

# ELBERT HUBBARD'S MANUSCRIPT MUDDLE: RESTORING WHITMAN'S "SUNDAY EVENING LECTURES" ON METAPHYSICS

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GARY WIHL, ed. "The Manuscript of Walt Whitman's 'Sunday Evening Lectures,'" *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 18 (Winter 2001), 107-133.

WHITMAN'S SYMPATHETIC RESPONSE to German metaphysics has long been recognized, though scholars have perhaps focused too narrowly on the supposed discovery of a Hegelian dialectic in the structure of his poems.<sup>1</sup> More fundamentally Whitman was attracted by Idealism's ever-developing Absolute Spirit, since it provided a single answer to Whitman's enduring two-fold question: the role of the subjective self in the objective world, and the grounds for belief that a unifying purpose ultimately shapes natural and social history. Something like that thematic attraction is at least implied by Whitman's two extended prose commentaries on German philosophy: (1) "Carlyle from American Points of View," an essay in *Specimen Days* (1882) that counters Carlyle's pessimism with what Whitman considers the more "American" ideas of Hegel; and (2) the "Sunday Evening Lectures," a series of manuscript fragments about the Idealists, published posthumously in *Notes and Fragments* (1899), edited by Richard Maurice Bucke.<sup>2</sup>

Since Bucke has occasionally been accused of inappropriately shaping and melding Whitman's fragments, and since Edward Grier, unable to find the original manuscript, was forced to rely on Bucke's transcript when he published "Sunday Evening Lectures" in *Notebooks and Unpublished Manuscripts* (1984), Gary Wihl recently made an important contribution to Whitman scholarship by finding the manuscript at the Ransom Humanities Research Center (HRC) at the University of Texas in Austin and then publishing a fresh reader's transcription, backed up with a diplomatic transcript by Ed Folsom and Matthew Miller.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, however, the order of the manuscript pages was seriously mixed up years ago, when they were bound into the volume that Wihl found in the HRC's Hanley Collection. Though he noticed the pages were arranged differently than they had been in *Notes and Fragments*, Wihl too quickly concluded that "at the very least the ordering of the

bound manuscript is more coherent and logical than the version that Bucke first published."<sup>4</sup> In fact the order of the manuscript as currently bound is more mixed-up, and in particular it breaks apart three coherent passages and disperses the pieces, thus creating six sentence fragments and effectively obscuring important parts of the text. By following that disorderly order, the Wihl transcript perpetuates an extraneous muddle.

My central purpose in this review essay is to restore the syntax, continuity, and full sense of those three passages, in that small way clarifying the evidence of Whitman's understanding of German Idealism and its implications. But first we need to consider how the manuscript reached its current state and then more exactly how that differs from the arrangement published by Bucke.

### *Historical Background*

Dr. Bucke—Whitman's designated biographer as well as the superintendent of a large mental asylum in Canada and the enthusiastic promoter of both "cosmic consciousness" and a new water/gas meter invented by his brother-in-law—acquired the "Sunday Evening Lectures" in the spring of 1895, as part of the three-way division of Whitman's books, letters, and manuscripts among his three literary executors (Thomas Harned, Horace Traubel, and Bucke himself). In 1899 Bucke privately published the "Lectures" manuscripts as part of his *Notes and Fragments*, a limited edition intended for Whitman devotees. As item #175 these drafts on metaphysics formed by far the largest single group (eight pages)—and the only one with a title—in the section devoted to Whitman's "Preparatory Reading and Thought."

Had Whitman himself put his manuscript leaves in the order in which Bucke printed them? Possibly. Since Whitman did not number the pages, however, there is no way of knowing that for sure. Nor can we be certain that Bucke did not supplement whatever Whitman had gathered together. In fact we can now see that Bucke did do that at least once, silently inserting some notes from a small booklet Whitman had labeled "Kant."<sup>5</sup> Bucke's introductory note to the "Sunday Evening Lectures" is not very informative about his editorial shaping, merely offering the assurance that "the MS. in my hands is simply a series of fragments which are here given word for word as they stand," together with the guess that "they were probably written in the late sixties or very early seventies."<sup>6</sup> In the summer of 1902 Bucke's transcript was published in Volume 9 of *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman*. The Doctor, however, was not around to celebrate that elegant and more widely distributed edition: he died of a concussion in mid-February, 1902, having slipped and hit his head on an icy porch while admiring the starry sky.

