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**The Dialectic of Indifference and the Process of Self-determination
in Hegel's *Logic* and the *Philosophy of Right***

A Dissertation Presented

by

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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In this dissertation I argue that Hegel's analysis of freedom based on the concept of self-determination provides us with an opportunity to radically rethink personal freedom and restore it to its necessary domain: the political. I reconstruct Hegel's exposition of the dynamic of self-determination in the *Logic* by focusing on a central premise: that the exposure and overcoming of the conceptual indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*] between categories – between, for example, something and other, identity and difference, or universality and particularity – is the driving force of the argument leading to the Concept, i.e., the concept of self-determination. I show that Hegel's critiques of abstract universal free will as well as of particular arbitrary freedom use the same strategy, that of exposing the claims of indifference that sustain the legitimacy of these conceptions of freedom. I argue that the critique of indifference, explicit in the analysis and exposition of self-determination in the *Logic* and implicit in Hegel's discussion of the free will in the *Philosophy of Right*, offers a new perspective for thinking personal freedom.

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INTRODUCTION

The Concept of Indifference in Hegel's System

No philosophical discussion of [change] would be complete without an inspection of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's notion that change flows inevitably from the fact that the "the universal elements" that constitute any particular thing are in contradiction. These contradictions result in the "disintegration of their unity" – a new combination, and therefore, a new entity is the result... Hegel said change happens as a result of the unfolding of the World Spirit, not because some politico makes it happen.¹

The word "change" has become the mantra among the presidential candidates in the early months of 2008. Consequently, this philosophically significant and difficult concept has also found its way to newspaper columns and become a popular topic. In this quotation, Cathcart and Klein express basically a Heraclitean account of the inevitability of change and our powerlessness to determine or even affect the coming of what will inevitably transpire. Hegel's system, according to these authors, claims to give an account of the law of becoming, of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be, of the *logos* of the world (natural and human), and thus his system implies that we humans are nothing but pawns of and witnesses to the self-unfolding of the universe.

The problem that I see expressed in such claims is the incompatibility of, on the one hand, understanding and accounting for reality, including the human

¹ Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein, "The only constant," *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 2008, M6.

world, and on the other hand, attributing agency and freedom to human beings. How can anything be said to be free when it is acting only according to its very nature, under the tutelage of natural laws, or reacting to multiple stimuli in a system of reciprocal actions and reactions? Our attempts at self-knowledge endanger our positing ourselves as free, and our assumption of freedom calls into question ever coming to know ourselves and, by extension, the world as such.

What are we to do? The prevalent solution of our times, if I may be allowed to make this generalization, seems to be the leaving of such “metaphysical questions” aside, bracketing our concerns about human self-determination and free agency, and taking the so-called objective route of science, following the research wherever it leads. This requires an acceptance of the scientific method, of the legitimacy of observation and experimentation, as well as of the authority (and possibility) of impartial description of so-called facts. Indeed, most of what we call “knowledge” today is produced in this manner. For example, the question “what do people want from their lives?” could be a research topic in psychology or sociology. The subject, i.e., “people,” would be too general and ambiguous, and so the researcher could introduce age, vocation, nationality, etc, as limiting factors. The way to approach this question could be conducting a survey, and such a survey, hypothetically, would give us results about a limited group of people. Since such results would only be partial in scope, other surveys have to be conducted to complete it, etc.

However, such a study would be proceeding on the assumption that people indeed know what they want from their lives. The study's aim, the determination of people's expectations from life, already assumes that this knowledge is available and reliable at the individual level. A study such as this leaves unquestioned many presuppositions, such as our capacity to know ourselves, while trying to produce knowledge about ourselves. This is a basic critique that Hegel makes about the sciences: that the sciences assume their objects as given and do not question the basic legitimacy of their conceptual definitions.

Whether we call it scientism, positivism, or empiricism, the inadequacy of this attitude is not limited to its silence about or negation of human agency, nor to its unquestioned presuppositions. Once "scientific knowledge" becomes the sole reliable explanatory framework of reality, natural and social sciences come to be seen as the legitimate disciplines to provide a "grounding" of facts. However, in actuality, these sciences only claim to produce "objective" descriptions and such descriptions neither give nor claim to provide an account of reality, or a grounding of facts. The result of this is that all non-descriptive or normative judgments that do not qualify as the proper subject-matter of these sciences (e.g., ethical judgments, questions of rights and merit, policy decisions, etc.) are condemned to uncertainty, arbitrariness, or at best, consensus. Furthermore, following Kuhn and the fallibilistic method dominant in the sciences, science itself has come to be seen as an interpretative framework that claims no absolute knowing. The general result of these considerations is that our accounts of reality

are based on conventions and only have the status of well-established opinions or of theories not-yet falsified.

It is no longer a radical statement to point out that facts rely on and are meaningful only within an interpretive framework, whether grounded on linguistic convention, scientific authority, subjective interest, or political ideology. All these frames of meaning make a partial claim to truth; they do not claim to set the criterion of truth for all objects of analysis once and for all. Hence, these frameworks and “discourses” function as *possible* paradigms of “factual” truth. It is due to the wide acceptance of this view that what we generally call “opinion” has also lost its distinctly negative philosophical significance.

From its beginnings, philosophical inquiry has defined itself as the search for a criterion by which knowledge could be distinguished from mere belief and opinion [*doxa*], and reality from appearance. Philosophy is able to differentiate itself from sophistry, myth, or ideology insofar as it claims to provide a universal and necessary criterion of truth, as for example in ‘true knowledge’ or ‘true reality’. As the natural and social sciences and the humanities have parceled reality and claimed partial authority over the specific objects of their interest, philosophy has been left “objectless,” so to speak. It has become a supplemental discipline, either carrying out the theoretical analysis relying on the results of empirical research or itself becoming “applied,” and for most people metaphysics, questions of being, reality, and truth, have expired. I find that Hegel’s definition

of philosophy – philosophy as meta-theory of what is true in those partial inquiries – is all the more pertinent today.

For Hegel, the task of philosophy is to give a rational account of ourselves and the world; the task is to grasp the true [*das Wahre*]. Comprehending something means accounting for it, showing its necessary ground. According to Hegel, to understand anything as what it truly is (or “what it is in and for itself”), one must analyze it as something more than a mere effect, dependent on and conditioned by its relations and predecessors. One must comprehend it as something that determines itself, something that has within it (or, gives itself) the law of its development. Hegel’s project in his *Logic*² is to derive the concept of self-determination by showing and analyzing how thinking determines itself. This might strike anyone who is not familiar with the Hegelian project as nonsensical. How does thinking determine itself?

² With the capitalized “Logic,” I refer to the project Hegel undertakes in both the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopaedia Logic*. The differences between the three editions of the *Encyclopaedia* and between the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopaedia* can be ignored for the purposes of this dissertation. G. W. F. Hegel. *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Vol 1 and 2, ed. Georg Lasson (Leipzig: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1951) (abbreviated from now on as L I or II with the page number); Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1969) (abbreviated as SL with the page number); *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften*, 1830, ed. Friedhelm Nicolin and Otto Pöggeler (Hamburg: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1959); *The Encyclopaedia Logic, Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze.*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991) (abbreviated as E with the paragraph number). Following the paragraph number, “R” stands for Hegel’s hand-written remarks and “A” refers to a compilation of student notes from Hegel’s lectures, both of which are included in the English translation. For the German original of the additions, I have consulted the student edition of Hegel’s completed works: *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, vol. 8-10. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970).

1- Hegel's Critique of "Finite Thinking"

Hegel's method of inquiry generally begins by uncovering fixed presuppositions and abstractions that underlie common categories of thinking and cognition and characterize the accepted approaches to natural and human reality. This method of inquiry proceeds by revealing the limitations of such abstract categories, relations, and concepts through exposing their inadequacy to their subject-matter. According to Hegel, such fixed presuppositions and abstractions are trademarks of finite thinking.³ Hegel often calls the understanding [*Verstand*] (the faculty of abstraction and judgment), as well as ordinary consciousness, "finite thinking in general." This description distinguishes such thinking from the infinite – unconditioned and self-determining – thinking proper to Reason [*Vernunft*].⁴

³ In his *Hegel Dictionary*, Inwood presents a very helpful summary of Hegel's distinction between finite and infinite thinking. He writes, "When Hegel says that thought or thinking is infinite, he means several things: (1) Thought(-form)s are not sharply distinct from, and bounded by, each other; they are knit together by reason and dialectic. (2) Thought(s) overreach what is other than thought. (3) Thought can think about itself. (4) Thought as a whole has no limits. Finite thoughts, by contrast, are segments of thought that are (a) treated as distinct from other thoughts; (b) treated as distinct from things; (c) incapable of, or not regarded as, applying to themselves; and/or (d) applicable to, or thoughts of, finite entities" (293). Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*. (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992).

⁴ "Prior to Kant, no distinction had been made between Understanding and Reason. But unless one wants to sink to the level of the vulgar consciousness which crudely obliterates the distinct forms of pure thought, the following distinction must be firmly established between Understanding and Reason; that for the latter, the object is determined in and for itself, is the identity of content and form, of universal and particular, whereas for the former it falls apart into form and content, into universal and particular, and into an empty 'in-itself' to which the determinateness is added from outside; that, therefore, in the thinking of the Understanding, the content is indifferent [*gleichgültig*] to its form, while in the comprehensive thinking of Reason the content produces its form from itself" (E § 467A).

Here, it is helpful to make explicit the unifying thread of Hegel's various descriptions of finite thinking. Given Hegel's analysis and critique of finite thinking, such thinking can be condensed to a specific structural component, or an underlying premise. I argue that, according to Hegel, finite thinking is characterized by an unquestioned acceptance of two relations of indifference: 1) The mutual indifference of thinking and reality, or thought and being, and 2) The mutual indifference of the subject and the object.

The first of the two relations of indifference according to Hegel's account of finite thinking is the mutual indifference of thinking and reality. Such indifference may be posited on diverse grounds: one might hold that reality is indifferent to thinking because reality is what it is regardless of our conceptions of it (e.g., the position of empiricism in general). According to this view, our thinking receives and perhaps even structures the material given to us in experience. However, in any case, thinking is an "alien" activity (as opposed to our immediate sense impressions or to the real processes given to us in experience) insofar as its functioning and products do not have the authority, legitimacy, or simply the reality of the things that are. Thinking is a dependent and conditioned activity since it has no native content and requires that an "external" content be given to it to function at all. Even if we grant, with Kant for example, that thinking has a content of its own, that is, has its own ends, ideas, or ideals, still it is the case that these "ideas of reason," – such as freedom, or God, as well as purpose, peace, justice, good, and many other abstract or normative

concepts – do not have objective validity. As an example for the first attitude (the demarcation of thinking and reality), one can mention the assumptions of positivist science, where the empirically given is the sole criterion of truth and reality, while observation and impartial (or “indifferent”) description of facts is the main function of rational analysis.

The second claim of indifference that underlies finite thinking, as Hegel defines it, is a result of the view that thinking is always the activity of a particular person, and that it is thus always dependent on and conditioned by the perspective and limitations of that particular thinker. According to this view, since thinking is an activity of the subject, “objective thinking”⁵ is either a contradiction in terms, or a hypostasis of (a particular subject’s) thinking as a transcendent activity and reality. The claim is that we humans have diverse points of view, following from our particular interests and idiosyncratic preferences. And thus we cannot impute those contingent elements resulting from our subjective reflection on to the object of analysis. Such a view of thinking is seen in skeptical arguments, which state the impossibility of bridging the gap between the subject and object, as well as in arguments for moral relativism.

⁵ Hegel explains in the “Preliminary Conception” to the *Encyclopaedia* that “To say that there is understanding, or reason, in the world is exactly what is contained in the expression ‘objective thought’” (E §24R). He describes his project in the Logic in the next paragraph as a study of “objective thoughts” (E §25). This brief description suggests that all Hegel means by “objective thoughts” is the basic import of his *Doppelsatz*: “what is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational,” which I discuss in the “Epilogue.” Hegel does not use this expression often; however, his use of it in these paragraphs is significant in that he defines his project through a suspension of the presuppositions of finite thinking, which, according to Hegel, is most easily identified by its instinctive and immediate rejection of the possibility of “objective thinking.” I discuss this further in Chapter One below.

Each position implies the other. The demarcation of thinking and reality implies the subject/object dichotomy: As long as observation is seen to be neutral with respect to its object, and thinking (or reason) is seen to be merely formal, the necessary mutual relation of each [the scientist (as the subject) and the event described (the object of analysis)] is bracketed and the subject's "influence" on the object of analysis is ignored. Similarly, the subject/object dichotomy implies the severance of thought and reality: The assumption that thinking is merely perspectival and relative to the individual thinker implies that thinking lacks any universal or necessary content of its own and that universal validity in thinking can only be achieved in formal rules or abstractions.

A concrete example for this mutual implication between the subjectivity and formality of thought can be found in liberal political thought, in the relation between the assumption of moral relativism and the formulation of universal human rights: An acceptance of moral relativism underlies the inevitability of formulating human rights in a purely formal manner. It is agreed that all human beings have a right to life; however, this right is left formal and does not specify what kind of life humans have a right to, or whether they have the right to the necessary means of life, etc. Similarly with the right to own property. This right is formal and does not determine the limits and quality of ownership. All these qualifications that are left indeterminate are deemed to be subjective and thus they cannot be legislated through a universal principle. According to finite thinking, then, there are no inherent ends of reason. The ends of human endeavors and

actions are personal, idiosyncratic, and perhaps culturally conditioned. Thinking is always and necessarily subjective, that is, guided by subjective ends, ends that are not given by thinking itself.

Hegel's basic premise is that these two positions are dogmatic presuppositions about the impotence of thinking and reason. As much as the inner constitution of chemicals determines how they react with one another, and as much as plants grow and develop according to their specific nature, human thinking *might be* (and, for Hegel, *is*) also a principled process that has the law of its own development within it.⁶ Given the two prior positions, the task for Hegel becomes to find the proof that thinking has a content of its own and that this content is not merely arbitrary (or relative to each person) nor a result of convention based on the negotiation of many particular thinkers. How does Hegel prove that thinking has and gives itself an objective content, or that objective thinking is the activity of self-determining thought?

