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Hegel's Debts to Friedrich Schlegel in Metaphysics and Epistemology

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ABSTRACT

Thanks largely to Hegel, Friedrich Schlegel has tended to be seen as a dilettante in philosophy. Hegel's damning critique of him, especially of his concept of irony, is well known. Less well known is the fact that in his *Lectures on Transcendental Philosophy* (1800-1), which Hegel attended, Schlegel developed a set of ideas in metaphysics and epistemology that Hegel subsequently took over to form the very core of his own philosophy. Irony indeed!

Keywords: Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel, metaphysics, epistemology, absolute idealism, skepticism

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Wegen Hegel hat Friedrich Schlegel den Ruf bekommen, philosophischer Dilettant zu sein. Hegels schonungslose Kritik an Schlegel, insbes. an seinem Begriff von Ironie, ist bekannt. Weniger bekannt ist aber die Tatsache, dass Schlegel in seinen *Vorlesungen über Transzendentalphilosophie* (1800-1), die Hegel besucht hat, eine Gruppe Ideen zur Metaphysik und Erkenntnistheorie entwickelt hat, die Hegel dann übernommen und zum Kern seiner eigenen Philosophie gemacht hat. Ironie in der Tat!

Stichwörter: Friedrich Schlegel, Hegel, Metaphysik, Erkenntnistheorie, absoluter Idealismus, Skeptizismus

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The general thesis of this article could be put like this: somewhat as Plato in antiquity developed an extremely negative critique of the Sophists that prejudiced a whole gullible tradition against them until in recent times more independent-minded scholarship (e.g. George Grote, Theodor Gomperz, W.K.C. Guthrie, and G.B. Kerferd) began to demonstrate their actual philosophical brilliance, likewise Hegel developed an extremely negative critique of Friedrich Schlegel that prejudiced a whole gullible tradition against him despite his actual philosophical brilliance.

More specifically, in a masterful and influential piece of reputation-assassination spiked with faint praise and backhanded compliments, Hegel in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* that he delivered between 1817 and 1829 made the following disparaging comments about Friedrich Schlegel's and his brother August Wilhelm Schlegel's pretensions to being philosophers (before going on to develop a critique of their concept of irony in particular, as he does in several other places as well):

Now in the vicinity of the renaissance of the philosophical Idea . . . *August Wilhelm* and *Friedrich von Schlegel*, in their thirst for prestige and show greedy for the new, acquired as much of the Idea as their precisely not philosophical but essentially *critical* natures were capable of grasping. For neither of them can make any claim to a reputation for speculative thought. But it was they who with their critical talent positioned themselves near the standpoint of the Idea and now turned with much freedom of speech and boldness of innovation, albeit with feeble philosophical contents, against the existing ways of seeing things with ingenious polemics and thus really did introduce into various branches of art a new criterion for judgment and points of view that were higher than those combated. But since their critique was not accompanied by a thoroughly philosophical knowledge of their criterion, this criterion remained somewhat indeterminate and unstable, so that they sometimes did too much, sometimes too little. Therefore, however much credit they deserve for lovingly unearthing and elevating what was old and despised by the time, such as the older Italian and Dutch painting, and for seeking with zeal to become acquainted with and teach about what was little known, such as Indian poetry and mythology, they nonetheless accorded such periods too much value; sometimes they even succumbed to admiring mediocre products, such as Holberg's comedies, and to according what is only relatively valuable a universal dignity, or indeed to impudently showing themselves enthusiastic for a

false tendency and low standpoints as though these were the highest thing.¹

Contrary to the impression that this passage seeks to give and gives, by the time Hegel first met him in 1801, Friedrich Schlegel (or Friedrich, as I shall henceforth refer to him, less out of affection for him than in order to distinguish him concisely from his brother August Wilhelm) already had a rather long and deep engagement with fundamental philosophical questions in metaphysics and epistemology behind him. Part of this engagement is well known. Friedrich already read Plato intensively in the late 1780s, and subsequently continued this strong preoccupation with Plato, especially with Plato's metaphysics and epistemology, throughout his career. In addition, although Friedrich devoted much of his work during the 1790s to exploring other fields, such as the history and theory of literature, he also paid much attention to philosophical questions in metaphysics and epistemology (as Manfred Frank, Elizabeth Millán, and several others have shown).² In particular, having started out as a follower of Fichte in 1795, Friedrich quickly came under the influence of a circle around Friedrich Niethammer that was developing skeptical objections against Reinhold and Fichte's conception of basing philosophy on a *Grundsatz* – a single, absolutely certain first principle.³ In consequence, he began developing new approaches of his own to metaphysical and epistemological questions: specifically, the conception of a “reciprocal proof [*Wechselerweis*],” i.e. instead of a definitive proof of the whole of philosophy from a single, certain *Grundsatz* in the manner of Reinhold and Fichte a *merely provisional* proof of it through the mutual support of a *multiplicity* of only *tentatively* accepted principles; the conception of “irony,” which in its first major version from 1797-8 (when Friedrich was still strongly influenced by Fichte) meant a sort of endless positing *but also destruction and modified re-positing* of oneself and thereby reality, and in a later (less Fichte-influenced) version that emerged around 1800 meant a reflection of the fundamentally *chaotic* nature of reality; the conception from about 1797 onwards that philosophy consists in an endless striving for the “Infinite”; and the conception from the same period that

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke*, 13:92-3. (*Werke* = G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970].)

² See esp. Manfred Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung: Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997) and Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, *Friedrich Schlegel and the Emergence of Romantic Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007).

³ For further details about this, see Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung* and Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), part 3, ch. 4, and *The Romantic Imperative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 119 ff.

philosophy should take the form of *Symphilosophie*, i.e. a type of philosophizing that in sharp contrast to Fichte's ego-centered approach is fundamentally intersubjective.

Hegel was by no means unaware of this early phase of Friedrich's engagement with metaphysics and epistemology. On the contrary, he again and again attacked Friedrich's concept of irony in particular for empty subjectivism and vanity – first in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807),⁴ then in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* (1817-29), the *Philosophy of Right* (1820), and a review of Solger (1828).⁵

However, there was also an additional phase of the young Friedrich's engagement with metaphysics and epistemology that is much less well known and that is in my view even more important, in terms both of its influence and of its intrinsic value, namely the metaphysics and epistemology that he developed in his *Lectures on Transcendental Philosophy* from 1800-1.⁶ Moreover, among the people who were powerfully influenced by this somewhat later metaphysics and epistemology was none other than Hegel himself. Irony indeed!