Though most of Bucke's huge Whitman collection was held together until auctioned off in 1935, the "Sunday Evening Lectures" manuscript somehow made its way much earlier into the possession of Elbert Hubbard, founder of the Roycrofters, a William Morris-like "Arts and Crafts" business/community in western New York that specialized in printing self-consciously aesthetic books and inspirational posters. Hubbard (aka Fra Elbertus) spread his ideas by writing and publishing *The Philistine: A Magazine of Protest* and as a flamboyant lecturer with flowing hair and billowing tie. He was probably most famous for his character-building tale "A Message to Garcia" (1899), whose reprints eventually reached 90 million copies.<sup>7</sup>

Not much is known about the relationship of Bucke and Hubbard. We know that Bucke "presented" the "Kant" booklet to him on January 2, 1902, just six weeks before the Doctor's accidental death,<sup>8</sup> but we don't know the circumstances, or if the "Sunday Evening Lectures" manuscript was acquired at the same time. Since the head Roycrofter was relatively wealthy, and since it is hard to believe that Bucke would have given away such an extensive and important set of drafts to someone who was not an active Whitman devotee,<sup>9</sup> I suspect that Hubbard purchased the manuscript.<sup>10</sup>

At some point before his own sudden death in 1915 (he went down with the *Lusitania*), Hubbard had the "Sunday Evening Lectures" manuscript bound in elaborately decorated leather. On the front cover was hand-tooled the image of a robed philosopher in a forest, tracing esoteric symbols on a rocky cliff. On the back cover was a large image of the Roycrofters pressmark, braced by two seahorses. Inside, interleaved at various points among the manuscript, were nine pages of photos and other souvenirs, including the menu of the May 1902 Whitman Fellowship banquet at New York's Hotel St. Denis (Kennebec salmon and filet mignon Delmonico), a personal check (J. H. Johnston to Whitman, 1890, for \$5), and seven images of the poet—four photographs (two of them inscribed "From R. M. Bucke to Elbert Hubbard"), and three engravings, one of which served as frontispiece, with Whitman's neat signature in pencil below and T. H. Donaldson's inked notation at the top: "This etching was signed for Mr. Thomas Donaldson in Philadelphia in 1888 by Walt Whitman."<sup>11</sup> Hubbard's bound volume was, in short, a collector's album,<sup>12</sup> not an intentional new edition of the "Lectures." There is no reason to believe that whoever assembled the manuscript leaves and memorabilia—whether Hubbard or his binder—was trying to improve or correct Bucke's editorial work.

At some later time, probably during or after the Depression, both this leather-bound "Sunday Evening Lectures" and the small "Kant" booklet entered the private collection of T. E. Hanley, a wealthy brick manufacturer in Pennsylvania, most likely by way of the dealer Jacob Schwartz. And both album and booklet finally made their way to Austin

after a 1958 agreement that sent Hanley's wonderful 155,000 piece collection, including hundreds of Whitman items, to the Humanities Research Center.<sup>13</sup>

What then is the status—from an editor's point of view—of the bound "Sunday Evening Lectures"? Since it contains original manuscript, the Hubbard volume obviously takes us to the hand of Whitman himself and thus has clear priority over Bucke's printed edition as we read line-by-line.<sup>14</sup> Hence the value of Wihl's new clear-text version, which conforms (mostly)<sup>15</sup> to the accurate diplomatic transcript made by Folsom and Miller.

The arrangement of the forty-five manuscript pages, however, is another matter. If we examine them closely, we find that while there are about fifteen single-page fragments, the other thirty pages include about a dozen multi-page drafts, giving us a total of approximately twenty-seven discrete documents. Notice the two levels of order here: in composing his multi-page drafts Whitman created numerous short sequences; but there is no sign that he subsequently arranged the twenty-seven documents (multi-page drafts and single pages) in any particular way. So Bucke had to organize them at that higher level, arranging them by topic in his 1899 edition.

Why did Hubbard change the *Notes and Fragments* order when he had the manuscript bound? Wihl speculates that either Bucke changed his mind (which is implausible, since he died before his *N&F* version was re-published, unchanged, in the 1902 *Complete Writings of Walt Whitman*), or Hubbard "exercised his own judgment."<sup>16</sup> I am inclined to believe, however, given the disorder of the new arrangement, that it originated not in anyone's deliberate editorial judgment but as an accident, perhaps in assembly at the binder's table.

Nevertheless, Hubbard's hand-tooled leather volume certainly *looks* authoritative in its library setting a century later, and that aura may have reinforced the natural tendency of an editor aiming at objectivity to adhere exactly to the object he finds. That may be why Wihl consistently followed the order of pages in the album even when that meant leaving several Whitman sentences dangling unintelligibly and why he dismissed the more coherent arrangements in Bucke's edition with comments like "the MS [i.e. the order in the Hubbard volume] does not support that placement."<sup>17</sup>

But objectivity does not require an editor to perpetuate post-authorial arrangements that obscure the meaning of parts of the text. On the contrary, the editor's critical task—beyond accurate transcription—is to work back through whatever dis-arrangements a set of texts may have suffered after the author set them aside, trying to recover whatever sense the original may have had. In this case that means looking beyond the current order of the pages, being guided in particular by their syn-

tactical patterns—including the likelihood that two pages belong together if a sentence fragment at the end of one is completed by a sentence fragment at the beginning of the other.

