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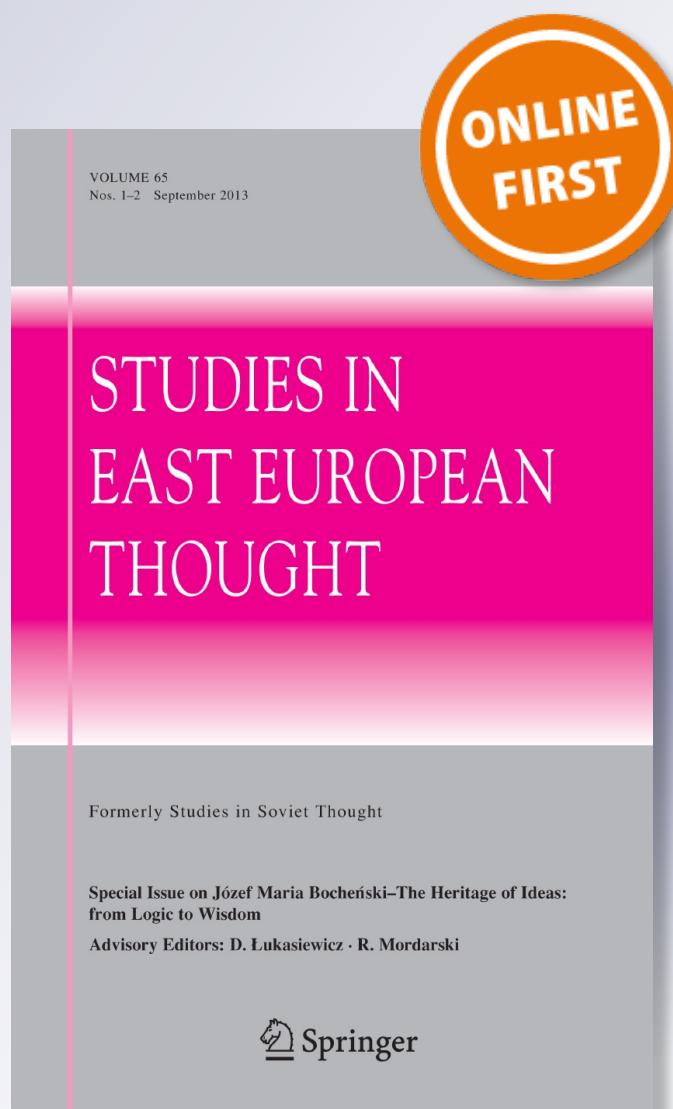
Victoria Frede

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Stankevič and Hegel's arrival in Russia

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Abstract When Russia's "Westernizers," Nikolai Stankevič, Vissarion Belinskij, and Mikhail Bakunin first encountered Hegel's ideas in the 1830s, they gravitated toward a conservative interpretation, centering on the proposition that the "rational is real." This article studies the preconditions for that interpretation, demonstrating that it was grounded in the writings of the late Hegel and of the circle of adepts who popularized his ideas and writings immediately after his death. These adepts later came to be known as Center and Right Hegelians. They influenced the early reception of Hegel in France as well as in Russia. Stankevič, the first of the Westernizers to subject Hegel to systematic study, learned about Hegel through these mediators.

Keywords Hegel · Stankevič · Hegel's reception and interpretation in France and Russia · Westernizers

Nikolai Stankevič was the first Russian intellectual to subject Hegel's ideas to systematic study in the mid-late 1830s. By the early 1840s, Hegel was on the lips of all Stankevič's friends, and of Moscow youth more generally. As Alexander Herzen so famously and elegantly testified, "There was not a paragraph in all three parts of the *Logic*, the two parts of the *Aesthetics*, of the *Encyclopedia*, which was not taken by assault after the most desperate debates lasting several nights. People who were the closest of friends broke off relations for entire weeks because they could not agree on a definition of the 'all-embracing spirit'" (Gertsen 1956, 15; tr. Malia 1965, 202–203). Hegel became important to young Russians within a very short period of time, and for this reason, it is worth asking how he first came to their

V. Frede (✉)

Department of History, 3229, Dwinelle Hall, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720-2550, USA
e-mail: vfrede@berkeley.edu

attention. What exactly did Stankevič and his friends read by Hegel and about him? What attitudes and assumptions conditioned their interest in him? This study will seek answers by working around an article Stankevič translated for the famous but short-lived journal *Telescope* (*Teleskop*) in 1835, “An Essay on the Philosophy of Hegel,” by Joseph Willm.

The “Essay” and Stankevič’s translation of it have barely been discussed in scholarly literature (exceptions are Jakowenko 1940, 11; Bourmeyster 2001, 80, 93). Yet, his essay and its translation deserve attention because they provided Russian readers with an interpretation of Hegel’s views that became influential. The interpretation found in Willm’s essay was not uniquely his: it had already begun to take shape in Germany shortly before Hegel’s death in Berlin in November 1831. There, Hegel’s followers, attempting to shore up the institutional status of his ideas, emphasized the spiritual component of his writings, their conformity with religion. Further, Hegel’s early acolytes tended to devalue individualism and personal uniqueness as encouraging aberration on the path to true knowledge. Last, but not least, there was a political component to their interpretation, which highlighted Hegel’s estimation of the Prussian state as “the purest example of the modern rational state” (Toews 1980, 88–93, 230).