In this article I shall therefore focus mainly on this especially important additional phase of Friedrich's metaphysics and epistemology and in particular try to show its fundamental influence on Hegel.

By way of preparation, a few preliminary remarks about the *Lectures* of 1800-1: They have only survived in a single set of student's notes, which moreover are incomplete.⁷ At first sight, they do not make a positive impression at all, on the contrary seeming hasty, undisciplined, and repetitive. This may in part be the fault of the student who took the notes. But it is probably more due to the facts that Friedrich was only beginning his career as a teacher of philosophy and that he deliberately adopted what in the *Lectures* themselves he describes as an experimental approach: "Philosophy is an experiment."⁸ Despite these weaknesses, the *Lectures* are of great importance.

⁴ In the case of the *Phenomenology* Hegel's attack on Friedrich's conception of irony is cryptic, naming neither him nor it explicitly, and is consequently not well known. It is found in the Introduction at *Werke*, 3:75.

⁵ For a good account of this attack, see Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1999).

⁶ In KFSa, vol. 12; cf. corresponding philosophical fragments in KFSa, vol. 18. (KFSa = *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, ed. E. Behler et al. [Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958-].)

⁷ Concerning this incompleteness, see Friedrich Schlegel, *Neue philosophische Schriften*, ed. Josef Körner (Frankfurt am Main: Gerhard Schulte-Bulmke, 1935), p. 49.

⁸ KFSa, 12:3, cf. 19.

Concerning the connection between the *Lectures* and Hegel, the following historical-biographical points should be noted before we turn to the philosophical details. Friedrich delivered the *Lectures* at the University of Jena in 1800-1, a period when the two men arrived there in order to pursue academic careers in philosophy. More precisely, Friedrich already arrived in September of 1799, followed by Hegel in late January of 1801, Friedrich delivering the *Lectures* from late October of 1800 until late March of 1801. A credible, though unfortunately anonymous, contemporary eyewitness places Hegel among the people who attended the *Lectures*.⁹ More importantly, Hegel himself does so as well, namely in a letter he sent to Friedrich Ludwig Georg von Raumer in 1816, in which he writes: "But while Friedrich Schlegel was still in Jena I myself witnessed his debut with his lectures on transcendental philosophy. He finished his course in six weeks, not to the satisfaction of his audience, which had expected and paid for a six-month course."¹⁰ (Hegel was mistaken about exactly how long the course had run. However, as we shall see, that was hardly the worst of his injustices to it.)

1. General Metaphysics

Concerning general metaphysics, Friedrich's *Lectures* contain some extraordinary anticipations of Hegel's mature philosophical position, his Absolute Idealism. Indeed, taken collectively, the anticipations are *so* extraordinary that in my view they can only be satisfactorily explained in terms of their having strongly influenced Hegel's mature position (which does not, of course, exclude the possibility – indeed, in this case it is a certainty – that *other* influences were pushing Hegel in a similar direction as well, including Herder, Hölderlin, and perhaps especially Schelling).

Here are some of the extraordinary anticipations involved: (1) As Frederick Beiser has argued,¹¹ Friedrich's *Lectures* constitute the first public presentation of an Absolute Idealism, i.e. a metaphysical monism whose single principle is ideal, or spiritual, in character: "Everything is in one, and one is everything," namely "the ideal."¹² Shortly afterwards this famously became Hegel's official philosophical position as well.

(2) More specifically, Friedrich's *Lectures* champion a synthesis of Spinoza's principle of an infinite substance with Fichte's principle of

⁹ See Friedrich Schlegel, *Neue philosophische Schriften*, pp. 46 ff. Also, Pöggeler, *Hegels Kritik der Romantik*, p. 123.

¹⁰ *Hegel: The Letters*, tr. C. Butler and C. Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 339.

¹¹ Beiser, *German Idealism*, part 3, ch. 4.

¹² KFSA, 12:7-8.

consciousness: “And now we have so to speak the elements that can constitute a philosophy: . . . consciousness and the Infinite . . . Fichte’s philosophy aims at consciousness. But Spinoza’s philosophy aims at the Infinite.”¹³ Very similarly, Hegel would soon afterwards famously write in the Preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807: “Everything depends on understanding the true not [only] as substance, but equally as subject.”¹⁴

(3) Friedrich calls this synthesis *Geist* [spirit]: “The infinite substance is to be thought of as the source of all form; hence it is to be thought of as consciousness, as a *Geist*.”¹⁵ Compare this with Hegel’s identical position in the *Phenomenology* that the fact “that substance is essentially subject is conveyed in the representation that expresses the Absolute as *Geist*.”¹⁶

(4) More specifically still, Friedrich’s *Lectures* explain why the infinite substance had to make itself finite in the form of human consciousness in terms of its need to represent itself, which is something it achieves in human consciousness: “Why did the Infinite alienate itself from itself and make itself finite? . . . The individual is . . . a representation [*Bild*] of the one infinite substance. (One could also put this [thus]: God created the world in order to represent Himself.)”¹⁷ This will be exactly Hegel’s position as well, for example when he writes in the *Phenomenology* that the formation of the human individual is “from the perspective of the universal *Geist* as the substance nothing else than that this gives itself its self-consciousness.”¹⁸

(5) In addition, Friedrich insists in his *Lectures* that in order to achieve truth philosophy must express the *whole*: “Philosophy must represent the

¹³ KFSa, 12:5, cf. 6, 29–32.

¹⁴ *Werke*, 3:22–3. Schelling, who might come to mind as an alternative source of Hegel’s embrace of positions (1) and (2), by the time of Friedrich’s *Lectures* held neither of them, having instead recently developed a “philosophy of identity” which, much like Spinoza’s own monism, did not privilege the spiritual over the non-spiritual or strive for a synthesis of Spinoza’s principle of substance with Fichte’s principle of consciousness (as indeed Friedrich himself pointed out; see KFSa, 18:478). It is true, however, that in earlier work Schelling had indeed tended in the direction of these positions, e.g. already doing so in *On the I as Principle of Philosophy* and *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (both from 1795), in the former of which he had written, for example, “If substance is the unconditioned, then the I is the only substance” (F.W.J. Schelling, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. Manfred Frank [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985], 1:82). There is therefore no doubt in the end a sort of double determination of Hegel’s eventual embrace of these two positions – an influence both from the early Schelling and from Friedrich.