He begins with the realization that, despite the inadequacies attributed to thinking in general we use categories, talk about essences, make value judgments, and define rights. According to Hegel, in ordinary thinking, and most of philosophical analysis, the determination of these definitions – of what is essential and correspondingly, what is inessential or irrelevant – follow neither from the

⁶ “What we are dealing with in logic is not a thinking about something which exists independently as a base for our thinking and apart from it, nor forms which are supposed to provide mere signs or distinguishing marks [*Merkmale*] of truth; on the contrary, the necessary forms and self-determinations of thought are the content and the ultimate truth itself” (SL 50/L I 30).

subject matter itself nor from a methodological principle. Hegel speaks to this point both in the *Philosophy of Right*⁷ and the *Encyclopaedia: Concerning the concept of right [Recht]* Hegel writes,

the definition is derived ... for the most part by abstraction from particular cases such that the definition is ultimately based on feeling and people's general representation [*Vorstellung*] about it. The correctness of the definition is then made to depend on its agreement with the current general representations. Through this method, what is alone essential to science is dispensed with: with regard to content, the *necessity of the thing* [Sache] in and for itself (in this case, of right), and with regard to form, the nature of the concept [in this case, how "right" determines itself] (PR §2R).

Further, in the context of his discussion of sophistical argumentation in the domain of law and ethics, Hegel writes,

since ... grounds can be found for what is unethical and contrary to law no less than for what is ethical and lawful, the decision as to what grounds are to count as valid falls to the subject. The ground of the subject's decision becomes a matter of his individual disposition and aims (E §121A).

Finally, by way of a very down-to-earth example, Hegel describes the arbitrariness and thus the inadequacy of relying on givenness and description in analyzing any concrete situation:

an official has an aptitude for his office, as an individual [he] has relationships with others, has a circle of acquaintances, a particular character, made an

⁷ Hegel, G, W, F, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Felix Meiner Verlag, 1955). English translations: *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Allen Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1991); *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, tr. T. M. Knox (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1952). Although I mostly use the Nisbet translation, I occasionally modify the translation in consultation of the German text as well as Knox's translation. In the following, I refer to this text as PR and indicate the paragraph numbers. "R" stands for Hegel's hand-written remarks and "A" refers to a compilation of student notes from Hegel's lectures, both of which are included in the English translations. For the German original of the additions, I have consulted the student edition of Hegel's completed works: *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, vol. 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970).

appearance in such and such circumstances and on such and such occasions, and so on. Each of these attributes can be, or can be regarded as, the ground for his holding his office... Each of these attributes are essential to the official because through it he is the specific [*bestimmte*] individual that he is; in so far as the office can be regarded as an external, posited determination, each can be determined as ground relatively to it, but also conversely, they can be regarded as posited and the office as their ground (SL 465 / L II 86-7).

Thus, if we are trying to understand why a certain individual holds an office, it seems arbitrary whether we choose to explain his position through one or more of his qualities or we choose to explain those character traits and qualities as grounded on his professional position. According to Hegel, in such an analysis, it is generally left to a third party⁸ to decide what the case actually is, which determinations are posited as the consequence of which. Thus, in any determination of truth (what is truly real, what is truly a human need, what is right, or why someone holds an office) a certain quality is prioritized while others are posited as indifferent. The positing of the indifference of certain givens or of certain attitudes towards the given is what delimits the analysis. There is no way of totally doing away with this process: no claim can be made, no judgment passed or no action could be undertaken unless one chooses, that is, unless one emphasizes one aspect, one determinacy, one attitude or course of action over

⁸ Such an analysis assumes that there is no inner principle to the qualities this official happens to have. They are “diverse” determinations and this list of attributes is simply a contingent effect of various givens and past influences. Since diversity implies contingency and the lack of inner necessity, any explanation of his holding this office or his qualities is inevitably arbitrary. “Distinction is (1) *immediate* distinction, *diversity*, in which each of the distinct [terms] *is* what it is *on its own account* and each is indifferent [*gleichgültig*] vis-à-vis its relation to the other, so that the relation is an external one for it. Because of the indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*] of the diverse [terms] with regard to their distinction, the distinction falls outside of them in a third, that *makes the comparison*” (E §117).

others. That means that one posits (or treats) the others as indifferent. For Hegel, what is necessary for the understanding of what is true in these multiplicity of claims and attitudes is the comprehension of this process.

The search for and assignment of grounds, in which ratiocination [*Raisonnement*] mainly consists, is accordingly an endless pursuit which does not reach a final determination; for any and every thing one or more good grounds can be given, and also for its opposite; and a host of grounds can exist without anything following from them. What Socrates and Plato called *sophistry* is nothing else but ratiocination from grounds; to this, Plato opposes the contemplation of the idea, that is, of the subject matter in and for itself, or in its *Concept*. Grounds are taken only from *essential* determinations of a content, *essential* relationships and aspects, and of these every subject matter, just like its opposite, possesses several; in their form of essentiality, one is as valid as another; because it does not embrace the whole extent of the subject matter, each is a one-sided ground, the other particular sides having on their part particular grounds, and none of them exhausts the subject matter which constitutes their *togetherness* [*Verknüpfung*] and contains them all; none is the *sufficient* ground, that is, the Concept [*Begriff*] (SL 466 / L II 88).

The subject matter contains all these diverse qualities, relations, and reasons, and the Concept [*der Begriff*] comprehends them in their togetherness. The Concept is not a general rule about what is essential and what, in turn, must be “left out” or treated as indifferent in the determination of truth. The result of Hegel’s analysis is that truth is not in any one of the qualities or relations (which posit the others as indifferent) but in the process of overcoming their partiality and apparent indifference. The Concept is the dynamic of this process in which the subject-matter determines itself. The comprehension of this process, according to Hegel, is truth itself.

The process of self-determination relies on the critique of two forms of indifference: 1) the relations of indifference that are posited and assumed when

we abstract and form general concepts or laws that represent regularities; and 2) the relations of indifference that are presupposed and implied when we make comparisons and judgments of sameness or diversity. The term that I specifically trace in Hegel's analysis of abstractions and comparisons that generate our categories and judgments is *Gleichgültigkeit*, which literally means "equal validity" and which is translated mostly as indifference and sometimes as equivalence.

2- The Philosophical Relevance of *Gleichgültigkeit*

The English word "indifference" translates two German words: "*Gleichgültigkeit*" and "*Indifferenz*". In the last section of the Doctrine of Being, titled "The Becoming of Essence: A. Absolute Indifference," Hegel simply states the interchangeability of the two terms: "Being is the abstract equivalence [*Gleichgültigkeit*] – for which, since it is to be thought of by itself as a *being*, the expression indifference [*Indifferenz*] has been employed..." (SL 375 / L I 387). Nonetheless, Hegel uses the German word *Indifferenz* mainly in the context of his critique of Schelling while he employs the term *Gleichgültigkeit* much more widely in his texts. This may be due to several factors: First, *Indifferenz* is a technical term used by Schelling to designate the identity of subjectivity and objectivity and Hegel does not inherit this specific technical use from Schelling. Second, *Gleichgültigkeit* has a normative connotation that *Indifferenz* lacks.

Besides indicating a state of non-difference (or lack of distinction), it also can express apathy, a lack of concern on the part of the subject, or irrelevance on the part of the object. For example, if I say that I am indifferent to where we go out for lunch, I mean that the decision is irrelevant to me, or I will be equally happy or unhappy with any of the possible options. And I could also remark that a device is sensitive to sound but indifferent to pitch. In the latter case, I would be expressing that for this device the pitch of the sound it detects is irrelevant. I call this connotation normative because both in my attitude about the choice of restaurant and the device's insensitivity to pitch, there is implied a judgment about what is significant or not, or what is relevant or not.

Finally, this latter sense of *Gleichgültigkeit*, designating a state of irrelevance, is a special case of its literal sense, namely, equivalence. The statement of equal validity or equivalence entails the statement of irrelevance in that when I say that the available options are irrelevant, i.e., that each is of no value or significance at all, I still imbue them with equal significance or validity. This sense of equal validity is also a connotation *Indifferenz* lacks. In short, then, *Gleichgültigkeit* refers to the state of no difference between two (or more) terms according to the aspect by virtue of which they are compared, or to the state of disinterest on the part of the will or thought with respect to a given set of objects. Both of these senses of *Gleichgültigkeit* are significant in Hegel's development and analysis of the concept of self-determination in the Logic.

Why do I trace and analyze Hegel's use of this term *Gleichgültigkeit*? First of all, it is a technical term similar to mediation, sublation, positing, negation, etc. – all of which have systematic and methodological significance – and unlike categories such as quality, measure, diversity, ground, substance, etc., which are assigned specific locations in the development of Hegel's argument. However, as opposed to other similar terms, such as negation or contradiction, Hegel scholars have overlooked the role of indifference in Hegel's method and system.

Second, indifference is a philosophically pregnant concept in terms of its possible associations and references. The German term is a literal translation of equipollence, which means equal force, significance or validity. Equipollence, in turn, is the Latin (and English) translation of the Greek *isostheneia*, which is one of the tropes of Ancient Skepticism (among the ten tropes of Aenesidemus as well as the five tropes of Agrippa). It is very unlikely, if not impossible, that Hegel was oblivious to this association (and in the following chapters, I will make this relation explicit). Furthermore, the Stoic (and Skeptic) teaching of *ataraxia* evokes a state of apathy, one of the meanings of *gleichgültig*, in the face of external events. This state of apathy and retreat to the purity of thinking is also the distinguishing quality of the abstract freedom of the 'I'. And, finally, perhaps the most prevalent understanding of freedom, that is freedom of choice, is a positing of indifference on the part of the will. It is expressed in Latin as *liberium arbitrium indifferentiae* and it designates the indeterminacy of the will and equal validity (relevance and irrelevance) of the possible determinations of the will.

Third, indifference implies both a lack of relation *and* lack of hierarchy, lack of normativity, or of an inner principle. Consider the distinction between an aggregate and a whole. An aggregate, for example a stack of papers or the set of all objects on the table, is different from a whole, for example a book or the human body. In an aggregate the parts are equivalent in value to one another; they are equally valid; the unity is indifferent to each and the parts are indifferent to one another. There is no inner hierarchy or order, nor is there a relation of priority between the parts and the resulting aggregate. In a whole, what each part is individually is determined by their mutual relations to one another and to the whole. They can only be identified and evaluated in the context of the whole. The relevance of this distinction is apparent when one considers what rides on our determination of an individual thing or society as either an aggregate or a whole. Given that the relation of equivalence and mutual independence among the parts is the defining quality of an aggregate, claiming that a political association, such as American society, is an aggregate has radically different consequences about how we understand individual liberty, the ends of political institutions, etc. than if we understand it to be a whole. Such difference of opinion about the nature of political association marks the debates between communitarians and libertarians in contemporary political thought. The kind of question Hegel raises and attempts to answer based on his analysis of self-determination is this: are we stuck with perennial swings of opinion or at the mercy of mere personal preference and persuasion concerning such issues, due to the fact that the truth about political

organization is either unknowable to us finite beings or simply because there is no such truth at all?

Fourth, the state of indifference is a defining moment in Hegel's analysis of subjectivity. Hegel often describes the subject or subjectivity as "pure self-relation." For example, in the *Philosophy of Right*, he defines the first moment of "subjectivity of the will" as "*pure form, the absolute unity of the self-consciousness with itself*" (PR §25).⁹ Pure self-relation implies abstraction from all personal, and thus idiosyncratic qualities, as well as all external, thus limiting, relations and givens. This first abstraction, usually called the first negation, is always an act of exclusion, positing everything other than that pure relation to self as irrelevant and thus positing the self as indifferent to all particulars.

Finally, the first determination of objectivity for Hegel is also one of indifference. Objectivity is defined in the *Science of Logic* as "an immediacy whose moments [...] exist in a self-subsistent indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*] as objects outside one another" (SL 710 / L II 359).¹⁰ Not only for Hegel, but also generally, this state of disinterest and attitude of indifference is closely related to the concept of 'objectivity' as impartiality. The attitude of indifference is a prerequisite of impartiality. For example, an arbitrator or a judge is expected to be

⁹ See also his definitions of Being-for-self, Identity, Concept, and Life.

¹⁰ "'Objectivity' has a three-fold significance. *To start with*, it has the significance of what is externally present, as distinct from what is only subjective, meant, dreamed, etc.; *secondly*, it has the significance, established by Kant, of what is universal and necessary as distinct from the contingent, particular, and subjective that we find in our sensation; and *thirdly*, it has the last-mentioned significance of the *In-itself* as thought-product, the significance of what is there, as distinct from what is only thought by us" (E §41A).

impartial in her judgments and evaluations. This impartiality is a requirement in the court of law because all citizens are to be treated equally. And such equal treatment requires and implies that all citizens are equally valid, so to speak, and that the judge is indifferent, or ought to be disinclined to any prejudicial treatment. Similarly, in many ethical theories, perhaps most notably in ideal observer theories as well as the Rawlsian original position, such indifference is seen to be the guarantee of objectivity and the antidote to prejudicial treatment. Such impartiality (indifference to personal preference and taste and immunity to prejudgment) is also generally taken to be the requirement of objective analysis. A thinker can get at the truth only by bracketing her personal prejudices, values, agendas. In Kantian ethics, for example, a truly moral act – as opposed to an amoral or an immoral act – is that which is indifferent to its context and personal wishes and feelings of the agent. And, finally, rational thought is supposed to be indifferent to feelings – a premise which makes it very difficult to philosophize about suffering and desperation!

3- Indifference and Self-determination

I trace two systematic uses of indifference in Hegel's development of self-determination in the *Logic*. These two meanings of indifference that Hegel uses in his analysis are closely related to the two main dictionary definitions of *Gleichgültigkeit*, namely that of irrelevance and equivalence. The first is the

function of ‘indifference’ in the act of abstraction. The Understanding [*Verstand*] forms generalizations by positing the irrelevance of excluded terms or relations. Privileging a context and disregarding others generally qualifies the subject-matter as an individual, a one – for example, something [*Etwas*], the ‘I’, the will, the universal are all defined first as an abstract self-relation.¹¹ The second meaning is the indifference of the equal validity of the many – of the qualities in the constitution of something, of the immediate determinations of the ‘I’, of the decisions of a will, of the particulars – that such abstraction presupposes and implies. For example, in an aggregate, which by definition lacks an inner hierarchy and order, the parts are reciprocally indifferent to one another. When the will is treated as the power of choice or is defined by its indeterminacy, the purposes of the will are posited as equally valid – indifferent to one another as well as to the will itself.