These dispositions were shared by several clusters of Hegel’s colleagues and former students, including Karl Friedrich Göschel, Karl Rosenkranz, Philip Konrad Marheineke, Heinrich Gustav Hotho, Karl Ludwig Michelet, Karl Friedrich Werder, and Eduard Gans, who came variously to be identified as Center and Right Hegelians in the later 1830s and 1840s. Overshadowed by the towering Left Hegelians in the 1840s, they were all too quickly forgotten. Herzen, however, remembered them in a sentence that has itself been overlooked: “So might they all have wept for joy—all those forgotten Werders, Marheinekés, [Ho]t[h]os, Vatkes, Schalle[r]s, Rosenkranzes, and Arnold Ruge himself... if they had known what duels, what battles they had started in Moscow between the Maroseika and the Mokhovaia, how they were read, how they were *bought*” (Gertsen 1956, 15; tr. Malia 1965, 202–203). At least some of them will be remembered in this essay for their influence, first on Willm, then on Stankevič, and finally on his friends, Vissarion Belinskij and Mikhail Bakunin. Underscoring their influence helps explain why it was a Christianized, statist Hegel who first arrived on Russian soil in the 1830s.

Hegel’s death and interpretations of his work in Germany

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel had always depended on others; he was a late bloomer. Having befriended the young Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling as a student at Tübingen University in the late 1780s, it took Hegel years to elaborate a philosophical position that would set him apart from his younger mentor. The work for which he is still best known, *Phenomenology of spirit*, appeared in 1807, when Hegel was thirty-seven years old, but it did not immediately gain the author acclaim in Germany. He was not offered a university professorship until the final volume of the *Science of logic* and the *Encyclopedia of philosophical sciences* appeared in

1816. He moved to Berlin in 1818, and in the 1820s, students from all over Germany would flock to the Prussian capital to hear him lecture. At the same time, Hegel's growing influence brought unfavorable attention. Opponents, led in the mid-1820s by the Pietist theologian Friedrich August Tholuck, pointed out incompatibilities between his philosophy and Protestant theology. Hegel's concept of the "Absolute" posited the unfolding of a mind, or "spirit" (*Geist*), which manifests itself in nature. Whereas objects in nature are finite, however, spirit remains infinite; it is the conflict and opposition between its finite nature and the infinite, which allows spirit to develop and realize itself (Taylor 1979, 22–23). Tholuck charged that Hegel left no room for the individual subject's immediate experience of the divine; he had allowed an all-pervading abstraction to displace the Christian God, making him a pantheist (Merklinger 1993, 141–148).

Hegel's institutional influence, personal authority and self-proclaimed conservatism prevented these accusations from becoming corrosive, and in the late 1820s, he set about refuting them in a variety of formats, including his lectures on the philosophy of religion. The position he elaborated in these lectures, as well as in the 1827 and 1830 editions of the *Encyclopedia of philosophical sciences*, were more emphatic than previous works about the close relationship between his philosophy and Christian faith, even if he remained critical of dogmatic theology. Hegel was supported by former pupils and sympathetic colleagues, who were institutionally invested in the acceptance of his ideas (Gebhardt 1963, 50). Yet, the obscurity of Hegel's writing and lecture style continued to limit his audience.

Hegel's death on 14 November 1831, at the age of sixty-one, became a transformative stage in his career, opening doors to the wider dissemination of his thought. Already at his funeral, his disciples spoke of it as a liberating moment. The Berlin theologian Philip Konrad Marheineke greeted Hegel's death as the man's emancipation from his "worldly shell," allowing him to appear "transfigured" before all who knew him and those who had yet to recognize him. Marheineke explicitly likened Hegel to the son of God, "our savior," who had suffered and died so that he might return to his congregation (*Gemeinde*) "eternally as spirit" (Marheineke 1831, 6–7). Likewise Friedrich Förster, another Berlin acolyte, greeted Hegel's death as a "transfiguration," but he went further, likening his audience to the disciples of Christ: it was their "calling" to spread the master's teachings (Förster 1831, 10–14). Förster and Marheineke, together with Gans, Hotho, Michelet, and others, immediately proceeded to produce a complete edition of Hegel's works. Older texts, such as *Phenomenology of spirit* were republished, and important writings were reedited with the aim of making his language clearer, such as the *Philosophy of right*, edited by Gans in 1833 and the substantially altered *Encyclopedia of philosophical sciences*, edited by Henning, Michelet and Boumann in 1833–1834. No less important, however, were previously unpublished lecture manuscripts, most notably *Lectures on the philosophy of religion*, edited by Marheineke in 1832; *Lectures on the history of philosophy* (ed. Michelet 1833–1836); *Lectures on aesthetics* (ed. Hotho 1835), and *Lectures on the philosophy of history* (ed. Gans 1837). These texts, partly reconstructed from the notes his students had taken, became gateways for uninitiated readers, allowing new audiences to access Hegel's thought.

In addition to publishing Hegel's works, his colleagues and disciples dedicated themselves to expounding his worldview and reasserting its status as the culmination of all philosophy. Eduard Gans noted in the obituary he first published in the *Prussian State Gazette* (*Preussische Staats-Zeitung*) that philosophy itself had reached its end in Hegel and could now be refined, but not redefined (Gans 1832–1834, 252). Precisely because Hegel had created “the philosophy,” not a philosophy, however, some adherents came to view his ideas as the universal property of the times. Thus, Karl Friedrich Göschel could dedicate a whole monograph, titled *Hegel and his times*, to an explication of “the philosophy” and its significance in all domains of knowledge, while allowing Hegel's name to appear only twice in the text (Göschel 1832, 27n and 137). Göschel had received Hegel's imprimatur as spokesman of his school in 1829, shortly before the master's death (Gebhardt 1963, 54–55), and in some ways, the deflection of attention away from Hegel's person accorded with Hegel's own intellectual inclinations. In Hegel's view, the history of philosophy had not been determined by personalities so much as by the free development of reason; it yielded its best results when philosophers engaged in thought while setting aside the particularities of their personality (*eigenthümlichkeitsloses Denken*) (Hegel 1833, 12). Followers who were later identified as Center and Right Hegelians, notably Rosenkranz, Michelet, and Hotho embraced this principle, arguing that self-abnegation, the rejection of “selfish egoism,” abandoning the “autonomy of the ‘modern personality’” and transcending one's “finite existence,” must be the precondition of entering into the realm of true thought (Toews 1980, 91–2).

