

the indispensability of Spirit to Hegel's political philosophy. However, as we have seen, the attempt to bring Spirit back into a world that is not prepared for Hegel's science has its inherent limits. These may very well be the limits of Hegel's philosophy. Yet, regardless of whether one is persuaded by Hegel's political philosophy in the end (and critics abound), Brudner succeeds in bringing to bear the ambitious stakes of that philosophy, even as its most profound teachings are likely to remain beyond reach. In this respect, Brudner's book delivers on its promise of presenting an "undistorted" Hegel, who will no doubt continue to agitate readers through his transformative political science.

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Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15.
2. See John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 33.
3. Timothy Luther, *Hegel's Critique of Modernity: Reconciling Individual Freedom and Community* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009), 359.
4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, §252, 225. For a helpful discussion of this issue, see Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 150.
5. G. W. F. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, 15.
6. See Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

Nahum Brown. *Hegel's Actuality Chapter of the Science of Logic: A Commentary*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019. 126 pages.

Hegel's modal theory has always drawn the attention of Hegel scholars but only a few works have closely examined what he argues in his treatment of modality. Nahum Brown's book contributes to this specific field without concerning itself with the global arguments of Hegel's *Logic*, and without drawing a global conclusion from Hegel's local arguments. The book offers readers a detailed guide to Hegel's modal theory. Hegel's *Logic* allows local readings by restricting the category in question to its own logical development in order to reveal the truth of categories. Brown elegantly benefits from

this aspect of the Logic, thereby making explicit Hegel's local arguments for those who are familiar with Hegel's Logic but not with his discussion of modality, and also for those who are not familiar with Hegel's Logic but are familiar with modal metaphysics. Brown's book has the potential to address both Hegelian and non-Hegelian readerships by undertaking the difficult task of regenerating Hegel's complex arguments under twenty-seven rigid premises. These premises render Hegel's arguments more approachable for those who are not familiar with Hegel's vocabulary. Although he is aware that, for some readers, the rigidity of the premises may incur the risk of failing to represent Hegel's transitional ideas and concepts, Brown defends his position on the grounds that it reveals the mechanics of Hegel's dialectic in a clear and detailed way (p. xv).

One difficulty in close textual examination is to decide how external resources will be used to explain the interpreted text itself. In the explanation of some premises, Brown chooses to bring external thinkers into his analysis in order to make Hegel's complex arguments more understandable. To a certain extent, this creates a filter through which the reader is forced to engage with Hegel's ideas. Brown's view that "the 'Actuality' chapter is Hegel's version of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* book *Theta*" (p. xx) gives an indication as to the filter through which the reader is to engage with Hegel's modal treatment. Nonetheless, Brown keeps external remarks to a minimum and aims to analyze Hegel's logic of modality on its own. Overall, the book offers a persuasive interpretation of Hegel's modal theory, and deserves praise above any criticism, because of its exhaustive contribution to Hegel scholarship in general, and because of its contribution to the understanding of Hegel's modal metaphysics in particular.

Brown's book consists of three chapters. Each corresponds to a subsection of Hegel's modal treatment: formal, real, and absolute modality, respectively. The book develops a systematic interpretation by means of twenty-seven premises drawn from Hegel's arguments. One of the major aims of the book is to provide an interpretation that will serve as an alternative or a complement to the conclusion reached in some of the main traditional readings of Hegel's "Actuality" chapter (e.g. in the works of Burbidge, di Giovanni, Henrich, and Houlgate), a conclusion that argues for the necessity of contingency in Hegel's system. Brown finds the traditional readings to some extent worrisome and states that "[i]f Hegel means that contingency is only one of many necessary concepts, necessity turns out to be more pri-

mary than contingency, in the sense that all concepts are of necessity and come from necessary developments. In contrast to necessity, contingency plays only a marginal role as merely one of these necessary concepts” (p. 79). Brown presents his account as “robustly dialectical,” and accordingly he emphasizes the mutually transitive aspect of necessity and contingency. Thus Brown argues that when we talk about the necessity of contingency, we should also discuss the contingency of necessity. For Brown, this robust dialectic between contingency and necessity completes the conclusions given in the traditional readings.