¹⁵ KFSa, 12:39.

¹⁶ *Werke*, 3:28.

¹⁷ KFSa, 12:39. Friedrich still retains a version of this idea in lectures on philosophy and its history from 1804–6 (KFSa, 12:419).

¹⁸ *Werke*, 3:33. Beiser, *German Idealism*, p. 461 also mentions a further point of continuity between Friedrich and Hegel in this connection that comes out a bit more clearly from some of Friedrich’s notes than from the *Lectures*: that we humans therefore *create* God.

whole [*das Ganze*]"; "It must become a whole."¹⁹ Compare this with Hegel's famous position in the *Phenomenology* that "the true is the whole [*das Ganze*]."²⁰

(6) Friedrich's *Lectures* accordingly develop the project of an *encyclopedia* of the sciences that encompasses all knowledge, moreover emphasizing that in such an encyclopedia the sciences relate to each other in the form of a *circle* (Greek: *kuklos*): "All knowledge is philosophical. It is an indivisible whole. . . Its [philosophy's] form is a circular course"; "Here we were led to the idea of an encyclopedia of the sciences."²¹ Compare with this Hegel's strikingly similar project of an encyclopedia of the philosophical sciences that encompasses all knowledge and has a circular structure, as he eventually realized this project in his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (three editions: 1817, 1827, 1830).²²

(7) Again accordingly, Friedrich in his *Lectures* conceives philosophy in a striking metaphor as a system constituted by an overarching syllogism made up of more specific syllogisms: "Syllogism [*Syllogismus*] as it is meant here expresses something whole, something complete in itself. A whole of the functions of the understanding. *But the smallest whole possible*. System is also a whole, but it can contain a whole interweaving of syllogisms. (The *syllogism* is so to speak a small system and the system a large syllogism.)"²³ Compare with this Hegel's identical, only more elaborate, conception of his own philosophical system as a syllogism of syllogisms in the *Encyclopedia* (par. 187):

The objective sense of the figures of syllogism [*Schlusses*] is overall this, that everything rational proves to be a threefold syllogism, and indeed in such a way that each of its limbs occupies equally the position of an extreme and that of the mediating middle term. For this is the case with the three limbs of philosophical science, i.e. the logical Idea, nature, and spirit. Here it is first nature that is the middle, combining member. Nature, this immediate totality, unfolds itself into the two extremes of the logical Idea and spirit. But spirit is only spirit by being mediated

¹⁹ KFSA, 12:93, 105.

²⁰ *Werke*, 3:24.

²¹ KFSA, 12:10, 17; cf. 19, 21. Cf. also the following later remark of Friedrich's from 1807: "The encyclopedic striving of the Germans . . . aims at combining all sciences and arts in a whole system and spreading the spirit of idealism over it" (KFSA, 15/2:135).

²² Cf. Rudolf Haym, *Die Romantische Schule* (3rd ed., Berlin: Weidmann, 1914), pp. 745 ff. There are also some significant differences between Schlegel and Hegel here, though: (i) Friedrich sometimes (though not always) conceives of the ideal of an encyclopedia as one of including the sciences *with* rather than *as* philosophy. (ii) For Friedrich the envisaged encyclopedia will not begin but *end* with Logic.

²³ KFSA, 12:22.

through nature. Secondly, spirit, which we know as the individual, active principle is likewise the middle term, and nature and the logical Idea are the extremes. Spirit is what recognizes the logical Idea in nature and hence raises it to its essence. Likewise, thirdly, the logical Idea itself is the middle term; it is the absolute substance of spirit as of nature, the universal, all-infusing principle. These are the limbs of the absolute syllogism.²⁴

(8) In addition, Friedrich's *Lectures* conceive of a preparatory path towards philosophy's grasp of the whole that takes the form of a "history of consciousness [*Geschichte des Bewußtseins*]." ²⁵ Compare with this Hegel's virtually identical project in the *Phenomenology*, whose Introduction describes the work itself as a "detailed history of the formation of consciousness itself up to science [*ausführliche Geschichte der Bildung des Bewußtseins selbst zur Wissenschaft*]." ²⁶

In short, Friedrich's *Lectures* from 1800-1 anticipated almost the whole metaphysical project of Hegel's mature philosophy and evidently exercised a powerful influence on its emergence (albeit that, as I have already said, other influences certainly played a significant role as well).

2. Metaphysics of Art

There is also another, somewhat less fundamental, but still very important, area in which Friedrich – this time together with his brother August Wilhelm – contributed metaphysical foundations for Hegel's own philosophy: roughly speaking, the metaphysics of art.²⁷ Indeed, in this case, unlike the more fundamental case just considered, Hegel can in retrospect be seen to be acknowledging the debt involved in the long passage from the *Lectures on Aesthetics* that was quoted at the start of this article, albeit only in a partial and grudging way. In this case the debt concerns the following three fundamental features of Hegel's Aesthetics.

First, in his *Dialogue on Poetry* from 1800 Friedrich, already writing in the spirit of metaphysical monism and Absolute Idealism, championed the view that human artists and their art are only sparks of a divine artist. Under

²⁴ Hegel, *Werke*, 8:339-40. Cf. Hegel, *Werke*, 10:393-4.

²⁵ KFSA, 12:11-13.

²⁶ *Werke*, 3:73. Cf. Ernst Behler, "Friedrich Schlegel und Hegel," *Hegel-Studien* 2 (1963), pp. 237-8. It should be noted, though, that Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) – which Friedrich read during the period of his *Lectures* (see Friedrich Schlegel, *Neue philosophische Schriften*, pp. 52 ff.) – also championed such a project. So this particular anticipation of Hegel is a little less astonishing than it might otherwise seem.

²⁷ Cf. Michael N. Forster, "August Wilhelm Schlegel and Hegel on Art," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 137 (2018).

his brother's influence, August Wilhelm then shortly afterwards in his *Doctrine of Art* [*Kunstlehre*] of 1801-2, likewise in a spirit of metaphysical monism and Absolute Idealism, interpreted art as (a little less colorfully) an appearance of a monistic principle that he called the "Idea."²⁸ This position developed by the Schlegel brothers was a major source for Hegel's famous conception in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* that art's beauty is "the sensuous appearance of the Idea."²⁹ Indeed, if one re-reads the long passage from the *Lectures on Aesthetics* quoted at the start of this article in light of these additional facts, one can detect in it a grudging admission of such a debt.