The writings of Göschel, Rosenkranz, Michelet, and Hotho were united by another common feature: all wished to refute earlier accusations of the incompatibility between Hegel's philosophy and Christian religion. Some did so implicitly, by composing theological works on the basis of Hegelian philosophy (Rosenkranz 1831). Göschel provided an exhaustive refutation of Hegel's Pietist critics, explaining that the concepts “Idea,” “Spirit” and “Absolute” in no way undermined Protestant conceptions of a personal God or the Holy Trinity and saturating key passages with references to the New Testament. Spirit and God were fundamentally the same (Göschel 1832, 57–59, 74–81, 109–113). Still others hoped to address the problem by making the relevant writings by Hegel more widely available, such as Marheineke's edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the philosophy of religion*.

Hegel was presented as a defender of the current order in other respects, too, as a staunch supporter of the Prussian state, of the family, and of social hierarchies (Hotho 1835). Even as a philosopher, it was said, Hegel had been more of a reformer than a revolutionary, as demonstrated by his debts to his forerunners, most particularly Schelling. Thus, in his brief obituary, Gans praised Hegel for never having ceased to cultivate the memory of his former friend (and later rival), whose name he always invoked with a “quiet, joyful melancholy” (Gans 1832–1834, 242–3). Notably, several of these works—those by Gans and Göschel in particular—were printed by Duncker und Humblot, the same Berlin publishing house in which Hegel's collected works appeared, perhaps lending his acolytes further credibility.

For foreign readers, these writings, no matter how short and trivial, served as valuable sources of orientation in approaching Hegel's dense works. This was true not only in Russia, but in France, where familiarity with German philosophical idealism and its terminology was weakly developed. Catholic prejudice against "Protestant" philosophy further slowed the transmission of ideas (Oldrini 2001, 34–35, 61–64). As a result, French readers, too, would have to wait until the late 1820s and early 1830s to achieve even superficial acquaintance with Hegel. Joseph Willm, a Lutheran pastor of Alsatian birth and professor of literature in Strasbourg, who set about composing a biography and introduction to Hegel's philosophy in 1835, was ideally suited to this task (Puisais 2005, 159–191). He, too, would have to rely heavily on popularizing works by Hegel's acolytes, together with the materials they made available: prefaces and introductions to Hegel's *Encyclopedia of philosophical sciences*, *Philosophy of right*, and most particularly the *Lectures on the history of philosophy*. At the time Willm wrote, however, even this basic level of engagement was a major stride ahead.

Early reception of Hegel in Russia

Little was known about Hegel in Russia prior to 1835, when references to him in Russian print were fragmentary and idiosyncratic at best. Faint echoes were heard of the German debate over the conformity of Hegel's philosophy with religion. At this stage, however, French writings about Hegel played a greater role in spreading knowledge of him in Russia than direct contact with Germany.

The first Russians who learned about Hegel were those who travelled to Germany in the late 1820s and heard lectures in Berlin (Jakowenko 1940, 2–4, 13n19). Ivan Kireevskij stayed in the Prussian capital in the spring of 1830, and, like many Germans, he initially found Hegel's lectures impenetrable. As he wrote to his father that spring: "he speaks unbearably, coughs almost at every word, swallows half the sounds, and with a trembling, whiny voice barely pronounces the other half." Others had to persuade Kireevskij of Hegel's importance, most notably, Eduard Gans, whose course on the history of law he attended with great enthusiasm. Kireevskij then invited himself to Hegel's home, where he became personally acquainted not only with Hegel, but with Gans and Michelet as well (Kireevskij 1911, 27, 34–37). Gans made an equally strong impression on Vladimir Pečerin, who travelled to Berlin in 1832, but arrived too late to hear Hegel lecture in person (Jakowenko 1940, 3). None of the knowledge they acquired, however, prompted them to publish anything on Hegel in the first half of the 1830s. Konstantin Nevolin, who lived in Berlin from 1829 to 1832 and attended lectures by Hegel, illustrates this well. He made no mention of Hegel in a speech on the theory and practice of law he held in 1835 at Moscow University and published in the *Journal of the Ministry of Education*. Only years later did he discuss Hegel and the *Philosophy of right* in print (Nevolin 1835; Nevolin 1839, 611–629).

In the first half of the 1830s, one finds only scattered references to Hegel in the leading Russian literary journals *Telescope* and *Library for reading* (*Biblioteka dlja čtenija*). These invoked his name several times between 1832 and 1834, mostly in

articles translated from French. In France, too, sustained discussions of Hegel's views had only begun to appear in the late 1820s and early 1830s, initiated by such prominent figures as Victor Cousin and Eugène Lerminier. Lack of familiarity however, meant Hegel's views would be retold in anodyne formulae, with their most original features effaced (Oldrini 2001, 34–35; Puisais 2005, 249–251). Amédée Prévost was the author of the first meaningful commentary on Hegel in French. This article, akin to an obituary, was originally published in *Revue de Paris* in 1833 and the poet Vasilii Mežević translated it into Russian for *Telescope* that same year. Both the French original and Russian translation attest to the fact that Hegel's name was still obscure in both places: the year of his death was mistakenly dated as 1830 in the very first sentence (Prévost 1833, 115; Prevo 1833, 381).