These two relations of indifference are very difficult to keep separate, even provisionally: In each of their instantiation in the various transitions in Hegel’s analyses, the collapse of the “type” of indifference characteristic of the one phase to the “other type” is a key and constant move. Abstraction and formal identity can be valid only if the relations (or the determinations of the context in general) are treated as “equally valid” (or irrelevant to the same extent);

¹¹ “Formal identity or identity-of-the-understanding is this identity, insofar as one holds onto it firmly and *abstracts* from distinction. Or rather, *abstraction* is the positing of this formal identity, the transformation of something that is inwardly concrete into this form of simplicity—whether it be the case that a part of the manifold that is present in the concrete is *left out* (by means of what is called *analysis*) and that only *one* of these [elements] is selected, or that, by leaving out their diversity, the manifold determinacies are *drawn together* into One” (E §115).

conversely, equal validity of the diverse elements can only be posited if each relation or determinacy can be chosen as belonging to the one, in abstraction from its relations or context. These relations of indifference function as a negative criterion in the Logic. Whenever a relation of indifference is posited between objects of analysis, or a relation of equivalence is affirmed between different aspects of the thing, self-determination no longer *is*.

Let us assume that we want to understand and define a tree, for example. If a tree is said to have diverse qualities, all equally valid (at least for immediate perception), such that it has a shape, a color, a texture, a density, and also a specific material constitution – it is made of wood – the treatment of these diverse qualities of the tree as equally valid, in a relation of equivalence, or as an indifferent aggregate, makes it impossible for us to comprehend it as something that is what it is on its own account, a living organism. The relation of “also [*auch*]” connecting the qualities assumes and implies that the tree lacks an internal organization. Thus, our identification of the tree as a specific kind of thing has to be arbitrary with respect to the subject matter itself, namely the tree. Our definition would be conditioned by our interests and the use we want to make of it. A tree, then, would be a different kind of thing for the logger, for the biologist, and for someone looking for shade.

Alternatively, claiming that the tree is something independent of all those qualities, something beyond those contingent relations or givens – since there is no apparent or perceivable hierarchy amongst them – does not solve the problem.

This can best be seen in Hegel's analysis of substance and its accidents. Such overcoming of the mere diversity of equivalent qualities relies on abstraction. We abstract from the various qualities and posit an inner *substratum* that underlies them all. However, since the specificity of the qualities and relations of the thing is excluded in this abstraction, we are left with an idea or formal representation of an inert thing. It is impossible to tell how that essence represents the tree as it is in and for itself since we cannot comprehend how this essence relates to its qualities.

Comprehending a living organism or anything that is "true" for that matter requires, for Hegel, that we comprehend it as self-determined.¹² And that comprehension is the result of overcoming these forms of indifference, of ceasing to fix that which is true (self-determining) by static definitions and categories. What Hegel proves at the end is the absolute (unavoidable and unsurpassable) partiality of determinacy. Every determinacy, every quality, category as well as every individual thing, is what it is as long as it posits its independence and self-sufficiency. However, such independence is never defensible and sustainable. It is, thus, impossible to capture truth as a determinacy, a static concept or relation: whether in being or reflection. This is not merely a negative result. Taken in abstract isolation, the result seems to suggest that there is no authentic self-determination – that all thought and all being is always partial, in flux, unfixable. However, looked at from its development, authentic self-determination is

¹² "Life, ego, spirit, absolute Concept are not universals merely in the sense of higher genera, but are concretes whose determinatenesses, too, are not species or lower genera but genera which, in their reality, are absolutely self-contained and self-fulfilled" (SL 605/L II 244).

precisely this process of overcoming partiality. Determinacy is both necessary and partial vis-à-vis the process of self-determination and “the self” is precisely the self-sublation of its various moments, i.e., determinacies.

4- Self-determination and Freedom

Given that self-determination also represents Hegel’s concept of freedom, how does the critique of indifference relate to Hegel’s study of the freedom of spirit and conception of individual freedom in the *Philosophy of Right*?¹³ Hegel’s

¹³ In this dissertation I limit my analysis to a study of Hegel’s Logic and the *Philosophy of Right*. In evaluating the *realphilosophical* counterpart of Hegel’s analysis of self-determination in the Logic, I could have chosen to evaluate Hegel’s philosophy of history, his lectures on the history of philosophy, art, or religion, or the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Especially since the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is predominantly the preferred text of much of the commentaries and references to Hegel’s “dialectical method,” an explanation of my preference for the Logic as well as the *Philosophy of Right* is in order: First, both the Logic and the *Philosophy of Right* are integral parts of the mature expression of Hegel’s system in the *Encyclopaedia*. The self-determination of thinking, captured in its totality as the absolute idea at the end of the Logic is not left behind in the following parts of the *Encyclopaedia*. On the contrary, Hegel refers the reader to the Logic in the beginning of the *Philosophy of Right* for the justification of the method and presuppositions of the latter (see PR §2). Only a much truncated version of the first part of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (the analysis of consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason) figures as a part of the *Encyclopaedia* (§§ 413-439). Moreover, the systematic place and necessity of the *Phenomenology* is unclear: Hegel only makes sparse and passing remarks on the *Phenomenology* in his other works and suggests that the “Introduction” and the “Preliminary Consideration” to the *Encyclopaedia* replace the main task of the *Phenomenology*: raising Hegel’s reader to the position of pure thinking (see E §25R). Since the status of the *Phenomenology* within the entirety of Hegel’s system has been a subject of extended commentary and debate in secondary literature, I did not find it necessary to attempt to unravel this issue for the purposes of reconstructing Hegel’s concept of self-determination and freedom as the overcoming of indifference. Second, self-determination is not thematized in the *Phenomenology*. Hegel does not discuss it as a methodological necessity, as he does in the Logic. The dialectical progression in the *Phenomenology* relies on a comparative evaluation of the object “in-itself” and the object as it is “for-us.” For example, sense-consciousness’ description of its object is seen to be inadequate to what its object really is. We, the readers, and Hegel, the philosopher, acknowledge this discrepancy and this, in turn, leads to a more developed form of consciousness, etc. The development is described from without, so to speak, and the viewpoint of “external reflection” is

criticisms of formal freedom as well as freedom of choice in the *Philosophy of Right* are based on his criticisms of the two types of indifference in the Logic. On the one hand, these relations of indifference define and sustain the coherence of both formulations of freedom. The exclusion of external determination is the relation of indifference that defines formal freedom, and the equivalence of the objects of the will is the relation of indifference that defines freedom of choice. On the other hand, these assumptions of indifference prove these forms of freedom to be inadequate to freedom as self-determination. For Hegel, these two kinds of indifference, achieving a sense of selfhood as well as having the freedom of choice, are necessary preconditions of true freedom, but neither can fulfill the requirements of self-determination. The critique of indifference as a methodological tool exposes the invalidity of indifference as an essential function of real self-determination, of human free agency.

How does a particular individual enact the kind of freedom Hegel lays out in his concept of self-determination? What does it mean to understand oneself as self-determined? According to Hegel, the identity of the self, its being-for-self, is a form of self-relation. Such self-relation cannot be a given, it is always posited. Neither is it ever complete, but is always already in the making as the self externalizes itself in judging and acting. According to Hegel, an individual is self-

not accounted for. Finally, in the *Phenomenology* indifference factors in Hegel's analysis most prominently in the section on "Observing Reason" and characterizes an empiricist framework of knowledge. Hegel's analysis in this section is not indispensable, given that he presents a similar critique in the *Encyclopaedia* (see pages 56ff. below).

determining insofar as she can always return to her unity of self from the particular expressions of itself. These particular expressions take place in the world of finitude and in a world of reciprocal determinations; they are thus never framed solely by the self. Their content, then, is not determined by the self alone. The return to self implies the positing of the other-determination as the self's own determination. Hegel's concept of self-determination does not assume the reality of a free self – one that guides/determines its actions free of influences from the outside/other. Self-determination assumes that the self is always already in relation to the other, and *is* only in that relation. So far, this explication sounds like a description of necessity and a stoic acceptance of it. How is this freedom, then?

The self is free to the extent that it is aware of the degree to which it is *affected* by that other. It is free to the extent that it owns up to its external determinations. The owning up of external determinations (what Hegel calls “the return to self”) posits an effect of an external cause or consequence of an alien influence as the self's very own – not by ignoring its external origin, but by sublating its indifference to otherness. Since the expressions of the self occur in a finite world, they are burdened with indifference: one cannot take into consideration all possible consequences and grounds and influences every time one judges or acts. Circumstances that the self inevitably posits as indifferent seem to be inconsequential in the context of limited acts. However, since the human individual is a natural and social being in reciprocal relation with the

world of things and community of persons, these aspects she posits as indifferent *are* indeed hidden influences on or even grounds of her actions. Consequently, they continue to limit, condition, and motivate her actions. Therefore, although it is impossible to be vigilant to all the claims of indifference that sustain and circumscribe one's attitude towards the world – one's convictions, and one's values – ignoring this indifference (the indifference to this indifference) necessarily inhibits one's self-determination. The influences one posits as irrelevant or the grounds and ends one treats as equivalent, in short, the relations of indifference, restrain the self's understanding of its own identity. Insofar as one cannot or refuses to identify the multiple determinants of oneself, one is not free to affirm or reject their continuing influence on one's actions.

If spirit (the collective life and creations of human beings) is indeed free in the Hegelian sense, then it is always in the process of making itself. This process also includes or implies the transformation of spirit's self-understanding, and this, in turn, implies a continuous change in the manner [*Art and Weise*] in which spirit is making itself. Temporarily fixing our self-understanding (individually and collectively) is inevitable for self-understanding to serve any purpose at all. We do so in the way we define the human and our relation to other living beings and each other, which are manifested and expressed both in the institutions under which we live and the discourses by which we justify and explain those institutions. As long as we allow ourselves to live under the authority of these institutions and ideologies, we perpetuate their existence. However, these fixities

are necessarily results of relations of indifference, and relations of priority and hierarchy which are not themselves absolute. And whether or not we acknowledge the blindspots created by what we posit as irrelevant or indifferent, they are affecting our judgments and actions. These blindspots, I argue, can only be overcome when we, as individuals identify the logic of indifference internal to them. However, the process of making explicit these relations of indifference is necessarily a collective and political process.

Self-determination *is* overcoming indifference, and such overcoming proceeds through the self-sublation of partial determinacies and fixed relations, which are grounded on relations of irrelevance and equivalence. Both the various steps in the Logic that are the result of such self-sublation and freedom in the *Philosophy of Right* are defined as being-at-home with oneself [*Beisichsein*] in the other. I show what this means for thinking and cognition in the Logic, in terms of comprehending something as what it is, or understanding it as self-determining. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel does not discuss personal freedom in this manner. His discussion of personal freedom is articulated in his treatment of abstract right (idea of personhood), subjective moral freedom (conscience), freedom of choice (economic relations of citizens in civil society), and concrete ethical freedom (as a member of an estate). However, I find that his exposition of personal freedom in the *Philosophy of Right* does not do justice to his explication of self-determination in the Logic. In the former Hegel limits his discussion to the spheres of the family, civil society, and the state, i.e. economic relations and a very restricted

form of political participation. In this respect the anonymous individual is no more than a pawn of world spirit while the famous and the great single handedly shape the future of human history. My analysis of indifference which stems from the Logic, however, reveals the impossibility of divorcing world spirit from the common person. Hegel's analysis of self-determination in the Logic allows us to comprehend substantial individual freedom through the active participation in one's spiritual world: not only in the aforementioned spheres or in culture as expressed in art, religion, and philosophy but more importantly in the determination of one's political existence. I find individual self-determination is predicated upon one's self-understanding and that self-understanding is politically determined and maintained. Individual freedom, thus, must be thought and practiced in the domain of the political.

5- Chapter Outline

The first chapter, entitled "Maneuvering Skepticism: Systematic Presuppositions and Hegel's Analysis of Finite Thinking," treats the discussion of finite thinking I indicated in the first section of the "Introduction." In this chapter, I discuss Hegel's "Introduction" and "Preliminary Exposition" to the *Encyclopaedia*, focusing on the justification of his project through the critique of finite thinking, and the discussion of his method, that is, the three moments of "the logical [*das Logische*]."

The second chapter, “The Dialectic of Indifference: Hegel’s Derivation and Analysis of Self-determination in the *Science of Logic*,” is a close study of Hegel’s account of the dynamic of sublation and self-determination. As I indicated, in the third section of the “Introduction,” I argue that the process of self-determination relies on the overcoming of two types of indifference, and I make explicit the role and significance of the critique of indifference in these thought processes (sublation and self-determination) by concentrating on three parts in the *Logic*: the dialectic of something and other that is resolved with the category of Being-for-self, which is the first category in the *Logic* to exhibit the structure of self-determination; the dialectic of identity and difference (exemplified in the relation of form and content as well as ground and existence); and the moments of the Concept, universality, particularity, and singularity.

In Chapter Three, “Self-determination of Humanity and the Place of Individual Freedom in the *Philosophy of Right*,” I focus on Hegel’s analysis of freedom in the *Philosophy of Right*. I focus on the parallels and the points of divergence between self-determination in the *Logic* and freedom in the *Philosophy of Right*. I argue that although Hegel limits personal freedom to forms that are inadequate to true self-determination, his critique of morality and arbitrary choice [*Willkür*] requires a more comprehensive account of personal freedom.

Finally, in the Epilogue “The Ambiguous Function of Indifference: Philosophy and Self-determination,” I trace the implications and consequences of

this analysis of indifference. I discuss its repercussions for the interpretation of Hegel's system, focusing on Hegel's *Doppelsatz*: what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational.