Second, the Schlegel brothers were also the main source of Hegel's fundamental division of art in his *Lectures on Aesthetic* into symbolic, classical, and romantic art. Beginning in the late 1790s, Friedrich and August Wilhelm introduced a novel distinction between classical and romantic art, conceiving the latter as distinctively Christian and subjective in character – a distinction that August Wilhelm made canonical in his lectures *Doctrine of Art* (1801-2) and then more elaborately in his lectures *History of Classical Literature* [*Geschichte der klassischen Literatur*] (1802-3) and *History of Romantic Literature* [*Geschichte der romantischen Literatur*] (1803-4).³⁰ Hegel later went on in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* to distinguish between two broad periods or types of art, classical and romantic, in a strikingly similar way, similarly conceiving the latter period / type as differing from the former in virtue of its Christian and subjective character.³¹ It is true that in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* Hegel included a third period or type of art as well, namely symbolic art. However, that his debt to the Schlegel brothers was fundamental here can be seen from the fact that his earliest systematic presentation of his aesthetic theory, found in an early version of his *Encyclopedia* from 1808 ff., does not yet include this third

²⁸ August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Die Kunstlehre* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1963). For a helpful account of this, see David E. Wellbery, "Literary Studies: Two 19th-Century Models of Literary Study: August Wilhelm Schlegel and Friedrich Nietzsche," in *Doing Humanities in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Efraim Podoksik (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

²⁹ *Werke*, 13:151. As Wellbery, "Literary Studies," points out, August Wilhelm was largely inspired to this conception by Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800). So Schelling should certainly be seen as a co-influence on Hegel here. However, the fact that Hegel's next two debts to the Schlegels in Aesthetics that I am about to discuss rather concern the Schlegels to the *exclusion* of Schelling strongly suggests that it would be a mistake to think of Schelling as the *only* important influence on Hegel in this case.

³⁰ See August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Die Kunstlehre*, esp. pp. 24, 304; also *Geschichte der klassischen Literatur* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1964) and *Geschichte der romantischen Literatur* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965), *passim*.

³¹ See e.g. Hegel, *Werke*, 13:111-14.

period / type, but only the twofold distinction classical art vs. romantic art.³² It was only later, in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* from 1817-29, that he added this third period / type (under the additional influence of Friedrich Creuzer).

Third, Hegel's conception and structuring of his hierarchy of the individual arts in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* also come mainly from Friedrich and August Wilhelm. In these lectures Hegel argues for a sort of hierarchy of the individual arts whose principle is to begin with the more sensuous, objective arts at the bottom and then ascend to those that are increasingly spiritual, subjective, and inward at the top. Accordingly, his hierarchy begins at the bottom with architecture, then ascends to sculpture, then to painting, then to music, then finally to poetry as the highest art of all. But August Wilhelm had already set up a hierarchy of the individual arts in his *Doctrine of Art* of 1801-2 that followed essentially the same principle: beginning with those that involve intuition and objectivity at the bottom and proceeding thence to those that are more inward at the top.³³ Moreover, the specific hierarchy that he had based on this principle was, though not quite identical with, strikingly similar to Hegel's: beginning with sculpture at the bottom, then ascending to architecture, then to painting, then to music, then to dance, then finally to poetry as the highest art of all. (Except for the reversed order of sculpture and architecture at the beginning and the inclusion of dance, this hierarchy is the same as Hegel's.) In sharp contrast, Schelling (who might come to mind as an alternative source of Hegel's hierarchy) had in his *Philosophy of Art* (1802-3) set up a hierarchy of the arts that so far from agreeing with August Wilhelm's and Hegel's shared principle of ascending from the more objective towards the more subjective, on the contrary over most of its course followed exactly the *opposite* principle of increasing objectivity.³⁴ Moreover, in consequence, Schelling's specific hierarchy had looked nothing like either August Wilhelm's or Hegel's, instead proceeding from music at the bottom to painting to sculpture (in a broad sense that included architecture, then bas relief, then sculpture proper) and then ultimately to poetry.

In short, Friedrich (together with August Wilhelm) was the main source not only of Hegel's mature general metaphysics but also of his mature metaphysics of art more specifically.

³² *Werke*, 4:65: "There are two main forms or *styles* of art that must be distinguished: the *ancient* and the *modern*. The character of the former is *plastic*, objective, that of the other *romantic*, subjective."

³³ August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Die Kunstlehre*, p. 102; cf. p. 215.

³⁴ See F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, in his *Ausgewählte Schriften*, 2:370 (concerning the transition from music to painting), 398 (concerning the transition from painting to sculpture).

3. Epistemology

But there is also a further set of striking and non-accidental continuities between Friedrich's *Lectures* of 1800-1 and Hegel that is of at least equal and perhaps ultimately even greater importance, namely continuities in the area of epistemology, in particular ones concerning *skepticism and its relation to philosophy*.³⁵ For Friedrich's *Lectures* also contain a number of distinctive ideas on *this* subject that Hegel would soon afterwards take over and develop further, especially in his early essay *The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy* (1802), but then over the remaining course of his career as well. Moreover, these ideas not only went on to play a fundamental role in Hegel's own philosophy but are also of great *intrinsic* value.

Before we consider these ideas, though, it is worth sketching Friedrich's epistemology *before* the *Lectures* of 1800-1 in a little more detail. By the time Friedrich delivered these lectures, he had already been interested in skepticism for many years. For example, he had already begun an intensive reading of Plato, whom he interprets as a sort of skeptic or at least as a philosopher who responds to a sort of skepticism and integrates it into his philosophy,³⁶ as early as 1788-9, and he had subsequently continued his deep preoccupation with Plato up to the period of the *Lectures* themselves (for example, at that period developing the project of translating the Platonic dialogues with Schleiermacher, writing a *Habilitationsschrift* on Plato in Jena (unfortunately now lost), and extolling Plato as a representative of skepticism in the *Lectures* themselves). Again, he already in a letter to August Wilhelm from 1794 projects a course of lectures on practical philosophy in antiquity that will begin with Socrates (the man who famously said that his only advantage over other people lay in knowing that he did not know) and end with Carneades (the Academic skeptic who famously on alternate days in Rome argued first for justice and then against it).³⁷ In addition, he already in notes probably from the later 1790s refers to the Academic skeptics

³⁵ Cf. Michael N. Forster, "Schlegel and Hegel on Skepticism and Philosophy," in *Die Begründung der Philosophie im Deutschen Idealismus*, ed. Elena Ficara (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2011).