Prévost's piece was thus aimed at a readership that knew very little about Hegel. Readers were more likely to be familiar with Schelling, and Prévost inserted several pages describing the relationship between the two thinkers as well as their differences (Prevo 1833, 382, 393–394). The core of the article, however, consisted of a brief biography and seven-page synopsis of Hegel's philosophy, purportedly based on the *Encyclopedia of philosophical sciences*, but in fact drawn from a review that had appeared in a German literary journal in 1830 (Anon 1830). The most striking feature of this synopsis was its repeated assertion of the conformity between Hegel's philosophy and religion. Here, Prévost and following him, Mežević misattributed the anonymous reviewer's words to Hegel: “Предмет философии, говорит Гегель, есть истина; и поелику Бог есть единственная истина и реальность, то, следовательно, предмет философии есть Бог, предмет абсолютный”¹ (Prevo 1833, 386; Anon 1830, 181). It was in this light, Prévost and Mežević asserted, that Hegel's famous statement in the *Philosophy of right* should be understood. “Все реальное рационально, все рациональное реально” (“everything real is rational, everything rational is real”) translated into “‘все созданное Богом есть благо’” (“everything created by God is a good”) (Prevo 1833, 386). Hegel's absolute spirit, the “One living spirit,” realizing itself as object, and thus coming to self-knowledge, is almost unrecognizable in Prévost's article and Mežević's translation. Describing the development of spirit in time, for example, Hegel had written: “Der Werkmeister aber dieser Arbeit von Jahrtausenden ist der Eine lebendige Geist, dessen denkende Natur es ist, das, was er ist, zu seinem Bewusstsein zu bringen, und indem dies so Gegenstand geworden, zugleich schon darüber erhoben und eine höhere Stufe in sich zu sein”² (Hegel 1843, 21). Following the interpretation provided by his source, the anonymous 1830 review, Prévost inserted the words “divine spirit” (*esprit divin*) when he quoted these words and presented this divine spirit as hovering above and outside of “philosophical

¹ “The subject of philosophy, says Hegel, is truth; and insofar as God is the single truth and reality, then, consequently, the subject of philosophy is God, the absolute subject.” Here and below, all English translations are mine, V.F.

² “The artificer of this work of millennia is the one living spirit. It is in his thinking nature to attain consciousness of that, which he is, and, by having thus become an object, simultaneously transcended it, and to be a step higher within himself.”

speculation.”³ Mežević, by contrast, drops the words “divine spirit,” translating “spirit” as “mind” (*um*), which “develops.” The dialectical attainment of self-knowledge had gone entirely missing: “Золчий сей вековой работы есть единый и живой ум, коего свойство состоит именно в том, чтобы открываться непрестанно более и более” (Prevo 1833, 389).⁴

In this manner, Mežević reinforced the view that Hegel was a Christian philosopher, while sidestepping the uncomfortable question that troubled German philosophers and theologians alike: the nature of “spirit” as Hegel understood it. If spirit was to be equated with God, as Hegel’s “Right” interpreters wished to believe, then his philosophy was flattened into an obscure exegesis of Protestant theology (Jaeschke 2003, 518). If, however, it were to be understood as an “all-embracing spirit,” one that existed in and through nature, then Hegel could be accused of pantheism. If, yet again, spirit had its seat in the human mind, then Hegel’s philosophy became open to charges of atheism. In Mežević’s estimation, it was evidently best to prevent these questions from arising, by leaving out the word “spirit” from passages likely to be controversial.

If readers were confused, then Prévost and Mežević could offer comfort: Hegel, they claimed, had said himself that “a philosopher must be obscure” (Prevo 1833, 385; Prévost 1833, 117). Whether their representation of Hegel made his ideas seem clearer is uncertain. All the same, they created a pattern for others to follow. At least, a similar transformation will be observed in Willm’s essay on Hegel as translated by Stankevič.

Stankevič’s path to philosophy

Vasilii Mežević and Nikolai Stankevič had a few things in common. Both attended Moscow University: Mežević from 1828 to 1832, and Stankevič from 1830 to 1834. If they were not personally close, they at least knew one another and had friends in common, including Vissarion Belinskij (e.g., Belinskij 1948, 224).

While at Moscow University, both had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with early nineteenth-century German philosophy. At Moscow, however, Schelling prevailed almost to the exclusion of other German philosophers. Mikhajl Pavlov, who had taught at the University since 1820, was a self-professed adherent of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*, while his younger colleague Nikolaj Nadeždin admired Schelling’s aesthetics. Both propounded Schelling’s views in their lectures in the early 1830s, and Nadeždin offered several articles on Schelling in early issues of *Telescope*, which he edited. Both Pavlov and Nadeždin were very careful to emphasize the conformity of Schelling’s views with religious faith, a reasonable stance, given that Schelling’s views, too, had been attacked—both in Germany and in Russia—in the 1810s as “pantheist” and “atheist.” But Pavlov and Nadeždin

³ “L’architecte de ce travail des siècles, c’est l’esprit unique et vivant, l’esprit divin, dont c’est la nature de se révéler de plus en plus, et d’être cependant toujours élevé au-dessus des notions de la spéculation philosophique” (Prévost 1833, 120).