### *Contrasting the Arrangements of Bucke and Hubbard*

To compare arrangements, we need page numbers, which this document still lacks.<sup>18</sup> So I have listed the pages (Appendix I), following the Folsom/Miller transcript of the Hubbard volume, excluding memorabilia, and then assigned each page a number (its place in Hubbard's sequence), quoted its opening words, and summarized its content. The following outlines use those page numbers on the right. At the left I note the topic shared by a series of pages. Hyphenated page numbers (e.g., 3-4) indicate a continuous, multi-page draft, while the plus sign (e.g., 19+22) marks continuous passages whose pages are now discontinuous in the Hubbard album. Square brackets indicate something is misplaced given the topic of adjacent pages, while boldface type highlights the pages that end or begin with sentence fragments.

*The Hubbard Arrangement:* In a bound album (1902-1915?), HRC

Title: 1  
 Kant: 2, 3-4, 5-6, [7 Leibnitz], 8, 9  
 Fichte: 10-11, 12  
     [13-14 "Finale" Kant]  
 Schelling: 15, 16-17  
     [Miscellaneous: 18, **19**, **20\***, 21, **22**, **23**, **24**]  
 Hegel: 25-26, 27-28, 29, [30 Four Idealists],  
     31, 32, 33-34, [35-36 Kant],  
     37-38, 39, [**40** Religion], 41  
 Four Idealists: 42, **43**, 44a, **\*\* 44b**, **\*\* 45**.

\*An unrelated fragment about themes in literature; not included in *N&F* or *NUPM*.

\*\*Page 44 includes two unrelated fragments. See the facsimile at Wihl, 132.

*The Bucke Arrangement:* From *Notes and Fragments* (1899)

Title: 1, 25\*  
 Hegel: 27-28, 25-26, 29, 37-38-39+**19+22**, 31-32-33-34, 41+page now missing\*\*  
     [21 Religion]\*\*\*  
 Hegel's Precursors:  
     Kant: 3-4, 9, page from "Kant" booklet,\*\*\*\* 5-6, 35-36, 2, 8  
     Fichte: 10-11, 12  
     Schelling: 15, 16-17  
 Four Idealists: 45, **43+24**, 18, 44a, 30, **23+44b**  
 Miscellaneous: 7, 42, 13-14, **40**

\* Title only from page 25.

\*\* Not in Folsom/Miller. Wihl copied it from Bucke (119, n. 25).

\*\*\* Printed as a separate document in *NUPM* (6:2038).

\*\*\*\* Not in Folsom/Miller. Wihl copied it from Bucke (117, n. 2).

At first glance the Bucke arrangement may appear to be less “logical and coherent.” Superficially the mixed-up numbers give that impression, though that is obviously just the consequence of my having used the Hubbard version when assigning page numbers. Wihl apparently found Bucke’s ordering less logical because it starts with Hegel—chronologically the last of the four Idealists. But this is really just a matter of Bucke’s rhetorical decision to begin with the most important figure, rather than the earliest one. And Bucke could have defended his scheme by pointing out that the only sign of Whitman’s intended order of topics is the word “Finale ?” written on a two-page passage (pp. 13-14) that discusses Kant, not Hegel.<sup>19</sup> As we look closer it becomes evident that Bucke’s version is quite coherent, with most of the fragments neatly sorted by topics (Hegel, his precursors, the Idealists as a group) and the rest put in a concluding miscellany. The single exception is a tangential passage on religion (p. 21) inserted at the end of the Hegel section, a page that should probably be in the miscellany.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the Hubbard arrangement seems less logical and coherent the more we examine it. Consider these anomalies of topical order and of syntax:

1) The Kant section, while including an unrelated note on Leibnitz (p. 7), lacks two important passages about Kant, which are misplaced so that one (pp. 13-14) interrupts the Fichte-Schelling discussion,<sup>21</sup> and the other (pp. 35-36) breaks into the Hegel section.

2) The Hegel section is also disrupted at two other points by passages that belong elsewhere—a page on the four Idealists as a whole (p. 30), and a page on religion (p. 40).

3) Most importantly, the shift from Fichte and Schelling (pp. 10-17) to Hegel (pp. 25 ff.) is interrupted by seven miscellaneous and discontinuous pages—two of which (pp. 20, 21) are not even related to metaphysics. Four of the other five (pp. 19, 22, 23, 24) are not really “miscellaneous” but misplaced pages that begin or end with a sentence fragment, pages that were coherently paired in Bucke’s edition. Taken together pages 19+22 form the conclusion of a long passage about Hegel, while pages 23 and 24 are parts of two two-page passages on the Idealists whose missing halves, with complementary sentence fragments, turn up at the end of Hubbard’s arrangement (pp. 23+44b and 43+24).