³⁶ Concerning his interpretation of Plato as a skeptic or at least as a philosopher who centrally responds to skepticism and integrates it into his own position, see e.g. the notes *Studies of Antiquity* [*Studien des Alterthums*], probably from the later 1790s, where, although he initially resists an interpretation of Plato/Socrates as skeptics (KFSA, 15/3:101), he then implies that not only Plato but also his predecessors, including Socrates, and his successors were in fact skeptics (KFSA, 15/3:152); also, the *Lectures* of 1800-1 themselves (as discussed below); in addition, later, the lectures on philosophy and its history from 1804-6 (e.g. KFSA, 13:411-12: though Plato's philosophy is not itself skepticism, it does contain it).

³⁷ KFSA, 23:195.

Arcesilaus and Carneades,³⁸ and moreover repeats his idea that a history of morality in antiquity should begin with Socrates and end with Carneades.³⁹ Furthermore (as has already been mentioned), having initially been impressed by Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, Friedrich during an earlier stay in Jena in 1796-7 became disillusioned with its conception of a single, certain *Grundsatz* from which the whole of philosophy would be derivable, under the influence of, and in sympathy with, a circle of skeptically minded thinkers around Niethammer,⁴⁰ and as a result developed his own competing epistemological conception of a *Wechselerweis*, a sort provisional mutual confirmation between a multiplicity of uncertain but reciprocally supportive propositions (a conception he first presented publicly in a review of Jacobi's *Woldemar* from 1796).⁴¹ Moreover, the *Athenaeum Fragments* (1798) already include fragments in which Friedrich commits himself to a very radical form of skepticism similar to that which he subsequently articulates in the *Lectures* themselves. For example, he writes there: "There is as yet no skepticism at all that deserves the name. Such a skepticism would need to begin and end with the assertion of, and demand for, infinitely many contradictions . . . Respect for mathematics and appealing to common sense are the diagnostic symptoms of the half-baked, ungenue sort of skepticism" (no. 400; cf. nos. 97, 220, 267).

In addition, skepticism lies behind several of the most important moves that Friedrich already made before the *Lectures* in developing his distinctive Romantic philosophy of literature. For one thing (as Frederick Beiser has argued), skepticism was a major motive behind Friedrich's epoch-making shift from Neoclassicism to Romanticism in the early work *On the Study of Greek Poetry* (1797).⁴² For another thing, skepticism played an important role in Friedrich's development at about the same time – specifically, in the *Lyceum Fragments* (1797) and the *Athenaeum Fragments* (1798) – of the ideal of a fusion between philosophy and literature (namely as his implicit reason for setting aside the obvious objection (especially obvious to a reader of Plato's *Republic* like Friedrich) that this would corrupt philosophy with

³⁸ KFSa, 15/3:98.

³⁹ KFSa, 15/3:149.

⁴⁰ A text that reflects this influence is a lengthy review from 1797 of the first volume of Niethammer's *Philosophisches Journal* in which Friedrich touches on the topic of skepticism at several points and sums up: "In philosophy nothing is clear, as is obvious. Here there is nothing firm at all" (KFSa, 8:12-32, here 31).

⁴¹ See KFSa, 2:71-2.

⁴² Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, pp. 119 ff. Cf. Michael N. Forster, "Herders Beitrag zur Entstehung der Idee *romantisch*," in *Die Aktualität der Romantik*, ed. Michael N. Forster and Klaus Vieweg (Berlin: LIT, 2012).

falsehood: since we cannot know the truth anyway, this does not matter). Finally, skepticism of one sort or another also constituted the basis of Friedrich's famous concept and ideal of irony, as he developed it from 1797 onwards: in continuity with the irony of Socrates, who famously held that his only claim to greater wisdom than other people possess lay in the fact that he knew that he knew nothing (see in this connection the *Lyceum Fragments* from 1797), it was Friedrich's anti-Fichtean skepticism from the period 1796-7 that motivated his first major version of such a concept/ideal (found incipiently in the *Lyceum Fragments* of 1797 but especially in the *Athenaeum Fragments* of 1798) as a sort of radicalized Fichteanism in which a subject not only posits itself and thereby reality, but also cancels them and re-positing them differently without end; then a more radical form of skepticism (already anticipated in *Athenaeum Fragments*, no. 400, as quoted above, and subsequently elaborated in the *Lectures* of 1800-1) motivated a second major version of his concept / ideal of irony (found especially in the *Dialogue on Poetry* and in the *Ideas*, both from 1800) as an expression of an original *chaos*.

In sharp contrast, *Hegel's* intellectual interests before the early 1800s had mainly focused on the sorts of religious, ethical, political, and historical questions that he treats at length in the early theological writings, hardly even touching on epistemology in general or skepticism in particular.⁴³

If Friedrich articulated distinctive ideas about skepticism and its relation to philosophy in the *Lectures* of 1800-1 that were shortly afterwards repeated and developed further by Hegel (as we are about to see was the case), there is therefore every reason to infer from this that Friedrich came up with them first and that Hegel then took them over from him.

⁴³ There is arguably one exception to this rule. Hegel's close friend Hölderlin and their mutual friend Isaak von Sinclair had already in the mid- to late-1790s developed a strong interest in skepticism, which they interpreted as the result of an "original division [*Urteilung*]" of a monistic Being into subject and object, and which they criticized for failing to recognize that this division on which it rests implicitly presupposes such a monistic Being (cf. Hannelore Hegel, *Isaak von Sinclair zwischen Fichte, Hölderlin und Hegel* [Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1971]). Hegel seems to have absorbed this line of thought from Hölderlin (and possibly also Sinclair) during the late 1790s – as can be seen especially from his fragment *Glauben ist die Art* (1798). However, even in this fragment Hegel does not discuss skepticism explicitly, and his appropriation of the line of thought in question is crude and undeveloped. So this is in the end the sort of exception that proves the rule. Klaus Vieweg, *Hegel: Der Philosoph der Freiheit: Biographie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2019) has recently attempted to question the sort of picture of Hegel I present here by claiming that Hegel's deep preoccupation with skepticism extends back into the 1790s. However, as far as I can see, his case for this interpretation mainly consists in the circumstantial evidence that *other people* around Hegel had such a deep preoccupation at the time, which, in my view, so far from showing that Hegel did so as well, only makes his relative neglect of skepticism at the time all the more striking.