⁴ “The architect of this ancient work is the one and living mind, whose attribute consists precisely in unceasingly revealing himself more and more.” Prévost’s French is rather different.

appear fully to have believed that their insights stood “in the very closest relationship to religion, the revelation of God himself” (Pustarnakov 1998, 103–104; Koyré 1929, ch. 2). Such statements cohered with the manner in which philosophy was taught at Moscow University. Knowledge was never supposed to challenge faith: if it did, it was false. This proposition, drilled into students at every turn, would inform the approach Mežević, Stankevič and other young Moscow graduates took to Hegel. It accorded well with the interpretation of Hegel then being promoted in France.

Having published his translation of Prévost’s article on Hegel in 1833, Mežević went on to place several other translations in *Telescope*, including pieces on Schelling and Kant (Karmazinskaja 1994, 562–563). For him, Prévost’s article appears not to have become the source of a more sustained interest in Hegel. Stankevič responded differently. Once he had translated Willm’s article on Hegel for *Telescope* in 1835, he went on to study Hegel with deep ardor. Perhaps, this was because his prior exposure to philosophy had been greater, or perhaps it was because Willm’s essay was more inviting (in addition to being more accurate than Prévost’s). Yet, it was also the case that Stankevič was at a critical juncture in his young life at the time he agreed to undertake the translation.

While studying at Moscow University for 4 years, Stankevič boarded at Mikhajl Pavlov’s house, and through him, met members of the old philosophical circle, the Wisdom Lovers (Pustarnakov 1998, 330–334). The results of his conversations with them, the imprint of Schelling’s thought, left traces in his writings of 1833, including a poem, “Podvig Žizni” (Ginzburg, 1964, 146). Most notably, however, these traces stand out in a philosophical manuscript entitled “Moja metafizika” (1833), probably composed as part of a letter to his friend, Ianuarii Neverov, who had also studied at Moscow University. Scholars disagree over the extent to which this manuscript reveals a consistent adherence to Schelling’s views (Randolph 2007, 185–189; Kornilov 1915, 125–126). Indeed, it was not until 1834, when he graduated, that Stankevič began to study Schelling’s work in any depth. He described this enterprise and its results in great detail in letters to Neverov (Stankevič, 1914, 283–284, 290–291, 293, 301, 317, 337–338).

In later years, Neverov would remember Stankevič’s turn toward philosophy as a radical shift. Until then, Neverov claimed, Stankevič had largely been preoccupied with poetry, and indeed the latter published roughly twenty poems between 1829 and 1834. Then Stankevič not only lost faith in his talent as a poet—burning his manuscripts and even buying up published copies in order to destroy them—but also questioned whether poetry was an intellectually adequate medium. “In his soul, he no longer sought poetic images but answers to the great questions of life” (Neverov 1880, 747). Stankevič’s letters, particularly those to Neverov beginning in the spring of 1834, corroborate this testimony. Alongside of numerous (old) declarations concerning his lack of poetic talent, one finds new expressions of concern about the ethical value of his life. Among these concerns was “egoism” and the dedication of one’s life to a wider community: “I cannot say that I acted against duty, but it seems to me that I gave in too much to egoism, and for that reason I was always incapable of spiritual elevation (*vysokosti dušy*), and that always made me dissatisfied with myself” (Stankevič 1914, 255, 283–284).

Writing in April 1834, Stankevič still adhered to the mode of Romantic introspection that, according to Lidija Ginzburg, predominated in his writings of the early 1830s. The conflicted soul had been a central theme in Stankevič's poetry, as it was for his friends (Ginzburg 1964, 146–149). Yet, introspection as an end in itself was beginning to lose its appeal for Stankevič, who gradually let moral and religious priorities take over. He wrote to Neverov: “if I have an *idea fixa*, it is the inculcation of morality and religion in the spirit.” He pledged he would use “all my strength to speed humanity along its path to the kingdom of God, to honor, to faith” (Stankevič 1914, 302–305). The project of reading philosophy was a project of moral self-discipline, but it was no less a religious undertaking. By the spring of 1835, having continued his studies in German philosophy, Stankevič was ready to declare both Kant and Schelling inadequate in this regard: the highest philosophical system must be one that allowed itself to be imbued with religion, and which must in turn be capable of imbuing religion with itself, developing into “pure Christianity” (Stankevič 1914, 317).

The year 1834 was thus a turning-point in Stankevič's intellectual development (Geršenzon 2000, 68; Mann 1983, 114–150). It shaped his receptiveness to Hegel in several ways. By reading Schelling, Stankevič acquired some of the philosophical training he needed to make sense of Hegel's ideas. Stankevič, however, had long been primed to accept one particular interpretation of Hegel's philosophy, that which emphasized its compatibility with religious faith.

Willm's “Essay on the philosophy of Hegel”

Stankevič began translating Willm's article for *Telescope* in November 1835 and it appeared in the journal's next edition (Vill'm 1835). His source was the first installment of Willm's “Essay,” which had appeared in the 1835 edition of *Revue Germanique*, a journal based in Strasbourg, which aimed to introduce German literature and philosophy to a French audience (Willm 1835). When Stankevič undertook his translation, Nadeždin had recently handed over responsibility for the bibliographic section of *Telescope* to Belinskij. The latter looked to his friends to fill its pages, and soon Stankevič began leafing through French journals (Stankevič 1914, 319). He may have chanced across Willm's article in the process. His first surviving reference to it came in a note to a friend written shortly before October 1835 (Stankevič 1914, 423).

