axiomatic or quasi-axiomatic system that is derived from more than one self-evident truth. It's sufficient for our purposes to note that when Hegel claims to be aiming at a deductive system (e.g., as in the *Science of Logic*), he is not aiming for a deductive system in the axiomatic sense, hence he is not using 'deduction' in the sense in which it is usually used. Whether it is possible to make sense of a conception of deduction which separates deduction from axiomaticity is an entirely separate question. What we can do here is to understand why Hegel wanted to avoid axiomaticity in philosophical systems. Hegel's rejection of foundationalism has to do with his desire to develop a self-grounding (or self-justifying) philosophical system that would proceed entirely without any presuppositions (this

⁴⁴In this respect, I disagree with Charles Taylor's reading of Hegel's account of the history of philosophy on this point (see Taylor 1975, 512-513).

concern is evident in the opening discussion of his *Science of Logic*). As Richard Dien Winfield has put it, Hegel's aim is to develop a "systematic philosophy [which] can overcome the dilemmas of foundationalism and achieve self-grounding" (Winfield 1989, 33). Put simply the dilemma of foundationalism has to do with the question of whether it is possible for foundationalists to justify the basic propositions which they assume to be true. Hegel clearly thought that the appeal to self-evidence was not sufficient. As such, then, his rejection of foundationalism is at least partly motivated by epistemological considerations. This makes Hegel quite different from some more contemporary anti-foundationalists (e.g., Richard Rorty) who often seem to think that if foundationalism is false, then the traditional image of philosophy as "the objective science of truth" (Hegel 1995a, 12) should be abandoned. Hegel, by contrast, rejects foundationalism precisely because he thinks that the traditional aims of philosophy can only be achieved if we reject foundationalism. As William Maker points out: "Hegel, like the postmoderns, rejects foundationalism and absolute subjectivity while endorsing cognitive and practical holism. But unlike the postmoderns he does this in such a way that this rejection and endorsement are fully rational, and are not only compatible with but also entailed by the idea of autonomous reason which the postmoderns disparage" (Maker 1994, 41). In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, when Hegel claims to be speaking from a systematic point of view (i.e., when he is advancing his own views, rather than in his role as an expositor of past philosophies), he says: "there is really no true ultimate, or what is the same, no true first" (Hegel 1995b, 360). He explicitly distances himself from the belief that all knowledge rests on a foundation of indubitable truths. A belief that he describes as a

"false belief" and one which he claims is "to be found in Kant and Fichte" (Hegel 1995b, 360). When Hegel claims that "the true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of such truth" (Hegel 1977, 3), the systematicity in question has to do with the making explicit of the conceptual and logical relations between the contents of the body of knowledge in question, and *not* with the derivation of the contents of the system from self-evident, foundational truths. William Maker suggests that systematicity (for Hegel), has to do first and foremost with the fact that all of the elements which are to be found in systematic philosophical discourse are justified within that discourse: "systematicity in systematic philosophy means [for Hegel], first and foremost, this internal immanent or self-generative feature, and the alleged autonomy and rigor of systematic philosophy its claim to being a science is a function of its immanency, an immanency the condition of the possibility of which is the attainment of a presuppositionless starting point [this is equivalent to the starting point of the *Science of Logic* and the endpoint of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*]" (Maker 1994, 49). We can say that, for Hegel, the demand for internal coherence is coupled with a demand for "autonomy" (understood as self-determination), which means that in philosophy one cannot begin by assuming anything: "the beginning must be *absolute*, or what is synonymous here, an *abstract* beginning; and so it *may not presuppose anything*, must not be mediated by anything nor have a ground" (Hegel 1969, 70).⁴⁵ For philosophy to be truly systematic it has to make explicit the logical relations between all of the elements

⁴⁵ Note that while Hegel thinks that philosophical progress requires the transition from the abstract to the concrete, he also thinks that the philosophical endeavour can only begin with a tremendous act of abstraction (these two propositions in no way contradict one another).

with which it deals ("it is clear that a collection of facts does not constitute a [systematic] science"), and it must determine its contents from within itself, i.e., it must begin without presuppositions (Hegel 1985, 22). The demand for systematicity such that all the elements that comprise the philosophical system are deduced within the system and provided with a warrant of justification from within the system (the *Science of Logic* is clearly a deductive enterprise in some sense) is derived from the demand for a presuppositionless philosophy in so far as this demand requires that nothing that has not been validated from within the system can be allowed a place within the system (because otherwise the system would lose its autonomy and would cease to be presuppositionless). Hence, a crucial feature of Hegel's conception of systematicity is encapsulated in his injunction that for philosophy as a science to begin "everything must be doubted, all presuppositions given up" (Hegel 1995a, 406), or as Hegel puts in the *Encyclopedia Logic*: "Science should be preceded by universal doubt, i.e., by total presuppositionlessness [*die ganzliche Voraussetzunglosigkeit*]" (Hegel 1991a, 124). This leads to anti-foundationalism, because a foundationalist approach would have to presuppose the truth of the basic axioms (it's important to understand that Hegel is really making a very strong claim here to the effect that no proposition, not even the most basic, can be assumed to be true simply because it is self-evident. As I have noted above, this epistemological point is what motivates his anti-foundationalism).

Now the question is whether Hegel applies his own conception of systematicity when assessing past philosophers. The main point to emphasize is that Hegel distinguishes, at least implicitly, between the conception of systematicity which he

himself endorses (i.e., anti-foundationalist, presuppositionless systematicity) and the conceptions of systematicity that he uses in order to assess past philosophies. Depending on the primary orientation of the philosopher whose philosophy is being assessed, Hegel recognizes two kinds of systematicity: metaphysical and epistemological. Hegel brackets his own conception of systematicity qua historian of philosophy because according to his own conception of internal critique he would not be justified in employing his own conception of systematicity to evaluate past philosophers. Presented in relation to historiography of philosophy, internal critique essentially means that the evaluation of past philosophies should do not employ standards of evaluation that are different from the ones that are associated with the philosophical position or system which is being critiqued (I discuss this in detail in chapters three and four). For according to Hegel "refutation must not come from outside, that is, it must not proceed from assumptions lying outside the system in question and inconsistent with it" (Hegel 1969, 580). In other words, if Hegel wishes to critically assess past philosophies with regard to their systematicity, he has to assess them according to their proponents' own conceptions of systematicity (or at least according to conceptions of systematicity that are not derived from the requirement of anti-foundationalism). Hegel is aware that many philosophers in the history of Western philosophy were foundationalists and that they associated systematicity with foundationalism (this holds for at least key figures such as Aristotle and Descartes, for example) and he thus cannot apply his own anti-foundationalist conception of systematicity when he is critically assessing their philosophical systems and standpoints.

Hegel effectively proposes to bracket his own conception of systematicity, and, to employ the conceptions of systematicity which are used by the authors who he is discussing.

Hegel thinks that if one studies the history of Western philosophy one can discern two main conceptions of systematicity that have been prevalent: a metaphysical conception of systematicity and an epistemic conception of systematicity (I should add that I do not think that Hegel's analysis here is adequate, but this is what he does). The first conception of systematicity that Hegel thinks he discovers in the history of philosophy is metaphysical. By that I mean that Hegel thinks that some past philosophers have conceived of a system as an attempt to provide an explanation of the world based on one metaphysical principle [*Prinzip*]. He gives the following examples of metaphysical principles around which philosophical systems have been constructed: "water, the one, *nous*, idea, substance, [and] monad" (Hegel 1969, 67). Hegel does not specify which historical systems he is referring to, but we can make an educated guess: "water" is referencing Thales, "the one" Parmenides (and Plotinus?), "*nous*" Anaxagoras, "idea" Plato, "substance" Aristotle (and others), and "monad" in reference to Leibniz (and Giordano Bruno?). On this conception of systematicity, a philosophical system comes into being when a metaphysical principle is used to explain the "whole system of the world" (Hegel 1995a, 38). To explain how these examples work, we can think of the ancient atomists who, according to Hegel, used the principle that there are indivisible units (atoms) that come together in different configurations to form bodies in order to account for perception, physical growth, and so on.

However, Hegel is also aware of the fact that some philosophers have been more concerned with epistemological rather than metaphysical issues.⁴⁶ Hence, he thinks that in studying the history of philosophy, we also encounter a conception of systematicity according to which a system of philosophy is characterized by the explicit (i.e., the thinkers in question were conscious of the fact that they were engaging in an epistemological project) and consistent use of an epistemological standard. In this case the principle is only "a[n] [epistemic] criterion rather than an objective determination [i.e., metaphysical principle or posit]", for example it could be "thought, intuition, sensation, ego, subjectivity itself" (Hegel 1969, 67). It is unclear how Hegel thinks that these could serve as foundations for systems (his remark is made in passing here), but perhaps he means something like this: if we start from an epistemic standard, we can build up a system by consistently applying that standard; for example if we think that the only knowledge which is possible for us to attain is that which is derived from sense experience, the consistent application of this standard will determine the structure of our philosophical system. In relation to this point one can think of Hume's fork:

"When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles [i.e., that knowledge can only be had through sense experience or through analysis of relations of ideas] what havoc must we make? If we take in our hands any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance, let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and*

⁴⁶ I will be using 'epistemic' and 'epistemological' interchangeably throughout this discussion.

existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion" (Hume 2007, 144).

Here we have a case where epistemic principles determine the overall structure of a philosophical system (or more specifically they determine how that system reconstructs the domains of knowledge with which it is concerned). In this case, the epistemic standard can be said to be the principle of the system in question in so far as when the proponents of this system are questioned regarding the justification of their claims (e.g., in Hume's case if he is questioned as to why he rejects speculative metaphysics or a realist account of causation), they must ultimately refer back to this epistemic standard. In his discussion of systematicity in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel employs this epistemological conception of systematicity when he is discussing epistemologically oriented philosophers (like Locke for instance with his genetic method). In this context, systematicity is understood as the consistent application of a standard of evaluation of knowledge claims: "the truth of all that is particular should be determined according to this abstract [epistemic] principle, and be at the same time likewise recognized" (Hegel 1995b, 232).

One element that is common to the two conceptions of systematicity (i.e., systematicity as associated with a metaphysical principle and systematicity as associated with an epistemic principle) is that the systematicity in question implies that all of the subfields that are encompassed by a system of philosophy have to be explicitly connected with one another, and because Hegel is talking about foundationalists (Hegel seems to assume that almost all the "main" philosophers in the history of western philosophy were

foundationalists), presumably this interconnection would take the form of an axiomatic deductive structure.⁴⁷ For example, Hegel criticizes Aristotle for not drawing systematic deductive connections between his investigations of different subject matters: "its parts [the subfields of Aristotle's philosophical system] are merely ranged side by side" (Hegel 1995b, 118). This is a significant shortcoming in Hegel's view, because Aristotle is ostensibly failing to abide by his own standards of systematicity (and not by Hegel's, for this is the whole point of Hegelian internal critique: you criticize philosophers on their own terms), which are presumably deductive and axiomatic.

However, as we shall see below, Hegel is not always successful in bracketing his own conception of systematicity when doing historical work (the consequences of this are discussed in the appendix to this chapter). Aside from this difficulty, there is also the more general issue that stems from the fact that employing systematicity as a standard of evaluation and thinking that systematicity is a necessary condition for a body of thought to be considered philosophy will lead to the neglect of philosophers who resisted systematicity and, as I point out in the appendix to this chapter, this is problematic.

2.4 The Principle of Autonomy

The fourth principle, independence from external authority (or autonomy), is closely connected to Hegel's conception of philosophy as an objective science of truth which, because it is concerned with knowledge claims that can be provided with

⁴⁷ In thinking that all the "main" philosophers in the history of western philosophy were foundationalists, Hegel might have been influenced by Jacob Brucker. Brucker used the metaphor of a house built on a foundation in order to describe past philosophical systems and he seems to have thought that philosophical systems were deduced from general principles (Catana 2005, 76).

epistemic warrants based on purely rational considerations, does not take common cultural or religious beliefs for granted. For Hegel, "Philosophy must, generally speaking, begin with a puzzle in order to bring about reflection; everything must be doubted, all presuppositions given up" (Hegel 1995a, 406), or as he puts it in the *Encyclopedia*, philosophy "cannot *presuppose* [unlike "the other sciences", i.e., the special sciences] the *method* of cognition as one that is already accepted" (Hegel 1991a, 24).⁴⁸ When Hegel speaks of thought as "inwardly self-determining" (Hegel 1995a, 91), he means that the only standards that rational thought can accept are the standards that it sets for itself (e.g., coherence, systematicity, and so on). This aspect of Hegel's view informs the way that he negatively assesses past philosophies that, in his eyes, are characterized by a lack of autonomy (in so far as they have, for example, taken for granted the truths of certain religious texts or have taken some historical figure, a philosopher or otherwise, as an unquestioned authority). Hence, for Hegel, in so far as medieval scholastic philosophers took their starting point from the doctrines of the church, which they took to be true based on the authority of the church, the systems that they produced "are not properly speaking themselves philosophy" precisely because they have taken certain beliefs for granted, e.g., the existence of a personal God, the immortality of the soul, and so on, (Hegel 1995a, 91). In this situation, "Thought has to prove itself from what the Church has already verified" and this is incompatible with Hegel's conception of philosophy as "independent thought" (Hegel 1995a, 92). Hegel's conception of medieval philosophy as lacking autonomy (in

⁴⁸ William Bristow notes that one of Hegel's major goals was to find a method of philosophizing which would be "completely open, in the sense that everything can in principle become an object of assessment or of reflection, as required by the demands of the investigation" (Bristow 2007, 213).

the sense that I have just described) is accepted by at least some contemporary historians of medieval philosophy. For example, Steven P. Marrone notes that, for most Medieval philosophers, "the sacred text acquired an authority transcending human reason [....] Scripture henceforth served as data or pretheoretical commitment for further reasoning, not as in much modern thought, as an object of critical-perhaps skeptical- scrutiny" (Marrone 2003, 41). This is precisely Hegel's point. Moreover, some medieval philosophers thought that the belief that philosophy could attain independence from the dogmas of the church was a deep error. For example, Bonaventure thought that if philosophy does not acknowledge the authority of revelation, then "the one who wants to remain in it [i.e., philosophy] falls into darkness" (quoted from Putallaz 2010, 104). Hegel also uses this principle when he negatively evaluates ancient Indian philosophy. Hegel argues that in so far as ancient Indian philosophy takes the Vedas as its starting point and its foundation, it does not have the requisite autonomy of thought which Hegel thinks philosophy ought to have: "Indian philosophy thus stands within religion just as scholastic philosophy stands within Christian dogmatism" (Hegel 1995a, 127).⁴⁹ Hence, we can see that Hegel employs autonomy as a principle by which to judge progress in the history of philosophy (he clearly regards the subordination of philosophy to church authority during the medieval period as being a regressive step in the history of philosophy). For Hegel, philosophy is autonomous when it sets internal rational standards for the evaluation of philosophical claims rather than accepting external standards for the

⁴⁹ It should be noted that the manner of Hegel's engagement with Indian philosophy changed over the years. Robert Bernasconi has shown that "his initial omission of India from the history of philosophy was not so much on its own terms, as having to do with a polemic against Frederick Schlegel [regarding the place of intuition in philosophy], but in the years immediately preceding his death [i.e., after 1825] Hegel rejected it again and after careful consideration of the issues" (Bernasconi 2003, 46).

evaluation of philosophical claims (e.g., those of the Catholic Church, or those of the existing political authorities).

Hegel also connects the possibility of autonomous philosophy with the existence of political and social freedom, which allows philosophers to set internal standards for the evaluation of philosophical claims. In other words, he thinks that political freedom is a necessary condition for philosophical autonomy. Hence, he claims that "philosophy only appears in history where and in so far as free institutions are formed" (Hegel 1995a, 95).⁵⁰ The thesis that philosophy first emerged in ancient Greece because it was only there that the political and social conditions which are necessary for philosophy obtained is shared by subsequent historians, for example Jacob Burckhardt (best known for his work on the Italian Renaissance) claimed that it was the democratic, self-governing polis that "set free the mind and the tongue" (quoted from Bryant 1996, 1). This thesis is also advanced by contemporary historians such as G.E.R. Lloyd. Lloyd has argued that there is a direct causal connection between the participatory democracy which characterized the political life of ancient Greece and the rise of rational thought, i.e., ancient Greek science and philosophy (see Bryant 1996, 3-4).⁵¹ So there is a clear point of contact between Hegel's views on the relationship between philosophy and political structures, and contemporary

⁵⁰ This is also how Hegel was interpreted by some of his followers. For example, Rosenkranz claims that "he [Hegel] makes his beginning [i.e., begins his history of philosophy] first with the Greeks because they first formed states with free constitutions, and true philosophy is impossible without political freedom" (Rosenkranz 1874, 5).

⁵¹ This thesis is often advanced in order to account for why philosophy and science did not develop (at least this is the assumption made) in the more ancient centres of civilization like Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China. For example, Joseph Bryant's answer is that "in social formations based upon mass subordination and bureaucratic regimentation of the primary producers, and where the means of cultural expression are controlled by the apparatus of domination, it is obvious that neither civic politics nor a free-ranging intellectualism are viable prospects" (Bryant 1996, 3).

debates regarding this issue (especially in relations to questions about the origins of philosophy).