Notably, Brown suggests a reading that seems to favor the position of possibility over actuality in Hegel’s treatment. Even though he does not explicitly propose a grand theory about Hegel’s concept of possibility, when the relevant arguments are considered together, they present Hegel’s concept of actuality both (a) in its relation to possibility and (b) as its derivation from possibility. The rest of this review will be devoted to the set of arguments about the relationship between actuality and possibility, a relationship which amounts to the idea of actualization out of possibilities. The suggested reading of actualization is one of the intriguing ideas with which Brown paves the way for a distinctive understanding of Hegel’s concepts of actuality and possibility.

Implicit though it is, Brown maintains the idea of actualization in various premises. The primary motivation for Brown’s understanding of actualization is bound up with actualization out of *possibilities*. *Pace* Brown, I argue that Hegel cannot hold this idea because, as Brown himself would agree (p. 31), actuality is always prior to possibility. The priority of actuality over possibility, when taken not only as an argumentative aspect of Hegel’s text but also as the nature of actuality, prohibits any reading that would favor the priority of possibility over actuality—i.e. the idea of actualization out of possibilities—for if an actual emerges out of possibilities, the actual had to presuppose its possibilities, i.e. possibilities had to be prior to actuality. Even if one were to consider Brown’s interpretation of actualization as offering the closest line of thought to Hegel’s arguments for real actuality, this would still not amount to actualization out of possibilities, since real actuality emerges from conditions, which are themselves actuals but are recognized by the conditioned actual as its own possibilities.

The priority of actuality and actualization out of conditions (actuals) enable Hegel to account for possibility within the conceptual sphere of actuality. In other words, possibility can only be a moment in actuality. Without

the priority of actuality and actualization out of actuals, we face a problem of *transcendent* possibilities, from which actuality emerges in the manner of Leibnizian transcendent possibilities (and this is certainly not something that Brown is willing to argue for).

The idea of actualization out of possibilities has its foundation in Brown's first premise: (P1) "What is actual is existence." The premise bears on the following passage from the *Science of Logic*:

Actuality is formal inasmuch as, as a first actuality, it is only *immediate*, *unreflected* actuality, and hence is only in this form determination but not as the totality of form. And so it is nothing more than a *being*, or *existence* in general. But because *by essence* it is not mere existence but is the form-unity of the in-itselfness or inwardness and externality, it immediately contains *in-itselfness* or *possibility*.¹

P1 tells us that, given that actuality is an immediacy, its minimal determination is existence. Brown, by referring to the logic of existence in *Science of Logic*, suggests two senses with which we can grasp what existence here means: (a) the *immediate* fact of existence (or immediacy as such), and (b) the totality of conditions from which something emerges (pp. 1–2). The first connotation is straightforward, as the opening of categories in the *Science of Logic* mostly begin with an immediacy as a logical given. This can be seen as one reason why Hegel thinks that actuality, by virtue of being an immediacy, is nothing more or less than being or existence, for being and existence, without further specification, imply immediacy. As for the immediacy of actuality, Brown rightly notes that "the modal version of *to be* is *to be actual*" (p. 2) where to be is to be being in the opening of the *Science of Logic*, or to be is to exist in the logic of existence.

However, for Brown this is not only because what is actual is immediate, i.e. a logical given, and because the actual, by virtue of its immediacy, appears as being or existence; it is also because actuality emerges as an immediacy from essence, as in Hegel's account of existence emerging as an immediacy out of essence. That is, what is actual is existence because it also conveys the sense of existence as emerging process (p. 1). This means that actuality emerges from essence. Brown's idea of predicating actuality with existence, by virtue of the second sense of existence, paves the way for interpreting Hegel's formal actuality as a process of emerging.

Given that in the domain of modality, actuality sustains a dialectic with possibility (not with nothing or essence), the argument suggests that actuality emerges from possibility (p. 2). If one thinks that actualization is

embedded in Hegel's first account of actuality, then it seems plausible to explain it through possibility. However, this view could be taken as implying, problematically, that actuals are to be recognized as actualized possibilities, for if every actual emerges out of possibilities, then every actual is nothing more than actualized *possibilities*. This seems to conflict with the claim that actuality is prior to possibility.