Stankevič's chosen article presented Hegel's work in a conservative light. While Willm claimed to be an impartial observer, “too far away from the field of battle” to join either Hegel's defenders or detractors, he labeled Hegel as a “genius” all the same, one who ranked alongside of Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Willm's emphasis lay on continuity, presenting Hegel's philosophical positions as closely related to Schelling's (Stankevič 1890 188–191, 206, 229). Hegel's political conservatism, too, was duly noted: “one of the greatest claims of the Hegelian philosophy” was “to reconcile thought with positive religion, with the state, with the entire instituted religious and political order” (Willm 1836, 22; Stankevič 1890, 203).

Willm's representation of Hegel had much to do with the sources he drew on, and these included many of the individuals mentioned above: Göschel, Gans, Marheineke, Förster, Rosenkranz, and a handful of others. The works he cited by Hegel were also principally the ones they had made available. While he referred briefly to the 1821 edition of *Elements of the philosophy of right*, Willm made more substantial use of *Encyclopedia of philosophical sciences* in the 1833 edition (Willm 1836, 13n1) and of the recently edited *Lectures on the history of philosophy* (Willm, 1836, 28n2), which appear to have been his main source.

It will, therefore, come as no surprise that Willm would belabor the question of Hegel's adherence to Christian faith. Quoting liberally from Göschel, Willm presented the very task of philosophy as a pilgrimage, albeit one of the most extreme kind. It compelled the thinker to leave green pastures for a craggy wilderness, "like a beast which wanders, enchanted by an evil spirit in a barren desert." This was a selfless enterprise, one of self-abnegation, in which emotion must be suppressed. It was not only arduous, but dangerous: "The road is long, and more than one man has died, or collapsed unconscious, before reaching the destination of his pilgrimage." This was the course of the new philosophy, "the philosophy of our time," which, as yet crude and uncouth, was waiting to be recognized by the age that had produced it (Göschel 1832, 1; Willm 1836, 5–6; Stankevič 1890, 185–186). These words must surely have enchanted more than one young man.

Philosophy might be dangerous, but Willm's representation of Hegel was safe. The very first page stipulated that any philosophy that merited study must justify its readers' religious beliefs in the immortality of the soul, free will, and a "Personal, Living God" (Willm 1836, 3; Stankevič 1890, 183–184). Hegel's philosophy, Willm repeatedly assured his readers, satisfied this condition. Where reasoning and inherited religious faith had previously been divided, Willm claimed, Hegel had sealed them together in complete, perfect, and lasting unity (Willm 1836, 31; Stankevič 1890, 212). Willm backed up this claim by quoting liberally from Hegel himself, although he systematically omitted passages in which Hegel criticized contemporary theology and made strategic alterations in order to avoid ambiguities. Stankevič followed Willm each step of the way, sometimes augmenting the effect through his own choice of words.

The first notable alteration concerned "spirit," or "Geist." The term is admittedly complex, and it may help to remind oneself once more what Hegel meant by it. Spirit is not simply mind, but, as Frederick Beiser described it, a "structure of self-consciousness" (Beiser 2005, 113). The subject achieves self-knowledge by identifying with objects around it, learning its limitations, and transcending them. Negation is crucial to self-realization. Depending on context, this subject can be a person, or humanity as a whole, or indeed a universal, God-like being. The latter is sometimes referred to as "the absolute," which develops through time toward self-recognition. In the *Lectures on the history of philosophy*, this development is identified as "the life of God" (Hegel 1833, 36). As previously mentioned, critics did not find this equation with God convincing. Partly, this was because they were committed to the notion of the Christian God as an independent being, possessed of

a free will, and having existed before all time. What kind of God needed an other to define and realize himself, and how could such a God be described as free?

Accordingly, Willm and Stankevič were uneven in translating the word “spirit” (esprit, *dukh*). The word could be allowed to stand if spirit could be shown to pertain to humanity as a whole (Willm 1836, 22; Stankevič 1890, 203), or to the guiding principles underwriting the development of philosophy (Willm 1836, 50–51; Stankevič 1890, 234). Here and there, Willm and Stankevič helped Hegel along, such as where he proclaimed the essence of the spirit to be eternal. Thus, “the immortal essence of spirit” (das unvergängliche Wesen des Geistes, Hegel 1833, 53) could become “the present being of our spirit” (настоящее бытие нашего духа) (Willm 1836, 55; Stankevič 1890, 238).

By contrast, in passages where spirit began to sound uncomfortably like a universal being, and a being with a will, they were inclined to switch nouns, or again, excise material.

This is particularly noticeable in the following passage from *Lectures on the history of philosophy*, where Hegel has just distinguished the life of the spirit from organic life in nature: plants and animals are tied to their physical bodies, but this is not true of spirit.

Die Entwicklung des Geistes ist Herausgehn, Sichauseinanderlegen, und zugleich Zusichkommen. Alles, was im Himmel und auf Erden geschieht—ewig geschieht,—das Leben Gottes und alles was zeitlich gethan wird, strebt nur darnach hin, dass der Geist sich erkenne, sich selber gegenständlich mache, sich finde, für sich selber werde, sich mit sich zusammenschliesse. Er ist Verdoppelung, Entfremdung, aber um sich selbst finden zu können, um zu sich selbst kommen zu können. Nur diess ist Freiheit; frei ist, was nicht auf ein Anderes sich bezieht, nicht von ihm abhängig ist (Hegel 1833, 35–36).⁵

While Willm rendered “Geist” as “esprit,” Stankevič, chose “um,” or mind. A passage describing the free development of the absolute spirit thus becomes a passage describing the development of the mind, presumably, an individual mind. The results, however, sound like a recipe for insanity:

Ум, развиваясь, выходит из себя, развертывается и в то-же время возвращается к себе или сознает себя. Это действие возвращения к себе, сознания самого себя, можно принять за высшую и абсолютную цель ума. Вот куда он стремится. Все, что происходит в небе и на земле, все, что происходит вечно, имеет одну цель, чтобы ум познал себя, нашел себя, сделался предметом своей собственной деятельности, *сделался для самого себя*; если он, повидимому, раздвояется, отчуждается, выходит

⁵ “The development of spirit is to go forth, separate out into parts, and simultaneously recover itself. All that takes place in heaven and on earth—takes place eternally—, the life of God, and all that occurs in time strives toward only [one goal]: that the spirit should recognize itself, become its own object, find itself, become for itself, join together with itself. It is made double, alienated, but in order to find itself, it must be able to recover itself. This alone is freedom: that is free, which is not connected to an other, not dependent on it.”

из себя, то это единственно для того, чтобы найти себя, чтобы лучше войти в себя. По этому-то он свободен (Stankevič 1890, 227).⁶

Numerous other details have changed here: the words “the life of God” (das Leben Gottes), for example, have been removed. The meaning of freedom, too, has changed. As Hegel explains, it is the experience of contradictions that constitutes the freedom of the spirit. Stankevič, bound to a more Orthodox Christian conception of freedom, insists that the mind is free *so that* it can experience contradictions and thus develop.

The difference is a fundamental one. Hegel notes earlier on in the *Lectures on the history of philosophy* that the difference between man and animal lies in self-consciousness. Yet, he dismisses as banal the “old prejudice” that humans are distinct from animals by virtue of their capacity for thought. Thoughts may distinguish human beings, but thoughts only become noble when they rise to the level of self-reflection: when “thought has searched for itself,” has “invented” or “found” (erfunden) itself (Hegel 1833, 15). The second step is missing in Willm and Stankevič’s version of the “Essay.” “Thought” (*mysl’*) raises human beings above animals; “thought” is “noblest, best” (Willm 1836, 37; Stankevič 1890, 219–220). Without understanding the distinction between thought and self-consciousness, however, it is difficult to comprehend Hegel’s views on freedom. In a related passage, Hegel explains that in human beings, freedom is precisely the state of having achieved self-knowledge: having identified with the objects around one, having understood one’s true relationship to them, and thereby having gained autonomy. Reason’s passage through these stages constitutes freedom. According to Hegel, this recognition is a watershed moment in the development of world history. Even a slave, since he is endowed with reason, is free if he attains self-recognition, “being for himself.” In this light, Hegel explains the difference between “African and Asian peoples” on the one hand, and Ancient Greeks, Romans, and modern people on the other: the latter are self-aware, and thus actively free, whereas the former are not self-aware, and thus only potentially so (Hegel 1833, 34). Willm chose simply to cut the lines about the African and Asian peoples (Willm 1836, 43). Surprisingly, Stankevič attempted to reinsert them, but because the difference between thought and self-consciousness was not clear to him, the results were strange: “Hegel means people who lost their rights of personhood and property: the slaves were such in ancient times, as are black people in the present—things, and not people” (Stankevič 1890, 226n1).

Stankevič had flattened Hegel’s philosophical views to increase their conformity with Christianity (of any denomination). In doing so, he presented a version of Hegel’s philosophy that resembled the very most conservative interpretations offered by Right Hegelians. It is unlikely, however, that Stankevič appreciated this

⁶ “The mind, developing, goes out of itself, unfolds, and simultaneously returns to itself and recognizes itself. This activity of returning to itself, the consciousness of itself, may be accepted as the highest and absolute aim of the mind. That is what it strives toward. All that takes place in heaven and on earth, all that takes place eternally, has only one goal, that mind should come to know itself, find itself, make itself the object of its own activity, *become for itself*. If it seems to be made double, to be alienated from itself, go out of itself, then that is only so as to find itself, enter into itself better. That is precisely why it is free.” Italics are in the Russian original.

point. Only when he moved to Berlin would he come to understand such subtleties, and at that time, his religious ardor began to wane.

Getting to know Hegel better

Stankevič himself admitted that he did not “know” Hegel in a letter to Neverov from 24 November 1835, around the time he translated Willm’s tract. Knowing is of course an ambiguous term, but it seems that the process of translation was indeed Stankevič’s first systematic exposure to Hegel’s ideas. His lack of familiarity is confirmed by another letter from 24 November 1835, to Mihajl Bakunin. Having informed Bakunin that he was translating Willm’s article, Stankevič noted his joy at having found “some of my beloved ideas in Hegel” and pledged to continue studying philosophy (Stankevič 1914, 338, 595). This did not immediately translate into reading Hegel.

While working on his translation, Stankevič appears to have consulted Hegel’s *Encyclopedia of philosophical sciences* and *Lectures on the history of philosophy*, since he inserted two footnotes into the text, correcting minor inaccuracies in the French translation (Stankevič 1890, 232n1 and 226 n1). Yet, he appears not to have owned these books, since the following year, beginning in March, he began to report to Neverov and Bakunin on efforts to obtain “Hegel,” without naming specific titles. In May 1836, Stankevič admitted he still had not read Hegel: “I read through [Fichte’s] *Bestimmung des Menschen*; [...] reconciled with Schelling, and, without having read him, began better to understand Hegel.” In November, he was still eagerly expecting the thirteen volumes of Hegel’s posthumous collected works (Stankevič 1914, 349, 604, 619, 621, 624).