CHAPTER ONE

Maneuvering Skepticism: Systematic Presuppositions and Hegel's Analysis of Finite Thinking

Hegel's "Introduction" to the *Encyclopaedia* addresses the difficulty of beginning philosophical analysis and initiates the reader to Hegel's subject-matter and method. In this "Introduction"¹⁴ Hegel defines philosophical science [*philosophische Wissenschaft*], introduces the subject-matter of the *Logic* (the first part of the encyclopaedic system), presents a critical discussion of rival philosophical approaches, and briefly introduces the concept of the Logical [*das Logische*], commonly treated as Hegel's "dialectical method." This extensive

¹⁴ The "Introduction" proper of the whole *Encyclopaedia* includes only §1-18 where Hegel defines philosophy (and distinguishes philosophical science from other sciences), and discusses the kind of thinking that is proper to philosophy (and distinguishes it from both ordinary consciousness and other methodologies). The section "Preliminary Conception [*Vorbegriff*]" follows this Introduction, where Hegel defines the subject-matter of the *Logic* (§19-25), and discusses three "Positions of Thought with respect to Objectivity" (§26-78): 1) "Metaphysics" is generally interpreted as Hegel's response to the dogmatism of the pre-Kantian, Leibnizian-Wolffian rationalism – though he does not name specific philosophers. 2) This section treats "Empiricism" and "Critical Philosophy" under one heading. Hegel discusses Hume's skeptical challenge, which famously woke Kant from his dogmatic slumber, and Kant's critique of reason, as examples of critical insight that have degenerated to dogmatism. And 3) "Immediate Knowing" discusses Jacobi's philosophy and summarizes the results of the former sections. Hegel's extended introduction still continues on in §79-82 where Hegel identifies the three "sides" of "the logical": 1) the abstract side of the understanding [*das Verständige*], 2) the dialectical side, and 3) the speculative side. For Hegel, these sides of the logical express the aspects of everything that is "true" because 1) everything true is determinate, 2) this determinacy fixes a process that cannot be fixed and thus leads to contradictions, and 3) true being implies self-relation, or comprehension of itself, and achieves such self-relation only in relation to the whole. Finally, §83 gives an outline of the parts of the *Logic*.

introduction presents the reader with more than a preparatory and general description of Hegel's project. Hegel's analysis of various approaches to philosophy, common-sense beliefs, and assumptions of ordinary consciousness provides the reader with examples of the manner [*Art und Weise*] of Hegel's analysis in general: of the "self-sublation of the finite" or dialectical thinking. Though it may seem to the reader that Hegel merely, and perhaps dogmatically, states what philosophy, or thinking, must be, his aim is not to establish definitions (of the Absolute, or the Idea). In this preliminary discussion of common-sense beliefs and dominant approaches, Hegel raises questions as to the basic assumptions of these generally accepted positions, shows them to be unwarranted presuppositions (characteristic of what he calls "finite thinking"), and lets the concept of philosophical science (and the thinking that is proper to it) determine itself through the suspension of these unjustified preconceptions. Thus, Hegel's manner of analysis in these introductory passages provides us with examples of the dynamic of "self-determination," which is the main issue that is at stake for us.

My focus in this chapter is to explicate how Hegel clears the way for his Logic. The clarification of how Hegel begins and initially justifies his project is necessary for carrying out the analysis in what follows. In the next chapter, I discuss Hegel's development of the concept of self-determination focusing on the role of indifference, and the overcoming of indifference, in the process of sublation. Before we embark on an analysis of particular passages in the Logic,

we must have a general idea about the nature of Hegel's Logic. It must be noted, for example, that Hegel's Logic is not a traditional logical treatise, which has as its subject-matter the nature of propositions, rules of correct thinking, laws of valid inference, etc. It is, rather, a metaphysical treatise¹⁵ which in studying thought-determinations claims to penetrate things in themselves.

Hegel's claim that logic coincides with metaphysics, that the rules and categories of human thought grasp and manifest what is true of reality, is an explicit denial of the Kantian critique of reason. As John W. Burbidge points out in his recent commentary on Hegel's Logic, post-Kantian philosophers "cannot get away with simply making such assertions [e.g. that "our thoughts ... are able to grasp not simply the way *we* understand the world, but the way the world actually is"]. For Kant we humans are essentially finite; our thoughts can never reach the world as it is in itself. We are limited to the givens of sense, filtered through our own specific locations in space and time."¹⁶ Taking into account also the significance of the tradition of skepticism for Hegel's system,¹⁷ a thorough

¹⁵ Hegel explicitly states this in the *Encyclopaedia*: "Logic coincides with *metaphysics*, with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts* that used to be taken to express the *essentialities* of the *things*" (E §24). See also his comment in the Introduction to the *Science of Logic*: Logical science "contains thought in so far as this is just as much the subject-matter in itself [*Sache an sich selbst*], or the subject-matter in itself in so far as it is equally pure thought" (SL 49 / L I 30).

¹⁶ Burbidge, *The Logic of Hegel's Logic* (Cambridge: Routledge, 2007), 29-30.

¹⁷ On the place of skepticism in Hegel's system, see Michael Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Fulda and Horstmann, eds., *Skeptizismus und spekulatives Denken in der Philosophie Hegels* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1996); Dudley, "Ancient Skepticism and Systematic Philosophy," in *Hegel's History of Philosophy*, ed. David Duquette (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 87-105; Mabile "Is Hegel Dogmatic?" *The Philosophical Forum* 31:3-4 (Fall-Winter 2000): 261-297.

treatment of Hegel's Logic must determine the fine line he walks between the extremes of a dogmatic rationalism and a skepticism that denies the possibility of metaphysics. What is, then, Hegel's task in the Logic? What does Hegel mean by thinking? What is the epistemic/ontological status of the categories analyzed in the Logic? Does Hegel dogmatically posit that there is reason (or *logos*) in the world? Does he mistakenly take the thoughts of a middle-aged German man as objective thinking?

None of these questions receive unanimous answers in Hegel scholarship,¹⁸ and they continue to haunt anyone who tries to come to grips with Hegel's system. Perhaps ironically, Hegel's system is condemned (or praised) for such opposing traits as "being too mystical" or "having no place for the irrational," "being a statist" or "being too liberal," "overcoming skepticism" or "succumbing to it," namely, for almost any possible philosophical crime, except simplicity. I cannot in the space of this chapter resolve all these issues. I do, however, aim to make clear 1) Hegel's general mode of analysis in the introduction, beginning with the modes of thinking proper to ordinary

¹⁸ Though it must be noted that the secondary literature on Hegel unanimously concedes that Hegel conceived his logic as metaphysics, but is divided as to (1) whether it is the ground for praise or censure, and (2) whether a non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's project is a legitimate undertaking. See, most recently, Burbidge's survey of diverse Hegel interpretations in Chapter 23 of *The Logic of Hegel's Logic*. He explains that "the metaphysical approach itself ranges from those who see the categories as predicates of a single entity incorporating all reality that can be called the Absolute, to those who claim that the logic articulates those connections between determinate concepts that we have found necessary in our experience. In either case, it is reality itself that requires the move from concept to concept. On the other hand, the logical readings claim that each concept has its own network of meaning that requires reference to other meanings, some of which conflict, requiring resolution of the paradox" and he concludes that "Hegel's text is rich enough to carry both interpretations and suggest many more" (153).

consciousness and analyzing the implications and assumptions thereof; 2) Hegel's analysis of the Understanding [*Verstand*], the finite thinking [*endliches Denken*] that is proper to it, and the antithesis or oppositions [*Gegensätze*] that characterize such thinking; and 3) Hegel's concept of the logical [*das Logische*] through which he positions his own project as a sublation of finite thinking.

First, I discuss Hegel's analysis of two "old prejudices" regarding thinking to show minute examples of self-determination at work (concentrating on § 2 and 5 of the introduction to the *Encyclopaedia*). Second, I turn to Hegel's description of his project in the Logic as the study of "objective thoughts." What I call Hegel's "maneuvering" of skepticism is especially pertinent here. Hegel's argument relies on the *dogmatic skepticism* of finite thinking: Finite thinking makes skepticism into a positive teaching when it denies the possibility of objective thoughts¹⁹. This presupposition of finite thinking, thus, is itself unwarranted and we cannot begin philosophical analysis accepting such unwarranted assumptions. Hegel suggests, then, that we keep an open mind about the possibility of carrying out and engaging objective (or pure) thinking. Finally, I discuss Hegel's strategic introduction and use of the concept of the logical based on my preceding analysis.

¹⁹ See page 8 above.

1- Common-sense Assumptions Regarding Thinking

Philosophy lacks the advantage, which the other sciences enjoy, of being able to *presuppose* its *ob-jects* as given immediately by representation. And, with regard to its beginning and advance, it cannot *presuppose* the *method* of cognition as one that is already accepted (E §1).

These opening words of the Introduction express Hegel's well-known claim to "presuppositionless" philosophy. Here, Hegel presents two initial criteria to which philosophical science must measure up. First, philosophy cannot take the object of analysis as immediately present or given, because any such givenness is always circumscribed by the perspective of the perceiver or thinker and cannot be expected to have the universality and necessity that philosophy requires in its subject matter. Second, the method of analysis should be assumed as indeterminate in the beginning, because any determinate approach will be burdened by presuppositions not yet accounted for.²⁰ For example, abiding by common practice in the formulation of the main questions and following the customary divisions in analyzing the topic would inevitably influence the content to be analyzed, grant the legitimacy of definitions, accept a hierarchy of concepts, and condemn a whole range of issues and relations as irrelevant. Moreover, the attempt to establish the method prior to the subject matter implies that the way or manner of study is external to the subject matter and that its choice does not affect

²⁰ "According to the formal, non-philosophical method of the sciences, the first thing sought and demanded is a definition, or at any rate this demand is made for the sake of preserving the external form of scientific procedure" (PR §2R).

the subject to be studied.²¹ These are assumptions that we can not make in the beginning, according to Hegel.

If we are not to presuppose a given concept or thing as our object of study, it means that the proper subject-matter will be determined in the course of our analysis. Also, if we are not to accept a certain methodology, it means that the development of the subject-matter will coincide with the establishing of our approach. In short, we must let the subject-matter determine itself. Already in the first paragraph, Hegel invokes the concept of self-determination as the necessary object and method of analysis through these two stipulations.²² Hegel clearly states this much later, and appropriately, in his discussion of “Ground” in the Logic: “It is precisely the business of the logic, however, to exhibit the thoughts that are merely represented, and which as such are not comprehended nor demonstrated, *as stages of self-determining thinking*, so that these thoughts come to be both comprehended and demonstrated” (E §121A, my emphasis).

Self-determination is a reflexive concept, and Hegel’s project in the Logic is to let this (as yet indeterminate) concept determine itself. It is this doubling of an already reflexive concept, I believe, that makes both the reading of Hegel’s

²¹ “Philosophical subdivisions are certainly not an external classification—i.e. an outward classification of a given material based on one or more extraneous principles of organization—but the immanent differentiation of the concept itself” (PR §33R). This second stipulation resonates, as we’ll see later, with Hegel’s critique of the form/content distinction and “external reflection.”

²² “[Philosophy] is concerned with definitions that have been validated, i.e., definitions whose content is not accepted merely as something that we come across, but is recognized as grounded in free [i.e., self-determining] thinking, and hence at the same time grounded within itself” (E §99A). Grounded in free thinking, then, means grounded through the process of self-determination; thus and only thus, could the concept of thinking be *self-grounded*, according to Hegel.

texts and evaluating their results so difficult. In a facile way, if “self-determination” is real or a meaningful concept, then we can never take it as given, as fixable and definable by qualities or relations. This is because the nature of self-determination must be so as to only follow itself and any quality or relation we introduce would be an alien delimitation. How can “letting self-determination determine itself” be a possible and meaningful project as long as we have that minor caveat of positioning ourselves as observers and evaluators? The coherence of this project depends on granting that there could be only one such principle, i.e., of self-determination. Besides, we must also grant that our observation [*Betrachtung*], that is our thinking, is susceptible or receptive to this principle of self-determination, and, since there is only one such principle, an instantiation of this process. This condition expresses the general, and correct, characterization of Hegel’s system as a form of monism, where the principle [*logos*] of both thought and being, reason and reality, is the concept of self-determination.²³

The two negative directives, of neither assuming a fixed subject-matter nor a determinate method, rid us of a *specific* content (the thinking of which could provide us with a beginning) and of a *specific* method (the application of which could allow us to find or develop a proper content). Self-determination is not a

²³ These implicit presuppositions are not dogmatically introduced and accepted by Hegel in the beginning. They will be proven in the course of the encyclopaedic system and established as results at the end. “Philosophy forms a circle: it has an initial or immediate point – for it must begin somewhere – a point which is not demonstrated and is not a result. But the starting point of philosophy is immediately relative, for it must appear at another end-point as a result. Philosophy is a sequence [*Folge*] which is not suspended in mid-air; it does not begin immediately, but is rounded off within itself” (PR §2A). See also Hegel’s remarks to E §15.

given thing or an immediate representation, nor does it constitute an established method. Hegel's answer as to the appropriate beginning comes in the next paragraph of the Introduction, where he somewhat unexpectedly turns to "ordinary thinking." Hegel begins with a very general characterization of philosophy proper to the way ordinary thinking would define it. Philosophy is "a thinking consideration [*denkende Betrachtung*] of objects [*Gegenstände*]" (E §2). This definition "determines" as little as possible and it is imprecise enough to be acceptable to all; however, it establishes the specific topic of the Introduction, namely, the general meaning of "thinking" and the mode of thinking that is proper to philosophy. Since the only "given" in this philosophical analysis is that it is a specific mode of thinking, thinking itself must be the first and foremost subject-matter of philosophy – with the added stipulation that we cannot simply accept our common opinions about thinking as true. Consequently, in the "Introduction" and the opening paragraphs of the "Preliminary Conception," Hegel examines various common opinions about thinking.

As I pointed out above, Hegel's encyclopaedic introduction contains miniature examples of his general way of proceeding and offers a good introduction to Hegel's use of sublation [*Aufhebung*]²⁴ – of letting inadequate perspectives and one-sided categories negate themselves and reveal themselves to be moments of a more comprehensive category or relation. In this Introduction,

²⁴ I discuss the concept of sublation and the logic of the self-sublation of categories and relations as constituting the process of thinking's self-determination in the Logic in Chapter Two. See especially pages 89-90 and 99ff. below.

Hegel analyzes common beliefs about thinking's relation to consciousness and to truth. He shows that unless one adopts his interpretation of these common beliefs, the beliefs themselves disintegrate. In his analysis of ordinary consciousness' attitude and common-sense beliefs, Hegel calls into question, on the one hand, the view that thinking is one subjective faculty among others,²⁵ and challenges, on the other hand, the certainty that is attached to feeling and sense experience and the consequent reduction of thinking to a formal activity that needs content external to it to produce any truth at all. Hegel discusses two propositions, what he calls "old prejudices [*alte Vorurteile*]," in §2 and §5. These old prejudices are the grounding presuppositions of not only ordinary consciousness, but also of empirical sciences and of most philosophical analysis, insofar as the presuppositions of finite thinking are adopted by the latter.

The first prejudice, introduced in §2, expresses the common belief that thinking, or reason, distinguishes humans from animals and defines the human as the *zoon logikon*. This definition is ambiguous insofar as it does not stipulate the status of reason in the human animal: may we treat rationality as one quality among others in the constitution of the human? Thus, for example, both a nominalist and an idealist may agree to this general claim while holding completely opposed theories about the definition of reason and its place in the constitution of the human being. The second prejudice, which appears in §5,

²⁵ This is, according to Hegel, one of the basic tenets of Kantian philosophy. However, he finds this presupposition in any philosophy that denies the objective validity of concepts, such as forms of skepticism.

expresses the principle of common-sense philosophy that our thoughts, categories, and words correspond to and comprehend the real world that we experience.²⁶ However, this prejudice can similarly accommodate a phenomenalist or subjectivist view of thinking as well as idealism.