This inevitably leads to the point that renders the logic unable to recognize the immediacy of actuality. If actuality, or whatever is actual, is the actualization of possibility, then the actual cannot be immediate because it requires possibilities to be at hand prior to itself. But Hegel explicitly states that actuality is immediate, unreflected, as opposed to possibility as the reflectedness (mediatedness) of actuality (SL, 478; GS, 11, 381–382). That is because the concept of actuality, which results from the identity of the inner and outer (SL 464; GS, 11, 368), is alien to the logic of inner and outer. The logic of the inner and outer is governed by the principle of difference, i.e. the inner is not the outer, and the outer is not the inner. So, if actuality is their identity, then actuality requires a new logical structure to which the logic of previous categories is alien. Thus, actuality has to be immediate, not mediated, or more precisely not emergent from possibility. Therefore, there must be an opening argument where actuality precedes possibility by virtue of its immediacy, and where actuality is not reduced to existence on account of its more complex determinations (e.g. immediately containing possibility) that cannot be satisfied by the concept of existence.

If we hold on to the immediacy of actuality, we realize that actuality does not emerge from possibility, because immediacy is a quality that only the concept of actuality can hold. As Brown admits, actuality is the point of presuppositionless beginning for Hegel's modal treatment (p. 2). However, he also argues (p. 1) that P1 holds the second sense of existence as emerging process, a sense which is missing in Hegel's formal actuality, and this enables Hegel to provide true determination of actuality, or more precisely to begin from actuality as such without any further determinations. Brown envisions actuality as "emerged from a prior source in possibility" (p. xviii), leading the reader to a position that seems incompatible with the priority of actuality over possibility. Importantly, this seems inconsistent with the argument in P14 where Brown agrees with Burbidge's interpretation that "possibility consistently comes after actuality" (p. 31).

The emerging process does not effectively demonstrate the derivation of possibility from actuality. Rather, it creates a problem as it presupposes the priority of possibility to actuality. The logic avoids this problem by beginning with actuality and then deriving possibility as the in-itselfness of actuality, an implicit inner moment through which actuality further determines itself. Though actuality is immediate, we cannot overlook the fact that it is derived as an identity from the logic of inner and outer (SL, 464; GS, 11, 368). If actuality as immediacy is explicit/outer, then its opposition, its implicitness/innerness, has to be possibility in the logic of modality.

To recapitulate: to conceive of actuality as existence, particularly as an emerging process, is to create the problem of presupposing an alien form to the logic of actuality. Hegel, in multiple places, remarks on the distinction between actuality and existence (SL, 478; GS, 11, 381; and SL, 482; GS, 11, 385–386). The most explicit of such remarks is given in a *Zusatz* to section 6 of the “Introduction” to the *Encyclopedia Logic*: “I dealt with actuality too in a quite elaborate Logic, and I distinguished it quite clearly and directly . . . from being-there [*Dasein*], from existence, and from other determinations.”² This remark may impinge on the representative power of Brown’s first premises about Hegel’s opening argument.

Furthermore, Brown elaborates on the idea of actualization out of possibilities in Hegel’s account of real actuality and its relation to real possibility, where Hegel argues that an actual, as self-subsistent, produces itself in relation to the other self-subsistent (SL 482; GS, 11, 386).

In P14, Brown refers to the following passage from Hegel about real actuality:

Real actuality is *as such* at first the thing of many properties, the existing world; but it is not the existence that dissolves into appearance but, as actuality, it is at the same time an in-itself and reflection-within-itself; it preserves itself in the manifoldness of mere existence; its externality is an inner relating only to *itself*. What is actual *can act*; something announces its actuality by *what it produces*. Its relating to an other is the manifestation of *itself*, and this manifestation is neither a transition (the immediate something *refers* to the other in this way) nor an appearing (in this way the thing only is *in relation* to an other); it is a self-subsistent which has its immanent reflection, its determinate essentiality, in another self-subsistent. (SL, 482; GS, 11, 385–386)

Brown argues that Hegel here refers to the opening of his account of actuality as existence (p. 30). However, Brown fails to emphasize that Hegel also immediately adds the nuance that actuality, by virtue of containing in-itselfness and reflection-within-itself, is not existence as such. Accordingly, containing

in-itselfness and reflection-within-itself allows an actual to be self-subsistent; by contrast, as we know from the logic of existence, an existent (thing) subsists only in its properties. Actuality amounts to a structure of relation where one self-subsistent relates to another, whereas an existent relates to a property. An actual relates to an other of its own kind, whereas an existent relates to an other of a different kind. This produces a conceptual difference between actuality and existence. However, Brown emphasizes only the similarity between actuality and existence without regard to their distinction. This leads him to read relations among actuals as a kind of actualization out of possibilities; for he conceives of actuality alongside actualization (or the emerging process) out of possibilities as if it were similar to the emerging of existence out of conditions.