The fact that Hegel posits this connection between political freedom and freedom of thought (which in turn is taken to be a necessary condition for philosophy) might also shed some light on the relationship between Hegel's conception of progress in the history of philosophy and his conception of progress in history in general. If increases in the autonomy of philosophy (increases in philosophers' ability to set and follow internal standards) constitute progress in the history of philosophy (by providing the conditions where the attainment of philosophical truth becomes possible), and if increases in the autonomy of philosophy are correlated with increases in political and social freedom, then the narration of world history as "the progress of the consciousness of freedom" (Hegel 1975, 54) provides a suitable context within which to narrate the history of philosophy as a history of the progress of human reason. In fact, the starting point of Hegel's history of philosophy is partly conditioned by this connection between political freedom and the possibility of philosophy. He locates the beginnings of philosophy in ancient Greece because it is "in Greece we first see real freedom flourish" (Hegel 1995a, 100).⁵² On the other hand, the dependence of the possibility of autonomous philosophical development on the existence of political and social freedom does introduce a problem for Hegel. This problem has to do with the fact that contingent developments on the political level (such

⁵² However, I agree with Andrew Fiala (2003) that Hegel does not really explain why philosophy proper (as he calls it) first emerged in the West. Hegel resorts to metaphorical language which does not really explain much: "the light first becomes in the West the flash of thought [*Blitze des Gedankens*] which strikes within itself, and from thence creates its world out of itself" (Hegel 1995a, 99). I take this to be an admission that Hegel does not really have an adequate account of why philosophy began in Greece; talk of "flashes" is no substitute for a detailed sociological account.

as, for example, the loss of freedom by a hitherto free people) may affect the manner in which philosophy develops in history, in a way that cannot be captured by an internalist account (i.e., an account that attempts to describe the way in which philosophy has developed in history by paying attention to primarily internal, i.e., philosophical, considerations). It is admittedly not a straightforward matter to characterize Hegel's views using the internalist-externalist dichotomy. For on the one hand, most of his narrative is internalist but not all of it. For example, some of the key non-philosophical factors that he highlights as having influenced the development of philosophy include: (i) the marked decline in the fortunes of the ancient Greek polis from the middle of the fourth century BCE onwards; this according to Hegel is what lead to a shift from a communally oriented social philosophy, e.g., in Plato and Aristotle, towards a more individualist ethics which he takes as the characteristic feature of Hellenistic philosophy in general, e.g., Stoicism and Epicureanism (Hegel 1995b, 234) , (ii) the rise of the Roman Empire and the destruction of communal autonomy (Hegel 1995, 276, 376) (iii) the Protestant Reformation (Hegel 1995c, 147). However, while acknowledging that Hegel sometimes did recognize the importance of external factors, we can point out that, for the most part, his narrative account is internalist (i.e., it does not, for the most part, appeal to non-philosophical factors in explaining developments in the history of philosophy). Hence, the aforementioned problem stemming from contingencies in political and social developments is indeed a problem for Hegel's account given the connection that he establishes between political (and social) freedom and philosophy.

One question that can be posed is the following: is Hegel's conception of autonomy as a necessary condition for philosophy proper relevant to contemporary debates in comparative philosophy? I think that the answer to this question has to be yes. To pick just one example, J.B. Schneewind has argued that in the course of doing comparative philosophy certain meta-philosophical questions arise which have to be answered. The one question which he seem to think is especially important is the following one: "much indigenous thought in other cultures is tied to religious beliefs that cannot be easily set aside, or even discussed in dispassionate and uncommitted ways. Can there be philosophy when the scope of inquiry is limited like this?" (Schneewind 2005, 174). It should be noted that Schneewind is not arguing for the conclusion that there is no such thing as non-Western philosophy (at least not explicitly), but he is arguing that there are important meta-philosophical questions which have to be confronted and answered in the course of doing comparative philosophy. Now, I think that Schneewind's question only makes sense if we believe that in philosophy "everything must be doubted, all presuppositions given up" (Hegel 1995a, 406). Indeed this is precisely Schneewind's view, for he thinks that in philosophy there "are no sacrosanct authorities - no starting points that that could not be questioned and rejected" (Schneewind 2005, 174). I do think that this is an adequate characterization of the self-understanding of those who are engaged in the practice(s) of modern philosophy (but whether it is in fact an adequate characterization of *what they actually do* is an entirely separate question which cannot be taken up here). However, if this characterization is correct, then what would prevent us from inferring, with Hegel, that strictly speaking, "indigenous thought" (to use

Schneewind's expression) in so far as it does not take a critical stance towards religious traditions cannot in principle be philosophic?⁵³ I am not suggesting that this is in fact what should be done. However, I think it is an issue which is worth thinking about and worth discussing in an explicit manner. In fact, I think that Hegel's formulation of this question is more adequate than Schneewind's in so far as Hegel does not restrict his question to what Schneewind calls "indigenous thought" (which seems to be Schneewind's shorthand for thought in non-Western/non-Westernized, "traditional" societies). In fact, as we have seen above, Hegel is prepared to apply his principle of autonomy in such a manner as to rule out almost a thousand years of Western medieval intellectual endeavours as "not properly speaking themselves philosophy" (Hegel 1995a, 91). Indeed Hegel does not restrict his discussion to just Christian philosophy. He also applies this principle to exclude Islamicate philosophy as philosophy proper.⁵⁴ Hence he

⁵³ Schneewind's characterization of what he calls "indigenous thought" is implicitly drawing on a certain characterization of what anthropologists call (or used to call) "traditional societies". According to this characterization people who live in traditional (i.e., pre-modern) societies are of course perfectly capable of engaging in valid deductive reasoning, however, they are (according to this characterization) reluctant to question the overall frameworks and contexts within which they reason and live (these frameworks and contexts include but are not limited to religious beliefs and practices). For example, Robert Borofsky, an anthropologist who engaged in ethnographic research in Pukapuka (a pacific atoll in the Cook Islands), has written that "my observations suggest that Pukapukans are hesitant to lay aside and/or place at a distance the contexts they know and handle so well....They did not question the broader context within which they operated" (Borofsky 1987,129). Robert Levy gives a similar characterization of Tahitian cognitive styles: "the thinking of people....is *embedded* in its contexts and operates, often wisely and intelligently, within them, but does not challenge the context itself" (Levy 1973, 269). Sylvia Scribner also makes a similar claim about "traditional villagers" in Mexico and Liberia (Scribner 1977, 494). I bring this up because Schneewind does not at all make explicit what he means by "indigenous thought", but also because it is important to be aware that meta-philosophical arguments about whether "indigenous thought" can be philosophical often depend on a specific anthropological characterization of pre-modern (or "traditional") societies and this needs to be made explicit and discussed.

⁵⁴ I use the term 'Islamicate' instead of 'Islamic' following Marshall G.S. Hodgson's distinction. Hodgson distinguishes between the religion which we call "Islam" whose cultural and social expressions we can call "Islamic" and "the overall society and culture associated historically with the religion" whose members often engaged in activities that we can refer to as "Islamicate" because they are not directly an expression of Islam nor of religion as such (Hodgson 1974, 57). I think that this distinction can be helpful for historians

finds fault with philosophy in the Islamic world during the Middle Ages precisely because, just like philosophy in medieval Christendom, it lacks, in his eyes, autonomy from religious authority: "they [i.e., medieval philosophers in the Islamicate world] have no higher principle than that of [religious] revelation, therefore a principle that is external [i.e., a principle that is imposed on philosophical discourse by religious or political authorities]" [*Sie haben kein anderes Prinzip als das der Offenbarung - ein äusserliches*], and hence it is not, according to Hegel's principle of autonomy, philosophy in the proper sense (Hegel 1995c, 30). In one sense, Hegel's question is more radical in scope than Schneewind's precisely because Hegel seems to think that it does not make much sense to stop at "indigenous thought" when asking whether thought that takes religious starting points for granted can be philosophical. Hegel extends the scope of this question to include long stretches of the history of Western philosophy, and in this sense he offers a less arbitrary version of Schneewind's question (recall that Schneewind asks whether "indigenous thought" can be philosophical? But for Hegel, the question is whether non-autonomous thought can be philosophy (regardless of whether it is "indigenous" or not)? In this sense thinking about Hegel's conception of the history of philosophy (and the metaphilosophical commitments that account for it) can help us to clarify some of the key questions that arise in contemporary comparative philosophy.

of philosophy who want to acknowledge that philosophers who lived in say 12th century Egypt were working within a social and cultural context that was dominated by Islam but that it does not follow from this that all of their intellectual activity was an expression of Islam as a religion. Indeed, I think that if we do not make this distinction we cannot make sense of the existence of intellectual activities that were explicitly unIslamic (and perhaps even anti-islamic), e.g., wine poetry, materialist philosophical currents, etc. Perhaps one way in which we can respond to Hegel's claims is to point out, using specific case studies that can serve as counter examples, that Hegel overemphasizes the dominance of religion in the cultures of medieval Christendom and Islamdom (especially in relation to philosophical activity) .

2.5 Conceptual Language as the Proper Medium for Philosophical Discourse

The fifth principle Hegel uses in order to assess progress in the history of philosophy is the articulation of philosophy in conceptual language as opposed to the use of representational language (as I have noted above, 'representational' is used by Hegel as a synonym for 'imaginative', hence it is far more specific than the ordinary use of 'representational'). The contrast between philosophy and religion (as understood by Hegel) provides a good illustration of what Hegel means when he contrasts conceptual and representational thought. Hegel claims that while it is true that religion often expresses ideas that are similar in content to ideas that are found in philosophy (e.g., ideas about the nature of external objects and claims about their mind independent existence or non-existence), religious thought expresses such ideas by way of representation [*Vorstellung*]. Here, we follow Paul Redding who notes that the way Hegel uses *Vorstellung*, in this context, should not be conflated with the way that term was used by German philosophers in the 18th century (e.g., Kant) to denote subjective ideas. As Redding puts it, "in Hegel's usage, to think in *Vorstellungen* [representations] is to draw on images from everyday life and employ them to express some conceptual content in an indirect, metaphorical way" (Redding, forthcoming 2017).⁵⁵ This form of thought relies on images [*Bilder*] which are "taken from immediate [sensible] intuition" (Hegel 1984, 397). These images are in turn given symbolic meaning: "the image is something symbolic or allegorical" (Hegel 1984, 397). Hegel provides an example of this symbolic

⁵⁵ Peter C. Hodgson also makes the same point (Hodgson 2008, 239). So does Charles Taylor (Taylor 1975, 211, 467).

imagery: "For example, if we say that God has begotten a son, we know quite well that this is only an image; representation provides us with a "son" and "begetter" from a familiar relationship, which as we know, is not meant in its immediacy [i.e., not meant to be taken in a literal sense], but is supposed to signify a different relationship, which is something like this one" (Hegel 1984, 398). Hence, Hegel does not deny that religious thinking (qua representational thinking) also employs concepts such as the concept of causation. His point is that this conceptual content is, in religious discourse (and even more so in mythical discourse), bound up with images [*Bilder*]. As Hegel himself puts it, "religion is rather the product of thinking imagination, or of thought which comprehends through the organ of imagination alone and finds expression in its forms" (Hegel 1995a, 69). In other words, in religious discourse the conceptual content is not dealt with in a language that is adequate to the development and comprehension of that conceptual content. Hence, there is a lack of specificity and clarity in that kind of discourse. We can even say that, for Hegel, religious discourse is not transparent to itself (precisely because of the inchoate mixture of concepts and images that characterizes it). For Hegel, philosophy makes it possible to comprehend religious claims (and all other claims that are advanced by representational, i.e., image dependent, modes of thought), because philosophy "transform[s] our representation [i.e., image laden discourse] into concepts" (Hegel 1984, 397).⁵⁶ Hence, for Hegel, philosophy uses language that is better suited for the expression of conceptual truths about the world and the explication of the logical

⁵⁶ As Martin De Nys puts it: "[for Hegel] a fully adequate comprehension of the sense and truth of religious proposals is not available to religious thought, properly understood [i.e., understood as a representational mode of thinking]. Religious thought points beyond itself to philosophy for the sake of a fully adequate comprehension of the sense and truth of religious proposals" (De Nys 2015, 122).

consequences of the claims that are being advanced (including the claims that are being advanced through religious discourse).

The language of religious discourse is juxtaposed to a language which is suitable for the exposition of what Hegel calls "the concept" [*der Begriff*]. While Hegel uses the term '*Begriff*' in a very complex way in the *Science of Logic*, he also uses it to refer to concepts in general, or rather conceptual structures in general, since Hegel, as a semantic holist, thinks that concepts get their meaning from their context and their relations to other concepts (I discuss Hegel's holism in chapter four). It is this more ordinary meaning of '*Begriff*' as referring to conceptual structures that is of concern to us in this context. What Hegel wants to point out is that because in philosophy we are interested in refining our conceptions and in developing new ones which overcome the limitations that we have discovered through our attempts to apply our old conceptions; we must use language that allows for clear determinations (for example the language of categories such as "Being", "Nothing", etc). According to Hegel, the visual imagery of religion may be useful for the stimulation of people's emotions and the presentation of sacred mysteries (e.g., the mystery religions of antiquity like the Mithariac mysteries and the Eleusinian mysteries), but it is not useful in philosophy, whose task is to make explicit what is implicit and, in a word, de-mystify the world (Hegel 1995a, 76).⁵⁷ For example, Hegel is very critical of what he calls the Christian "love of allegory" (Hegel 1995a, 195), and he chides previous Christian historians of philosophy for hoisting on ancient Greek philosophers (especially

⁵⁷ We can read Hegel as criticizing Plato not only for using myths, but also for drawing on motifs that are associated with the initiation rituals of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Plato uses such motifs in parts of the *Symposium*, the *Republic*, and the *Phaedrus* (Farrell 1999).

Pythagoras) all "the mysteries which pervade a clouded, miserable imagination and the wild ideas of distorted brains" (Hegel 1995a, 194-195).

Hegel is very much opposed to any kind of mystification, which he sees as being fundamentally incompatible with the aims of philosophy: "the less clear the thoughts, the deeper they appear; what is most essential, but most difficult, the expression of oneself in definite conceptions, is omitted" (Hegel 1995a, 195). Hegel also claims that clarity is the essence of thought, i.e., that for thought to be thought in the fullest sense it must be clearly expressed: "thought is, on the contrary, simply its manifestation; clearness is its nature and itself" (Hegel 1995a, 89). The reader may think that Hegel's insistence on clarity in expression is rather ironic given the notorious obscurity of his writings. While I cannot discuss the question of why Hegel wrote the way he did, given his commitment to clarity, in any detail, it is worth noting that Hegel's conception of clarity does not imply a rejection of the use of equivocal terms.⁵⁸ For example, Hegel thinks that the use of terms which have opposed meanings (terms like '*Aufhebung*') is indispensable in philosophy. This probably has to do with the fact that, for Hegel, the highest philosophical standpoint is the one that "apprehends the unity of the determinations in their opposition, the

⁵⁸ For example Hegel says that one of the virtues of the German language is that it has words which have "not only different but opposite meanings so that one cannot fail to recognize a speculative spirit of the language in them: it can delight a thinker to come across such words and to find the union of opposites naively shown in the dictionary as one word with opposite meanings, although this result of speculative thinking is nonsensical to the understanding" (Hegel 1969, 32). Daniel J. Cook notes that Hegel thought the employment of these equivocal terms was philosophically important because "in using such words, we become alive to certain contextual implications and etymological resonances that impart a vividness and "movement" to the ideas which these terms are meant to denote, thereby avoiding a static, formalistic interpretation of reality" (Cook 1972, 102). In terms of the implications of this for the interpretation and exposition of Hegel's view for an audience of analytic philosophers, I will only repeat Michael Forster's warning: "when I say that Hegel means such and such by a given passage, I should never be taken to be implying that he does not mean various other things by it as well; he typically does" (Forster 1998, 14).

affirmative that is contained in their dissolution and in their transition" (Hegel 1991a, 131). Of course, an exposition of what Hegel might mean by this is well beyond the scope of our discussion.

The main point to note is that Hegel thinks that one of the principles by which progress in the history of philosophy can be evaluated is the extent to which philosophy comes to be expressed in clear discursive language and abandons the use of imagery and allegory. For example, Hegel is fairly critical of Plato's use of myths as modes of presentations (e.g., the myth of Er in Plato's *Republic*) in his dialogues which he regards as indicative of the fact that philosophy had not yet matured enough to be able to dispense with the language of myth: "the myth belongs to the pedagogic stage of the human race [.....] it cannot express the meaning of thought" (Hegel 1995b, 20). Myth, as a representational mode of thought, relies heavily on imagery and this makes it inadequate as a philosophical medium (from Hegel's point of view). In fact, Hegel can be very harsh when dismissing this mode of thought. Regarding Plato's use of the image of a chariot and a charioteer when discussing the soul in the *Phaedrus*, "let us then liken the soul to the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer" (246B), Hegel simply says: "this image expresses nothing to us" (Hegel 1995b, 38). Thus the progress that philosophy has made can be judged by the ability of philosophers to express themselves without the use of myths or imagery, when philosophy "attains its full development, it has no more need of the myth" (Hegel 1995b, 20).