Hegel does not argue against the basic import of these presuppositions. However, following his demand for a presuppositionless beginning, Hegel finds fault with the attitude that simply accepts these “old prejudices” as true. He also shows that these beliefs, if fully comprehended, prove the presuppositions of finite thinking to be false.²⁷ The paradox of finite thinking is that while it affirms the opposition (or antithesis) of thought and being, or subject and object, its definition of rational thought and reason’s relation to consciousness implies a negation of those strict distinctions. These claims about the place and limits of the rational can only be accepted through an analysis of the conditions upon which their truth depends. In his analysis of these claims, Hegel shows the reader the presuppositions or conditions of these “truths” and raises our comprehension of these claims to a higher, namely more self-conscious, level. Through this analysis,

²⁶ Hegel also expressly states this as the dogma of “old metaphysics,” the first position of thought with respect to objectivity. He writes “The first position is the *naïve* way of proceeding [*das unbefangene Verfahren*], which, being still unconscious of the antithesis of thinking within and against itself, contains the *belief* that *truth* is [re]cognized, and what the objects genuinely are is brought before consciousness, through *thinking about* [Nachdenken] them” (E §26). See also “The presupposition of the older metaphysics was that of naïve belief generally [*des unbefangenen Glaubens überhaupt*], namely, that thinking grasps what things are *in-themselves*, that things only are what they genuinely are when they are [captured] in thought” (E §28A).

²⁷ According to Hegel, finite thinking is characterized by the assumptions of the indifference of thought and being, on the one hand, and the indifference of subjectivity and objectivity, on the other. See also my introduction, pages 7-15, as well as section 2 below.

Hegel accomplishes two tasks: 1) He gives an example of the method of analysis to be carried out in the Logic, one of immanent critique rather than external evaluation; 2) He shows his position (of “objective thinking”) to be the result and inner truth of these ordinary (and philosophical) conceptions of truth and thinking.

It is an old prejudice, a saying that is now a cliché, that man is distinguished from the lower animals by thinking; it may seem to be a cliché, but it must also seem remarkable that there is need to recall this old belief. Yet one can hold that the need is there, in view of the prejudice of our day and age, which separates feeling and thinking from each other in such a way that they are supposedly opposed to each other (§2R)... But if it is correct [*richtig*] (as indeed it is), that the *human being* distinguishes itself from the *animals* by thinking, then everything human is human because it is brought about through thinking, and for that reason alone (E §2).

Whatever kind it may be, the *content* that fills our consciousness is what makes up the *determinacy* of our feelings, intuitions, images, and representations, of our purposes, duties, etc., and of our thoughts and concepts. (§3) In order to reach a provisional agreement... that the genuine *content* of our consciousness is *preserved* when it is translated into the form of thought and the concept, and even that it is not placed in its proper light until then, we can conveniently call to mind another *old prejudice* that, when we want to experience what is true [was *Wahres sei*] in objects [*Gegenstände*] and occurrences, as well as feelings, intuitions, opinions, representations [*Vorstellungen*], etc., then reflective thinking²⁸ [*Nachdenken*] is necessary (E §5).

Both of these prejudices, or, common beliefs, concern the activity of thinking, what it is and what it does. If they are indeed “old prejudices,” they must be readily acceptable by anyone and thus a good source for determining an ordinary,

²⁸ I translate *Nachdenken* as “reflective thinking” based on Hegel’s own definition: “the thinking that can be called *Nachdenken* – the *reflective* thinking [*das reflektierende Denken*] that has *thoughts* as such as its *content* and brings them to consciousness” (E §2R). Hegel uses “*Nachdenken*” as a general term that includes reflection [*Reflexion*] and argumentation [*Räsonnement*]. The emphasis here is on thinking’s mediating activity on an already given content and thus its characterization as an activity external to the given content. See also the translator’s “Notes to the Glossary,” p. 351, in the Hackett edition of the *Encyclopaedia Logic*. They argue that “reflection” would be a better translation for “*Nachdenken*” if it were not reserved for “*Reflexion*.”

or common-sense, view of thinking. Based on the definition that humans are thinking animals, the first “old prejudice” defines thinking as the specific difference [*spezifischen Differenz*] that distinguishes the human species within the animal genus. The second prejudice defines thinking according to its function, namely, as an activity which allows us to comprehend our feelings, intuitions, and our experience of the world around us in general.

It seems at first that Hegel refers to these “old prejudices” affirmingly and uses them in his “Introduction” as appropriate characterizations of thinking. These “old prejudices,” however, are too general. They can easily accommodate an account of thinking as a subjective faculty of knowledge or as a purely formal activity, both of which are approaches to thinking that Hegel criticizes and most importantly sees as hindrances to the development of philosophical science. The first proposition – that humans are thinking animals – does not contradict, and can perhaps even be taken to imply, the view that thinking is *only* a human faculty, and hence a subjective activity, the results of which have no objective validity. Likewise the second one is consistent with the view that thinking is the instrument by which we acquire a particular kind of knowledge about the world we experience, such that thinking is seen as formal activity dependent and parasitic on the content given to us in experience.

However, such interpretations of these common beliefs would affirm the antitheses²⁹ of subject and object, and concept and reality, respectively, and would prejudice the study of thinking before it begins. As we pointed out earlier, according to Hegel, philosophical analysis cannot begin on the foundation of such unwarranted claims, especially ones about the impotence of reason, or thinking. Thus, in his discussion of these propositions, Hegel reformulates them such that there could no longer be any ambiguity as to their interpretation. His reformulations rule out the interpretations based on such an antithetical understanding of thinking. This is not the substitution of one dogma, namely Hegel's conviction about the objectivity of thinking, in the place of another, namely the antithesis of finite thinking. Rather Hegel shows that the reduction of thinking to a passive and subjective faculty contradicts the very definition of thinking it presupposes.

Let us take the first "old prejudice". Hegel transforms it in two ways. The original proposition formulated as a conditional would be: If x is human, then x is a thinking being. Thinking is characterized as the necessary (but not sufficient) condition of humanness. First of all, Hegel's reformulation does not relate thinking to the abstract category "human," but establishes the relation between "what is properly human [*Menschliches*]" and thinking. The reformulation thus

²⁹ Such antithetical thinking is characterized both as philosophy of the understanding and as finite thinking (e.g., E § 25). The antithesis at stake also takes different forms: immediacy and mediation, or finite and infinite, or understanding and reason, etc. See also Hegel's discussion of the Idea as the unity of the various antitheses: of the ideal and the real, of the finite and the infinite, and body and soul, etc. (E §214).

reads: If something is properly human, then it is brought about [*bewirkt*] by thinking. The original formulation leaves open the possibility of imagination, willing, or religion to also be “properly human” activities in the case that thinking is not active [*tätig*] in them. Hegel’s modification of the original claim posits thinking not merely as a necessary condition of *being* a human, but states that everything properly human, i.e., imagination, religion, or action, must involve thought, or reason. The second alteration that Hegel brings to the “old prejudice” is to state this latter version as a double conditional: Something is properly human if and only if it is brought about by thinking.³⁰ Thus, “being brought about by thinking” is formulated not only as a necessary condition, but also a sufficient condition of everything properly human [*Menschliches*]. According to this statement, rationality can no longer be viewed as one faculty among others, or a predicate that makes the subject bearing it “human.” Reason is seen now as penetrating everything that deserves the name “human.”

From the common belief that thinking distinguishes humans from animals, Hegel in a certain sense derives the controversial statement that thinking is active in everything human. At first glance, this is an invalid logical move because the original statement in no way requires that thinking be involved in sensation, feeling, or desire for those to qualify also as human activities. Merely belonging to a human being would be sufficient for that. The key is the status of

³⁰ “Everything human is human because it is brought about through thinking, and for that reason alone” (E §2).

“thinking” as the specific difference in the definition³¹ of the human animal. Thinking, the specific difference, could be seen as one *additional* determination amongst all other determinations shared by the genus; however, that would underplay its distinctive character. Hegel shows that it is indeed questionable to claim that all other determinations, e.g., sensation, feeling, or desire, remain indifferent to this “addition” and thus remain the same as they are in other animals. It is thus plausible to suggest that the presence of thinking restructures and influences, or “determines and permeates [*bestimmen und durchdringen*]” (E §2R), all other human activities. Belonging to, or occurring in, a human being infests all activities with thought, given that thinking is the distinguishing mark of the human. Hegel in this way transforms the necessary condition for being a human animal – having the faculty of thinking – into a necessary and sufficient condition for everything properly human – the activity [*Tätigkeit*] of thinking. This is not a full-fledged argument and Hegel does not aim at proving his

³¹ For Hegel, thinking constitutes the determination [*Bestimmung*] of the human being and must not be regarded as a characteristic [*Merkmal*] that is predicated to the subject “human.” See also footnote 101 on page 106 below. In *Hegel’s Ladder*, Harris gives an excellent summary of the difference between conceptual definition in the Hegelian sense and definition in its ordinary meaning: “The speculative judgment changes the subject by development. It does not “predicate” something newly discovered about the stable subject that was there already... Speculative propositions are conceptual definitions that are “ontologically necessary” (H. S. Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder*, vol. I, p. 143). “But to call speculative propositions stipulations is misleading, because it would imply a free choice of subjective argument. To call them definitions is also misleading, for then it would give absolute status to the freezing power of Understanding” (H. S. Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder*, note 68).

statements and position in the “Introduction”.³² However, he has achieved something. If his reader is willing to consider the possibility that the activity [*Tätigkeit*] of thinking is the necessary and sufficient condition for everything properly human, then she, in the following pages, will not bring with her the presupposition that thinking is merely what happens when she has thoughts [*Gedanken haben*].³³

The second “old prejudice” states that if we want to know what is true in our experience, then we must reflect upon its content. It thus presents the employment of thinking as the necessary condition for true knowledge. However, according to this statement, reflection is coupled with the intention to know and with the content of knowledge. This proposition leaves indeterminate whether thinking may be seen merely as an instrument that “receives” the content of experience. Is thinking also (and always already) at work in experience, even at those times when the person does not inquire into the truth of her experience and

³² “Like our explanation of thinking so far, the division of the Logic ... must be regarded simply as an anticipation; and its justification or proof can only result from the completed treatment of thinking” (E §83A).

³³ I use “having thoughts” here to emphasize the inadequacy of the relation of “having” which treats thinking as a form of consciousness. (See also Hegel’s discussion of the thing and the relation of “having” in E §125). Even philosophical thinking, i.e., “a mode by which thinking becomes cognition and conceptually comprehensive cognition [*begreifendes Erkennen*]” is “*diverse* from the thinking that is active in everything human, even though it is also identical with this thinking, and *in-itself* there is only *One* thinking” (E §2). Hegel later defines the proper activity of intelligence as having thoughts: “The *thought* of intelligence [*das Denken der Intelligenz*] is to have thoughts [*Gedanken haben*], which are its content and general object” (E §465), but thoughts [*Gedanke*] at that point in the analysis no longer refer to the contents of consciousness, but to what is: “It knows that what is thought is, and that what is only is in that it is thought [*was gedacht ist, ist; und daß, was ist, nur ist, insofern es Gedanke ist*] (cf. §§ 5, 21), and it is therefore being-for-self” (E §465).

thus does not self-consciously reflect upon the content of her experience? This indeterminacy or ambiguity allows for an interpretation of this “old prejudice” such that both the world as such and the content of our experience are posited as indifferent to thought.

Hegel again makes two subsequent alterations to the original proposition, and claims that his reformulation follows from the “old prejudice.” In the original statement, “reflective thinking [*Nachdenken*] upon the content of consciousness” is posited as the necessary condition of knowing the truth about experience. First, Hegel reformulates both terms of this relation. He changes “reflective thinking [*Nachdenken*]” to “translation [*Übersetzen*] of the content [of experience] into the form of thought and the concept.” This modification emphasizes that the content is not something material and external, which is essentially left as it is, while thinking somehow comes from outside and mirrors that “given” content. Then, Hegel posits thinking as the necessary condition of comprehending “the true [*wahrhafte*] content of experience,” rather than the truth about experience. The implication here is that experience has a genuine or true content. The claim about the relation between thinking and truth is no longer merely epistemological, but about thinking’s comprehension of “what truly or really is”.

Second, he changes the original proposition into a biconditional – the true content of our consciousness can be comprehended *if and only if* it is translated into the form of thought. According to Hegel’s first alteration, the original prejudice would read: If the genuine [*wahrhafte*] content of our consciousness is

to be preserved and placed in its proper light, then it must be translated into the form of thought. By adding that the genuine content of our consciousness is “*not* placed in its proper light” if it is *not* translated into the form of thought, Hegel presents the activity [*Tätigkeit*] of thinking not only as a necessary but also as a sufficient condition of *the true*, or rather, of genuineness [*Wahrhaftigkeit*]. This can only mean that if the genuine content of anything – or “the true” in all objects, occurrences, intuition, feeling, representations, etc. – is comprehended, it exhibits the form of thought and the concept.³⁴

Hegel derives the highly controversial proposition that true knowledge is knowledge of “the true [*das Wahre*]” from the common belief that we can know the world through the categories and concepts of thought/reason. At first glance, the original statement in no way requires that ‘truth’ have an ontological meaning or a given content be true. According to the Understanding, truth is a quality that applies to propositions and is a relevant category merely for human knowledge. Its assumption is that if through thinking the object of experience is to be comprehended, thinking must not alter this object, that is, add to or subtract from its content.³⁵ Thus the content of truth is taken to be external to the activity that

³⁴ Hegel gives a more abstract, but also more definitive, formulation of this conclusion later as he discusses the moments of the Logical [*das Logische*] and states that they are “moments of everything logically real, i.e., of every concept or of everything true in general” (E §79R). I will discuss §§79-83 in the last section of this chapter.

³⁵ Hegel accounts for the difference only alluded to here in his various discussions of the distinction between the understanding and reason. And this distinction rests on the relation of the form and content of knowledge: “*Kant* was the first to make definite distinction between understanding [*Verstand*] and reason [*Vernunft*]... whereas for the latter, the object [*Gegenstand*]

comprehends (and produces) truth and indifferent to it; and thinking is characterized as an instrument of knowledge.

The validity³⁶ of Hegel's argument depends on the status of truth implied in the original proposition. If truth is only a function of human knowing, as for example the Kantian framework would have it, then 1) it makes no sense to speak about the genuine (or true) content of consciousness, and 2) the world as well as our immediate and pre-reflective experience of it, are indifferent to truth (since truth is a function of human knowledge). Hegel's analysis of the "old prejudice" shows us that the merely formal function of thinking need not be an assumption in

is that which is determined in-and-for-itself [*An-und-für-sich-Bestimmte*], the identity of content and form, of universal and particular, for the former it falls apart into form and content, universal and particular, into an empty in-itself [*Ansich*] and the determinateness which comes to this from without, – so that for the *understanding* [*im verständigen Denken*] the *content is indifferent* [*gleichgültig*] to its *form*, whereas in *rational* or *conceptual* cognition it *brings forth* its form *from within itself*" (§467A).