In summary, two kinds of evidence suggest that Hubbard or his binder “arranged” the manuscript fragments in only a casual, perhaps even accidental way: (1) frequent disruption of the order of topics, and (2) the emergence of six new sentence fragments. The interpretive consequences of topical disorder are not serious, since this is, after all, a gathering of various manuscript drafts and notes, not a finished document with a definite structure. But the textual muddle signaled by the

breaks in syntax reduces our ability to understand Whitman's meaning. Though it is bad enough that three coherent sentences are fractured, the distorting effect is even wider, since what is broken apart and dispersed are not just sentences but the substantial two-page passages in which those sentences were embedded.

But wait. How do we know that Bucke did not illicitly manufacture these three sentences by arbitrarily combining what were originally six unrelated pages? Did Hubbard disassemble Whitman's sentences and their contexts—or just Bucke's fabrications? The question occurs to us because Bucke, Harned, and Traubel have all been accused, sometimes with reason, of occasionally melding various unrelated fragments into an ersatz whole. It is highly unlikely, however, that Bucke formed these three sentences (and pairs of pages) in that way. To understand why, we need to consider both what usually happens in uncritical editorial melding and the facts of this particular case.

Illicit melding sometimes occurs when an editor brings together documents from different sources and runs them together as if they constituted a single document. A clear example is Bucke's silent insertion in "Sunday Evening Lectures" of the notes Whitman wrote in his "Kant" booklet. Hubbard provides another example (assuming for a moment it is relevant to consider him an editor) with his insertion of page 20. Since this page about themes in literature has nothing to do with metaphysics, and since it does not appear anywhere in *Notes and Fragments*,<sup>22</sup> I suspect that it was not a part of the "Sunday Evening Lecture" gathering until Hubbard put it there, probably having acquired it as a separate purchase or gift.

At other times, uncritical melding occurs when an editor misleadingly combines pieces from the same source. Wihl, for example, skips the physical break at the end of manuscript page 34, running together its concluding sentence with the first sentence on page 35.<sup>23</sup> In fact, however, there is no rhetorical or thematic (let alone syntactical) connection between pages 34 and 35. On the contrary, at this point the Hubbard arrangement interrupts the pages on Hegel (pp. 31-34 . . . 37-39) with an unrelated two-page passage on Kant (pp. 35-36). By silently ignoring the page break between 34 and 35, Wihl leads us to believe that two disparate passages form a single argument—and that Whitman composed an oddly bifurcated paragraph.

However, none of these usual problems of melding appear with the pages Bucke printed as three pairs (pp. 19+22, 43+24, 23+44b, using the Hubbard pagination). Here all six pages are obviously from the same gathering in "Sunday Evening Lectures." In each pair the syntactical fragment at the bottom of the first page is completed by a syntactical fragment at the top of the second. And in each case the subject matter of the first page is clearly carried over to that of the second page.



Given these factors, the probability is extremely low that these are accidental pairs, melded together by an uncritical editor. If we had a very large pile of Whitman sentence fragments, we could search a long time before finding even one pair that fit each other syntactically. But if we did, and if, in addition to the grammatical match, we found that the larger context, the argument preceding and following the joined fragments, was also continuous thematically and rhetorically, we would conclude with confidence that we had re-united two pages of a single document. *A fortiori* it is inconceivable that Bucke could have found *three* such pairs among just eight pages that begin or end with a sentence fragment—unless Whitman wrote them that way. Most likely, however, Bucke did not have to do any such puzzle solving. It is more probable that these three coherent pairs were in the manuscript as Whitman left it and Bucke found it—and as they would be still if Fra Elbertus had not created such a manuscript muddle in binding his beautiful book.

### *Three Restored Commentaries on German Metaphysics*

Having made our way through all this technical detail, we may reward ourselves with a brief reconsideration of some of what Whitman had to say about Hegel and the Idealists. Our focus on these three passages is of course accidental in the sense that they are merely the pages that Hubbard happened to break apart and disperse. There is no reason to think that these are the most important parts of “Sunday Evening Lectures” or that they represent the full range of ideas expressed there. They are, nevertheless, quite suggestive, and they complement each other in interesting ways. (I make a fresh reader’s version, following the Folsom/Miller diplomatic transcript.)

#### A. The Legacy of Ariadne’s Thread (pp. 19+22)

If we follow the hint of the transitional “Because” at the top of page 19,<sup>24</sup> looking back to the preceding page, we discover that in Bucke’s arrangement<sup>25</sup> pages 19+22 are the conclusion of Whitman’s longest continuous commentary on Hegelian metaphysics (pp. 37-38-39+19+22, using the Hubbard pagination), in which he distinguishes the special attraction of Hegel’s Idealism by contrasting it with other kinds of human value and knowledge. Whitman first points out that it does not replace ethics or religion (pp. 37-38). Nor does “the Hegelian system . . . explain the universe” (p. 39), since no man can “penetrate Nature” or solve its “Eternal mystery.” And yet, he continues, leading up to the “Because” of page 19, there is still a “legitimate field for the human mind, in fact its chosen ground.”<sup>26</sup>

Whitman then describes that field or ground as a multi-fold metaphysical question in a way that reflects his understanding of Kant: what



is our “position in the universes of time, space and materials”? how does our human subjectivity relate to the objectivity of the world? As he passes over to the last page (22), Whitman emphasizes that since these questions “touch all human beings” with “permanent importance,” they are “the greatest themes . . . greater than Science, History, Art, Democracy . . . Religion” (pp. 19+22).