Hegel uses this claim in order to explain the antagonism that has existed between philosophy on the one hand, and religion and mythic poetry on the other hand. In Hegel's

view, the latter's hostility towards philosophy is entirely justified, in so far as the maturation of philosophy implies the weakening of the authority of the latter:

"[philosophical] thought really brings about the result that certain objects which may be called divine, and certain conceptions of these which may be called poetic[.....] are demolished" (Hegel 1995a, 327).⁵⁹ In this regard it is interesting to note that Hegel thinks that attempts to mitigate the historical conflicts which he thinks have often existed between philosophers and religious authorities is dishonest: "The Greek folk religion indeed, proscribed several philosophers; but the opposition is even more apparent in the Christian church [*Schon die griechische Volksreligion hat mehrere Philosophen verbannt; noch mehr in dieser Gegensatz aber in der christlichen Kirche vorgekommen*]" (Hegel 1995a, 65).⁶⁰ Of this, Hegel says, "we must speak definitely, openly and honestly - *aborder la question*, as the French say" (Hegel 1995a, 65).⁶¹

⁵⁹ We can see that by the mid-fifth century BC there was already conflict between religion and traditional morality on the one hand and philosophical thinking on the other hand. For example, Protagoras opened with his book *On the Gods* with a statement of agnosticism: "Concerning the gods, I have not the means to know whether they exist or do not exist" (quoted from Bryant 1996, 175). But even more radical was Kritias (who incidentally was Plato's uncle) who essentially claimed that the gods were made up by human beings for the purposes of social control: "it seems to me, some wise and clever fellow invented fear of the gods, that the bad might have some fear even if they are doing, saying, or thinking anything wrong in secret. Hence it was that the divine was introduced [...] And by speaking these words, that man introduced the most profitable and cunning of all teachings, concealing the truth with a false *logos*" (quoted from Bryant 1996, 176).

⁶⁰ I have slightly modified Haldane's translation of this passage. Reference to the German: (GP I, 85).

⁶¹ I cannot enter here in to the question of Hegel's religious beliefs. I think that there is a structural ambiguity or ambivalence in Hegel's thought regarding God. But essentially I think that Heine was right when he characterized Hegel as a "monk of atheism": "we now have monks of atheism who would burn Monsieur Voltaire alive because he was a hardened deist. I have to confess this music is not pleasing to me, but it also does not frighten me; for I stood behind the maestro [i.e., Hegel] when he composed it, to be sure in indistinct and convoluted signs so that not everyone would decipher it" (Heine 2002, 289). It is also important to note that Hegel's philosophy was interpreted as being anti-Christian by some of his followers even when he was still alive. For example, Ludwig Feuerbach in his letter to Hegel dated November 28, 1828 claims that he reads Hegel as claiming that philosophy's task lies in "actually abolishing world-historical modes of intuition assumed up to the present. Modes of intuiting time, death,

We should also note that Hegel's thesis that one way in which philosophy makes progress is by the transformation of representational forms of thinking into conceptual forms of thinking was quite influential on neo-Kantian historians of philosophy such as Windelband. Windelband, in a very Hegelian passage in his *History of Philosophy*, claims that when we examine the history of philosophy we discover that philosophy "was labouring to bring to conscious expression the necessary forms and principles in which the human reason manifests its activity, and to transfer these from their original form of perceptions, feelings, and impulses, into that of *conceptions*" (Windelband 1901, 9). We should add that Windelband is conscious of the influence of Hegel on his work as a historian of philosophy, he acknowledges that it was "through Hegel that the history of philosophy was first made an independent science, for he discovered the essential point that the history of philosophy can set forth neither a motley collection of opinions of various learned gentlemen [...], nor a constant widening and perfecting elaboration of the same subject-matter, but rather only the limited process in which the "categories" of

the this-worldly, the other-worldly, the ego, the individual, the person, as also that person considered as something absolute outside the finite, namely God, etc.: modes containing both the basis of history such as it has been envisaged up to the present and the source of the system of Christian representations" (Hegel 1984, 549). Also, some of Hegel's contemporaries like Friederich Carl von Savigny complained that "his [i.e., Hegel's] enthusiastic students are abandoning any relationship to religion and in this respect Hegel has even gone beyond Fichte" (quoted in Althaus 2000, 157). It is interesting to note that Hegel himself thought when modern philosophy advances in its development, it comes to recognize the "concrete Idea of God as reason [*konkrete Idee von Gott als der Vernunft*]" (Hegel 1995c, 358). I think that Hegel was first and foremost an Enlightenment thinker at least in so far as he thought that the sublation of religion by philosophy was a positive and progressive step in human history. Hegel has very positive things to say about the French philosophes' attack on religion; he thinks that they were revolting against a "condition of degeneracy. I may even say of utter and universal falsehood" (Hegel 1995c, 388). It is also interesting to note that Hegel thinks that the French Enlightenment "completed the Reformation that Luther began" (Hegel 1995c, 398). This could be read as an attempt to tame the Enlightenment, but it could also be read as an attempt to claim, albeit "in indistinct and convoluted signs" that the perfection of religion is its elimination (or rather its *Aufhebung*). In general, I think that Paul Redding is right when he says that Hegel "saw the passage from art to religion to philosophy as a progressive step in line with the ultimately *rational* nature of humans" (Redding 2002, 415).

reason have successively attained distinct consciousness and reached the form of conceptions" (Windelband 1901, 11). So we see that there is a clear line of influence from Hegel to later nineteenth and twentieth century historians of philosophy (especially in the Neo-Kantian strand of historiography of philosophy). Even Nietzsche, who is generally hostile to Hegelian approaches to historiography of philosophy (and to Hegelian historiography in general as is clear from his *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*), takes up a Hegelian position (perhaps unknowingly), when he tries to justify why Thales deserves to be considered a philosopher rather than a religious thinker. Nietzsche claims that because Thales expresses his key thesis "in language devoid of image or fable. . . [this fact] takes him out of such company ["the company of the religious and superstitious"]" (Nietzsche 1962, 39).

2.6. The Substantial Component in Hegel's Framework: The Identity of Thought and Being as the "Fundamental Idea" of Philosophy

The principles that have been presented above are all formal in character in so far as they do not point to a specific doctrine which is taken to be central to the true philosophy, and in relation to which progress in the history of philosophy is to be evaluated. Indeed, one does not have to be a Hegelian in order to subscribe to some or even to all of them. However, these principles do not exhaust the elements that constitute the evaluative framework that Hegel uses in order to evaluate progress in the history of philosophy. In addition to these principles Hegel offers what he takes to be the doctrine towards which the history of philosophy is advancing, namely, the doctrine of the identity

of thought and being. The key point to note is that the thesis of the identity of thought and being, which is at the heart of the system that Hegel regards as the true philosophical system (namely his own system), is a key element in the evaluative framework which Hegel uses in order to evaluate past philosophies. To show how a substantial philosophical thesis can serve as a parameter for the evaluation of development in the history of philosophy, we can take a look at a contemporary historian of analytic philosophy, namely Michael Dummett (we have already looked at how Kantian historians like Tennemann adopted a substantial philosophical thesis as a parameter for the evaluation of development in the history of philosophy). Michael Dummett claims that "only with Frege was the proper object of philosophy finally established: namely, first, that the goal of philosophy is the analysis of the structure of thought; secondly, that, the study of thought is to be sharply distinguished from the study of the psychological process of thinking; and, finally, that the proper method for analyzing thought consists in the analysis of language" (Dummett 1978, 458). Here we see that Dummett is using three metaphilosophical theses (although they are far more substantial than the principles that I have identified as the formal components of Hegel's evaluative framework. For instance, the second thesis presupposes a fairly strong philosophical claim, namely that we can make sense of the distinction between thought and the psychological process of thinking) as evaluative principles. For after all, if it was Frege who finally discovered the proper goal of philosophy, then presumably all the pre-Fregean philosophers who were not primarily concerned with the structure of thought (in the Fregean anti-psychologistic sense) were either not doing philosophy at all and consequently not contributing to

progress in philosophy qua philosophers (presumably they might have still contributed to philosophy in some other way, e.g., qua mathematicians or natural scientists) or were rather poor philosophers. I take it that Dummett would treat the adoption of the thesis that thought is distinct from the psychological process of thinking as a parameter by which progress in the history of philosophy can be evaluated. For instance, he would think that if a given philosopher held a view that was closer to this thesis than her predecessor, then at least in that respect this philosopher would have made progress over her predecessor. I also take it that Dummett would think that a widespread reversion to psychologism would constitute a regression in the history of philosophy. In this section I argue that the thesis that thought and being are identical (in the sense in which Hegel understood it) plays an analogous role as an evaluative parameter or principle in Hegel's account of the history of philosophy.

This identity of thought and being forms the starting point of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, which begins from where the *Phenomenology of Spirit* ends, namely with the recognition that "thinking in its immanent determinations and the true nature of things form one and the same content" (Hegel 1969, 45).⁶² While there is much that could be said about Hegel's identity of thought and being, it is sufficient for our purposes to note just a few things about it. First, Hegel is not some kind of subjective idealist; thus he does not think that being (or objects as such) do not have a mind independent existence. In the second part of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, the part dealing with his

⁶² I have modified A.V. Miller's translation slightly by adopting Stephen Houlgate's translation of this text (Houlgate 2006, 119). My account of Hegel's conception of the identity of thought and being follows the one that is provided (in much greater detail) by Houlgate.

philosophy of nature, Hegel makes sure to avoid this claim by stating that "the things of nature do not think and are neither representations [*Vorstellungen*] nor thoughts" (Hegel 1970, 198). He also juxtaposes his version of idealism to the "false idealism that means to be done with what is objective by bringing it into relation with consciousness, merely saying of it that it is my feeling" (Hegel 1995a, 310). In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel claims that if one has to choose between materialism and idealism (understood as the thesis that matter is not real, since all that exists are minds and ideas) then "materialism is much preferable to this spiritualistic idealism, since "its [i.e., materialism's] view is that matter is independent and spirit is dependent" Hegel then goes on to add that "it is folly to deny the reality of matter" (Hegel 2007, 70).⁶³ For Hegel, idealism (as he understands it) has nothing to do with maintaining that we are not affected by external objects (as if the world that we have access to is only the product of the human mind): "it is of no avail to imagine that all in me [i.e., all my mental representations] develops out of me; for we must always recollect that what is thus developed in me is passive and not free [. . .] sensation is always in one aspect passive" (Hegel 1995b, 188). He goes on to add that what we usually call idealism is "a false idealism which thinks that the passivity and spontaneity of the mind depend on whether the determination given is from within or from without, as though there were freedom in sense-perception, whereas it is itself a sphere of limitation [. . .] Thus there need be no standing on ceremony with sense-perception, nor can a system of idealism be based on the theory that nothing come to us from without" (Hegel 1995b, 188). Hence if to be an

⁶³ For an exposition of Hegel's development of a non-reductive physicalism as an alternative to both materialism and dualism, see Russon (2015).

idealist is to believe that there are no mind independent entities in the world, then Hegel is simply not an idealist.⁶⁴ However, if to be an idealist is to believe that what is (i.e., being) has an intelligible structure and that this structure is identical to the structure of the basic categories of thought, then Hegel is an idealist (in a similar way in which we can describe Aristotle as being an idealist, if we adopt this definition of idealism).⁶⁵ As Stephen Houlgate puts it, the identity of thought and being means that "being *is* in itself intelligible logical form and that thought is direct awareness of such intelligible being" (Houlgate 2006, 117). In fact, one of the things that Hegel is attempting to do in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* is to show that modern subjectivist idealism is not the only, or even the original, form of idealism. In this sense, we can say that Hegel as a historian of philosophy is engaging in act of retrieval (something which contemporary historians of philosophy sometimes do):

"The idealism of Plato must not be thought of as being subjective idealism, and as that false idealism which has made its appearance in modern times, and which maintains that we do not learn anything, are not influenced from without, but that all conceptions are derived from out of the subject. It is often said that idealism means that the individual produces from himself all his ideas, even the most immediate. But this is an unhistoric, and quite false conception; if we take this rude definition of idealism, there have been no idealists amongst the philosophers, and Platonic idealism is certainly far removed from anything of the kind" (Hegel 1995b, 43-44).⁶⁶

⁶⁴ It is quite clear that to say, as Russell says, that Hegel held that "only minds and mental events can exist" is to misinterpret Hegel (Russell 1945, 657).

⁶⁵ The context for the passage which has been quoted above is Hegel's attempt to show that the fact that Aristotle thought that there is passivity in perception is not incompatible with absolute idealism (He wants to cast Aristotle as an absolute idealist): "with this moment of passivity Aristotle does not fall short of idealism" (Hegel 1995b, 188). This conception of idealism is also apparent in Hegel's characterization of Spinoza as an idealist; Hegel speaks of "*Spinozistischen Idealismus*" because Spinoza affirms "*die Einheit des Denkens und Seins*" (GP III, 161).

⁶⁶ I take it that when Hegel says that there have been no idealists among the philosophers, he does not mean to deny that there have been subjective idealists (he clearly thinks that there are). Instead, I think

He characterizes the unity of thinking and being as the "fundamental idea" of philosophy. He characterizes modern philosophy's task as the grasping [*begreifen*] of the unity of thought and being: "the task of philosophy is determined to the point of making its object the unity of thinking and being, which is its fundamental idea, and of grasping this idea [*Die Aufgabe der Philosophie bestimmt sich dahin, die Einheit des Denkens und Seins, welche ihre Grundidee ist, selbst zum Gegenstande zu machen und sie zu begreifen*]" (GP III, 314).⁶⁷ (Compare this with Dummett's claim that the goal of philosophy is to grasp the structure of thought as distinct from the psychological process of thinking). There are also passages where Hegel seems to imply that the history of philosophy as a history of progress can only be narrated by one who has finally achieved the true (and final) philosophical system: "in order to obtain a knowledge of its progress as the development of the Idea in the empirical, external form in which philosophy appears in history, a corresponding knowledge of the Idea is absolutely essential, just as in judging of human affairs one must have a conception of that which is right and fitting" (Hegel 1995a, 31).

However, there is an important point which should be made clear here. This point has to do with the tension which exists between Hegel's professed approach to critique, which involves the rejection of the use of external standards (standards that are different

that he is harshly insinuating that those who are subjective idealists are not really philosophers at all. It should be noted that while I think that Hegel finds Plato's objective idealism appealing, I think Findlay goes too far when he claims that "Platonism and Hegelianism are, in my view, the same philosophy" (Findlay 1972, 62). Findlay neglects the fact that Hegel explicitly denies a key tenet of Platonism, namely that universals exist independently of particulars. Hegel is fairly clear on this issue: "[the universal] 'the animal' does not exist; on the contrary, this expression refers to the universal nature of single animals" (Hegel 1991, 56). For a more sustained criticism of Findlay's reading on this point see (Palmer 1972).

⁶⁷ This is a slightly modified form of Quentin Lauer's translation of this passage in (Lauer 1972, 39).

from the ones that are adopted by the proponents of the system or position which is being critiqued), and the manner in which he seems to be claiming, in the passage above, that his system (qua final philosophical system) is the standard in relation to which different philosophical systems are to be assessed. One way in which to make sense of this tension is to concede that Hegel simply failed to adhere to the standards that he had set for himself, and that he essentially resorted to using his own system as the standard by which past systems can be assessed (and thus, that he is vulnerable to the criticisms that he himself had levelled against the Kantian historians). There is some textual support for this thesis. There are several passages where Hegel seems to be describing past philosophies in terms of how close they were to discovering the identity of thought and being. For example, Hegel reads Parmenides as affirming the identity of thought and being. He reads Parmenides as claiming that "thought produces itself, and what is produced is a Thought. Thought is thus identical with Being, for there is nothing beside Being" (Hegel 1995a, 253). Hegel even claims that because of his identification of thought and being, Parmenides "began Philosophy proper" (Hegel 1995a, 254). Here, Hegel seems to be attempting to establish correspondence between the beginning of philosophy "proper" (which is presumably different from philosophy as such, in so far as he identifies Thales as being the first philosopher) and the first stage of his own system (the *Science of Logic* begins with "being, pure being"). (Again, compare this with Dummett's view that Frege essentially began philosophy proper). The redescription of the positions of past philosophers' position in Hegelian terms is a running theme throughout Hegel's treatment of the history of philosophy. To give another example, part of the reason that Hegel holds

Aristotle in such high regard is that he takes Aristotle to have also affirmed the identity of thought and being: "Das Hauptmoment in der Aristotelischen Philosophie ist, daß das Denken und das Gedachte eins ist, – daß das Objektive und das Denken (die Energie) ein und dasselbe ist" (GP II, 162-163). The question that we are concerned with is not whether Hegel's reading of Aristotle on this matter (or of anyone else for that matter) is accurate. The issue is how are we to reconcile Hegel's repeated insistence that we must always be on guard against committing anachronism, and that critique (and evaluation in general) must proceed from an internal standpoint, with the manner in which Hegel seems to consistently read past philosophers through his own system. After all, it is Hegel himself who notes that "we are too apt to mould the ancient philosophers into our own forms of thought" (Hegel 1995a, 44). In general, as John E. Smith puts it, "one of the problems to be faced by anyone seeking to understand and to evaluate Hegel's treatment of other philosophers is that he never seems to regard their thought as having any tenure beyond the framework of his own philosophical account of the history of philosophy" (Smith 1972, 109) and yet Hegel consistently emphasized the importance of historical context for understanding past philosophies. In the following chapter I suggest a way through which this tension can be resolved (or at least attenuated) by first explaining how Hegel conceived of the relationship between his philosophical system and the history of philosophy (and Hegel's anti-individualistic conception of philosophy will play an important role here), and second by showing how Hegel's holism bears on this issue.