³⁶ If analyzed formally, Hegel's inference of 'H' (the reformulation) from the original proposition 'A' is seen to be invalid. Let

p = we want to experience what is true
 q = we must reflect upon the content of consciousness
 $A = p \supset q$

p' = the genuine content of consciousness is posited in its proper light
 q' = the genuine content of consciousness is translated into the form of thought
 $H = (q' \supset p') \ \& \ (\sim q' \supset \sim p')$
 since $(\sim q' \supset \sim p') = (p' \supset q')$
 $H = p' \equiv q'$

Hegel presents the old prejudice 'A' as support for his reformulation 'H' and ignores the difference between p and p' , or q and q' . He says that "to reach an agreement that ' p' if and only if q' ', let us consider the old prejudice 'if p then q '." In effect, then, he argues that $(p \supset q) \supset (p' \equiv q')$ and makes an invalid inference. However, it must be pointed out that this formal analysis completely ignores the ambiguity and thus inadequacy of the original proposition.

it. He invites his reader to consider the true in and for itself, or on its own account, and thus not limit it to human knowledge.³⁷

How and why do I find in Hegel's analysis of the old prejudices examples of his methodology, i.e., of letting the subject matter determine itself? Hegel's reformulations in both cases change the object of the definition – the human being in the first, and truth in the second – from mere representations or abstract categories to concrete determinations that have an inner measure. In the second prejudice the abstract category “what is true [*das Wahre*]” is replaced by the concrete designation “genuine content [*wahrhafte Inhalt*] of consciousness.” The change is more pronounced in the first instance, where Hegel uses the concrete designation “everything human [*alles Menschliche*]” instead of the abstract category “human [*der Mensch*]” as the definandum. The latter designation is (more) concrete in the Hegelian sense because the empirically given determinations of human beings as well as the insights of conventional wisdom regarding humanness are implied and presupposed as products of the concept of humanity [*Menschlichkeit*]. They are treated as belonging to the concept “human” *out of itself*, not merely included within or subsumed under it. It is also concrete in an ordinary sense in so far as it invites the reader to examine the general term together with the particular determinations that are generally associated with it.

³⁷ Hegel admits that attributing “truth-value” to the content of experience “is bound to sound strange to our ordinary consciousness for the determinations of thought seem to acquire truth only in their application to given objects, and on this assumption it makes no sense to question their truth apart from this application” (E §24A2). However, we may concede with Hegel that “sounding strange” is not an appropriate criterion for ruling out philosophical claims.

Hegel's inferences are then invalid only if thinking is taken to be subjective and formal, that is, according to the antithetical conception of it. If that prejudice is bracketed, the meaning of thinking itself is expanded such that the inferences – which are invalid according to formal logic – become valid.

For the expansion in the meaning of thinking to be acceptable, Hegel's argument relies on both the ambiguity in the original statements and the counter-intuitive results of the antitheses. Upon closer analysis, the antithetical interpretations of the two prejudices contradict one another. The subjective status of thinking in the first prejudice undermines the claim that it is the necessary condition for comprehending the true in the second. Likewise, the reduction of thinking to a formal activity in the second prejudice divests thinking of its real significance as the specific difference of the human in the first.

One could argue that truth is only relevant for human knowledge and the designation "true being" is a meaningless relic from outdated metaphysics, and, at the same time, one could argue that the subjectivity of thinking poses no problems as long as this subjectivity itself is shown to have a well-grounded criterion of truth – as is shown by Kant. And similarly, one could object by arguing that the definition of human is a nominal definition such that the ontological status of thinking is insignificant for the meaning of "human." According to such an objection, the contradictions that I summarized above result only when one shares Hegel's premises.

Accepting this objection would lead to a dead end because it would appear that we are at the impasse that the skeptical argument of equipollence points to: Perhaps, there is no overarching criterion to decide between the antithetical view of thinking and Hegel's view. If one accepts Hegel's characterization of thinking, then his argument is valid and the antithetical interpretations of the two prejudices prove contradictory. Conversely, if one accepts the antithetical view of thinking, Hegel's argument is invalid and the two propositions are consistent. We have a battle of presuppositions and the intuitive preference for each position is deemed to be a dogmatic assumption by the opposing side – and there is no higher arbiter. However, there is an imbalance in the relation of the two positions to one another. The antithetical thinking asserts that thinking is only a human faculty, or a subjective activity, and that true knowledge requires that some content is given to thinking. Thus, it excludes the possibility of Hegel's position.

Hegel, in contrast, does not exclude the partial “truth” of the opposing perspective, and indeed even acknowledges the significance of the antithetical position.³⁸ Indeed, he defines *the* problem of philosophy to be this antithesis (E

³⁸ My implicit premise here is that, given that A and B are opposing frameworks, if A can account for B's position (while B cannot account for A), then A is a better theory than B. The reason is that A acknowledges that B is and thus no longer defines itself purely in opposition to B. Whether B simply denies A (as being dogmatic) or even gives good arguments against A, it misses something as long as it does not account for the possibility of A. My argument here mimics the move from the skeptical to the speculative in Hegel's analysis in general. Hegel's maneuvering of skepticism relies on his treatment of seemingly opposing views without the assumptions of an oppositional framework. Perhaps Daniel Dahlstrom is right in claiming that “Hegel's legacy is precisely the questionability of any attempt to put it in question.” “Hegel's Questionable Legacy,” *Research in Phenomenology* Vol. 32 (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2002), 3.

§22A and E §25), and the task of philosophy to be its examination and resolution. Hegel's acknowledgment and acceptance of the antithesis as a legitimate problem makes his position stronger than the position of the antithesis. It does not rely on an intuition or subjective preference for the belief in the incorrectness of the antithesis, but presents the antithesis as a problem to be reckoned with. The analysis that is carried out in the *Logic* proves Hegel's position in so far as it accounts for the existence and ground of the antithesis, that is, makes it a moment within thinking³⁹.

To sum up, the antitheses between concept and reality, and subject and object, are compatible with, if not reinforced by, the common weaker formulations of these prejudices, insofar as the first makes thinking one activity among others, albeit a privileged or special one, and the second treats thinking as an instrument or form to be applied to matter external to it. Hegel takes these "plausible" propositions and turns them into proofs for his much stronger claims against the merely subjective status of thinking and against thinking's unbridgeable gap from reality. This activity [*Tätigkeit*] of thinking, which

³⁹ The merely subjective and finite connotation of thinking (or thinking's characterization as external to its content and thus formal) finds many expressions in the *Logic*. Hegel's description of the necessity of an external perspective, "the third," which carries out the comparison of two determinacies in the section "determinate being" (SL 117/L I 105), the categories of "external reflection" (SL 402/L II 17) and "real ground" (SL 444/L II 88), which represent and incorporate the necessary subjectivity of essential distinctions into Hegel's discussion, are examples of Hegel's non-indifference to the problem of the antithesis. This problem even figures as a problem to be reckoned with in Hegel's analysis of synthetic knowledge towards the end of the *Logic* (SL 817 /L II 476-7). Only through the conceptualization of the dynamic of this movement as self-determination, the absolute Idea is able to sublimate this problem: that is by defining the sublation of the indifference of the antithesis (thinking/reality and subject/object) as *the* distinguishing mark of self-determination, of the concept.

determines and permeates all human activities (E §2) and brings about the genuine content of our experience (E §5), is established as the proper object [*Gegenstand*] of philosophy. The stronger versions of these “old prejudices” that Hegel infers from the original common-sense formulations, thus, function as entryways⁴⁰ or preparations for Hegel’s own idea of speculative science.

2- Understanding [*Verstand*] and the Antitheses of Finite Thinking

What Hegel tries to do in these opening paragraphs of *the Encyclopaedia* Logic is to introduce his philosophy to an audience, which, he assumes, holds that thinking is a merely subjective human faculty, and that thinking and reality have no connection other than the one attempted in knowing. He then uses the very prejudices of his audience regarding thinking to prove the inner contradictions of finite thinking. The result that the activity of thinking determines and permeates each and every human activity is used to open up the possibility in the reader’s mind that thinking is active [*tätig*] “in the world.” Similarly, the result that through thinking we get at truth is used to open up the possibility that truth is in, and only in, this activity of thinking. After his discussion of these common prejudices, Hegel turns to an evaluation of philosophy and the empirical sciences in general.

⁴⁰ Thus Hegel can conclude in the next paragraph, §6, that the task of philosophy is to know the rational as the actual and the actual as the rational.

Despite the differences in their immediate objects and approaches, and despite the apparent contradictions in their principles or results, the empirical sciences, traditional philosophy, and ordinary thinking all share a common feature, according to Hegel. They are caught up in a limited or finite way of thinking.⁴¹ This thinking is limited or finite because it takes fixed categories as legitimate designators of reality and takes cognition to be a thinking-over⁴² of a given content, a subjective mediation of an immediate object. Finite-thinking has reflective thinking [*Nachdenken*] as its method of cognition. The inadequacy of reflective thinking [*Nachdenken*] is that it both presupposes and relies on experience. Hegel identifies two modes of dependency in this reliance on experience. Reflective thinking has experience as its *principle* such that it assumes that thinking is *receptive* in the manner sensation or consciousness in general is. Also, it begins with experience such that all *content* of thought has its origin and validity in sensible experience. This double dependency – of form and content – applies both to abstract thinking, which Hegel associates with “old metaphysics,” and to empiricism. Since empiricism claims to proceed on the

⁴¹ Generally, Hegel uses the term “finite-thinking” as a synonym for the thinking of the Understanding [*verständiges Denken*], or as constituting the approach of the philosophy of the Understanding [*Verstandesphilosophie*]. “The treatment of infinite objects according to finite thought-determinations belongs to the philosophy of the understanding.” Hegel, G. W. F. *Vorlesungen* Band 10, *Vorlesungen über die Logik* (1831), ed. by Udo Rameil (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2001), 25. See pp. 7-15 of my “Introduction,” especially footnotes 3 and 4.

⁴² Reflective thinking [*Nachdenken*] is not restricted to the methodology of the empirical sciences, which “throw themselves upon the material of the world of appearance – a material that seems to be measureless” (E §7), but also characterizes formal theoretical analysis, “reflection [*Reflexion*], argumentation [*Räsonnement*], and the like” (E §2). See also footnote 14 above on *Nachdenken*.

foundations of common-sense experience, this reflective thinking characterizes also the basic attitude of ordinary consciousness.

Hegel's depiction of the empirical sciences is distinguished by his emphasis on the stark separation between, on the one hand, *the fixed measure* of things that these sciences seek, i.e., the universal and the necessary laws that are the goals of empirical sciences, and, on the other hand, the *sea* of the empirical singularities and the *disorder* of the infinite throng of contingencies that is the object of their investigation. The essential purpose and results of empirical sciences, in so far as they are "laws, universal principles, a theory," that is, "*thoughts* of what is present [*vorhandene*]" (E §7R) are not altogether misguided, according to Hegel. However, their beginning with and reliance on experience is precisely what hinders their purpose: they try to grasp the universal and the necessary starting from the contingent particularities of experience, an impossible task according to Hegel⁴³. Hegel argues that the results of these sciences cannot have the universality and necessity that is required of science [*Wissenschaft*] and thus fall short of an adequate comprehension of "what is."

First, the results of these sciences lack universality: the categories (for example, matter, motion, and number) and laws (of planetary motion, for example), are not determined according to their inner principles [*für sich*

⁴³ "Empiricism elevates the content that belongs to perception, feeling, and intuition into the *form of universal notions, principles, and laws*, etc. This only happens, however, in the sense that these universal determinations (for instance, "force") are not supposed to have any more significance and validity on their own account than that which is taken from perception, and no justification save the connection that can be demonstrated in experience" (E §38).

bestimmt], but as inductive generalities. Thus, the relation of the universal and the particular, the application of the laws and categories to objects given in experience is not intrinsic [*für sich zusammenhängend*] (E §9). The particular and the universal remain external to one another and their relation is contingent – contingent on the abstracting, formalizing or generalizing act of reflective thinking. Because the law of their unity, the universal that binds them, is an abstraction and an external determination, the particulars are also connected only externally and contingently.⁴⁴

Second, the beginning is an immediate; it is something merely found, a presupposition – namely, the sea of empirical singularities, or the disorder of countless contingencies.⁴⁵ Reflective thinking starts from experience and can never totally leave it. It produces the universal through the mediation of thinking over the immediately given, and thus can never ground the necessity of its object – the object is merely given! By limiting their object of investigation to the objects of sense experience, always “given” in space and time, these sciences presuppose and posit the impossibility of studying the unlimited and the unconditioned. Laws are not “given” in experience, and thus the universality and necessity of their results is always precarious. Also, since infinite objects are not given in experience, metaphysical questions concerning the nature of freedom,

⁴⁴ Finite thought-determinations “being quite generally of *limited content*, they persist both in their antithesis to each other, and (even more) in their antithesis to the Absolute (E §25).

⁴⁵ As the object is taken to be something complete in-itself and as “given,” the finite thought-determinations, i.e., the laws which posit the necessary connections and relations, “are *only subjective* and are permanently in antithesis to the objective” (E §25).

spirit, or God, (the proper subject-matter of philosophy according to Hegel), are posited beyond the limits of human cognition.

According to Hegel, only self-determining thought, as the *concretely* universal as opposed to the abstract generalizations of old metaphysics or empiricism, allows an exposition of itself as determined on its own account and connected to the particular intrinsically. Thus, only such a universal allows of a sufficient grounding of itself in its necessity. A science that begins with the subjective certainty of experience can not make “thinking as such” into its object and cannot grasp the universality intrinsic to thinking, if there is indeed such universality at stake. However, this reliance on experience is not the property of empiricism alone:

Empiricism has this source [i.e., experience] in common with metaphysics itself, which likewise has representations – i.e. the content that comes originally from experience – as the guarantee for the authentication of its definitions (E §38).

According to Hegel, abstract and formal thinking of the understanding – epitomized in the Leibnizian-Wollfian metaphysics – also relies on experience insofar as it does not regard pure thoughts in and for themselves but rather unself-consciously accepts what is found in ordinary consciousness. It relies on the content of sense-experience as well as the common representations of right, morality, or God. So even though reflective thinking [*Nachdenken*] is said to reveal the truth of what is, thinking is not seen to determine both itself and what

is, according to its own principle. Both positions are inadequate⁴⁶ for the comprehension of the true object of philosophy, according to Hegel, that is, the concretely universal.