Now, in the *Lectures* themselves Friedrich articulates three especially original and intriguing ideas about skepticism and its relation to philosophy that were subsequently taken over and developed further by Hegel. First, Friedrich argues that philosophy both begins with skepticism and always retains skepticism as an essential aspect of itself: “Philosophy begins with skepticism”; “Skepticism is eternal too, like philosophy . . . [namely] to the extent that it belongs to philosophy.”⁴⁴ Friedrich’s more specific idea here is that skepticism performs the vital function for philosophy of destroying the illusion that finite things exist independently of the Infinite, or Absolute: “The finite does not exist at all, it only exists in relation to the whole”; “The illusion of the finite must be destroyed; in order to do that all knowledge must be subjected to a revolutionary condition”; “Philosophy perforce proceeds polemically . . . Philosophy begins by raising itself to the concept of the whole and abstracting from the individual. This is necessary. Philosophy must represent the whole; but it can only do this indirectly. It drives the human mind away from the finite, it challenges the latter”; “Consciousness begins with error, namely with the finite. Now if there is only *one* science . . . then the task arises of destroying error – and philosophy constitutes this. Philosophy would therefore be . . . *destruction of the finite*.”⁴⁵

Shortly afterwards Hegel repeats this whole position quite precisely in *The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy*. For Hegel too: “Skepticism itself is most intimately one with every true philosophy”; “Skepticism . . . can be found *implicit* in every genuine philosophical system, for it is the free side of every philosophy.”⁴⁶ Moreover, for Hegel too skepticism’s more specific function in philosophy is to destroy the illusion that finite things exist independently of the Infinite, or Absolute: “A true philosophy necessarily has a negative side as well, which is turned against everything limited . . . , against this whole territory of finitude . . . ; and is infinitely more skeptical than [modern] skepticism.”⁴⁷

Second, Friedrich considers viable and champions as an appropriate beginning for and dimension of philosophy an unusually *radical* form of skepticism. In particular, he rejects the conception that what is *empirically given* furnishes us with certain knowledge of the truth, specifically doing so

⁴⁴ KFSA, 12:4, 10; cf. 18, 42. Cf. also, later, the lectures on philosophy and its history from 1804-6: “True philosophy, far from quite unconditionally rejecting skepticism, rather recognizes in it a necessary condition and preparation for philosophy itself” (KFSA 13:350).

⁴⁵ KFSA, 12:11, 77, 93, 97. Cf. Beiser, *German Idealism*, pp. 456-7, who, though, seems not to realize that for Friedrich this is the function of *skepticism* in philosophy.

⁴⁶ *Werke*, 2:227, 229.

⁴⁷ *Werke*, 2:227-8.

on the interesting grounds that what seems to be empirically given is in fact always already infused with theory, consequently involves a mixture of truth and falsehood, and therefore requires theoretical purification: "The phenomenon is merely crude intuition, in which truth and error are still combined. But facts must be results, they must be discerned, the truth decided upon. All results of philosophy are contained in the one [proposition]: *that theory and empiricism are one*, that they cannot be absolutely separated."⁴⁸ Even more radically, Friedrich also believes that the laws of classical logic, including the law of contradiction, are vulnerable to the sort of skepticism that he has in mind: "*Logic* as the organon of truth offers us *the law of contradiction* . . . But the source of truth lies for us far higher than in these laws [of logic]; for skepticism also lays claim to these laws."⁴⁹

Hegel's position in *The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy* is again strikingly similar. He too has an unusually radical conception of the form that skepticism should take. Indeed, the main purpose of his essay is to argue against tamer forms of skepticism, such as that recently propounded by his contemporary G.E. Schulze, in favor of a more radical form of it.⁵⁰ Accordingly, in close agreement with Friedrich's rejection of a reliance on what is *empirically given*, Hegel in *The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy* conducts a concerted skeptical attack on the modern faith (exemplified by Schulze) in so-called "facts of consciousness," observing that the best forms of skepticism, such as Plato's *Parmenides* and the Pyrrhonists' Ten Tropes of Aenesidemus, attacked these putative "facts" first and foremost. Indeed, Hegel develops Friedrich's radicalism concerning this case a bit further than Friedrich had himself done, not only thus arguing that the claim of seemingly immediate experience to constitute a sure guide to truth is skeptically questionable, but also implying that the very self-ascription of experiences, or even of mental states generally, is vulnerable to skeptical attack. Moreover, just like Friedrich, Hegel holds that a genuine skepticism will even attack classical logical laws. Thus Hegel already in a review of his contemporary Friedrich Bouterwek from 1801 (i.e. a little earlier than the 1802 essay on skepticism) criticizes Bouterwek for purporting to assume only as much as a skeptic would allow but then assuming the validity of logical laws, "whereas the consistent skeptic on the contrary denies the concept of a [logical] law

⁴⁸ KFSa, 12:98.

⁴⁹ KFSa, 12:3.

⁵⁰ In this connection, Hegel among other things points out that Schulze's interpretation of the dispute between the Pyrrhonian skeptics and the Academic skeptics in antiquity inverts its real character: according to Schulze the Pyrrhonists complained that the Academic skeptics were too radical, whereas Hegel notes (quite rightly) that their actual complaint was that the Academic skeptics were *not radical enough* (see *Werke*, 2:230-3).

altogether.”⁵¹ And in an even more specific echo of Friedrich’s position, Hegel then in *The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy* itself goes on to skeptically question the law of contradiction in particular, referring the reader to a higher principle that violates it (“Reason”): “The so-called ‘law of contradiction’ is . . . so far from possessing even formal truth for Reason, that on the contrary every proposition of Reason . . . must contain a violation of it.”⁵²

Third, in light of that radical position, Friedrich implies in the *Lectures* of 1800-1 that ancient forms of skepticism are different in character from and superior to modern ones.⁵³ As might be expected given his longstanding fascination with Plato as a skeptic and its persistence into the period of the *Lectures*, it is the skeptical side of Plato’s (and his character Socrates’) thought that constitutes the paradigm of a genuine skepticism for Friedrich there. Thus in the *Lectures* he says that “Plato represented skepticism very completely / perfectly [*vollkommen*]”;⁵⁴ that philosophy must be dialectical and therefore Socratic;⁵⁵ and that several of Plato’s writings, especially the *Phaedo*, are “suited to producing a yearning for the Infinite.”⁵⁶ Besides the

⁵¹ *Werke*, 2:141.