Appendix to Chapter 2, Section 3:

The Historiographic Consequences of Thinking that Systematicity is a Necessary Condition for a Body of Thought to be Considered Philosophy: Distortion and Marginalization

Hegel's conception of philosophy as being essentially systematic leads him to claim that traditions that do not have systematic philosophy do not have philosophy at all. For instance, Hegel claims that someone like Confucius is not really a philosopher at all because he is "only a man who has a certain amount of practical and worldly wisdom - one with whom there is no speculative philosophy" (Hegel 1995a, 121).⁶⁸ Hegel is quite consistent in his application of systematicity as a principle (which, in his view, is both a necessary condition for a body of thought to be considered philosophy and a principle by which progress can be evaluated). On his account, for instance, since Socrates lacked a system of philosophy he did not really possess any philosophical knowledge: "it may actually be said that Socrates knew nothing, for he did not reach the systematic construction of a philosophy" (Hegel 1995a, 399). So even though his application of this principle to Chinese philosophy is probably clouded by ethnocentricity, he is at least willing to apply the same principle to both Eastern and Western philosophy. Nonetheless,

⁶⁸ It is interesting to note that, according to Young Kun Kim, Hegel's harsh criticisms of Confucianism were essentially taken up by some Chinese intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Kim 1978, 179). Yu Xuanmeng also discusses how Chinese scholars in the twentieth century such as Cai Yaunpai explicitly drew on Hegelian models for the history of philosophy in order to re-write the history of Chinese philosophy (Xuanmeng 1997, 132). It would also be a mistake to think that all of Hegel's immediate followers thought that he was right in denying that there existed philosophy in ancient China and India. For example, Rosenkranz disagrees with Hegel on this point: "The Chinese and the Indians have not philosophized like the Greeks, but they have philosophized [...] it avails nothing, especially since the further investigations in this domain since Hegel's death, to seek either to ignore or to exclude the Orientals; for they have philosophized..." (Rosenkranz 1874, 5).

Hegel's conception of philosophy as being necessarily systematic in character creates historiographic problems for him. For example, Gary K. Browning has criticized Hegel for attempting to portray Plato as a systematic philosopher, when in fact (according to Browning) Plato was not interested in presenting a systematic philosophy: "Hegel's characterisation of Plato as a systematic philosopher is an anachronistic importation of his own style of philosophising into a previous age"⁶⁹ It must be said that Browning's criticism is not unfair given the fact that Hegel under-emphasizes the Platonic dialogues which do not fit into his conception of philosophy as systematic. It is certainly difficult to disagree with Browning that Hegel's emphasis on the *Parmenides*, the *Republic*, and the *Timaeus* and his exclusion of other dialogues is part of Hegel's attempt to recast Plato's philosophy so that it conforms to his own conception of philosophy (and this seems to violate Hegel's own methodological principles). Hegel himself seems to admit this: "if the *Parmenides* be taken together with the *Republic*, and the *Timaeus*, the three together constitute the whole Platonic system of philosophy divided into its three parts or sections" (Hegel 1995b, 49). Of course, the reference to the triadic division is meant to evoke Hegel's own system with its logic, philosophy of Spirit [*Geist*], and philosophy of nature.

The emphasis on systematicity and the problems that are associated with such emphasis allow us to draw connections between Hegel and subsequent philosophers who were also historians of philosophy, e.g., Ernst Cassirer. This will help us detect the

⁶⁹ A similar point is also made by J. Glenn Gray regarding Hegel's (mis-)reading of Plato as a systematic philosopher (Gray 1941, 78).

influence of Hegelian assumptions on subsequent historiography of philosophy (and consequently the role of those assumptions in shaping the self-understanding of philosophers through the shaping of the philosophical canon). As Donald Philip Verne (1992) notes, Hegel's emphasis on systematicity becomes especially problematic when it comes to treating philosophy in periods where philosophy was done in a consciously unsystematic fashion (Plato may not have been a systematic philosopher in Hegel's sense, but it is not clear that he was consciously and intentionally anti-systematic). Hegel has trouble dealing with Renaissance philosophy and Enlightenment (18th century) philosophy both of which were unsystematic in character (especially the latter, which had philosophers like Diderot and Condillac who consciously rejected and argued against the idea of philosophy as a system).⁷⁰ Ernst Cassirer emphasizes the point. In *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* he notes that Renaissance philosophy "does not seem to bear out Hegel's presupposition that the full consciousness and spiritual essence of an epoch is contained in its philosophy" primarily because it seems to lack a unified philosophical system (Cassirer 1963, 1). However, interestingly enough, Cassirer does not infer from this that Hegel's conception of philosophy as being essentially

⁷⁰It is interesting to note that Hegel's overall interpretation of the Renaissance as being fundamentally an anti-clerical reaction that was characterized by freedom and individuality (and an emphasis on immanence as opposed to transcendence) and as thereby constituting a clear break with the Middle Ages (see Hegel 1900, 410) was essentially adopted by several Italian thinkers as being the correct interpretation of the Renaissance. This approach is observable from Bertrando Spaventa (1817-1883), who along with Francesco de Sanctis (1817-1883) played an important role in the introduction of left Hegelianism to Italy (see Lombardi 1971, 231-232), through to Giovanni Gentile (Ferguson 2006, 222-223). However, the Hegelian Italians did not just adopt Hegel's interpretation of the Renaissance as a general cultural and social development, they also wanted to establish the significance of Renaissance philosophy as philosophy (something that Hegel himself was not very interested in). It would be interesting to understand how they attempted to reconcile their emphasis on the significance of Renaissance philosophy qua philosophy with the Hegelian assumption that Renaissance philosophy was not really significant qua philosophy because it was unsystematic.

systematic is incorrect. Instead, as Verne points out, Cassirer attempts to solve this historiographic problem not by abandoning Hegel's principle but by suggesting that the entirety of Renaissance philosophical thought can be understood as "a system in which all separate philosophical productions and viewpoints are parts of a total Spirit of the age" (Verne 1992, 335).⁷¹ From Cassirer's point of view, the lack of a systematic philosophy authored by a single individual is to be resolved by reconstructing a unified philosophical system, one which can be taken to represent the primary intellectual concerns of the age, from "the multiplicity of starting points and the divergence of solutions to the various problems posed" (Cassirer 1963, 6). Compare this to what Hegel says about what we are to do (methodologically) when several philosophies appear at the same time in the same cultural context: "where several philosophies appear at the same time, they are [to be considered] as different sides which make up one totality forming their basis" (Hegel 1995c, 548). In fact, further evidence in support of Verne's view that Cassirer essentially agrees with Hegel on this point is provided by Cassirer himself in the preface to his *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Here, Cassirer tells us that the philosophy of the Enlightenment is to be presented "in light of the unity of its conceptual origin and of its underlying principle rather than of the totality of its historical manifestations and results" (Cassirer 1951, v). We can see that Cassirer's approach is to construct a unified system

⁷¹Louis Dupré also notes that a someone who adopts a Hegelian approach to the history of philosophy will have difficulty in dealing with transition periods like the Renaissance because of the lack of systematic thinkers during such periods as well as the fact that the philosophical scene is chaotic in so far as it is not dominated by any one system (or even just a few competing systems) (Dupré 1987, 34). On the other hand, if we emphasize Hegel's claim that the philosophy of an age reflects the character of that age (i.e., its dominant cultural trends), we can say that the very lack of systematicity reflects the character of that age as a period of transition and exploration. In this sense, we can say that Hegel might have a response to Dupré's criticism.

where he can find none. The invocation of an "underlying principle" [*Prinzip*] which can be used to identify (and in this case, construct) a system is clearly a Hegelian move.

Cassirer also claims that he is interested in uncovering the "real systematic value of the philosophy of this age [the Enlightenment]" (Cassirer 1951, v). The Hegelian emphasis on identifying a system which can then be taken to reflect the main intellectual concerns of the age is also apparent in the following passage: "the tensions and solutions, the doubts and decisions, the skepticism and unshakeable conviction of this philosophy *must be seen and interpreted from one central position if its real historical meaning is to be made clear*" [my emphasis] (Cassirer 1951, v). The attempt to present the philosophy of a given period as being embodied in one system is motivated by the belief that there is a unity to the culture of a given period (we can recast this in Hegelian terms so as to speak of the Spirit [*Geist*] of an age), and that this unity is expressed in systematic philosophy.⁷² On this view, if the philosophy of a given age is not systematic or even explicitly anti-systematic, it must nonetheless be shown that it can be re-cast in systematic form. In fact, Cassirer's conception of the task of the historian is rather Hegelian. A. Juffras notes that Cassirer's view of the task of the historian is fundamentally characterized by "his emphasis on reconstructing the 'spirit of the age' " and that this expression [*Zeitgeist*] is

⁷²In this regard, it is interesting to note that "Hegel was one of the first (if not the first) to use '*Aufklärung*' to designate a particular period, rather than an ongoing activity" (Schmidt 2003, 439). Hegel, in other words, attempted to define the characteristics of the period (to discover the "Spirit of the age" of that period), rather than just understand the nature of *Aufklärung* as an activity carried out by individuals (i.e., the way that Kant uses the term in his essay *Was ist Aufklärung?*). Hegel is, in general, concerned with cultural wholes or unities and the attempt to discover their general characteristics. It should also be noted that the increased interest in historiographical questions in the nineteenth century was accompanied by an increase in interest in periodization (i.e., the attempt to identify and characterize periods in history as opposed to presenting history in terms of continuous chronological narratives of past events) and Hegel's approach should be situated in this context (see Ferguson 2003, 168).

an expression which recurs frequently in Cassirer's work (Juffras 1989, 189).⁷³ The point is that there is a Hegelian strand in Cassirer's historiography (and in some influential strands of 20th century intellectual history).⁷⁴ Questions about the strengths and weaknesses of Hegelian approaches to history are not just of antiquarian interest; they directly pertain to contemporary issues in historiography (especially the historiography of philosophy in particular and the historiography of culture in general). As Wallace K. Ferguson has noted in his study of the historiography of the Renaissance, when one studies the history of historiography one discovers that Hegelianism "has exerted an

⁷³It is also interesting to note that Cassirer's histories of philosophy have been subjected to criticisms that are similar to the ones that are often directed at Hegel's history of philosophy. For example, Quentin Skinner has quipped that "it sometimes seems in Cassirer's analysis as though the whole Enlightenment was striving to make Kant possible" (Skinner 1969, 11). Compare this to Beiser's claim that Hegel distorted the history of German idealism by presenting his predecessors as "stepping stones on the triumphal path towards Hegel's grand system" (Beiser 2008, 10).

⁷⁴ For a concrete example of this Hegelian strand in 20th century intellectual history we can turn to the work of Cassirer's colleague at the Warburg Institute, the well known historian of art Erwin Panofsky. Specifically his *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*, which is clearly inspired by Hegel's thesis that there is a unified outlook or perspective belonging to a given age which can be detected in all of the cultural productions of that age (in this case an outlook or perspective that is detectable in both Medieval architecture and Medieval philosophy). Panofsky even explicitly uses Hegelian language (though slightly incorrectly in my view) in his exposition (Panofsky 1958, 64, 86). The most extreme statement of the claim that cultural history has been in the grip of "Hegelian Holism" since its inception is made by E.H. Gombrich. Gombrich claims that cultural history has always been the grip of "Hegelian Holism" in so far as its practitioners have always assumed that "some essential structural similarity must be detected which permits the interpreter to subsume the various aspects of a culture under one formula" (Gombrich 1969, 32). Gombrich is very critical of this tendency. However, as Claude N. Paur (1991) has argued, Gombrich is mistaken on at least two counts. First, his description of the Hegelian attitude towards the question of unity in culture is too simplistic, in so far as it leaves out Hegel's emphasis on the importance of providing empirical support for claims about the unity of culture. Second, it is entirely unclear how cultural history can be narrated without reference to wholes or unities (e.g., wholes such "Roman culture", "Weimar Culture", "Classical French Drama", "Ottoman architecture", "Calvinism", "Late Victorian Culture" etc.). Keith Thomas, a historian of early modern England, also makes a similar point (though not directly in response to Gombrich). Thomas notes that it is legitimate to group several cultural phenomena under a unifying concept such as "Early Modern English Culture" because "some problems, values, and assumptions persisted over long periods of time" (Thomas 2009, 6). In this sense we can say that claims about the unity of culture in a given society at a given place and time are first and foremost *empirical claims* whose truth can be assessed by examining the relevant historical evidence; these claims about unity are not any sense "metaphysical" or "a priori" as some seem to think.

incalculable influence on the historiography of the past century [the 19th century]" (Ferguson 2003, 169) and, as I have attempted to show with the example of Cassirer, it has also exerted a significant influence on 20th century historiography of philosophy.

Nonetheless, it must be said that the emphasis on systematicity as a necessary condition for serious philosophy comes at a significant cost. For if attempts at showing that there is systematicity in the philosophy of periods such as the Enlightenment fail, then provided that one retains the idea that serious philosophy must be systematic, the history of modern European philosophy will be presented in a distorted form.⁷⁵ The principle of systematicity, which took hold in the historiographic practices of the nineteenth century, leads to the following results: "the Renaissance is at best covered as a somewhat chaotic period of transition; seventeenth- and eighteenth-century eclecticism itself disappears completely from historical view; the messy French *philosophes* are taken less than seriously; the 'civic philosophers' in the Pufendorffian tradition are . . . dismissed" (Haakonssen 2006, 19). Haakonssen characterization applies to Hegel's treatment of Renaissance of philosophy which is quite brief and dismissive. In Hegel's treatment, Ficino, Pico, and Bessarion get treated collectively in a single paragraph (Hegel 1995c, 112), and the same is the case for Gassendi, Lipsius, Reuchlin, and

⁷⁵ However, it must be said that it is not the case that all of the Enlightenment *philosophes* were anti-systematic. For example, in his *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia* d'Alembert makes an assumption regarding the unity of all knowledge and the possibility of representing it in a systematic form. He tells us that the aim of the *Encyclopedia* is systematic, "it is to set forth as well as possible the order and connection of the parts of human knowledge" (d'Alembert 1995, 4). He also claims that "the universe, if we may be permitted to say so, would only be one fact and one great truth for whoever knew how to embrace it from a single point of view" (d'Alembert 1995, 29). Hence, Cassirer's claim that "the rationalistic postulate of unity dominated the minds of this age" (Cassirer 1951, 23), is not without support.

Helmont who also get lumped together in a single paragraph (Hegel 1995c, 113). Hegel is more or less explicit on why he devotes little space to Renaissance philosophy. He claims that "it is in fact not a true philosophy at all [given systematicity as a necessary condition for a body of thought to be philosophy proper], and I shall therefore not dwell any longer upon it" (Hegel 1995c, 113).⁷⁶ What is especially interesting (and in some sense, disturbing) is that the result that Knud Haakonssen describes (a result which follows from knowingly or unknowingly adopting a Hegelian, or German Idealist, conception of what counts as serious philosophy) corresponds in many respects to the structure of the contemporary philosophical canon (especially in relation to its omissions).⁷⁷ For instance, while it is more or less impossible to study for an undergraduate degree in philosophy without encountering systematic philosophers like Descartes and Kant, it is very much possible that one will not encounter the work of unsystematic philosophers like Marsilio Ficino and Diderot. This is especially interesting once we realize that it is not at all clear that most contemporary philosophers would agree with Hegel (and the German Idealists in general) that systematicity is a necessary condition for serious philosophy. Hence, it is important to analyze and evaluate the ideas which have historically dominated the historiography of philosophy in the nineteenth century (and many of these ideas can be found in Hegel) because these ideas have played an important role in structuring the

⁷⁶The exception to this characterization of Renaissance philosophy is Giordano Bruno, who Hegel finds very interesting and treats at some length. Hegel reads Bruno as a precursor to Spinoza: "this system of Bruno's is thus objective Spinozism, nothing else; one can see how deeply he penetrated" (Hegel 1995c, 126). Hegel also emphasizes Bruno's proto-Leibnizian conception of matter: "[for Bruno], matter is nothing without activity, form is therefore the power and inward life of matter" (Hegel 1995c, 127). Interestingly, this positive evaluation of Bruno is also based on the characterization of Bruno as a philosopher who has a *system*.

⁷⁷It is commonly acknowledged that all of the major German idealists (Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel) thought that philosophy must be systematic (Franks 2005, 1-6).

philosophical canon which we now have.⁷⁸ It may very well be the case that Descartes and Kant are just more interesting or more important philosophers than Ficino and Diderot and that the latter pair are really not deserving of a place in the philosophical canon (and there may be other factors as well) but at the very least we should be questioning whether it is wise to let the structure of our philosophical canon be dictated to us by the views of nineteenth-century philosophers and historians of philosophy. Especially once we realize that it is not at all clear that we share with them their ideas about the necessary conditions that a philosophical work needs to meet in order to be considered serious or valuable.

⁷⁸ Hegel was not the first historian of philosophy to think that a body of thought can be considered philosophy only if it is systematic: Jacob Brucker held this view before Hegel. Leo Catana (2005) offers a similar critique of the historiographical use of the concept of a system of philosophy in Brucker's historiography to the one that I am offering of Hegel's use. On a philological note, there is good evidence to suggest that the Latin term 'systema' was not used to refer to logically unified bodies of knowledge until the second half of the sixteenth century (Catana 2005, 79).

Chapter 3: Attenuating the Tension between Hegel's Historiographic Strictures and his Historiographical Practice

3.1. Hegel's Conception of the Relationship between his Philosophical System and the History of Philosophy: Narrating the History of Philosophy from an anti-Individualistic Standpoint

We can attenuate (but perhaps not completely eliminate) the tension which has been outlined in the concluding section of the last chapter by emphasizing that Hegel's system emerges as a result of the dialectical development of past systems, at least as he sees it. By this I mean that Hegel considers his system to be the outcome of the historical process whereby different philosophical systems have emerged from one another through the process of internal (or immanent) critique. Hegel is claiming that taking each philosophical system in the historical series and applying its own standards for philosophical success (and failure) in the most rigorous way possible should result in this system having to be replaced by the subsequent system in the series, if the contradictions which have emerged are to be resolved. The subsequent system will, in the course of time, be undermined through the rigorous application of its own standards, which reveal its own contradictions. This process continues, according to Hegel, until we reach his own system.