Empiricism presupposes the epistemological (and ontological) priority of sense-experience (of “the matter,” the given, or “the immediate”) and it treats representations and the activity of thinking in general as secondary and as legitimate only in reference to the content of experience. Rationalism posits the primacy of ideas such that the categories of abstract thought are taken to express and capture the true and the real. This abstract thinking of logic and metaphysics, is at fault in strictly separating reflective thinking [*Nachdenken*] from feeling, intuition, etc., and regarding formal analysis “to be the condition, or even the only way ... to arrive at the representation of and belief [*Fürwahrhalten*] in what is eternal and true” (E §2). However, as we saw above, empiricism is also mistaken when it makes experience the condition of all knowledge. According to Hegel, these seemingly opposite positions regarding the principle of philosophy, abstract reflection (pure mediation) and experience (pure immediacy), are indeed *complementary*; these approaches are inadequate for philosophical cognition

⁴⁶ In his Lectures on Logic and Metaphysics, Hegel defines dogmatism as the one-sided claim to truth common to both positions: “Dogmatismus” is the belief that ‘the principle of all truth is thinking’ or ‘the principle of truth is sensation [*die Empfindung*]. One must be true, and thus the other false.” Scepticism claims that “‘There is a contradiction [*Es gibt ein Widerspruch*]’ and it stops there. That each position could be proved as well as the other, have resulted in the destruction of metaphysics” (*Vorlesungen* X, 31).

insofar as they take themselves in their one-sidedness to be the guarantee and the way to truth.⁴⁷

What is significant in Hegel's critique of metaphysics and the natural sciences is that he does not see this double one-sidedness as a hindrance for thinking, but rather as a *stimulus* for thinking. Philosophical thinking should *neither* exclude these two approaches, *nor* limit itself to either alone. It is necessary that thinking begins with experience. However, there are two main conditions Hegel introduces: experience should not be reduced to sense-experience, and philosophy must transcend its immediate origins – that is, become self-conscious about the origins of its definitions and sources of its determinate content.

In §12, Hegel traces the movement [*Fortgang*] of thinking towards “the pure universal,” showing that both formal thinking and experience are necessary moments of this process. Thinking raises itself “above the natural, sensible and argumentative [*Räsonnierende*] consciousness into its own unadulterated [*unvermischt*] element; and it gives itself initially a self-distancing *negative relationship* to this beginning” (E §12), finding satisfaction in its pure element.

⁴⁷ Hegel's discussion of reflection and experience in the “Introduction” is at the same time a foreshadowing of the three positions of thought with respect to objectivity discussed in the “Preliminary Conception”. Hegel's characterization of abstract reflection and empirical sciences, and identification of their common ground to be their dependence upon experience, fits very well with the first and second positions of thought, respectively. The third position, immediate knowing, is neither reflection nor sense-experience, but rather includes both. However, intellectual intuition in so far as it emphasizes immediacy one-sidedly is, for Hegel, also not the cognition proper to philosophy. However, it deserves to be the last position considered, not only historically, but also in so far as it unites the intellectual and the intuitive, formerly corresponding one-sidedly to mediation and immediacy, or reflection and sense-experience, respectively.

Starting with its own immediacy, it is reflected and mediated in itself; it has itself as its object and also as its medium. It does not leave its pure element, and thus “has inherited an indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*] towards *particularization*, and hence towards its development” (E §12R). This characterizes the approach of “old metaphysics” and the abstract and formal analysis of reflection and argumentation that constitutes its method of cognition.

Empirical sciences, on the other hand, (seek to) elevate the immediate content, which is simply given or found, “as a manifold of *juxtaposition*, and hence as something altogether *contingent*,” to necessity by grasping the form of this content. “In this way they prepare the content of what is particular so that it can be taken up into philosophy” (E §12R). These two movements, which are incomplete and inadequate in their one-sidedness, resemble in their unity the double movement of the discovering reflection and necessary productivity of thinking. Hegel writes:

The assumption [*Aufnehmen*] of this content, through which the immediacy that still clings to it, and its givenness, are sublated by thinking, is at the same time a *developing* of thinking out of itself. Thus, philosophy does owe its development to the empirical sciences, but it gives to their content the fully essential shape of the *freedom* of thinking (or of what is a priori) as well as the *validation* [*Bewährung*] of *necessity*. Instead of the content being warranted because it is simply found to be present, or a fact of experience, the fact becomes the presentation and imitation of the activity of thinking that is original and completely independent” (E §12R).

Speculative science must not leave aside the categories and results of these empirical sciences, of logic and metaphysics. Its task is to show the necessity of

these categories and universals, and thus make them valid⁴⁸ (E §9). Speculative science must comprehend the *two one-sided aspects* of thinking as the activity of *one* thinking: the elevation of the immediate content into the form of thought and the negative self-distancing relation to the immediate, which Hegel argues, will result in the comprehension of the mediated content as brought about by thinking.⁴⁹

Hegel cannot ask the reader simply to ignore the subjective connotation of thinking and/or cognition in general. It must be accounted for in the analysis of thought's self-determination in the Logic.⁵⁰ In this preliminary discussion, Hegel shows that the subject/object antithesis does not merely concern human cognition,

⁴⁸ Compare with Hegel's comment: "This content is the system *of the logical*. All that remains here as *form* for the Idea is the *method* of this content—the determinate knowing of the **currency** of its moments" (E § 237). I believe that Hegel's use of "currency" in this sentence can be understood precisely in the sense of the necessity and validity that the moments of the logical will be shown to have both for thinking and being in the *Encyclopaedia*.

⁴⁹ "Analytic cognition, the transformation of the given material into logical determinations, has shown itself to be two things in one: a *positing* that no less immediately determines itself as a *presupposing*. Consequently, by virtue of the latter, the logical [*das Logische*] may appear as something *already complete* in the object, just as by virtue of the former it may appear as the *product* of a merely subjective activity. But the two moments are not to be separated; the logical [*das Logische*] in its abstract form into which analysis raises it, is of course only to be found in cognition, while conversely it is something not merely *posited*, but possessing *being in itself*" (L II 444 / SL 788).

⁵⁰ In his essay "The Preliminary Conception and the Concept of Philosophy in Hegel," Fulda makes a similar argument: "Also *independently* of the contingent philosophizing subject, the character of subjective knowing is to be attributed to the first concept of philosophical science – to the extent that the science is supposed to be its self-purpose [*Selbstzweck*]. With this, what was said in anticipation at the end of the exposition of the preliminary conception is taken into the philosophical conception: that the unique purpose, act and goal of the science is "to arrive at the concept of its concept" (§17)" (25). Fulda points out here that philosophical thinking has itself as its own end and that such self-relation belongs to it essentially and cannot be reduced to the particular and contingent purposes of the philosopher. Fulda, Hans Friedrich. "Vorbegriff und Begriff von Philosophie bei Hegel" in *Hegels Logik der Philosophie*, ed. Henrich and Horstmann, Ernst Klett Verlag (Stuttgart, 1984), 13-34. All references to Fulda's essay are my translations from the German original.

but is inherent in the thought and process of self-determination. Approached from the “subjective side” self-determination is an activity. It requires that determinacies be *assigned* – that they be posited by the self that produces them. Approached from the “objective side” self-determination is a real process. It requires that determinacies be *found* – that they are given to the self and are thus presupposed by it. I discuss this double aspect of self-determination – especially as it figures in Hegel’s discussion of positing and external reflection – in my next chapter, but here we must reconsider what Hegel has established in the “Introduction” with respect to the subject-matter of philosophy as well as its mode of cognition.

Accepting – or being willing to consider – Hegel’s statement that the Logic is a study of “objective thoughts”⁵¹ depends upon the willingness (and courage!) of the reader to engage in pure thinking. Hegel’s admittedly obscure injunction “to engage in pure thinking,”⁵² ironically mimics the Kantian motto of the Enlightenment: *Sapere Aude!* Hegel demands that the reader suspend his/her common-sense assumptions – especially, the belief in the antithesis between thinking and reality – dare to know the true as such. In his essay “Preliminary Conception and Concept of Philosophy in Hegel,” Hans Friedrich Fulda argues that the function of the first few paragraphs of the Preliminary Conception,

⁵¹ “The expression *objective thoughts* signify the truth which ought to be the absolute *object* [Gegenstand], not just the *goal* of philosophy” (E §25).

⁵² According to Hegel, the requirement for a presuppositionless beginning is fulfilled “in the resolve of *the will to think purely*” (E §78R).

namely §§19-25, consists in “bringing about a suspension [*Zurückstellen*] of presuppositions which hinder the entrance to speculative philosophy. [It] *specifies the preliminary conception of philosophy as a preliminary conception of logic*, and emphasizes, especially in the Heidelberg edition, that such presuppositions are contained in the subjective and finite ways of philosophical knowledge (*HEnc* §36).”⁵³

Hegel lists four presuppositions of finite thinking in the Heidelberg edition of the *Encyclopaedia*:

1. the fixed validity of restricted and opposed determinations of the understanding in general,
2. the representation of a given and already complete [*schon fertigen*] substrate, which is supposed to be the criterion [*Maßstab*] for whether any of the fixed thought-determinations is adequate to it or not,
3. knowledge as a mere connecting of such complete and fixed predicates to some given substrate,
4. the antithesis [*Gegensatz*] of the knowing subject and its object, which is not to be united with it, both of which is supposed to be for itself, or on their own account, fixed and true.⁵⁴

The first two presuppositions Hegel attributes to finite thinking point to the antithesis between thinking and reality: the first describes the abstract thought of the Understanding, which has fixed rules that are “valid for thinking,” implying a formal account of thinking and its indifference to content; the second describes thoughts as representations of a content that is indifferent to thought and is the

⁵³ Fulda, “Vorbegriff und Begriff von Philosophie,” 19.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 19, my emphasis.

ultimate referent and the arbiter of thinking.⁵⁵ The third and fourth presuppositions express the antithesis between the subject and the object of knowledge: the third describes cognition to be a “connecting,” and activity that is relevant and significant only for the subject; and the fourth explicitly states the complete separation and independent validity of the subject of cognition and the object known. In the 1931 *Encyclopaedia* version, Hegel formulates the antithesis as follows:

This expression [namely, objective thought] indicates in any case an antithesis [*Gegensatz*] – indeed, the very one whose determination and validity is the focus of the philosophical interest at the present time [*jetziger Zeit*], and around which the problem of truth [*Wahrheit*] and of its cognition revolves. If the thought-determinations are afflicted with a fixed antithesis, i.e., if they are only of a *finite* nature, then they are inadequate to the truth which is absolutely in and for itself, and the truth cannot enter into thinking... The *finitude* of thought-determinations has further to be taken in two ways [*gedoppelte Weise*]: first, they are *only subjective* and are permanently in antithesis to the objective; secondly, being quite generally of *limited content*, they persist both in their antithesis to each other, and (even more) in their antithesis to the Absolute (E §25).

Here, Hegel does not name *the* antithesis he refers to, i.e., “the very one” whose validity has become the focus of philosophy at his time. However, he connects it with “finite thinking.” First, he says that thought-determinations afflicted with a fixed antithesis are *thereby* finite, implying that the antithesis is the origin of the “finitude” of thought-determinations. And, in the second part of the paragraph, he claims that the two antitheses that we have been discussing are the determinations, or *consequences*, of finite thinking: thought-determinations

⁵⁵ These also constitute the presuppositions of abstract thinking of the understanding and the empirical sciences, respectively, which were discussed above.

are subjective and partial (or of a limited content) because they are finite. In this manner, Hegel states that finite thinking is both the ground and consequence of the antithesis, the belief in which must be suspended to enter the philosophical science.

The two antitheses, the indifference between concept and reality, and between subject and object, correspond to two main types of skeptical objections, that Hegel intends his system to be immune to.⁵⁶ The first corresponds to the skeptical argument regarding “concept-instantiation,” which consists of the strategy of arguing that our concepts do not need to refer to anything really in the world. This objection is valid only if we assume that concepts are merely results of our thinking, that the entities they refer to are merely there, and that these entities are independent of and indifferent to our concepts and thus to thinking in general. The second corresponds to the argument of “equipollence,” the strategy of arguing for the negative of a claim or a conclusion, to show that neither the original claim nor its opposite can be justified. This depends on treating thinking as an instrument, with no truth content of its own, on its own account, which could be used in this or that way, for this or that purpose, according to the thinking subject’s ends and needs. However, both of these arguments⁵⁷ presuppose that thinking, which *occurs* in a finite thinker, *is* thereby itself finite.

⁵⁶ For a detailed discussion see Michael Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism*, Chapter 9.

⁵⁷ As I point out also in my introduction (9ff.), these skeptical arguments and the two antitheses imply one another.

The remarkable result of Hegel's discussion of the "old prejudices" is that Hegel has turned the skeptical arguments into dogmatic objections that must be "put aside." For what underlies the antitheses in their many expressions, is the belief that thinking is only the thinking of a finite human being and determinations of thought have only a finite content. And this is "a mere presupposition and an arbitrary *assurance*" (§ 78). Fulda argues that "the philosophical science, however, does not presuppose anything except that it **wants** to be pure thinking (§78), and it is only in *philosophical science* that these [presuppositions] are to be examined. Accordingly it appears that the preliminary conception and the concept of philosophy are connected precisely through the *destruction* [Destruktion] of the provisionally only suspended [*zurückgestellte*] presuppositions. It is not difficult to guess that the Logic is the systematic place of this destruction; because it is the Logic, above all, which makes skepticism superfluous ... because "the dialectical" itself is an essential moment in it (§78R)."⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Fulda, 20. See also Hegel's comments on the contradictions of finite thinking in his discussion of Kant's antinomies: "The main point that has to be made is that antinomy [*Antinomie*] is found not only in the four particular objects taken from cosmology, but rather in *all* objects of *all* kinds, in all representations, concepts, ideas. To know this, and to be cognizant of this property of objects, belongs to what is essential in philosophical study; this is the property that constitutes what will determine itself in due course as the *dialectical* moment of the logical [*des Logischen*]" (E §48R).

3- The Concept of the Logical and Self-determination

Philosophical science in the Hegelian sense comprehends and brings about the true only in so far as it shows the partiality of the competing frameworks. And this is precisely what Hegel shows in the “Introduction.” As we saw in the first section of this chapter, Hegel uses some of the very presuppositions and prejudices that he will later argue against in forming a provisional idea of the philosophical science and the character of thinking that is proper to it.⁵⁹ This seeming contradiction of using the very premises he wants to discredit is not at all an oversight on the part of Hegel. Rather it is, as I show in the following, part of Hegel’s strategy and method as well as part of any non-arbitrary derivation and proof.