⁵² *Werke*, 2:230. Hegel’s conception that there is a viable form of skepticism that is radical enough to attack even logical laws also has *another* contemporary source, namely Christoph Gottfried Bardili. See on this Michael N. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), ch. 1; *Kant and Skepticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), ch. 12; and “Skepticism about Logic in Germany at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century” (forthcoming in *The Palgrave Handbook of German Idealism and Analytic Philosophy*, ed. James Conant and Jonas Held). My strong suspicion, however, is that Bardili was himself here influenced by Friedrich.

⁵³ A further striking bit of common ground between Friedrich and Hegel of a more generic nature that is implied here is that they both distinguish sharply between several different types of skepticism. Friedrich already does so with this distinction, but he does so even more elaborately in his 1804-6 lectures (see there e.g. KFSA, 12:124-30, where he distinguishes six types). Hegel in his 1802 essay and elsewhere does so as well.

⁵⁴ KFSA, 12:42.

⁵⁵ KFSA, 23:103. Friedrich’s emphasis in this particular passage is more on dialectic qua *conversation* than on dialectic qua a *skeptical demonstration of contradictions*, but that the latter is very much included can be seen from an earlier passage in the *Lectures*: “Consciousness begins with error, namely with the finite. Now if there is only *one* science . . . then the task arises of destroying error – and philosophy constitutes this. Philosophy would therefore be . . . *destruction of the finite*. In the narrower sense philosophy is dialectical. It should only be concerned with the development of the Understanding [i.e. what Hegel would call Reason; Friedrich and Hegel use the terminological distinction between Understanding and Reason in precisely opposite ways – M.N.F.], it should refute the errors. This is the characteristic of the bounding of philosophy in the narrower sense. The dialectical is that which relates to the art of the common development of the Understanding and the destruction of error” (p. 97).

⁵⁶ KFSA, 12:8.

Phaedo, Friedrich also had a strong interest in Plato's *Parmenides* at the time.⁵⁷ So, although this does not come across in the (incomplete) transcription of the *Lectures* that we have, it seems likely that a focus on the *Parmenides* played a role in the *Lectures* as well. In the (incomplete) transcription of the *Lectures* that we possess Friedrich does not discuss any *other* ancient forms of skepticism. However (as has been mentioned), he already in the 1790s mentions the Academic skeptics Arcesilaus and Carneades,⁵⁸ and even writes that a history of morality in antiquity should begin with Socrates and end with Carneades.⁵⁹ Moreover, in remarks from 1796 onwards he shows that he is familiar with the ancient Academic skeptics' and Pyrrhonists' characteristic method of setting opposing arguments into equal balance with each other in order to motivate a suspension of judgment.⁶⁰ Furthermore, in a later note from 1803-7 he writes that "skepticism is the center of philosophy as such – and in this respect Greek philosophy is of great value. For the tone of Greek philosophy as a whole is skepticism."⁶¹ Accordingly, later on, in lectures on philosophy and its history from 1804-6, in addition to emphasizing Plato's credentials as a representative of the skepticism of antiquity, he also devotes extensive respectful discussion to forms of skepticism championed by the Sophists (especially Gorgias), Socrates, the Academic skeptics Arcesilaus and Carneades, and Pyrrho.⁶² So it seems reasonable to assume that such a broader conception of the valuable forms of skepticism to be found in antiquity was already part of his full position in the *Lectures* of 1800-1, its absence from the surviving transcription again being due to the transcription's incompleteness. In sharp contrast to this very positive assessment of *ancient* skepticism, Friedrich in the *Lectures* argues that *modern* forms of skepticism are woefully inadequate because they are not nearly radical enough, and are consequently not up to the task of serving as a transition from the finite to the Infinite, which they rather actually obstruct. In particular, he characterizes his contemporaries Maimon, Reinhold, and Platner as all skeptics of a sort, and states that Maimon is the most important of them, but he then goes on to say dismissively of them all, "But this

⁵⁷ See e.g. KFSa, 25:136-7, where Friedrich remarks in a letter to Schleiermacher from 1800 in the course of discussing the Platonic dialogues that "concerning the Eleatic ones [i.e. the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*] I am confident of being able to throw new and bright light overall and to really and actually understand them completely, which is not saying little." See also KFSa, 18:531-4: an introduction to the *Parmenides* that he wrote in 1801-2.

⁵⁸ KFSa, 23:195; KFSa, 15/3:98.

⁵⁹ KFSa, 23:195; KFSa, 15/3:149.

⁶⁰ See on this Forster, "Herders Beitrag zur Entstehung der Idee *romantisch*," pp. 128-9.

⁶¹ KFSa, 18:562, cf. 187-9.

⁶² KFSa, 12:124-30, 160, 181-2, 195, 201-2, 229-30; KFSa, 13:330, 347-9.

skepticism stands in opposition to idealism” (i.e. instead of being one with it, as in Friedrich’s view it ought to be).⁶³ Moreover, later on, in the 1804-6 lectures, he develops the same point with some more interesting modern figures in view, again characterizing ancient skepticism as pure, but contrasting it with the following three modern forms of skepticism as inferior: fideist skepticism (e.g. Jacobi), a more secular modern skepticism (e.g. La Motte le Vayer), and empiricist skepticism (Hume).⁶⁴

Now, once again, Hegel in *The Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy* champions a position that is strikingly similar to Friedrich’s in all of these respects. Thus, Hegel too argues that ancient forms of skepticism are greatly superior to modern ones. Hegel too identifies Plato as the paradigmatic representative of a genuine ancient skepticism. Moreover, while Hegel focuses not on Plato’s *Phaedo* but rather on his *Parmenides*, he has in mind exactly the same function that Friedrich explicitly associated with the former work in his *Lectures*, namely a skeptical discrediting of commonsense and natural scientific cognition in preparation for an ascent to knowledge of the Infinite, or the Absolute: “What more perfect and self-supporting document and system of genuine skepticism could we find than the *Parmenides* in the Platonic philosophy, which encompasses the whole domain of that knowledge [of everything limited, of so-called facts of consciousness, and of the doctrines of the natural sciences] through concepts of the Understanding and destroys it? . . . This skepticism does not constitute a special thing of a system, but it is itself the negative side of the cognition of the Absolute, and immediately presupposes Reason as the positive side.”⁶⁵ Hegel too in addition includes a broader range of ancient forms of skepticism as genuine skepticism, especially Academic and Pyrrhonian skepticism with their method of balancing opposed arguments (much of his essay is devoted to a detailed and subtle discussion of Academic and Pyrrhonian skepticism). Finally, Hegel too by contrast rejects modern forms of skepticism as greatly inferior to these ancient ones, moreover, like Friedrich, doing so mainly on the grounds that they tamely cling to finite cognition and thereby obstruct a