P14 and P15 account for this idea by proposing that the relation of actuality to possibility should be understood as the actualization that takes place in the form of the actualization of *possibilities*. For Brown, “an actuality *produces itself*, in the sense that it is at first only something that might come about, but must become itself *in the possibilities of others*” (p. 30). This explains how an actual operates as a possible in another actual. The idea makes sense when the inclusion of possibility in real actuality is at hand (SL, 482; GS, 11, 386). The inclusion enables an actual to be possible in relation to another actual. In turn, the actual, as the possibility of another actual, plays a constitutive role in the emergence of another actual. “This actuality, therefore, which constitutes the possibility of a fact, is not *its own possibility* but the in-itself of an *other actual*” (SL 483; GS, 11, 386). For example, in the case of a rainbow, the dispersion, reflection, and refraction of the sunlight are individual actualities, which form a rainbow, another actuality in which each individual actuality is contained and recognized as the possibilities of the rainbow. Hegel describes the relation of actuals as conditioning relation where the possibilities of an actual are taken as the conditions out of which the actual comes to be.

In P18, Brown emphasizes the transitory relationship between actuality and possibility by stating that “[c]onditions are both actuality and possibility” since they are immediately given in virtue of their actuality, and are “latent possibilities” in another actual that arises from themselves (pp. 42–43). However, by stating that something becomes actual through its possibilities, P18 can be taken to imply that conditions are only possibilities (p. 41). In P21, Brown does seem to favor the idea that “it is necessary that if something has become actual, it must have become actual through other actuals, that is, through conditions” (p. 53); however in his explanation of P21, Brown argues, referring back to P18, that

“thought discovers material actualization, where something initial comes into actuality only if all of its possibilities (as conditions) are made present” (p. 54).

Brown presents the idea that actuality comes out of actuals (pp. 53–55) as a viable way of understanding Hegel’s argument about the emergence of real actuality. However, the references to P1, along with the arguments in P14, P15, and P18, make Brown’s account of actualization as emergence out of possibilities appear to be quite similar to Hegel’s account of existence emerging out of conditions; the difficulty is that Brown does not sufficiently distinguish between Hegel’s account of existence and Hegel’s account of actuality.

Brown’s interpretation demands an answer to the following question: if the idea of actualization out of possibilities is right, how can one appreciate actualization in Hegel’s treatment of real modalities, without also accepting that possibility is prior to actuality? Either (a) one should follow Brown’s inadequately emphasized yet promising suggestion that an actual has to actualize an other actual (i.e. that actualization has to involve relations among the same kind); or else (b) one should admit that possibilities are problematically concealed in the immediacy of actuality (i.e. that actuality is not immediate but only assumed to be immediate). The former option finds support in Hegel’s account of real actuality, since one can argue that each actual operates as a possibility only in another actual. The latter option points to a serious problem that further raises the question of the viability of Hegel’s analysis, and the viability of interpretations that follow rather than oppose Hegel. As Brown would agree (p. 31), the issue here does not concern those who recognize that in formal, real, and absolute modalities, Hegel is consistent in arguing that possibility is derived from actuality. Accordingly, the premises articulated by Brown which seem to favor the idea of actualization out of possibility fail to clarify the meaning of one of Hegel’s prominent arguments; as a result, unfortunately, this book leaves it up to the reader to decide what is ultimately meant by Hegel’s idea of the priority of actuality over possibility insofar as this idea relates to the question of how actualization takes place.

To conclude: although readers may find many of the book’s arguments to be in need of further debate and discussion, Brown fundamentally offers a satisfying set of arguments that help the reader to understand Hegel’s complex ideas in minute detail. For this reason, it is an essential companion for Hegelians and non-Hegelians seeking a guide to one of Hegel’s most difficult treatments.

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Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. George di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 478. Throughout this review, I have relied on the Cambridge edition of the *Science of Logic*, translated by di Giovanni. However, I have made the following minor changes to di Giovanni's translation: *Existenz* is translated as "existence," and *Reflexion-in-sich* translated as "reflection-within-itself." Henceforth, citations to the Cambridge translation will be made parenthetically within the body of the text, using the abbreviation "SL" for the *Science of Logic*. For convenience, the parenthetical citations will also include references to the volume and page number of the critical edition (the *Gesammelte Werke* edition) of Hegel's works. Thus the parenthetical citation for the current quotation would appear as (SL, 478; GS, 11, 381).

2. The quotation is taken from G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991), 29–30.