I have claimed above that Hegel views the history of philosophy as a dialectical development. This naturally leads to the question of what is "dialectic" according to Hegel? For Hegel the word 'dialectic' does not refer to some mysterious and esoteric method. Rather it refers to the process wherein philosophical systems subject themselves to examination and criticism, thereby discovering their own limitations. Strictly speaking

it would be better to speak of *proponents* philosophical systems subjecting the philosophical systems to examination, but Hegel seems to prefer to speak of philosophical systems subjecting *themselves* to examination. Presumably he does this because he attempts to provide a completely anti-individualistic account of the history of philosophy. Hegel says in the *Encyclopedia Logic* that "they [philosophical systems] examine themselves: in their own action they must determine their limits, and point out their defects. This is that action of thought, which will hereafter be considered under the name of dialectic" (Hegel 1975, 66).⁷⁹ Hence, we can see that for Hegel dialectic is simply the

⁷⁹ I agree with interpreters of Hegel who reject the characterization of Hegel's dialectic as a "method". Hegel's dialectic cannot be understood as being some kind of algorithm for the discovery of truths, which he wants us to apply to different subject matters (this would contradict his central methodological prescription, namely, the importance of presuppositionless thinking). As Beiser puts it, if by 'method' we mean to refer to "certain rules, standards and guidelines that one justifies a priori and that one applies to investigate a subject matter....[then] Hegel utterly opposed having a methodology" (Beiser 2005, 160). Alexandre Kojève also (correctly) denies the claim that the Hegelian dialectic is a method: "the Hegelian dialectic is not a method of research..." (Kojève 1980, 259). David Lamb, in turn, notes that "Hegel never employed a dialectical method. Instead he argued that human knowledge is dialectical, breaking into contradictions due to the attempt to consign thought into watertight categories, and finally driven on to a resolution" (Lamb 1980, 30). Houlgate (2006), Solomon (1983), Dove (1974), Taylor (1975), Maker (1982), and Tabak (2013) also hold this view. However, it should be noted that, like almost everything else related to Hegel's philosophy, there is controversy over this issue. For instance, Michael Forster thinks that Hegel has a "dialectical method" and that "it is pervasive in Hegel's mature philosophy [and that] governs all three parts of his system proper" (Forster 1993, 130). In my view, Hegel is fairly clear on this issue and his dialectic can only be described as a method if methodological passivity for the sake of internal critique can be described as a method. Hegel himself says that dialectic "is the immanent contemplation of the object; it is taken for itself, without previous hypothesis, idea or obligation, not under any outward conditions, laws or causes; we have to put ourselves right into the thing, to consider the object in itself, and to take it in the determinations which it has" (Hegel 1995a, 265). Hegel's hostility towards the mechanical application of abstract principles is apparent even in his earlier years. During his Jena period we find him writing the following: "An essential part of studying a science is that one should not be led astray by its principles. They are general and do not mean much. It appears that you only grasp their meaning if you grasp the particular. Often they [the abstract principles] are simply bad. They are consciousness of a thing, and the thing is often better than the consciousness" (quoted from Lukács 1975, 255). That Hegel thinks that there is no such thing as a dialectical method if by that we mean a method that is applied a priori to a subject matter is clear from the manner in which he criticizes the Schellingians who have brought *Naturphilosophie* into disrepute by imposing an a priori structure on natural phenomena: "this externally applied science takes the place of dialectic progress; and this is the special reason why the philosophy of

process wherein philosophical standpoints reveal themselves to be inadequate relative to their own standards of adequacy and this in turn leads to a new philosophical standpoint which attempts to overcome the inadequacies of the previous one. This is the relevant meaning of the word 'dialectic' in relation to our discussion.

Hegel thinks that he is entitled to re-describing past philosophical systems in his own terms because he thinks that his system is the outcome of the consistent application of the internal standards of past systems. Hegel's own system is thus not external to the systems in question, because for him the entire series is indispensable for the emergence of the true system of philosophy. Moreover, in so far as the entire series has been *aufgehoben* in the true system of philosophy, the elements (i.e., systems) that comprise the historical series of philosophical systems are both cancelled and preserved. The elements (systems) in the series are cancelled in so far as their claims to be absolute and complete have been undermined and revealed to be false (Hegel 1995a, 37). However, they are also preserved in so far as (1) whatever is of value in them is taken on board and integrated into the final system (2) they, qua systems that make an unwarranted claim to finality and completeness (i.e., qua systems that are false), are assigned a place as

nature has brought itself into discredit, that it has proceeded on an altogether external plan, has made its foundation a ready-made scheme, and fitted into it Nature as we perceive it" (Hegel 1995c, 542). We can also note in passing that thinkers such as Noam Chomsky who are critical of the idea that "the dialectic method" is something helpful in scientific investigations are quite correct in so far as a dialectical approach is precisely the attempt to approach any given subject matter with as few presuppositions as possible and hence is not really a method at all. In fact, what Chomsky says when he responds to the question of what he thinks of "the dialectical method" is not a bad gloss of what Hegel himself thinks: "As for my own methods of investigation, I do not really have any. The only method of investigation is to look hard at a serious problem and try to get some ideas as to what might be the explanation of it, meanwhile keeping an open mind about all sorts of other possibilities. Well, that is not a method." (Chomsky 1988, 190).

necessary steps in the process of the development of human reason. This is how Hegel's claim that in his philosophy all preceding philosophies are contained and "hence no philosophy has ever been refuted" should be understood (Hegel 1995a, 37). He does not mean to say that everything that has been ever been asserted by past philosophers is true (for example, it is clear that he thinks that empiricism is false). Rather his point is that all philosophies are given their place in the historical development and emergence of the true philosophy (i.e., his own).⁸⁰ Hegel's model of rational inquiry as involving the identification and overcoming of contradictions, i.e., his conception of rational inquiry as being a fundamentally self-correcting process, allows him to give an important place to even those philosophers who, in his eyes, have taken up false positions. Those philosophers, according to Hegel, have at the very least contributed to the progress of philosophy by increasing the level of concreteness of philosophical discourse or by pointing out areas of inquiry that other philosophers had ignored, or by developing an inadequate position to such an extent that its contradictions become apparent.

Hegel's project in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* is not to save past philosophers from the ignominy of having been mistaken (in fact, he thinks that there is nothing shameful or disgraceful in having been wrong).⁸¹ Instead his project is to save past philosophers from the accusation that they have not contributed to the progress of

⁸⁰ Note that this is quite different from thinking that Hegel believes, as Heinrich Heine claimed, that "the most various systems were only various sides of the same truth" (Heine 2007, 48-49). As I am arguing above, this is an incorrect reading of Hegel.

⁸¹In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel notes that an excessive fear of error can have adverse effects on progress in knowledge: "if the fear of falling in error sets up a mistrust of Science [Wissenschaft], which in the absence of such scruples gets on with the work itself, and actually cognizes something, it is hard to see why we should not turn round and mistrust this very mistrust" (Hegel 1977, 47).

philosophy and thus saving them from the accusation that their work is in some sense worthless. Hegel's language can sometimes be misleading on this point. For example, "to the old philosophy we can turn again and admit its truth; it is satisfying in the stage of development that it has reached...." (Hegel 1995c, 358). It seems that in this passage Hegel is saying that past philosophy has attained "truth" [*Wahrheit*], however if we read this passage carefully, we discover that in this specific context that by 'truth' Hegel means to say that we can show that past philosophical positions were not outrageous nonsense, but rather they could be justified within their specific context and could be seen as having contributed to progress in philosophy. Indeed, Hegel says that past philosophy is "satisfying in the stage of development that it has reached" which implies that we have been able to situate past philosophies as stages within an overarching narrative that has a unified structure. This is why Hegel thinks that in order to justify past philosophy (not necessarily justify its truth, but rather its historical significance) we need overarching narratives in the history of philosophy (his account of the history of philosophy is one such overarching narrative). However, this does not commit Hegel to the claim that detailed studies of individual philosophers or even individual works are not important. Overarching narratives like the one Hegel proposes depend on the existence of such detailed studies.

Hegel is essentially trying to find a way in which our recognition of the fact that past philosophical positions had to be abandoned because of the difficulties that they faced (i.e., their contradictions, according to Hegel) and our recognition of the fact that there is progress in philosophy does not lead us to thinking that past philosophers were

failures. In fact, if we take a comparative standpoint we can see that this is not really a very radical position: chemists celebrate John Dalton as the founder of chemical atomism, despite the fact that "every statement made by Dalton in his celebrated statement [of chemical atomism in 1803] is now regarded as false" (Barnes, Bloor, & Henry 1996, 94-95). Closer to home, historical sociologists can think that Max Weber's methodological approach to historical sociology cannot be adopted today as it is, but it does not follow from this that Max Weber was a failure. We have seen that Hegel wants to move away from the history-of -philosophy-is- the- history- of -abject -failure narrative and towards a more optimistic narrative; primarily because he thinks that the former narrative is fundamentally self-undermining: it undermines philosophy's place in both academia and in intellectual culture in general. (Imagine how other intellectuals and the general public would view the discipline of sociology if every other sociologist went around saying that the history of sociology is the history of abject failures!).⁸²

However, this justification of the past comes at a price. Hegel has to re-describe, in his own terms, past philosophers in order to incorporate them in his narrative, and thus he often underemphasizes the individuality of the thinkers that he analyzes (a criticism that is often levelled at Hegel). He prefers to deal with them as representing various stages in the development of human rationality. Each past thinker represents "a passing moment" in the developing totality that is the human venture of discovery (Hegel 1995a, 34).

⁸² As I have noted above, this point is also made in (Richardson and Hardcastle 2003).

Hegel is rather uninterested in talking about the "originality" or "genius" of individual philosophers. He applies this same approach to his own work. In fact, it is slightly misleading to speak of the final and complete system as Hegel's own system, because Hegel himself never spoke of it as "his" system precisely because he had a very anti-individualistic conception of philosophy (and of intellectual and cultural production in general). Hegel himself thought that his primary task was to make philosophy *teachable* and this, in his view, required him to de-emphasize the role of individuality. In a letter to von Sinclair in 1810 Hegel emphasizes this point: "I am a schoolmaster who has to teach philosophy, and perhaps this is why I also hold that philosophy must assume a regular structure as teachable as geometry" (Hegel 1984, 288).

In his account of the history of philosophy, Hegel is always at pains to emphasize that, in the final analysis; philosophical advances are public cultural achievements rather than expressions of individual idiosyncrasies. Hence, he describes philosophical advances as "the deeds of the World-Spirit", i.e., of humanity in general (Hegel 1995b, 453).⁸³

Allen Wood puts this point well:

"He is as far as possible in this regard from his Romantic contemporaries who thought of both philosophy and art as products of individual genius, monuments to the idiosyncrasy of their self-celebrating creators. For Hegel, a sound philosophical system is not anyone's personal creation at all. In his view, the

⁸³ Interestingly, Hegel also emphasizes the communal character of philosophy in the modern period (especially in the early modern period when many major philosophers were not associated with universities but collaborated with one another through being members of a single republic of letters and through being members of organized scientific societies). Hegel notes that, in "the modern world", "only a common mode of existence is possible in any calling or condition [i.e., including philosophy], and to this Spinoza [in his relative solitude] forms the solitary exception [*Es ist nur eine gemeinschaftlich Weise in einem Stande möglich; Spinoza macht Ausnahme*]" (Hegel 1995c, 169).

content of his system is merely the Western philosophical traditions, appropriated by the reflective spirit of modernity" (Wood 1990, 7).⁸⁴

When Hegel describes past philosophical systems in his own terms, he does not think of himself as distorting them, but rather as describing them in terms of the system which makes the history of philosophy intelligible as the history of the progress of human reason. Hegel, with his rejection of the idea that philosophy is reducible to an expression of a thinkers' individuality (or personality), would reject, for example, Nietzsche's claim that

"Every philosophy is a philosophy of a certain stage of [an individual person's] life [...] Thus Schopenhauer's philosophy remains the reflected image of passionate and dejected youth - it is not a mode of thinking proper to men of older years. Plato's philosophy recalls the mid-thirties [...]"(Nietzsche 1996, 277).

From Hegel's perspective Nietzsche's approach in this passage is excessively biographical, it does not account for the impersonal, objective character of philosophy: "the events and actions of this history [i.e., the history of philosophy] are therefore such that personality and individual character do not enter to any large degree into its content and matter" [*Die Begebenheiten und Handlungen dieser Geschichte sind deswegen zugleich von der Art, dass in deren Inhalt und Gehalt die Persönlichkeit und der individuelle Characktere eingeht*] (Hegel 1995a, 1). In fact, Hegel's anti-individualist approach to the history of philosophy was criticized by historians of philosophy who held

⁸⁴ As an aside, we can point out that when Karl Mannheim claims that "strictly speaking it is incorrect to say that the single individual thinks. Rather it is more correct to insist that he participates in thinking further what other men have thought before him" (Mannheim 1960, 3), he is essentially making a Hegelian point regarding the assumptions which should inform his approach to the sociology of knowledge. Given Hegel's anti-individualist attitude towards philosophy and his anti-individualist epistemology, it is not surprising to find that his views accord with the theoretical postulates that characterized classical sociology of knowledge.

the view that the history of philosophy should be narrated as the history of geniuses.⁸⁵ For example, Charles Renouvier (1815-1903), took issue with Hegel's neglect of the individuality of the philosophers whose views he expounded (Smart 1962, 32-34). Hegel's response to such critics would be to point out that they have an excessively individualistic of philosophy and that they are mistaken in thinking that philosophy is primarily about the expression of one's individuality. I suggest that one reason that Hegel thought he was justified in consistently reading past philosophers through his own system is that Hegel was consciously attempting to write an anti-individualistic history of philosophy, and that he saw "his" system as really just the expression of rational modernity (which was a public cultural achievement and not the achievement of any single individual genius). By assimilating past philosophers into his own system, he was emphasizing the nature of their contributions as public cultural achievements. Nonetheless, this is not the only reason that explains why Hegel thought he was justified in re-describing past philosophical systems in terms of his own system. Hegel's holism also plays a crucial role.

⁸⁵ However, it should also be said that the anti-individualistic conception of the history of philosophy that Hegel advanced was not always met with hostility. For instance, Frederick Engels clearly appreciated Hegel's role in pointing out the limitations and distortions that accompany the individualistic conception of philosophy (Engels 1941, 15).

3.2. Hegel's Holism and its Significance for Understanding his Approach as a Historian

Hegel is both a semantic holist (i.e., he believes that words get their meaning from their context),⁸⁶ and an epistemological holist (i.e., he believes that the units of knowledge are entire conceptual structures and not individual propositions). As Hegel puts it: "the true is the whole [*Das Wahre ist das Ganze*]" (Hegel 1977, 11). This is, of course, the most famous statement by Hegel of his holism. However, it is important to note that Hegel conceives of the "whole" which is the bearer of truth as being essentially dynamic. Hence, Hegel goes on to say that the "whole is nothing other than the essence [*Wesen*] consummating itself [*sich vollendende*] through its development [*Entwicklung*]" (Hegel 1977, 11). In other words, Hegel is claiming that we should not think that the bearer of truth is a static conceptual structure (i.e., we should not think that Hegel believes that the bearer of knowledge is, for example, a single Kuhnian paradigm). Instead, it is the entire series of successive conceptual structures, each one emerging out of the "determinate negation" [*bestimmte Negation*] of the preceding one. 'Determinate negation' is Hegel's term for the result of the process of "internal critique"; it refers to what happens when a certain philosophical system or approach is shown to have failed to measure up to the standards which it has set for itself. According to Hegel, the result of a successful internal critique is not "nothingness" (to use Hegel's expression), i.e., not *just* the repudiation of the philosophical system which has been successfully subjected to

⁸⁶ Hegel claims that it is a mistake to believe that "in rational combination, which is essentially dialectical, a content still retained the same determinations *that it possesses when fixed in isolation*" (Hegel 1969, 685). Hegel's point is that a linguistic unit's semantic content is dependent on its relations to other units in a given context.

internal critique, but rather the substitution of a new, more robust philosophical approach in place of the one which has been successfully critiqued.⁸⁷ Hence, according to Hegel, upon successful criticism "a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation the transition is made through which the progress through the complete series of forms comes about of itself" (Hegel 1977, 51). In this passage from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel is speaking of "forms" [*Gestalten*] of consciousness, but his claims equally apply to philosophical systems.

For Hegel, the 'whole' refers to the entire historical series of philosophical systems as they have emerged from one another by way of internal critique (i.e., *as a series of determinate negations*). We can think of determinate negation as quite literally putting a given philosophical system in its proper place. Internal critique (which leads to determinate negation) shows that a given philosophical standpoint or system cannot justify the claims (claims to the effect that this philosophical standpoint is final and comprehensive) which have been made on its behalf by its proponents. However, the result is, for Hegel, not the realization that this specific philosophical standpoint is entirely without merit, but rather that it only captures a certain, limited aspect of what needs to be explained. Hence, Hegel claims that what "has been refuted [*widerlegt*] is not the principle [*Prinzip*] of this philosophy, but merely the fact that this principle should be considered final [*Letzte*] and absolute in character" (Hegel 1995, 37). It is important to note that Hegel does not mean to say (despite appearances to contrary) that every single philosophy has been right about something of fundamental philosophical importance. A

⁸⁷ This has already been discussed in detail in section one of Chapter Two.

given philosophy can contribute to progress (in a wide sense, i.e., the progress of human rationality in general) by successfully countering, for example, various superstitions (even if the philosophical basis from which this given philosophy does this is fundamentally flawed).