⁶³ KFSA, 12:95. Where Maimon is concerned, Friedrich’s more specific complaint is that he rests content with a tame form of skepticism that blocks a philosophical knowledge of the whole in the following way: “He accepts from Kant the separation of experience and reason. He teaches: there is a knowledge of reason, but it is not applicable, both in the theoretical domain and in the practical.” In the case of Platner, Friedrich’s complaint is somewhat similar: Platner “considers his skepticism to be philosophy itself. But in this way philosophy is brought to a halt [*fixirt*] and its progressive tendency impeded.”

⁶⁴ KFSA, 13:347-54.

⁶⁵ *Werke*, 2:228.

knowledge of the Infinite, or Absolute, instead of destroying the former in order to proceed to the latter, as they should.

Furthermore, these three big ideas about skepticism and philosophy all subsequently went on to play fundamental roles in the constitution of Hegel's mature philosophy. The first of them, the idea that any genuine philosophy must have a skeptical side that discredits "finite" viewpoints in preparation for philosophy's grasp of the Infinite, or Absolute, is fundamental to Hegel's conception of his *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a "self-completing skepticism" that prepares the way for his "Science" of the Absolute (comprising Logic, Philosophy of Nature, and Philosophy of Spirit).⁶⁶ It also forms part of his conception of that Science itself, especially its Logic, which he likewise conceives as including a skeptical side directed against "finite" cognition.⁶⁷ The second idea, the idea that a genuine skepticism must be radical, extending its attacks even against claims about one's own experience, or one's own mental states generally, and against the claims of classical logic, plays a fundamental role in Hegel's philosophy as well. For one thing, it is this idea that precludes Hegel from using transcendental arguments in the manner of Kant to support his philosophy (as certain commentators, such as Charles Taylor, have mistakenly supposed he does), because transcendental arguments essentially rely on the epistemological certainty of both experience and classical logic. Instead, it requires Hegel to use a quite different epistemological approach, one whose central strategy is to show that there is ultimately *no alternative* to the standpoint of his own philosophy because all of the seeming alternatives to it turn out to be implicitly incoherent and hence illusory.⁶⁸ For another thing, Hegel's sympathy with skepticism about subjective experience and classical logic leads him in his mature philosophy to actually reject claims about subjective experience as illusory (in what might, with only a superficial appearance of oxymoron, be called a sort of 'eliminative idealism') and likewise to actually reject classical logic, instead recasting logic in what he considers to be a more epistemologically defensible, truer form (a project he pursues in the *Science of Logic* and in the Logic of the

⁶⁶ *Werke*, 3:72-3.

⁶⁷ See *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, in *Werke*, vol. 8, pars. 78, 81. The double occurrence of the skeptical component of Hegel's philosophy in both the *Phenomenology* and the Logic might seem surprising at first sight. But it will seem less so if it is recalled that, as the Introduction of the *Phenomenology* already tells us, the "shapes of consciousness" of the *Phenomenology* are really the categories of the Logic, seen through a glass darkly as it were (*Werke*, 3:80).

⁶⁸ See on this Michael N. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), ch. 3.

Encyclopedia).⁶⁹ Finally, the third idea, the idea that in light of this requirement of radicalism ancient forms of skepticism are superior to modern ones, plays an important role in Hegel's mature philosophy as well. Recognizing his commitment to this idea is indeed the key to seeing the erroneousness of the superficially plausible accusation leveled against him by certain commentators (e.g. J.B. Baillie and Roger Scruton) that he is not concerned about epistemological questions in general or skepticism in particular. In fact, he is only dismissive of the epistemological challenges posed by *modern* skepticism – since in his view modern skepticism merely amounts to a sort of dogmatism, in particular because its approach requires it to assume that *some* facts are certain in order to call into question the inference from these to *other* facts that it regards as questionable, as in the case of modern 'veil of perception' or 'external world' skepticism for example. However, he is by no means dismissive of the epistemological challenges posed by *ancient* skepticism – which he considers superior to modern skepticism because it avoids such dogmatism (largely thanks to its employment of a method of "equipollence [*isostheneia*]," or balancing opposed arguments, that does not essentially rest on making any assumptions), and which he therefore makes very strenuous efforts to answer on behalf of his own philosophy.⁷⁰

Beyond thus being important for their role in enabling Hegel's philosophy, the three ideas about philosophy and skepticism in question are also, I think, of great *intrinsic value*. But since I have already developed that point extensively in previous publications,⁷¹ I shall not elaborate on it further here.

4. Conclusion

In sum, far from being a mere philosophical dilettante, as Hegel implied, Friedrich Schlegel was a serious philosopher, indeed one who – irony of ironies – largely supplied the most fundamental principles of Hegel's own philosophy, namely those in metaphysics (both general metaphysics and the metaphysics of art) and epistemology. Nor do Hegel's positive philosophical

⁶⁹ See Forster, "Skepticism about Logic in Germany at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century."

⁷⁰ See Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism* and *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit*, ch. 3.

⁷¹ In addition to the works already cited, see Michael N. Forster, "Does Every Genuine Philosophy Have a Skeptical Side?" *The Review of Metaphysics*, 75/2 (2021).

debts to Friedrich end there, for there are also a number of further important, albeit less fundamental, ones.⁷²

⁷² These include, for example, a project of combining philosophy with literature that Hegel continues and modifies in the *Phenomenology*, a new theory of ancient tragedy that Hegel likewise continues and modifies there, seminal views concerning the nature of languages that Hegel takes over from Friedrich and his tradition in the 1820s, and ideas concerning the historiography of philosophy. For more on this whole subject, see Forster, "Friedrich Schlegel and Hegel" and *Friedrich Schlegel's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).