[19] Because, final and paramount to all, is Man’s idea of his own position in the universes of time, space & materials, his faith in the scheme of things, the destinies which it necessitates[,] his clue to the relations between himself and the outside world, his ability in intellect & spirit at any rate to cope and be equal with them, and with Time and Space. These & thoughts upon these, come to the soul and fill & exercise it and remain of vital interest after it has exhausted all other fields. These touch all human beings without exception, and include every thing that is of permanent importance to them. They are the greatest themes. They are greater than Science,<sup>27</sup>

[22] History, Art, Democracy, or any problems of the Utilities, or prosperity or wealth, or any sectarian Religion. I would not be understood to deprecate the great Departments, the specialties I have just named, but I say that compared with the question of Man, in the visible & invisible worlds, the others become comparatively insignificant. Yourself, myself,—amid the baffling labyrinths—what am I—what are you here for?—give us some suggestion or clue, however indirect or inferential, or satisfying reason—the world with its manifold shows—the beginningless, endless wonder, Time—the other wonder, Space—oneself, the darkest labyrinth[,] mightiest wonder—what triumph of our kind<sup>28</sup> outtopples this[:] That one a man has lived & has advanced[,] has bestowed [bestowing]<sup>29</sup> on his fellow men the Ariadne’s thread to guide them through the maze?

This passage may surprise those of us who share the post-modern disdain for metaphysics as impersonally abstract and dogmatic. Whitman seems to be drawn by the soul-tugging, almost existential evocativeness of the metaphysical question—“the question of Man, in the visible & invisible worlds.” And he admires Hegel not for creating a logically rigorous and all-unifying system, but for leaving behind a slender, long-winding thread, for providing an intellectual hope that helps us keep moving on through the labyrinths of self and world without dissolving their wondrous darkness in a reductive flood of intellectual light.

#### B. Happiness on the Spiritual Plane (pp. 43+24)

This self-contained two-page passage<sup>30</sup> begins with a simple image of how the Idealists’ contributions—developed elsewhere in these lecture notes as Kant’s skeptical ground-clearing, Fichte’s expansion of subjectivity, Schelling’s imaginative merging of the subjective with the objective, and ultimately Hegel’s insight that history is the unfolding of Spirit—are complementary, how they extend and enclose each other like a set of nested boxes. Again Whitman praises this multi-phased Idealism as “the most important emanation of the mind of modern ages,” though here its superiority is measured not in relationship to more narrowly defined intellectual fields (science, history, art, democracy, reli-

gion) but by its surpassing the great practical achievements of the nineteenth century—technological, political, economic.

[43] There is a close relative-connection, sequence &c. between all the four even in time. (They fit into each other like a nest of boxes—and Hegel encloses them all.[] Taking their whole philosophy, it is the most important emanation of the mind of modern ages, and of all ages, leaving even the

[24] wonderful inventions, discoveries of science, political progress, great engineering works, utilitarian comforts, &c. of the last hundred years, in a comparatively inferior rank of importance—outstripping them all. Because it assumes to answer & does answer, as far as they can be answered, the deepest questions of the soul, of identity, of purposes worthy the world, & of the relation between man and the material Nature & workings of the external universes, not depreciating them, but elevating man to the spiritual plane where he belongs, and where after all that physical comfort and luxury, with mental culture, & political freedom can accomplish, he at last finds, and there only finds, a satisfaction worthy of his highest self, & achieves Happiness[.]

Again the value of metaphysics lies in its concern with “the deepest questions of the soul,” existential questions about “the relation between man and . . . the external universes.” But while the first passage presents an image of Idealism as Ariadne’s thread guiding us though the dark labyrinths of world and self, this one suggests that it has liberating power in an almost mystical sense, that it may lift us above the maze, “elevating man to the spiritual plane” where his “highest self . . . achieves Happiness” above mere physical comfort and even political freedom.

### C. The Thought of Universality (pp. 23+44b)

Tacitly acknowledging that metaphysics has a bad reputation for intellectual overreaching, Whitman introduces a subtle distinction between, on the one hand, the “ambition for universal knowledge” that already “taints the schools” and, on the other, “the *thought* of universality.” By this he seems to mean that metaphysics can help us imagine and believe that a single “divine purpose” underlies everything, without encouraging or even allowing (thanks to Kant) the foolish presumption that our limited minds can penetrate that central Mystery or comprehend everything that radiates from it. As in the first passage, Whitman then praises metaphysics above the more specialized intellectual disciplines, but his reasoning here works in the opposite, complementary direction. Where before he emphasized that in the face of the burgeoning achievements of science, economics, and so on, the Idealists have kept alive the deepest perennial questions, he now points to their value as preservers of an equally perennial logocentric faith, concluding that such a “thought of universality” is the essential beginning point, the prerequisite and foundation for science, ethics, politics, esthetics, theology.