The best way to illustrate this point is provide an example of a philosophical standpoint which, according to Hegel, fits this description. Such an example is provided by Hegel's discussion of Epicureanism. Hegel's assessment of Epicurus' philosophy is very negative (from a philosophical point of view). For example, Hegel says that "Epicurus rambles amidst the indeterminate which expresses nothing" (Hegel 1995b, 289). Moreover, he claims that "we can have no respect for the philosophic thoughts of Epicurus, or rather he has no thoughts for us to respect" (Hegel 1995b, 300). Given that this is Hegel's assessment of Epicureanism; it is legitimate to wonder how Hegel thinks he can still give it a place as a moment in the dynamic whole which, according to Hegel, is a progressive development. Hegel does this by pointing out that Epicureanism, even though it is (from his point of view) entirely inadequate philosophically, contributed to progress in (what we would call) the natural sciences. According to Hegel, Epicurus, by emphasizing the importance of experience and observation in the acquisition of knowledge about nature played an important role in the progressive development of natural science: "it may thus be said that Epicurus is the inventor of empiric Natural Science" (Hegel 1995b, 297). The second point that Hegel makes is that Epicureanism, in so far as it rejected appeals to the supernatural in relation to explanations of natural phenomena (and its rejection of the imputation of religious significance to natural

phenomena), placed itself in direct opposition to what Hegel describes as superstition:

"All the nonsense about birds flying to right or to left, or a hare running across the path, or men deciding how they are to act according to the entrails of animals, or according as chickens are lively or dull - all that kind of superstition the Epicurean philosophy made short work of" (Hegel 1995b, 298). Moreover, Hegel gives Epicurus credit for having "banished the fear of the gods" (Hegel 1995b, 298). Hence, Hegel is able to both criticize (very harshly) Epicureanism on philosophical grounds, while also giving it a place in the story of the intellectual progress of humanity.⁸⁸

It is important to emphasize that, for Hegel, the various inadequate philosophical positions, in so far as they are grasped as a dialectically interconnected whole, constitute the "absolute". As Hegel puts it: "when the expression 'absolute idea' is used, people may think that it is only here [i.e., at the culmination of the exposition of Hegel's *Logic*] that we meet with what is right.... [however] its true content is nothing but the entire system.....what is of interest is the whole movement....everything which, taken by itself, appears to be restricted get its value by belonging to the whole" (Hegel 1991a, 304).⁸⁹

⁸⁸ This is also the same approach that he adopts towards Francis Bacon's philosophy. He dryly remarks on Bacon that "the esteem in which his name is held is greater than can be ascribed directly to his merit" (Hegel 1995c, 172-173), and yet he still manages to find a way to present Bacon's philosophy as a progressive development in so far as it was "at least of service to culture" (Hegel 1995c, 186).

⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that this view is also echoed by Cassirer in the third volume of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*: "The truth is the whole--yet this whole cannot be presented all at once but must be unfolded progressively by thought in its own autonomous movement and rhythm. It is the unfolding which constitutes the being and essence of science. The element of thought, in which science is and lives, is consequently filled and made intelligible only through the movement of its own becoming" (Cassirer 1957, xiv). In the same preface Cassirer makes it clear that his *Phenomenology of Knowledge* is essentially Hegelian: "In speaking of a phenomenology of knowledge I am using the word 'phenomenology' not in its modern sense but with its fundamental signification as established and systematically grounded by Hegel" (Cassirer 1957, xiv). For a discussion of Cassirer's Hegelianism (and a critique of Michael Friedman's "de-Hegelianized" reading of Cassirer), see Richardson (2010). Donald Philip Verne has also provided strong

Hegel's holism does not lead to the sorts of incommensurability problems that are associated with the holism of, for example, Thomas Kuhn. This is because Hegel's holism does not operate at the level of individual systems (or to put it in Kuhnian terms, paradigms), but rather it picks out a macro-level historical process, namely, the progressive development of human rationality as the whole whose dynamics it describes. In this sense, incommensurability problems would not arise for Hegel because (on his model) it is never the case that you have two (or more) *entirely unrelated* conceptual structures confronting one another.

Note that denying that there are no entirely unrelated conceptual structures does not entail denying that to the individuals who are engaged in disputes it *might appear as if* they "practice their trades in different worlds" (Kuhn 2012, 149). In this sense, I agree with Paul Thagard when he notes that while Hegel is very much a proponent of historical approaches to epistemology (i.e., approaches that emphasize the importance of developing models of the dynamics of theory change), he "does not subscribe to the radical conceptual incommensurability which seems proposed by Kuhn" (Thagard 1982, 403). This point is important to note because some historians of science like Mario Biagioli think that in order to establish the existence of incommensurability between two different conceptual frameworks "all that matters is that an impossibility of communication was claimed by members of a group. Whether or not they were right in their claims is not something that can be legitimately judged from any point of view

textual evidence to support the claim that Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms "is derived from Kant only in a broad and secondary sense and that its actual foundations are in Hegel" (Verne 1969, 33)

external to that culture or group" (Biagioli 1993, 212).⁹⁰ A Hegelian response to this claim would be that this approach makes the mistake of thinking of incommensurability in subjective, phenomenological terms whereas, in fact, incommensurability is about the existence (or non-existence) of relations between concepts and theories.

A Hegelian need not commit herself to the claim that appearances of incommensurability (on the phenomenological level) do not take place. A Hegelian need only maintain that it is possible to *retrospectively* show that what appeared to be the case of two unrelated conceptual structures confronting one another is in fact a dialectical progression (which would involve showing that there is no incommensurability between them). In this respect, it is interesting to note that Hegel sometimes speaks as if the fact that progress has been made in philosophy can only be known retrospectively, i.e., after one has attained Hegel's own philosophical standpoint. Hence, Hegel leaves open the possibility that philosophers have in the past made progress, but have not known that they have made progress (and in fact, that they in principle would not have been able to show that they have made progress) and that the process only attains transparency when one attains Hegel own standpoint. Therefore, from the standpoint of the non-Hegelian participants in the progressive development "the road can therefore be regarded as the pathway of *doubt*, or more precisely as the way of despair" (Hegel 1977, 49).

Here it would be appropriate to say something about a common criticism that is often levelled against Hegel, namely that his account of history in general (and the history

⁹⁰ Biagioli's work on Galileo is discussed in (Schmaltz 2013, 321-322).

of philosophy in particular) is teleological in some kind of unacceptable manner. It must be admitted that Hegel does indeed employ teleological language when talking about history. For example, Hegel claims that the increase in the humans' consciousness of their freedom and the actualization of this freedom is the "final purpose of the world" [*Endzweck der Welt*] (PGh, 32). However, Hegel's account of the history of philosophy (as I have presented it above) does not require any strong teleological claims, in the sense that it does not require history to have a purpose that is somehow bestowed upon it by some kind of supra-human agent who stands outside of the historical process. Strictly speaking, at least in relation to the history of philosophy (which is what we are concerned with here), none of Hegel's claims entail the claim that the history of philosophy is a teleological process (in an undesirable sense). What Hegel's claims entail is that the history of philosophy has a discernable direction (having a direction does not imply having a purpose) which displays a developmental structure that can be judged to be progressive or good in normative terms, but it does not follow from this that the history of philosophy has some kind of purpose.⁹¹

It is also interesting to note that my interpretation of Hegel's account of the history of philosophy coheres rather nicely with Robert Pippin's attempt to argue that Hegel's absolute does not refer to the termination point of the process of knowing, but rather to the point where this dynamic process of knowing becomes transparent (i.e., we are no longer travelling on the "way of despair" because we know how to redescribe transformations so that we see them as dialectical progressions). As Pippin puts it

⁹¹ This point is derived from Pinkard's characterization of Hegel's account of human history in general (Pinkard 2012, 119).

"Absolute knowledge involves a self-consciousness about such a process rather than its final completion and so termination" (Pippin 1989, 247). H.S. Harris argues for a similar interpretation. According to Harris, absolute knowing is the standpoint from which the dynamics of reason become transparent to us, absolute knowing does not "preclude the possibility of any significantly new knowing" (Harris 1997, 27). Hence, what is terminated is the confusion about how to understand the dynamics of reason, the first-order process of knowing is not itself brought to a halt.⁹² One of Hegel's primary concerns is the development of an adequate epistemological account of the dynamics of theory change and he glosses this goal as the attempt to "attain insight into what knowing is" (Hegel 1977, 17).⁹³ If this goal is achieved, it does not follow that the process of knowing itself will come to a halt.⁹⁴

Hegel thinks that all the individual philosophical standpoints which are subject to examination in his account of the history of philosophy get their value by "belonging to the whole". This is why Hegel thinks that he has the right to re-describe past

⁹² The question of whether Hegel thought that there could be no philosophical advances on his position is an object of strong disagreement in the literature. However, I think that there is some evidence to support the view that Hegel thought that there could be (and would be) advances on his position. For example in a letter from Weisse to Hegel dated July 11, 1829 Weisse writes to Hegel "you yourself, honoured teacher, intimated orally to me one day that you were entirely convinced of the necessity of new progress and new forms of the universal Spirit even beyond the form of Science achieved by you" (Hegel 1984, 540).

⁹³ Hegel's assumption here is that "knowledge is ipso facto imperfect if it is in error about its own nature" (Taylor 1975, 132).

⁹⁴ On this point I agree with Anthony Manser, namely that the absolute standpoint is achieved (for Hegel) when we can comprehend and articulate the dynamics of the first-order process of knowing as a progressive, rational process (Manser 1978, 124). In other words, it has nothing to do with "knowing everything" or any other such grossly inflated reading of Hegel's claims (which would reduce them to absurdity).

philosophical systems in his own terms.⁹⁵ What Hegel wants to show is that one can re-describe the history of philosophy so that instead of being presented as a "battlefield covered with the bones of the dead.... [or].... a kingdom not merely formed of dead and lifeless individuals, but of refuted and spiritually dead systems" (Hegel 1995a, 17), it is presented as a story of progress. As we have seen, Hegel does this in two ways. First, if Hegel thinks that a given philosophical standpoint (or system) can be shown to have been a progressive development in relation to its predecessor, he shows how it could be reconstructed as having emerged out of an internal critique of its predecessor (and he shows in what ways it is superior to its predecessor). Second, if Hegel thinks that a given philosophical standpoint does not have great philosophical merit (e.g., his view of Epicureanism), he tries to show how the given philosophical standpoint has contributed to philosophical progress indirectly (e.g., by contributing to progress in the natural sciences).

One can object that this latter move involves a kind of bait and switch (one promises to show that most philosophical standpoints in the historical series are progressive developments, but then one shows that only a few philosophical standpoints are directly progressive in relation to philosophy proper, while others have contributed to philosophical progress only indirectly by contributing to progress in other fields of inquiry, e.g., the natural sciences). However, this objection presupposes that the history of philosophy is somehow self-contained in relation to other fields of inquiry. In particular,

⁹⁵ Michael Forster provides a similar reconstruction of why Hegel thinks he is justified in reconstructing past philosophies in terms of his own system (Forster 2008, 187). Songsuk Susan Hahn also provides a similar account of why Hegel thinks he is justified in reconstructing the meaning of the art of Classical Greece within the scheme provided by his own philosophical system (Hahn 2007, 126-128).

it presupposes that philosophy was not intimately intertwined with what we would today call the natural sciences. This is a presupposition which Hegel would want challenge (note that to say that Hegel thought that philosophy was not self-contained and isolated in relation to what we would today call physics and mathematics, etc., does not contradict the claim that I have made earlier regarding the mostly internalist nature of Hegel's account of the history of philosophy. For Hegel's point is not that the natural sciences were external factors that influenced the development of philosophy. Instead he is making the claim that the natural sciences and philosophy constituted a unified field of inquiry; this does not make him an externalist about explanation in the history of philosophy because his point is precisely that the natural sciences were not an external factor in the history of philosophy (for most of that history). Hegel would point out that the distinction between natural sciences and philosophy was not very clear cut in the past (especially in classical antiquity): "we are more often met by this admixture of philosophy and general knowledge [regarding nature]" (Hegel 1995a, 58). More importantly Hegel thinks that philosophy's progress depends on scientific progress, to a significant degree, as Hegel puts it in his *Philosophy of Nature*:

"it is not only that philosophy must accord with the experience nature gives rise to; in its formation and in its development, philosophic science presupposes and is conditioned by empirical physics" (Hegel 1970, 197).⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Beiser notes that Hegel "never accepted any fundamental distinction in kind between philosophy and empirical methods" (Beiser 2005, 108). Pinkard also makes a similar point: "[Hegel] rejects the idea that the real distinction between science and philosophy is that between the empirical and the a priori" (Pinkard 2012, 19). In fact, Hegel claims that a posteriori knowledge can become a priori knowledge when a particular science attains completion: "In every science principles are commenced with; at first these are the results of the particular, but if the science is completed they are made the beginning" (Hegel 1995c, 176). Also note that, for Hegel, a priori knowledge is not knowledge that is independent of experience, but rather knowledge derived from experience that can, given the stage of development that a given science has attained, be systematically derived from the principles of that science. In other words, Hegel thinks

Readers who are unfamiliar with Hegel might find this passage surprising given Hegel's reputation as a speculative philosopher who ignored the natural sciences. But this reputation is ill deserved. Not only did Hegel hold that empirical natural science is extremely important for philosophy, he was also very well versed in the natural sciences of his day (Westphal 2008, 284).⁹⁷ In fact, during his so called "Jena period", Hegel was actively involved in scientific research himself: he did research in botany, chemistry, optics, medicine, and geology (Ferrini 2009, 94). The point is that Hegel's belief that philosophy benefits from engagement with the natural sciences was informed by (and reflected in) his own practice as a philosopher. If this is what Hegel believed, then we can better appreciate why he thought that a philosophical standpoint which cannot be justified directly (e.g., Epicureanism, according to him) can nonetheless be justified if it can be shown to have contributed to the development of the natural sciences: according to Hegel, the latter also contributes to the progress of philosophy in so far as they provide a part of the material which forms the object of study of philosophy. In fact, Hegel goes so far as to claim that modern philosophy would have been impossible without the rise of modern science in the 16th century. He writes:

that a priori knowledge is just systematically *reconstructed* a posteriori knowledge. Hegel clarifies this point in the following manner: "The demand of *a priori* knowledge, which seems to imply that the Idea should construct from itself [i.e., independently of experience], is thus a reconstruction only" (Hegel 1995c, 176).

⁹⁷ It should be noted that the rejection of the common view that Hegel is some kind of charlatan when it comes to science and who consequently has nothing to say to contemporary philosophers of science is not just found among Hegel scholars, it is also found among influential philosophers and historians of science such Robert S. Cohen and Marx Wartofsky: "his [Hegel's] philosophical analysis of knowledge and the knowing process, of concepts and their evolutionary formation, of rationality in its forms and histories, of stages of empirical awareness and human practice, all set within his endless inquiries into cultural formations from the entire sweep of human experience, must, we believe, be confronted by anyone who wants to understand the scientific consciousness" (Cohen and Wartofsky 1984, vii).

"without the working out of the empirical sciences on their own account, philosophy could not have reached further than with the ancients" [*ohne die Ausbildung der Erfahrungswissenschaften für sich hätte die Philosophie nicht weiter kommen können als bei den Alten*] (Hegel 1995c, 176).⁹⁸

Hegel thinks that in studying early modern figures such as Descartes it is important to note that "philosophy and exact science were not yet separated, and it was only later that this separation took place" (Hegel 1995c, 221). Hegel's emphasis on the importance of the connection between modern philosophy and modern science differentiates him from some of his contemporaries. For example, Christian August Brandis (1790-1867) in his *Von dem Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1815) did not think that narrating the history of philosophy (and especially the history of modern philosophy) requires understanding its relation to the natural sciences or to other disciplines (Catana 2013, 127).⁹⁹

Moreover, Hegel's emphasis on the importance of recognizing the important role that scientific discoveries have played in the history of modern philosophy coheres with contemporary calls by some historians of philosophy for historiographical approaches to the history of early modern philosophy that recognize the importance of taking into account early modern science when attempting to understand early modern philosophy. For example, Justin E. H. Smith has argued that in order to understand Leibniz's development of his theory of organic bodies it is necessary to understand his reception of the microscopic research that was done by figures such Athanasius Kircher, Balthasar de Monconys, and Robert Hooke (Smith 2013, 42-43). Another example would be Michael Friedman's attempt to point out that philosophical debates about the nature of space and

⁹⁸ Reference to the German: GP III, 79.

⁹⁹ Though interestingly enough, Brandis, like Hegel, thinks that the history of philosophy should essentially be the history of systems.

time from Newton to Kant should be understood in relation to the history of astronomy and in particular in relation to attempts to develop accurate calendars (Friedman 2010, 504).¹⁰⁰ This is an approach that is in line with Hegel's own methodological prescriptions, and while it is true that Hegel himself does not pursue this particular methodological prescription in detail (he does not discuss the history of early modern science in any great detail in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*), it is still important to note that there are clear points of contact between Hegel's methodological views on how the history of philosophy should be done and contemporary calls for the integration of the history of philosophy with the history of science.¹⁰¹ Hegel's belief that the history of philosophy is closely intertwined with the history of science must be situated within his account of the relationship between philosophy and other aspects of human culture. This subject is discussed in the following chapter in relation to Hegel's views on discontinuity in the history of philosophy.

¹⁰⁰ The importance of the "scientific revolution" for the emergence of the modern philosophy was also stressed by Otto Bauer who was probably the most Hegelian member of the collective of thinkers who are grouped under the label of "Austro-Marxists". Speaking of Kant, Bauer makes the following claim: "In order for Kant to have accomplished his works, much had to precede it. The emergence of modern science: without a Newton, no Kant [...]" (Bauer 2015, 301).