By March 1836, Stankevič had decided that he would need to travel to the source, to “listen to lectures in Berlin university” (Stankevič 1914, 604). Awaiting his father’s permission, he did not sit with hands folded, but applied himself to reading various histories of philosophy—Krug and Reinhold—together with Hegel’s predecessors, Kant, Fichte, and Schelling (Stankevič 1914, 368, 624, 598, 607). Stankevič left Russia the following year, accompanied by another friend, Timofei Granovskij. Arriving in Berlin in October 1837, they immediately headed to the University to catch lectures by Gans and Hotho, as well as by one of Hegel’s former students, Karl Friedrich Werder, who taught philosophy at Berlin until 1838 (Stankevič 1914, 160). They very quickly engaged him as their private tutor.

The choice suited the previous tenor of Stankevič’s philosophical interests well. John Toews lists Werder among several “major spokesmen” of Center Hegelianism in the 1830s, alongside of Michelet and Hotho (Toews 1980, 87, 216). Under Werder’s guidance, Stankevič would finally embark upon a systematic study of Hegel’s works, beginning with the *Science of logic*, and proceeding through the *Lectures on aesthetics* and *Encyclopedia of philosophical sciences* (Stankevič 1914, 641, 650, 656, 469, 492). Werder had explicitly warned him to stay away from the *Phenomenology of spirit*, which, as Stankevič reported to Bakunin, “requires revisions. That was Hegel’s first work, in which his thought broke free with all the intensity of a birth hastening to reach its goal” (Stankevič 1914, 641).

It was only reasonable that Stankevič would proceed from here to read other Center Hegelians, notably Karl Rosenkranz' *Encyclopedia of theological sciences* (which Willm, too, had cited) and Hotho's *Preliminary studies for life and art* (Stankevič 1914, 649, 492). These two works seemed to enhance one part of the worldview that had led Stankevič to the study of philosophy in 1834: the need to sacrifice personal interests, both out of dedication to the wider community, and out of dedication to "spiritual elevation," which could only be attained by renouncing "egoism" (see above). In a letter to Bakunin dated 21/9 January 1838, Stankevič came full circle. Combining his reading of Hegel's *Aesthetics*, Rosenkranz' *Encyclopedia*, and Hotho's *Preliminary studies*, he had reached new insights into the attainment of true self-consciousness. As Hegel had explained in the *Aesthetics*, love was one means by which the self could develop, by identification with another. But romantic love had its limitations, since it hinged on the particular feelings that united the lovers, their particular identities. The lover's mistake was to identify "his life," "his consciousness" in "her." Hegel called this "infinite obstinacy," Stankevič explained: "it is too individualistic, the choice is a caprice, the obstinacy of particularity." What was needed were ties to the community, "to the objective content of human existence, to the family, to political matters, to the state, to religion" (Stankevič 1914, 651).

Religion was the final word here, but it was far less prominent in Stankevič's letters of 1838 and 1839 than it had been in 1834. Indeed, when Stankevič explained his new position in a letter to the Frolov brothers in 1839, God appeared to have been eclipsed by the state: "I am becoming more and more convinced of that, which Hegel asserts: that the sphere of the state is the only salvation from subjective moods, that this is where man can find support (*opora*)" (Stankevič 1914, 680).

Conclusions

Historians of Russian intellectual history have often used Hegel's phrase, the "the real is the rational and the rational is the real" to describe the stance that Stankevič developed in the 1830s under Hegel's influence, and which Bakunin and Belinskij followed him in accepting. To explain why a conservative reading of Hegel would predominate among Stankevič's friends in the late 1830s, some scholars have invoked idiosyncratic personal traits and experiences. In his history of Hegelianism in Russia, Guy Planty Bonjour, for example, would simply state as a fact that Stankevič prioritized the "spiritual principle" and the state, without offering any explanation (Planty-Bonjour 1974, 15, 20). Stankevič's biographer, Brown had more to say about Belinskij, whose "period of reconciliation" he attributed to the influence of Stankevič, as well as to the "kind of man [Belinskij] was and the complex set of psychological pressures that were at work on him at the time" (Brown 1966, 107). Other historians were more inclined to think that Stankevič, Bakunin, and Belinskij were simply ill-informed when they approached Hegel. Thus, Martin Malia would explain that Bakunin and Belinskij had "misunderstood" the *Philosophy of right* when they read it, as if a technical error had occurred (Malia 1965, 204). The analysis of personalities, personal experiences, and serendipitous

misreadings has its place in intellectual history. Yet, in the case of Hegel's arrival in Russia, the results have been misleading.

By tracing sources and verifying translations, a host of influences can be identified, in particular, the figures later identified as Center and Right Hegelians. These effectively wrote their interpretation into works by Hegel that they made accessible in the early 1830s. In some cases, they were able to use the press that published Hegel's collected works to publicize their own views, and they further impressed readers by saturating their prose with vivid imagery. Their representations of Hegel's views as compatible with religious faith and supportive of the political and social status quo were thus ready to hand. In addition, they appear genuinely to have appealed to readers outside of Germany, in Russia as well as in France. Stankevič, Bakunin, and Belinskij were, thus, far from eccentric in adopting this interpretation.

Just as the Marheinekes and Hothos were on the verge of triumph in the mid-1830s, however, they were routed by their cousins, the Left Hegelians. The latter succeeded in convincing the German public, and many subsequent readers, that when Hegel spoke of "all-embracing spirit," he could not possibly have had the Christian God in mind. Stankevič appears to have reached the same conclusion while studying in Berlin in the late 1830s. His friends in St. Petersburg and Moscow, including Belinskij and Herzen, underwent a similar development in the early 1840s. But this was not an outcome anyone might have predicted just a few years earlier.

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