[23] I see to my own satisfaction & see very clearly, that, to any individual mind, the ambition for universal knowledge is a vain ambition, and that it already carried<sup>31</sup> to extravagant lengths and taints the schools. But it seems to me the *thought* of universality—the conception of a divine purpose in the cosmical world & in history—the realization that knowledges and sciences however important are branches, radiations only—each one relative

[44b] —is<sup>32</sup> not only the grandest ante-dating background & appropriate entrance to the study of any science, but to the fit understanding of the position of one's self in Nature, to the performance of life's duties, to the appreciation and application of sane standards to politics and to the judgment upon and construction of works in any department of Art, and that by its realization alone is provided a basis for religion and theology that can satisfy the modern.—

### Conclusion

A full and fresh appreciation of Whitman's response to Hegel and German metaphysics would take us beyond these three isolated drafts, to other passages in the "Sunday Evening Lectures" and to his *Specimen Days* essay on Hegel and Carlyle, with its insistence on the Idealist's peculiarly "American" quality. One crucial problem would require our attention in such a study: how did his exuberant admiration for the Idealists ("the most important emanation of the mind of the modern ages") relate to his sense of the contemporary mission of the Poet? Whitman was quite reticent about that. Only once, toward the end of the Carlyle essay, did he make note of "something lacking" in the Hegelians, "something cold, a failure to satisfy the deepest emotions of the soul—a want of living glow, fondness, warmth, which the old *exaltés* and poets supply."<sup>33</sup>

But these passages recovered from Hubbard's muddle at least give us a clue that Whitman's taste for German Idealism was akin to his need to write poetry. They suggest that at the core of his imaginative life, even deeper perhaps than his sexual passion, his adhesive desires, and his resolute faith in democracy, was a two-sided hunger—an urge to experience concretely the labyrinths of self-in-world, while at the same time celebrating his faith in the ultimate purpose toward which those labyrinths lead. That double hunger seems to have drawn him to metaphysics, deeply coloring what he found there, and in another dimension it led to his best poems, from the young man's "Song of Myself" to the old man's hymn "To the Sun-Set Breeze."

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## APPENDIX I

Inventory of Pages in "Sunday Evening Lectures"—following the Folsom/Miller transcript in *WWQR* 18 (Winter 2001), 120-133.

Page	First Phrase (pages in <i>WWQR/NUPM</i> )	Topic
1	" <i>Sunday evening</i> " (120/2009)	Title. Names/dates of four philosophers
2	"Enc. Brit. . . . moral portrait" (120/2014)	Kant—Herder's description
3-4	"Kant was born" (120-21/2012-13)	Kant—biography
5-6	"We must sum him" (121/2013-14)	Kant—core idea
7	"?Note. Perhaps to have begun" (121/2017)	Leibnitz—his themes
8	"The objection" (121-22/2014)	Kant—uncertainty
9	" <i>Kant</i> / Like Socrates" (122/2013)	Kant—tester of ideas
10-11	"Fichte (-1762-1814)" (122/2014-15)	Fichte—biography, themes
12	"Fichte as will be seen" (122/2015)	Fichte applies Kant
13-14	"Finale? It remains" (123/2017-18)	Kant's relativism vs. Soul's instinct
15	"Then comes Schelling" (123/2015)	Schelling—his themes, vs. Kant, Fichte
16-17	"The <i>chief forte</i> " (123/2015-16)	Schelling—core idea, vs. Fichte
18	"It is true no philosophy" (124/2016)	Mystery of being remains
19	"Because, final and paramount" (124/2011)	Man's place in universe
20	"While a great part" (124/not included)	Literature—universal vs. local themes
21	"Religions—Pagan" (124-25/2038)	Pagan naturalism vs. Christian moralism
22	"History, Art, Democracy" (125/2011)	Academic fields vs. question of existence
23	"I see to my own" (125/2016-17)	Universal vs. branches of knowledge
24	"wonderful inventions" (125/2016)	Man in the universe
25-26	"Metaphysics . . . I will begin" (127/2010)	Terms in philosophy
27-28	"(born at Stuttgart" (127-28/2009)	Hegel—biographical notes
29	"Hegel was a philosopher" (128/2010)	Hegel—core idea
30	"Taking the advent" (128/2016)	19 <sup>th</sup> Century metaphysics, the Four Idealists
31	"Only Hegel is fit" (128-29/2011)	Hegel—fit for America
32	"The varieties" (129/2011-12)	Hegel—summary view
33-34	"Hegel part /The essential" (129/2012)	Man in Time-Space, Democracy
35-36	"Kant's whole /The pursuit" (129-30/2014)	Kant's question: Is metaphysics possible?
37-38	"Strictly speaking" (130/2010)	Metaphysics is not morals, religion
39	"Nor does the Hegelian" (130/2010-11)	Hegel—nature's mystery remains
40	"query? It is certain" (130/2018)	Religion vs. modern mind
41	"Penetrating beneath" (131/2012)	Hegel—Absolute Spirit
42	"He has read my Vistas" (131/2017)	Hegel & Four for humanity, democracy
43	"There is a close" (131/2016)	The Four are connected
44a*	"Idealism underlies" (131/2016)	The Four Idealists
44b*	"—is not only the grandest" (132/2017)	[something] is the entrance to other fields
45	"These then are the illustrious" (133/2016)	The Four—critical & transcendental