¹⁰¹ For example Julie R. Klein has noted that when studying early modern philosophers it is important not to project our contemporary disciplinary divisions of labour into the past (Klein 2013, 157). As we have seen, Hegel was well aware of this point. In fact, the idea that past philosophy should be studied in relation to past scientific enterprises is not novel, neither as an ideal nor as a framework for actually existing research programmes; historians of philosophy in the Soviet Union took this approach as their default working method (see Ballestrem 1963). Of course, the fact that this approach was the predominant approach cannot be directly attributed to Hegel (perhaps only very indirectly, in so far as Marxist-Leninist philosophy has Hegelian roots).

Chapter 4: Hegel's Account of Philosophy's Relation to Human Culture and his Conception of Continuity in the History of Philosophy

4.1. Hegel's Views on Discontinuity in the History of Philosophy and the Explanation of Discontinuities

In this chapter I will argue that Hegel does not think that there is continuity in the history of philosophy if by 'continuity' we mean co-referentiality (i.e., the thesis that philosophers from different periods, working in different cultural and social contexts, are referring to the same phenomena with the terms that they are employing, e.g., the claim that the term 'mind' as employed by Locke and the term 'mind' as employed by contemporary philosophers have the same referent), nor does he think that there is continuity at the level of the kinds of problems that philosophers have been interested in.¹⁰²

Ursula Goldenbaum notes that when historians of philosophy are concerned with continuity (understood in terms co-referentiality), they ask themselves: "Do the words *they used* [i.e., past philosophers] and *we still use* refer to the same thing?" (Goldenbaum 2013, 71-72). The consequences of neglecting to ask this question can be rather dire. One well documented case that Goldenbaum discusses involves a complete misinterpretation of the use of the term 'the people' in the *Magna Carta* of 1215, the term 'the people' was taken by some legal theorists and historians to mean all of the citizens of a state (which is

¹⁰² In principle one can make a distinction between these two kinds of continuity because there can be continuity in terms of co-referentiality without there being continuity at the level of problems, for example two groups of philosophers from different time periods can use the term 'meaning' to refer to same thing/phenomenon but they could have very different conceptions of the sort of philosophical problems that surround the phenomenon that is picked out by the term 'meaning'. One group may even think that there is nothing that is philosophically interesting about meaning while another group might think that there is a constellation of philosophical problems that arise when we think about meaning. Hence, it is helpful to make a distinction between the two conceptions of continuity)

more or less what the term 'the people' is usually taken to refer to when it is used in political discourse in modern liberal democracies), and hence was taken to show that England had an ancient tradition of democratic constitutionalism going back to at least 1215 (some Whig historians even asserted that English democratic constitutionalism was even older because it was rooted in Anglo-Saxon legal traditions that were preserved even after the Norman conquest in 1066, and which regained formal recognition with the *Magna Carta*).¹⁰³ A whole school of legal thought was founded on this interpretation of the *Magna Carta*. However, the main problem with this interpretation is that it is completely anachronistic, because as Goldenbaum tells us, the term 'the people' in this contract between King John and his rebellious barons does not at all refer to all of the citizens of a state (as the Whig historians would have it), but rather to a "handful of barons" (Goldenbaum 2013, 72). Here we have a case where a failure to investigate whether a term has the same referent in different historical contexts has led to a complete misinterpretation of a historical document and its incorporation into a Whig narrative of progress.

Hegel does not explicitly reject the thesis that there is co-referentiality in relation to the terms that philosophers from different periods have employed (it seems that he thinks that this is to be decided on a case by case basis). However, he does point out that past historians of philosophy and philosophers have often misinterpreted past philosophers because they assumed that terms like 'Idea' that are used by different individual philosophers living in different historical periods have the same referent. For

¹⁰³ See (Skinner 2002, 262).

example, he thinks that historians of philosophy have misunderstood Plato's use of the term 'Ideas' because they thought that it refers to abstract objects: "[when Plato] speaks of the central point of his philosophy, of Ideas, of the Universal, as the permanently self-existent, as the patterns of things sensible, we may easily be led to think of these Ideas, after the manner of the modern categories of the understanding, as substances which exist outside reality, in the understanding of God; or on their own account and as independent" (Hegel 1995b, 21). This Hegel seems to be saying would be a mistake. Hence, while Hegel does not explicitly deny the claim that key terms in philosophical discourse (e.g., 'mind', 'substance', etc.) have had the same referents when they were employed by philosophers working in very different historical contexts, he is very wary of claims to the effect that if philosophers from the past use words that we use today, then they are referring to the same things/phenomena which (we assume) are referred to when we use those same words.

The second type of continuity, continuity at the level of problems, is the subject of more explicit discussion by Hegel. Hegel thinks that the problems which concern philosophers change over time. For example, Hegel rejects the thesis that the mind-body problem, which following Howard Robinson (2016) we can gloss in terms of a question about the relationship between mental properties and physical properties, is a perennial problem of philosophy in so far as to say that some problem is a perennial problem of philosophy is to say that there has always been a significant interest in this problem by a significant number of philosophers whenever and wherever people have engaged in philosophy. Hegel glosses the mind-body problem as follows (he specifically seems to

have the Cartesian formulation of the problem in mind): "[the problem] of community of soul and body, of *commercium animi cum corpore*, as it has been called, wherein the soul appears as the simple, ideal, and free, and the body as the manifold, material and necessary [i.e., mechanistically determined]" (Hegel 1995c, 165). Hegel explicitly adds that this problem was not a problem that concerned ancient or medieval western philosophers: "These matters occupy the attention of science [*Wissenschaft* which includes philosophy, for Hegel], and they are of a completely different nature from the interests of ancient philosophy" (Hegel 1995c, 165). Hence, it is clear that Hegel thought that there were significant discontinuities in the sort of problems that philosophers have been interested in.¹⁰⁴ Hegel also identifies other problems which are often thought of as being perennial problems of philosophy, i.e., the sort of problems that would be taught in a contemporary introduction to philosophy as *the problems of philosophy* or something of that sort, but which he thinks only became problems with the emergence of early modern philosophy.¹⁰⁵ Some of these problems include: 1. the problem of knowledge of the external world which is one of the key epistemological problems of early modern philosophy, 2. the problem of the existence of evil given the Christian characterization of God, 3. the problem of the reconciliation of freedom with God's foreknowledge, 4. the problem of finding room for human freedom given the description of the world that is provided by what we call classical mechanics (Hegel 1995c, 164-165). These are all

¹⁰⁴ Some Hegel scholars have recognized this point, e.g., Kenneth Westphal (Westphal 2010, 12). However, Westphal only notes this in passing and he does not provide a detailed account of Hegel's justification for this claim.

¹⁰⁵ However, he concedes that at least some of these problems were encountered implicitly by medieval scholastics, though not by ancient Greek pagan philosophers.

problems that, according to Hegel, are "of a completely different nature from the interests of ancient philosophy" (Hegel 1995c, 165).

We will not be primarily concerned with whether Hegel is correct to claim that there is a strong discontinuity between ancient Greek philosophy on the one hand and modern philosophy on the other hand or whether, with respect to some problems such as the mind-body problem, there is a strong discontinuity between ancient and medieval philosophy on the one hand, and modern philosophy on the other hand. However, we can note in passing, in relation to the mind-body problem, that some contemporary historians agree with Hegel that the ancient Greek philosophers did not hold any theories about the relationship between "mind" and "body". For example, Wallace I. Matson argues that while some of what Aristotle says can be construed as an endorsement of an identity theory solution to the mind-body problem, "in the more correct sense in which use of the word 'theory' implies a pre-existent theory-generating puzzlement, the Greeks held neither an identity theory of mind-body nor any other " (Maston 1966, 93). In other words, Maston (like Hegel) is claiming that the ancient Greek philosophers did not think that there was a mind-body problem, nor did the Greeks seek to provide it with a solution. More recently, Peter King has argued that "medieval anticipations of practically everything [i.e., the problems that concern modern philosophy] can be found, but not the mind-body problem" (King 2007, 204). Hence, Hegel's views on the mind-body problem as a distinctively modern philosophical problem do have some degree of plausibility, at least in so far as they are advanced by contemporary specialists in ancient and medieval philosophy. While Hegel seems skeptical of claims to continuity at the level of problems,

Hegel also does not say that there are no trans-historical philosophical problems and I think that he was wise to withhold such a blanket judgement, because it essentially amounts to an a priori judgement about the structure of intellectual history. A more cautious approach is to examine specific problems and see if we can trace continuous interest in them among groups of intellectuals who we identify as philosophers. This is more or less Hegel's approach in relation to this question.

Hegel does not just stop at identifying discontinuities in the history of philosophy; he also seeks to explain them. For Hegel, philosophy is one manifestation of the "Spirit" [*Geist*] of a given people. For Hegel, Spirit is not some mysterious substance that exists over and above human beings, but rather "it is human consciousness" [*ist er menschliches Bewußtsein*] (Hegel 1975, 95).¹⁰⁶ In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel speaks of "Spirit" as "the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' and that is 'I' (Hegel 1977, 177). In this context, Hegel's use of '*Geist*' seems to refer to what contemporary social and cultural historians refer to by the use of the term 'culture', i.e., "the collection of myths, rituals, metaphors, ideologies, beliefs, symbols, and signs that create and express the collective mentality of a people" (Coleman 2004, 153). As Hegel sees it, Spirit manifests itself not only in philosophy but also in human "institutions and forms of governments, their morality, their social life and capabilities, customs and enjoyments of the same" (Hegel 1995a, 53). Hegel believes that any particular philosophical discourse is a reflection of the cultural context within which it takes place

¹⁰⁶ For more on this point see (Houlgate 1990).

(though it is important to add that Hegel does not think that this has relativistic implications, nor does he think that this shows that philosophy is an irrational activity) (Hegel 1995a, 53-54). Hegel writes that:

"the particular form of a philosophy is thus contemporaneous with a particular constitution of the people amongst whom it makes its appearance, with their institutions and forms of government, their morality, their social life and the capabilities, customs and enjoyments of the same; it is so with their attempts and achievements in art and science [. . .] Philosophy is one form of these many aspects" (Hegel 1995a, 53).

But what does it mean to say that any particular philosophical discourse is a reflection of the cultural context within which it takes place? In my opinion, Hegel's point is that the sort of problems that are raised within a particular philosophical discourse are conditioned by the cultural context within which that philosophical discourse takes place. I understand him to mean that philosophy gets its problems by reflecting on the presuppositions and assumptions of cultural activities such as moral judgments, politics, the scientific discourse of a certain period, etc.¹⁰⁷ This is what Hegel seems to be saying when he claims that "every philosophy is the philosophy of its own day, a link in the whole chain of spiritual development [read as cultural development], and *thus it can only find satisfaction for the interests belonging to its particular time*" [my emphasis] (Hegel 1995a, 45). If we follow Hegel, particular philosophical discourses deal with problems that stem from the concerns (and achievements) of the culture to which they belong. One example to which Hegel refers explicitly is the nexus of philosophical problems that arise within a Christian cultural context. He notes that many of the problems that concerned

¹⁰⁷ I agree with James Lawler and Vladimir Shtinov that, for Hegel, the Spirit "which historical philosophies express, is not the particular community of philosophers, but the broader community of society as a whole, an economic, social, political, and cultural totality" (Lawler and Shtinov 1988, 276).

medieval and early modern philosophers in the Christian tradition would not have been interesting at all to pagan Romans: "the philosophy which is essential within Christianity could not be found in Rome" (Hegel 1995a, 54). Hegel repeats this claim fairly frequently, and he emphasizes that "every philosophy belongs to its own time and is restricted by its own limitations, just because it is the manifestation of a particular stage in development" (Hegel 1995a, 45). More specifically, Hegel wants to say that philosophy makes explicit the normative standards that are implicit in other manifestations of human culture.

One way in which we can understand this point is to think of philosophical discourse as having a prominent role to play whenever there is a crisis in relation to the legitimacy of given standards of justification or normative standards. On this view, philosophical discourse attempts to clarify what is at stake by making explicit the normative standards whose legitimacy is being questioned and attempts to lay out as explicitly as possible the consequences of abandoning or endorsing them. Hegel thinks that non-philosophical discourse (this could be everyday political conversation or discussions between scientists doing routine lab work, i.e., Kuhnian "normal science", for instance) resorts to normative standards that are not made explicit: "Healthy human understanding possesses the modes of thought, maxims, and judgements of its time, the thought-determinations of which dominate it without it being conscious thereof" (Hegel 1995a, 379). However, when a crisis emerges and the normative standards themselves

come into question, then philosophical discourse becomes necessary.¹⁰⁸ Hegel uses the example of Socrates' relationship to Athenian culture to illustrate this point. He thinks that Socrates comes to have a role to play because the Athenians have lost faith in their institutions and laws, i.e., the disputes are no longer about whether for example certain acts are just or unjust according to the laws of the city, but rather about whether the laws of the city themselves are just, and about what justice is (Hegel 1995a 387-390). For Hegel, philosophical discourse allows us to attain a certain level of clarity about our commitments, and consequently a certain level of clarity about who we are. Thus he says that philosophical discourse leads to a: "self-knowledge of Spirit [*Geist*] which previously was not present" (Hegel 1995a, 55).¹⁰⁹ This self-knowledge amounts to knowledge of the implicit normative standards which govern the other manifestations of human culture. For example, philosophy can identify the implicit normative standards that structure legal institutions, and it can lead to the discovery of inconsistencies within the normative standards that are implicit in the legal institutions of a given people, this discovery of inconsistency and inadequacy can lead to the attempt to develop more consistent legal institutions.¹¹⁰

This reflection on the relevant aspects of human culture, for Hegel, is how philosophy gets its problems. For Hegel the problems of philosophy come from the

¹⁰⁸ This is one way in which we can gloss Hegel's famous claim: "when philosophy paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized, by the grey in grey of philosophy; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk" (Hegel 1991b, 23).

¹⁰⁹ I have slightly altered Haldane's translation here, so that "Geist" is rendered as "Spirit" rather than "Mind".

¹¹⁰ I chose legal institutions as the object of reflection as an example, but there is no reason to prevent us from undertaking a similar analysis of "achievements in art and science" (Hegel 1995a, 53).

problems of the culture within which it is embedded. The implication, for Hegel, is clear: "it is just as foolish to imagine any philosophy can transcend its own contemporary world as that an individual can overleap his own time" (Hegel 1991b, 21-22).¹¹¹ One consequence of this is that we cannot, according to Hegel, be "Platonists, Aristotelians, Stoics, or Epicureans to-day" (Hegel 1995, 46). This point is important to note. While Hegel thinks that the study of the history of philosophy can be very helpful to philosophers, he does not think that its main benefit lies in providing us with arguments in relation to first order philosophical problems (though he does not say that this can never happen), but rather he thinks that the main benefit lies in the metaphilosophical insights that the history of philosophy can provide (I will return to this point below).

4.2. The Metaphilosophical Role of the History of Philosophy

I have argued that Hegel does not think that what provides continuity in the history of philosophy is the existence of continuity in the referents of the terms that have been employed by philosophers working in different historical periods, and I have also argued that Hegel thinks that there are very significant discontinuities in the problems that philosophers have been interested in. However, Hegel also provides us with an overarching narrative account of the history of philosophy, and this overarching narrative presupposes some form of continuity. In this section, I will argue that Hegel employs a specific concept of continuity that is different from continuity in referents of

¹¹¹ He also emphasizes that the individual philosopher is completely bound to her/his historical context: "the individual is the offspring of his people, of his world, whose constitution and attributes are alone manifested in his form; he may spread himself out as he will, he cannot escape out of his time any more than out of his skin" (Hegel 1995a, 45).

philosophical terms and continuity in problems, namely, "dialectical continuity". I adaptively borrow the term 'dialectical continuity' from Theodore Oizerman who, while he does not use this specific term, refers to the "dialectical concept of philosophical development" in connection to Hegel's conception of continuity in the history of philosophy (Oizerman 1982). On Hegel's account, new philosophies arise as a result of attempts to rectify the inadequacies of previously existing philosophies. Here, we should make it clear that, for Hegel, the inadequacies of a preceding philosophy are, in the final analysis, reflections of the inadequacies and inconsistencies of the wider culture and social structure within which the preceding philosophy is embedded. This follows from the claim that philosophy gets its problems the cultural context and social structure within which it arises. Hence, while awareness of the inadequacies of the preceding philosophy leads to the birth of a new philosophy, this new philosophy ultimately signifies "a wider kind of spirit, it is the inward birth-place of the spirit which will later arrive at actual form" (Hegel 1995a, 55).¹¹² In other words, the new philosophy signifies not only a significant change in philosophical discourse; it also ushers in a wider, more general cultural change. I wish to argue that, for Hegel, continuity in the history of philosophy comes from the specific manner in which a new philosophy emerges from its predecessors (or, alternatively, from the specific manner in which a subsequent philosophy can be described as having emerged from a preceding one in so far as we are narrating the history of *progress in philosophy*).

¹¹² Thus, for Hegel, progress in philosophy must be understood against the background of cultural and social progress in general.

