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*Hegel on the Proofs and Personhood of God: Studies in
Hegel's Logic and Philosophy of Religion* by Robert R.
Williams (review)

Kevin J. Harrelson

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Robert R. Williams. *Hegel on the Proofs and Personhood of God: Studies in Hegel's Logic and Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xiv + 319. Cloth, \$95.00.

Hegel endorsed proofs of the existence of God, and also believed God to be a person. Some of his interpreters ignore these apparently retrograde tendencies, shunning them in favor of the philosopher's more forward-looking contributions. Others embrace Hegel's religious thought, but attempt to recast his views as less reactionary than they appear to be. Robert Williams's latest monograph belongs to a third category: he argues that Hegel's positions in philosophical theology are central to his philosophy writ large. The book is diligently researched, and marshals an impressive amount of textual evidence concerning Hegel's view of the proofs, his theory of personhood, and his views on religious community.

Many of Williams's sources are lectures from the 1820s, when Hegel gave more detailed presentations of his philosophy of spirit. This material has long belonged to the received corpus of Hegel, but it is only due to recent critical editions that we have a sense of how Hegel modified his approach during his final decade. There are thus plenty of unanswered questions, and Williams poses some of the right ones. What is the relationship, for instance, between Hegel's many texts on logic and his later lectures on the ontological argument? How should we understand 'personhood' such that it captures the famous chapters on recognition from the *Phenomenology*, the theory of positive freedom from the *Philosophy of Right*, and the comments about divine personhood from Hegel's final lectures on religion?

The former question is the topic of part 1: Hegel on the Proofs of God. Williams demonstrates convincingly enough that Hegel's endorsement of the proofs is rooted in his view of logic. Hegel allows, with the Kantians, that the traditional forms of these arguments are invalid. Knowing this much, one might expect Hegel to reformulate them. This has been the source of disappointment for many readers: revised arguments are not to be found in Hegel's lectures in the form of well-defined premises and conclusions. Williams makes clear that Hegel's view is rather that traditional logic was not suitable for arguments about this subject matter; and he explains how Hegel saw the proofs as insufficient attempts to "elevate the mind to God" (45–46).

The cosmological argument, for instance, is supposed to show that the world depends on God. But in its classical form—since there are contingent entities there must be a necessary one—our knowledge of this relation is inverted. If contingent things depend on God, Hegel reasons, then they are not contingent. A more adequate approach requires that we unlearn, so to speak, the sense of contingency asserted in the premise. Syllogistic argument cannot bring about such unlearning. Hegel purported, and Williams exhaustively documents the fact, to have done a better job in his *Science of Logic* when he argued that the category of 'contingency' collapses into necessity.

Readers may wonder about Williams's argumentative purposes in this part of the book. He succeeds in showing that the Hegel of the Berlin lectures believed himself to have secured, in his earlier work, an adequate basis for theology. Did Hegel's logic, however, *commit* him to his later theological views? Revisionist Hegelians hedge on this, and Williams offers little to persuade them to his side. Should we view Hegel's positions on these topics as mounting a good defense of cosmological or ontological proofs? Williams seems to think so, but he does little to persuade anyone who is not already versed in Hegel's theory of logic.

Part 2, Hegel on the Personhood of God, is more successful. Williams defends a version of recognition theory, and he argues that Hegel's understanding of self-consciousness commits him also to a defense of divine personhood. Williams is more at home with this material, having written previously several books on it. He explains Hegel's doctrines straightforwardly enough: as readers of the *Phenomenology* know, Hegel took self-conscious personhood to be a social characteristic; as readers of the *Philosophy of Right* are well aware, Hegel took freedom to require membership in institutions. Williams's best work is in the final chapters, in which he explains how these ideas led Hegel to illuminating accounts of religious community, confession, repentance, and such matters.

This is a serious work of scholarship, and Williams well documents and explains Hegel's writings on these subjects. Readers of Hegel who wish to understand more about his late

lectures on philosophical theology will find an adequate guide. The book's absence of polemic against the less theological readings of Hegel may even be a virtue. But readers who are not already fluent in Hegel's vocabulary and logic will learn much less from it.

KEVIN J. HARRELSON

Ball State University

Rachel Zuckert and James Kreines, editors. *Hegel on Philosophy in History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. xiv + 260. Cloth, \$99.99.

Hegel on Philosophy in History is a *Festschrift* for Robert Pippin, one of the most important contemporary Hegel scholars. Pippin's importance has to do not only with the way in which he opened up the field of Hegel studies beginning in the 1980s, but also with the extraordinary number of other figures and discussions in philosophy with which he has brought Hegel's thought into connection. These aspects of Pippin's importance are connected, of course, since it is the latter that allowed the former to blossom into a whole field with wide-ranging discussions and a fruitful plurality of perspectives rather than to fade after a brief renaissance. Those Hegel scholars (including this reviewer) who have more recently taken up professional positions in academic philosophy certainly owe Pippin a tremendous debt of gratitude. In this connection, I am happy to report that this *Festschrift* does justice to both aspects of Pippin's influence, and can be highly recommended as a substantive contribution to the field that his influence helped to open up.

Two features of the book allow it to stand out from the ranks of ordinary *Festschriften*. First, it features an all-star lineup of authors from the current debate about the meaning of Hegel's philosophy. There are contributions from authors such as Paul Redding and Terry Pinkard, who have points of view relatively similar to Pippin's and who have long been associated with each other under the general banner of generally sympathetic, post-Kantian interpretations of Hegel. There are contributions from authors such as Christoph Menke and J. M. Bernstein, who are far more critical of Hegel's views and of their philosophical defensibility as Pippin reconstructs them. There are contributions from authors such as Ludwig Siep, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, and Karl Ameriks, who take a more traditionally historical approach than Pippin, and then contributions from authors such as Slavoj Žižek and Jonathan Lear, who emphasize the supplementary value of post-Hegelian psychoanalytical approaches to the topics Hegel treats. When reading over these papers, one cannot help but be struck by the wide variety of ways Hegel's thought has become relevant to contemporary philosophical perspectives, which makes the book somewhat of a *Festschrift* not only to Pippin but to the discursive space he was and continues to be so instrumental in carving out.

Second, it is organized around a particular theme, namely, history and the question of its centrality to Hegel's thought, to its contemporary relevance, and to the philosophical issues that Hegel treated. Though, of course, some of the chapters engage more or less with the theme than others, all of the contributions take up the relation of history to Hegel's thought in some way or other. From John McDowell's and Robert Stern's argument that one ought not emphasize history as much as Pippin does, to Sally Sedgwick's consideration of the question of the historicity of even the most abstract and apparently a priori part of Hegel's system (namely, his *Science of Logic*), there is a multilayered discussion of the different ways in which actual historical events and historicity itself can be relevant to different issues in philosophy as Hegel treated them. Axel Honneth's contribution treats Hegel's contribution to the theory of freedom itself as a historical watershed that must be incorporated into contemporary reflection on the topic. And Bernstein and Žižek come to different conclusions about the philosophical tenability of Hegel's views, but on the basis of the same basic perspective of examining them against the background of the historical experience that lies between our world and Hegel's own. In reading the collection it becomes