\*Page 44a/b: two unconnected fragments (See facsimile, Wihl, 132)

## APPENDIX II

Diplomatic transcript of Whitman's "Kant" booklet, p. [9].

For description, see note 5.

### *Metaphysics*

"*Metaphysics*, according to Kant

—in which he only echoes the general voice of philosophers—is conversant  
with the world above sense, or beyond experience." *Enc*

---

<is> occupied with such problems as the nature of absolute being} (*ontology*)

---

the essence & immortality of the Soul } *pneumatology*  
the prevalence of freedom or fate in the world } *cosmology*  
the being of God } *speculative theology*

---

before Kant, two stages  
*dogmatism*—lots of systems, each affirmed positively—  
which led by their contradictions & absurdities to  
*scepticism* typified in Hume, & some of the French philosophes

## NOTES

1 For example, Millie D. Jensen, "Whitman and Hegel: The Curious Triplicate Process," *Walt Whitman Review* 10 (June 1964), 27-34.

2 *Notes and Fragments: Left by Walt Whitman and now Edited by Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke* (Printed for Private Distribution Only: London, Ontario, Canada, 1899; rpt. Norwood Editions, 1977), 132-140. Hereafter cited as *N&F*. The manuscript title comes from the cover sheet on which Whitman wrote in large, underlined letters "Sunday evening Lectures"; beneath this he recorded the life dates of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Bucke's arrangement of the manuscript is now most accessible in *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, ed. Edward F. Grier (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 6:2009-2018. Hereafter cited as *NUPM*.

3 Gary Wihl, "The Manuscript of Walt Whitman's 'Sunday Evening Lectures,'" *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 18 (Winter 2001), 107-133, with three facsimiles: the back cover and pages 126 and 132. For Wihl's "Reader's Transcription," see 110-119; for the "Diplomatic Transcription" by Folsom and Miller, see 120-133.

4 Wihl, 108.

5 "Kant," also in the Hanley Collection (HRC), is a hand-made notebook, 5" by 7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>", constructed by folding six leaves of white paper (blue lines at 1/2"), with a pink ribbon tied through the centerfold. At the top of the cover page a large "Kant" is written in black ink. The booklet is still tight, implying minimal use. In fact the only inscription beyond the cover is a neat, un-emended entry in pencil on page [9] under the heading "*Metaphysics*." Wihl includes this entry in a note (117, n.2); but since he relied on Grier's copy of Bucke's transcript (*NUPM* 6:2013), and since Folsom/Miller do not provide a diplomatic transcript, I include one here as Appendix II.

6 *N&F*, 132. I suspect most of these notes on metaphysics were written in the early 1880s, around the time of the Carlyle essay (1882), perhaps stimulated by talks with W. T. Harris, editor of the Hegelian journal *Speculative Philosophy*, while Whitman was staying in St. Louis in the fall of 1879.

7 Charles F. Hamilton, *As Bees in Honey Drown: Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1973), 166-168 and passim; see also Susan Otis Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1977), Chapter 18, "Elbert Hubbard: 'An American William Morris.'"

8 On the cover page of the "Kant" booklet is written this note: "Book prepared by Walt Whitman for notes on Kant, for lecture, & presented to Elbert Hubbard by Dr Bucke Jan 2 1902."

9 Hubbard wrote little about Whitman, though he defended him a couple of times in *The Philistine* and reprinted Robert Louis Stevenson's 1878 Whitman essay in an elegantly designed Roycrofters edition (1900), filled out to ninety pages with a reprint of his own "Little Journey to the Home of Whitman" (an 1896 publication about an 1883 visit). Hubbard made no contributions to the *Conservator* or to the Walt Whitman Fellowship as far as I can tell, though he may have attended the annual banquet in New York in May, 1902. There is, however, one other intriguing connection with the Whitman circle: in January 1904, while in Philadelphia for a lecture, having finally obtained a divorce from his wife, Hubbard scandalized small-town America by marrying his long-time extramarital lover (their daughter was nearly ten)—with lawyer (and Whitman executor) Thomas Harned performing the ceremony (Hamilton, 188-189).