For Hegel, a new philosophy emerges when the inadequacies of the preceding philosophy cannot be remedied without a change in its overall theoretical framework, which may include a change in the formulation of the core problems that it is attempting to resolve. It should be noted that the inadequacies in question are "internal" in the sense that they are failures to live up to the standards of philosophical success that the adherents of a given philosophical system set for themselves.¹¹³ The sense in which the evaluative standards in question are internal can be explicated by reference to the domain of phenomena that the adherents of a given philosophy think an adequate philosophical position should be able to explain. For example, the adherents of some versions of neo-Kantianism might think that the main business of philosophy is to provide a logic for explanations in the natural sciences, and that the failure or success of a given philosophical approach is to be judged in relation to this goal. Not only do the adherents of philosophical positions identify specific sets of phenomena as the proper objects of study for philosophy (e.g., a Fregean would insist that psychological phenomena are not the proper objects of study for philosophy), they also often have specific standards of philosophical explanation and argumentation that they think should be adhered to by any adequate philosophical position. For example, they may think that no adequate philosophical position can refer to intellectual intuition when attempting to explain how we know certain propositions, or that no adequate philosophical position can make use of transcendental arguments. The entire point of Hegelian "internal critique" is to show that

¹¹³ For a characterization of Hegel's approach as having "internal critique" as its crucial strategy, see (Westphal 2003). My account of Hegel's approach is indebted to Kenneth Westphal's account, though I emphasize how internal critique can lead to a shift in the problems that are taken to be central, which is something that Westphal does not do.

a philosophical position is inadequate on its own terms, when judged by its own standards (i.e., in relation to the domain of phenomena that its adherents purport to explain and in relation to the constraints that its adherents place on legitimate philosophical argumentation).

It might seem as if Hegel is placing an overly stringent requirement on philosophical critique, after all an analytic philosopher for example might respond by saying that it is entirely unfair to expect her to argue with, say, a Derridean on the Derridean's own terms. Rather the analytic philosopher might wish to reject the argumentative norms that Derridean abides by because she and the Derridean may have diametrically opposed metaphilosophical views. Hegel however would insist that philosophical critique should be internal because he wants to avoid circularity and begging the question when criticizing other philosophical views. For example if our analytic philosopher criticized our Derridean because the latter makes philosophical claims about human cognition without paying much attention to cognitive science, or because the latter does not present her arguments in a clear enough matter, the Derridean might respond by claiming that the analytic philosopher is simply begging the question because she is presupposing that philosophical claims about the mind must draw on cognitive science and that philosophical discourse must place a premium on clarity. The Derridean may point out that the dispute between them is really about metaphilosophical issues and that one is begging the question when one presupposes that philosophy must be done in a certain way (given that what one must demonstrate in the first place is that philosophy should be done in that specific way).

However, the Derridean would not be able to claim that the analytic philosopher is begging the question about crucial metaphilosophical issues if the analytic philosopher engaged in an *internal critique* of the Derridean's position, by showing, for example, that given the standards for philosophical justification which are embraced by the Derridean, she cannot accomplish what she claims to be able to accomplish, and that if she wants to accomplish this, then certain changes in her philosophical positions including in her metaphilosophical positions, must be made. Ideally, these changes should be outlined as explicitly as possible. Hegel thinks that we need internal critique in order to prevent our refutation [*Widerlegung*] from begging the question.

The idea here is that in any philosophical dispute our interlocutor can evade our criticisms by asking: why should I adopt this standard as an adequate standard for philosophical justification? What justifies this standard? And essentially the dispute runs into a version of the dilemma of the criterion. Hegelian internal critique is, as Kenneth Westphal has pointed out, an attempt to sidestep the dilemma of the criterion (Westphal 2003, 2). As Westphal puts it "Hegel accepts this stringent requirement [i.e., that philosophical criticism should be internal to the position/system that is being criticized] because he is very concerned to avoid the twin philosophical sins of dogmatism and question begging (*petitio principii*)" (Westphal 2003, 35). Hence Hegel claims that: "the refutation must not come from outside, that is, it must not proceed from assumptions lying outside the system in question and that do not correspond to it" (Hegel 1969,

580).¹¹⁴ Hegel points out that if we attempt to refute a system by adopting standards of justification which are not recognized by the proponents of the system in question, then "the [proponents of the] system need only refuse to recognize those assumptions" in order to reject our refutation (Hegel 1989, 580-581). (Hegel speaks of systems doing the refutation, though it is more accurate to speak of individual proponents of the systems in question as engaging in refutation).

However, it is perhaps still not clear how an internal critique of the sort I have described above can lead to a reorientation of philosophical discourse with regard to the problems that are taken to be central. A historical example would be helpful, though it is difficult to find a historical example in philosophy that would not be very controversial. For instance, contemporary Platonists would not take kindly to the suggestion that Aristotle offered a successful internal critique of Plato's theory of forms! For this reason, I will, following Alasdair MacIntyre, instead offer an example from the history of physics (or rather "natural philosophy"): the transition from the late medieval impetus theory of motion to the modern inertial theory of motion, the theory of motion that was developed successively by Galileo, Isaac Beeckman, and Newton - we can call this the Galilean-Newtonian account of motion. There are three reasons for choosing this episode in the history of natural philosophy as an example of a successful internal critique. First, it is not very controversial to say that the Galilean-Newtonian account of motion based on the concept of inertia counted as a progressive development relative to the late medieval

¹¹⁴ "Ferner muß die Widerlegung nicht von außen kommen, d.h. nicht von Annahmen ausgehen, welche außer jenem Systeme liegen, denen es nicht entspricht"

theory of motion that was based on the concept of impetus. Second, the key protagonists in this episode were conscious of the fact that there was a substantial meta-component to their enterprise, i.e., they were conscious of the fact that what was at stake was a dispute over the scope of natural philosophy and its methods; and we know that scientific controversies that turn around meta-scientific questions and methodological issues are similar to philosophical disputes.¹¹⁵ Third, and most importantly, the adherents of the Galilean-Newtonian account of motion could show that late medieval theory of motion based on the concept of impetus failed by its own standards of success (hence the "internal" nature of this kind of refutation or criticism). Moreover, they could show that the adherents of the late medieval theory of motion could not explain their own failures as judged by their own standards of success and that it is only by adopting the standpoint of the Galilean-Newtonian account of motion that one can explain both the successes and the failures of the late medieval theory of motion and why that research program had to degenerate once it had reached a certain point in its development (MacIntyre 1993, 79).¹¹⁶ The adherents of the Newtonian account of motion could show that if their opponents wanted to develop a general theory of motion then they had to adopt the concept of inertia. Moreover, this episode was also characterized by discontinuities in problems (the problems which required solutions and the phenomena which required explanations changed), hence it is especially pertinent to our discussion of discontinuities in the history of philosophy, since with the adoption of the concept of inertia certain kinds of motion (or

¹¹⁵ For instance, it seems that Galileo consciously desired to develop a new conception of natural philosophy and to set natural philosophy on a different methodological course (Machamer 2017).

¹¹⁶ I use the language of Lakatos deliberately here - "degenerative research programme", since as Ian Hacking has noted, Lakatos' key concepts of a "progressive research programme" and a "degenerative research programme" have "a lot of Hegel and Marx behind them" (Stix 2012).

more specifically, certain kinds of components of certain kinds of motion) for which an explanation had been sought by the adherents of the late medieval theory of motion no longer needed explaining, i.e., they were no longer problems. There was discontinuity at the level of problems, but there was also dialectical continuity in so far as one could reconstruct this change in the problems that came to be taken as central as an event in a progressive development; a reorientation that could be shown to have arisen from rational considerations and that could be articulated in discursive terms.

From a Hegelian standpoint, there can be discontinuity in terms of referents (e.g., the term 'cause' as used by John Locke and contemporary philosophers could have different referents) and discontinuity at the level of problems (the problems which are taken to be central to philosophical discourse can change over time), but this does not imply that philosophical systems and positions that are characterized by both discontinuity in referents and discontinuity in problems (and where one philosophical system stands in a relation of chronological succession to the other) cannot be compared with one another, i.e., that they are incommensurable in some way that prevents comparative evaluation, because one can show (according to Hegel) how the philosophical position which succeeded an earlier one can be reconstructed as having developed out of an internal critique of that earlier one. Moreover, and this is where the metaphilosophical importance of the history of philosophy comes in, one can show that there were good reasons why certain issues which were important for earlier philosophers are no longer important to us, and also why later philosophers had good reasons to take up issues which were not taken up by earlier philosophers (i.e., that the shifts in the

problems which have interested philosophers are not without justification). This is an important point. One who does not pay sufficient attention to this could use discontinuity at the level of problems to argue that there is no progress in the history of philosophy. For example, George R. Lucas has argued that discontinuities at the level of problems show that there is no progress in the history of philosophy. Lucas thinks that the history of philosophy is really more like the history of art, i.e., "the history of successive and episodic engagements that fade more from exhaustion and lack of interest than from refutation of error" (Lucas 1993, 106). Hegel, on the other hand, wants to show that the existence of such discontinuities is not problematic, because one can reconstruct the history of philosophy in such a manner so as to show that there were good reasons why philosophers abandoned their interest in some set of problems and turned to new problems. As Hegel puts it, one of his main aims in providing a narrative of the history of philosophy is to show that "the succession of philosophic systems is not due to chance, but represents the necessary succession of stages in the development of this science" (Hegel 1995c, 552). This involves accounting for discontinuities in the sorts of phenomena that philosophers have been interested in. Hegel is not just interested in providing explanations of what we might refer to as metaphilosophical shifts (i.e., shifts in the scope of philosophical discourse which can take the shape of shifts in the problems that are considered the proper object of philosophical inquiry); he also wants to provide justifications because he wants to show that the history of philosophy is (for the most part) a progressive development.

Now we must clarify a point regarding Hegel's approach. It is perhaps unclear as yet whether Hegel is maintaining that internal critique is actually how past philosophers have consciously proceeded when they attempted to refute the works of their predecessors. Another possibility is that he believes that this is how philosophers *ought* to have proceeded. Yet a third possibility is that Hegel is claiming that this is how past philosophers have proceeded whenever they have been successful in their refutation of the works of their predecessors - regardless of whether they have been aware of their own method. In my view, Hegel is indeed claiming that this is how philosophers in the past have proceeded whenever their refutations of their predecessors were successful. Whether or not they were aware of their own method is another question. An important point in relation to the question whether Hegel thinks that this model can be used to explain the history of philosophy: Hegel is not just interested in the history of philosophy as such; he wants to provide an account of *progress* in the history of philosophy. He tells us that he will be focusing only on those philosophers who advanced positions and arguments "through which science has made an advance" and that he shall "put aside many names which would be taken up in a learned treatise, but which are of little value in respect to philosophy" (Hegel 1995a, 115). According to Hegel, then, his lectures concern the "*the series of successive spiritual forms pertaining to philosophy in its progress*" [my emphasis] (Hegel 1995c, 553).

When it comes to writing a history of progress in philosophy it is not necessary for Hegel to show that the philosophers who carried out successful refutations were aware of the correct description of what a successful refutation (from the Hegelian point of

view) should be like, nor is it necessary for Hegel to show that the philosophers in question held the correct (on his view) conception of progress in philosophy. Indeed Hegel himself thinks that even philosophers who contributed to progress in philosophy have often had an incorrect conception of the relation of their position to the position(s) that they have shown to be inadequate: "he who rejects a philosophical system [i.e., the philosopher who attempts to refute other philosophical positions] does not usually comprehend what he is doing in this way [i.e., in the way that Hegel presents it as, when successful, an internal critique]" (Hegel 1977, 2). The point is that Hegel does not need to ascribe knowledge of the correct theory of refutation in philosophy (i.e., that successful refutation takes place through internal critique) to those philosophers who, in his view, have contributed to progress, because subscribing to the correct theory of refutation is not a necessary condition for contributing to progress. Hegel is right: a scientist need not know the correct theoretical account of progress, whatever that is, in order to contribute to progress in her discipline.¹¹⁷ What Hegel needs to do, however, is to show that one can reconstruct the history of progress in philosophy using his model of internal critique, and the only way in which he can show this is by actually writing such a history, so that its weaknesses and strengths can be assessed. Hegel needs to show how the elements in the series of successive systems which lead up to the correct system (which on his view is, of

¹¹⁷ Hegel could not have thought that having knowledge of the history of philosophy and the patterns which characterize its development (according to him) is a necessary condition for contributing to progress in philosophy without qualification, because he thought that some philosophers who did contribute to progress in philosophy, e.g., Descartes, did not really understand their relation to their predecessors (the qualification being that he might have thought that it was a necessary condition for contributing to progress in philosophy, once philosophy had reached a certain level of maturity in late 18th and early 19th century Germany). Allegra de Laurentis seems to ignore this point when she claims that, for Hegel, adequate philosophical investigations must involve historical investigations (de Laurentis 2005, 21-22).

course, his own system) can be described as having emerged from one another through the kind of internal refutation that I have sketched above.

We may still insist and ask what kind of progress is Hegel envisioning? How can Hegel say that there is progress in the history of philosophy when he denies that there is continuity in the subject matter of philosophy? If my interpretation of Hegel's account of progress in the history of philosophy is correct, then he cannot think that progress in the history of philosophy is cumulative. For in order to for progress to be cumulative, there would have to be continuity in the problems that philosophers have been interested in (this is a necessary condition for progress to have a cumulative character). This is in fact what Hegel claims: "the history of philosophy does not exhibit the persistence of a rather simple content without any addition, nor a process of the peaceful accretion of new treasures to those already acquired" (Hegel 1985, 13). Given his views on continuity in the history of philosophy, i.e., that for the most part continuity does not exist at the level of referents nor at the level of problems, Hegel's conception of progress must be understood as involving the transformation of internally inconsistent systems into more consistent ones by way of internal refutation which, in so far as it (i.e., successful internal critique) can lead to a re-orientation of philosophical discourse, might involve the rejection of old problems and the introduction of new ones. More importantly, progress occurs when this re-orientation of philosophical discourse can be reconstructed and accounted for in terms of rational considerations, i.e., in terms of the ability of a system to meet its own standards of philosophical success. What is recognized in past philosophy by the historian of philosophy, according to Hegel, is not so much the philosophical

problems that define our current endeavour, as the origins of our current philosophical endeavour and the changing character of the philosophical enterprise itself.¹¹⁸ The history of philosophy thus, according to Hegel, displays "our becoming, the becoming of *our* philosophy" (Hegel 1985, 11). The superiority of contemporary philosophy is not vindicated on the basis of the superiority of contemporary solutions to perennial problems; instead, it is documented by way of a narrative that shows that our contemporary framework is the outcome of attempts to resolve the inadequacies of past philosophical systems as discovered through the application of the evaluative standards of those systems. In this sense, Rorty is right to claim that one of the main purposes of Hegel's history of philosophy is to provide self-justification for the overall framework of the philosophy of his day (Rorty 1984, 56-57). Hegel intends to justify the present metaphilosophical standpoint: "*Ancient philosophy is to be revered as necessary and as a link in this sacred chain, but all the same nothing more than a link. The present is the highest stage reached*" [my emphasis] (Hegel 1995c, 547). This self-justification is not restricted to the justification of the overall framework, i.e., the central concerns and problems, of the philosophy of his day; it also extends to the justification of the whole Spirit/culture of the age.

Hegel himself notes in his concluding remarks to the attendees of his lectures that "it is my desire that this history of philosophy should contain for you a summons to grasp the Spirit of the time" (Hegel 1995c, 553). This point becomes salient once we recall

¹¹⁸ Paul Redding (1987) gives a similar reading of Hegel's criticisms of romantic (general) historiography along these lines (though instead of talking specifically about philosophy, Redding's reading is formulated in reference to Spirit/culture because Redding is discussing Hegel's approach to history in general).

that for Hegel the inadequacies of any given philosophy are, in the final analysis, a reflection of the inadequacies of the Spirit/culture of its corresponding age and that philosophy gets its problems from its cultural and social world. So the Hegelian history of philosophy does not just seek to justify the dominant conception of philosophy, it also seeks to justify the wider culture within which that philosophy is embedded. For Hegel, the primary function of the history of philosophy is metaphilosophical in the sense that it does not help us to solve particular philosophical problems, but rather helps us justify our occupation with the philosophical problems that concern us. This is why Hegel can deny that past philosophers were interested in the issues we were interested in, all the while maintaining that the history of philosophy plays an essential role in philosophy by providing us with ways in which we can justify our current frameworks and central problems.

This point can help us understand why Hegel expressed hostility towards accounts of the history of philosophy that emphasize its contingency (Hegel 1995a, 19). We can see how, for Hegel, the emphasis on accidental, contingent development would jeopardize the justification that the history of philosophy - at least a Hegelian one - aims to provide for our current frameworks and central problems. For if our current philosophical framework is just the outcome of arbitrary, contingent developments rather than the outcome of a process of internal critique, then it would stand unjustified - and our ability to justify the wider culture within which philosophy is embedded would also be in

jeopardy.¹¹⁹ Hegel thinks that if we are at all interested in attaining self-knowledge, i.e., knowledge of the nature of philosophical inquiry and of the relation of philosophical inquiry to other aspects of human life, we have to know the past because "the possession of self-conscious rationality, a possession belonging to us, to our contemporary world, has not been gained suddenly nor has it grown merely out of the soil of the present", rather it is the product of "the labour of all preceding generations of the human race" (Hegel 1985, 9). The self-reflective character of philosophy means that a consideration of the origins of our doctrines and beliefs is central to philosophy, according to Hegel. This is the metaphilosophical function of the history of philosophy.

¹¹⁹ While the notion of "justifying culture" might seem rather strange to us (though perhaps it should not be, since it seems to be the function of much contemporary philosophy, even if that is not the intention of the philosophers themselves), for Hegel, communal forms of life need to be justified over their predecessors, if we are to believe that human history is making progress (note that Hegel believed not only in the possibility of progress but also in its actuality).

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