10 All three executors treated the manuscripts and letters they divided among themselves as their personal property, as if Whitman's will had named them inheritors, not just executors. After Bucke's death Traubel and Harned considered rejoining the divided material into a single collection. A possible starting point would have been to have the Boston Public Library (which already had a small Whitman collection, donated by Bucke in 1896) acquire the Bucke collection. But the late doctor's family was not in a giving mood. The auction value of his collection was rumored to be worth \$25,000, and Andrew Carnegie's name was floated (unsuccessfully) as one who might buy it for the library. ("Who Will Buy the Walt Whitman Collection for the Boston Library," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, January 6, 1903, page 1.)

11 Whitman's friend Thomas Donaldson was a Philadelphia lawyer-politician-administrator with national connections and an immense collection of historical artifacts, autographed books and manuscripts, etc., including a few Whitman items. He died in 1898, two years after publishing *Walt Whitman, The Man*.

12 Hubbard would probably have included the "Kant" booklet if its format had not made that physically impossible.

13 Carlton Lake, "Ed [Hanley] the Collector, Jake [Schwartz] the Dentist and Beckett: A Tale That Ends in Texas," *University of Texas Alumni Magazine*, September 6, 1987. I thank John Kirkpatrick (HRC) for calling this article to my attention.

14 Bucke's version is remarkably accurate, however, with fewer than a half dozen errors apart from mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, etc.).

15 For exceptions, see my notes 23, 28, 30, and 31 below.

16 Wihl, 108.

17 Wihl, 119, note 24.

18 In their diplomatic transcript Folsom and Miller (unlike Bucke and Wihl) indicate where each manuscript page begins, but they do not give each page a number.

19 Bucke placed this "Finale ?" passage at the end, just before a tangential sentence fragment on religion (p. 40). Wihl leaves it in Hubbard's early position, arguing that Whitman's intention "is not at all clear," because "Finale ?" is in blue pencil and is followed by a question mark (118, note 3).

20 Grier printed this page as a separate document in a different part of *NUPM* (6:2038), though he still relied on Bucke's transcript because he did not have the manuscript.

21 This passage could also be reasonably placed in the concluding miscellany, as in Bucke's arrangement, since Whitman marked it "Finale."

22 If Bucke had found manuscript page 20 ("While a great part of Literature") in "Sunday Evening Lectures" and decided it did not belong there, he surely would have published it elsewhere in *Notes and Fragments*; since he did not, I suspect that Hubbard acquired it as a separate leaf from someone else (Harned, Traubel, Donaldson, perhaps even Whitman himself). Incidentally page 20 ends with a sentence fragment, as does page 40, but neither of these fits together with a fragment elsewhere to form a complete sentence, either because Whitman left the sentences incomplete or because the complementary pages have been lost.

23 Wihl, 116, near the top: manuscript page 34 ends with "absorbs them with avidity," while page 35 begins "The pursuit." Compare the Folsom/Miller transcript (129).

24 This page seems to open with a sentence fragment—a subordinate adverbial clause. But the capitalization of "Because" suggests Whitman used it as an adverbial conjunction between sentences. For a similar usage, see the first full sentence on manuscript page 24.

25 See *N&F*, 133-134, or *NUPM*, 6:2010-2011.

26 Since it happens that the preceding manuscript page in the Hubbard arrangement (18) is a variant draft of page 39, it provides a similar referent for the transitional "Because."

27 Folsom/Miller record a period here, and in that case this would not be a grammatical fragment. It seems unlikely, however, especially in the light of page 22, that Whitman intended to limit his point to a comparison of metaphysics and science.

28 At this point Wihl's transcript (113) muddles the diplomatic transcript of Folsom/Miller (125).

29 In dense revisions at this point, Whitman apparently neglected to cancel one of these two forms.

30 In Wihl's transcript (117), the first sentence on manuscript page 43 concludes the paragraph at the end of page 42, but that silent melding has no obvious warrant.

31 Wihl silently creates a passive ("it is already carried"), but Whitman's sentence works as written, though with awkward word order and a shift in tense: two active verbs ("already carried to extravagant lengths" and "taints") share the same direct object ("the schools.")

32 This long predicate is on the bottom half of manuscript page 44 (see the facsimile, Wihl, 132). At the top is pasted a separate note that ends with the isolated word "Transcendentalism," a term which *could* function as the subject of Whitman's sentence, as Wihl's transcript implies (117). That, however, would leave the complex syntactical subject at the end of manuscript page 22 dangling, and its terms ("knowledges and sciences . . . branches, radiations") make a much tighter thematic fit with the predicate on page 44.

33 "Carlyle From American Points of View," *Specimen Days*, *PW* 1:261; Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 898.