Once the Logic begins, it is no longer the activity of thinking that is at issue, nor objective thought in general, but the categories and thought-determinations themselves. Thinking is only mentioned in passing and even cognition is only discussed as a category. In the following, I will show that indeed it is the logical [*das Logische*] and not thinking, that is the subject-matter of

⁵⁹ In his essay “The Preliminary Conception and Concept of Philosophy in Hegel,” Fulda makes a similar argument: “Instead of a sketch of derivation and formal exposition of the concept, in the preliminary conception, there is merely a suspension [*Abhebung*] of philosophy from its ‘others’” (16). However, “it becomes evident that one cannot “put aside” (§78), “bracket” let alone “give up” (*HEnc* §36) all these presupposition at will... it is really *suggested with* the Preliminary Conception that one keep and use some of these presuppositions” (21).

Hegel's Logic. Hegel uses this term to designate the formal structure of the process of self-determination.⁶⁰

In the following, I discuss Hegel's strategic choice of the term "the logical"⁶¹ to designate the subject-matter of the Logic. I argue that Hegel institutes this change in terminology and uses the term "the logical" (instead of the Idea, or thinking) to facilitate the reader in bracketing her assumptions and to prevent the antithetical definitions of thinking and truth from undermining the whole project before it properly begins. I focus on Hegel's use of this term in two key passages. I argue that in E §19, Hegel substitutes this term for thinking (or, concept or idea) to suspend the association of "the true" with human cognition, and that in E §79, he uses it to suspend the merely formal and external connotation that any explicitly methodological description would have in the beginning of a treatise.

In §19, Hegel defines the Logic as "the science of the pure Idea, that is, of the Idea in the abstract element of *thinking*."⁶² Given our analysis of Hegel's

⁶⁰ And the process of self-determination, in so far as it shows the necessary exposition of the subject-matter on its own account, constitutes the proper method of philosophical science. Thus, in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel claims that "what constitutes scientific procedure [*wissenschaftliche Verfahren*] in philosophy is expounded in the philosophical logic and is here presupposed" (PR §2R).

⁶¹ It must be noted that the English translations of Hegel's texts make it very difficult to identify this strategic use. Not only are the translations of "*das Logische*" rarely "the logical," but they are not consistent: "logical thinking," "logical element," "the content of logic," or "the logic" are a few examples.

⁶² That the logical analysis is undertaken in the "abstract" element of thinking should not be interpreted as implying that the absolute idea, which is its result, is itself abstract. The absolute idea as the systematic expression of the activity of self-determination is *formal* insofar as it does

general exposition of philosophy in the “Introduction,” it is clear that “the pure Idea” is not a fixed thought-determination, but designates a process. Thinking is not merely a faculty of thoughts, but is active [*tätig*] in all human activities. Logic, thus, will *not* be the study of particular thoughts, and their possible relation, correspondence, or adequacy to a reality that is outside of them. Here, Hegel must emphasize, then, that the Logic is a study of the *activity* of thinking and its principle. This emphasis is brought forth by his equation of “the logical” with “the true” in his comments on this paragraph in his lectures:

The first question is: What is the object [*Gegenstand*] of our science? The simplest and most intelligible answer to this question is that it is *truth* [die *Wahrheit*]...But very soon a reservation appears: can we [...] know the truth? There seems to be a lack of proportion between us, limited human beings, and truth as it is in and for itself [*an und für sich seienden Wahrheit*], and the question arises of the bridge between the finite and the infinite... Though one then also asks whether truth can be known, so that one could find justification for living on in the vulgarity of his finite purposes (E §19A1).

Hegel shows here, once again, why an *ontology* of thinking or a *logic* of reality constitutes a problem for ordinary thinking in general and for his readers.

The question of truth may be framed as a strictly epistemological problem such

not contain within it the natural and historical manifestation of self-determination, that is, its particular shapes. However, formality does not imply abstraction. Although the absolute Idea does not have determinate content, that is, a particular content, such as a definite quality or quantity, a determinate identity or an essential relation, it is not thereby divorced from and indifferent to matter or content. It signifies the very activity of a concrete universal: having its own principle within itself and producing its content from itself. It is formal in the sense of pure, rather than contentless, for the whole treatment occurs with respect to and in the medium of pure thinking. In the Kantian framework, “pure” means “not-empirical” such that the pure intuitions of space and time, for example, are forms of intuition. For Hegel, pure thinking is not *opposed* to empirical content: it is self-purifying (de-empiricizing and de-subjectifying) thinking. There is no pure thinking to start out with. Nor can one safely stay there once one reaches it. Pure thinking is not a God’s eye point of view that can be reached once and for all after one fulfills the necessary conditions. It must be sustained and enacted again and again.

that it is presupposed that there *is* a (true) reality out there, and the philosophically relevant question regards our capacity to know it. However, the problem may also be formulated within the framework of metaphysics: is there such a thing as a “true reality”? Or, is the universe chaotic, without any principle or reason, merely a contingent series of events? Hegel’s discussion of “the logical” in these early paragraphs of the *Encyclopaedia* aims at liberating the problem of truth from a strictly epistemological approach and the restricted framework of cognition.

If we treat the discipline of logic (or logical science) as the science of formal thinking as it is traditionally done, its value depends on the purpose for which we use it, that is, it depends on our subjective ends – perhaps we need it as part of our training, for our proficiency in thinking, as the mere “formal exercise of our thinking [capacity]” (E §19R), or in sophistical argumentation for proving whatever point fits our desire or interest. In any case, in our ordinary conception of logic and thinking, categories or syllogisms themselves have no inner truth value: they cannot be true or false. Truth and falsity are qualities that apply to claims about the world. However, in his remarks to §19, Hegel says:

Since the logical [*das Logische*] is the absolute form of truth [*die absolute Form der Wahrheit*] and, even more than that, also pure truth itself [*die reine Wahrheit selbst*], it is really something quite other than anything merely *useful*. But, just as the most excellent, the most free and most independent is also that which is most useful, so the logical can be grasped as useful, too. But in this case its use is to be measured on quite another scale than as being just the formal exercise of thinking (E §19R).

In this paragraph Hegel distinguishes between “absolute form of truth” and “pure truth itself” only to claim that *the logical* is both at the same time⁶³. His formulation implies a hierarchy such that the logical is not only the absolute form of truth, but more importantly (and perhaps surprisingly) also pure truth itself. Hegel must know, at this early stage in his argument, that he has not refuted antithetical or finite thinking, and that his reader must regard thinking as a subjective activity and categories of thought as indifferent to reality, or, as the case may be, to truth in and for itself. The phrase “absolute *form of truth*” has an immediate subjective association, on the basis of the common viewpoint that thinking provides the form of cognition where the content is “given” from outside. “Pure *truth itself*” on the contrary has a decidedly objective connotation, bringing to mind truth in-itself, or truth as such, independent of our comprehension of it.

⁶³ In his comments on “the Concept” in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel utilizes the same distinction: “As contrasted with these concrete sciences (although these have and retain as their inner formative principle that same logical element [*das Logische*], or the Concept, which had served as their archetype), logic is of course a formal science; but it is the science of the *absolute form* which is within itself a totality and contains the *pure Idea of truth itself*. This absolute form has in its own self its content or reality; the Concept, not being trivial, empty identity, possesses in its moment of negativity or of absolute determining, the differentiated determinations; the content is simply and solely these determinations of the absolute form and nothing else... [The absolute form] is already *on its own account truth* [*für sich selbst die Wahrheit*], since this content is adequate to its form, or this reality to its Concept; and it is the *pure truth* because the determinations of the content do not yet have the form of an absolute otherness or of absolute immediacy” (SL 592-3/L II 231).

These pseudo-subjective and -objective sides of the logical⁶⁴, result from what the *Logic* has set out to do: to comprehend “the true” in thinking through thinking, that is, understand the principle and activity of thinking, what it really is.⁶⁵ According to Hegel, we can achieve an adequate concept of thinking when thinking becomes “the true” in the course of this inquiry, that is explicitly perform or enact its proper activity. If thinking cannot achieve that, then “the true” is perpetually deferred and is posited as other than thinking. However, if it is achieved and thinking becomes “the true,” then the *result* of the subjective activity of finding “the true” in thinking – the principle that governs thinking’s self-determination – is the overcoming of the merely subjective character of the inquiry itself.

A brief diversion might be helpful here in order to account for the status of the subjective inquiry with respect to the activity of thinking and also to further clarify my assignment of subjective and objective sides to the logical. In his remarks on the first transition in the *Logic* (from being to nothing), Hegel writes, “The *reflective thinking* [Nachdenken] that *finds* deeper determinations for them (being and nothing) is the logical thinking by which these determinations produce

⁶⁴ “The absolute form of truth” might be taken as the subjective side/aspect of the logical, i.e., “the true” as it is *in* thinking, and “pure truth” as the objective side, “the true” as such.

⁶⁵ See my earlier remarks on this “double reflexivity” as a distinguishing mark of the concept of self-determination on page 37 above.

themselves ... in a necessary way” (E §87). Here, Hegel again⁶⁶ identifies two movements, or distinguishes two aspects of the same movement: a “discovering reflection” that *finds* logical determinations and a “logical thinking” that produces the determinations of thinking in a necessary way. In his commentary on this section, Lakebrink writes:

Logical thinking comes about as the unity [*Einheit*] of thinking and thought. But thought is “the matter itself, the simple identity of the subjective and the objective” and thinking is “having thoughts,” of which the first examples are being and nothing, respectively. This *intense identity* [innige Identität] of thought (as subjective objectivity) and thinking (as objective subjectivity) allows Hegel to ascribe the logical unfolding of the concept [*der Begriff*] the double character of a discovering reflection [*das findende Nachdenken*] and a necessary productivity [*notwendige Produktivität*]. The subjective reflection [*Nachdenken*] which ‘finds’ the logical determinations is at the same time the thinking which ‘produces’ them in necessary progress.⁶⁷

Lakebrink thus identifies two moments of logical thinking: (1) thinking, as objective subjectivity, and (2) thought, as subjective objectivity. The reflective thinking [*Nachdenken*], that the reader activates in himself or herself while following the movement of thought in the Logic is different from the thinking which produces this movement. But *thinking itself* has this tension or division in itself. Thinking (as objective subjectivity) is a process of having thoughts (as subjective objectivity). Hegel sublates the viewpoint of the subjective thinker in

⁶⁶ See also my discussion of this double-movement in Hegel’s description of philosophy’s relation to empirical sciences on page 61-2 above.

⁶⁷ Bernhard Lakebrink, *Kommentar zu Hegels “Logik” in seiner “Enzykloädie” von 1830* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Aber, 1979), 107. The translations from this text are mine from the German original.

the Logic through the identification of this inner division in thinking itself. And this he does (at least terminologically),⁶⁸ by introducing the term “the logical.”

Maneuvering the antithesis of subjectivity and objectivity is not an easy task especially if Hegel continues to use the term “thinking.” As long as thinking remains the subject-matter, its objective subjectivity or subjective objectivity yet to be accounted for, or the inconvenience *and* necessity of the expression “objective thoughts” yet to be resolved, the Logic cannot even begin.⁶⁹ Unless it is bracketed, this antithesis will bias the discussion of “the true,” the concept, or the process of self-determination. Although it cannot be refuted before the science begins but only within the science, its provisional suspension is necessary. My argument regarding the strategic introduction of the term “the logical” as well as my reading of “absolute form of truth” and “pure truth itself” as having a strategic subjective and objective connotations respectively depends on this necessity of *entering into* “pure thinking,” that is studying thought-determinations in and for themselves. If this suspension cannot be legitimated by a refutation of the antithesis, it must at least be terminologically enacted.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Of course, it would be naïve to think that just because a new term is introduced, the antithesis itself is refuted. However, at this point the goal is the suspension of the antithesis, and this can be achieved, or at least facilitated, by the alteration in terminology.

⁶⁹ The *Logic* begins with the category “being” – but the progression in the *Logic* depends upon the ambiguity (or perhaps deliberate indeterminacy) of whether it signifies being as such, mere immediacy or givenness, or the thought of being, mere positedness.

⁷⁰ In the “Preliminary Conception” [*Vorbegriff*], Hegel further examines metaphysics, empiricism and critical philosophy, and intuitive knowing, and develops his critique of finite thinking. His analysis there could be seen as a further attempt to bring about the suspension of the antithesis.

If the logical is a substitute term for both the activity and principle of thinking, the logical overcomes a strict subject-object dichotomy. It designates both the subject, the agent of thinking *and* the object, the thoughts that are the results of this activity. “The logical” is in this manner an implicit reference to the *logos* of the universe: to the principle of self-determination.⁷¹ It is this principle that comes to comprehend itself in the movement of thinking [objective subjectivity] which produces thought [subjective objectivity] through the self-sublation of finite thought-determinations, or as Fulda says, through “the destruction of these presuppositions.”⁷²

The antithesis can disappear and the logical can be shown to be pure truth itself only by proving that the kind of cognition which holds on to this antithesis is inadequate to comprehend “the true”. Truth cannot be ascribed to categories which are taken by themselves, one-sided, out of and independent of the movement that produces them. Such finite thought-determinations or fixed categories cannot be made into the building blocks of true knowledge, for they

⁷¹ Hegel does not explicitly thematize or define the concept *das Logische*. And in many instances where he uses this term, he associates it with the rational, pure Idea, the universal, or the concept, all of which require as much clarification as the term logical. For example, in the *Science of Logic*, the logical is used interchangeably with the purely rational and with the concept: The logic demands that “thought-determinations be considered as they are in and for themselves, as they are the logical, the purely-rational [*wie sie...das Logische, das Rein-Vernünftige sind*]” (SL 51/ L I 32). “Opposed to these concrete sciences, which however have and maintain the logical or the concept [*das Logische oder der Begriff*] as their inner paradigm [*innern Bildner*], and have had it as their archetype [*Vorbildner*], the logic is needless to say a formal science; but it is the science of the absolute form, which is in-itself totality and contains the pure idea of truth itself” (SL 592/ L II 231).

⁷² See page 68 above for a full quotation of Fulda’s remarks.

contradict and so cancel each other. This is the negative task that Hegel has set out for the Logic.

However, this negative process has positive results, and it provides the core of Hegel's concept of self-determination, which he introduces and outlines in §§79-82:

With regard to its form, the *logical* [das Logische] has three sides: a) *the side of abstraction or of the understanding*, b) *the dialectical or negatively rational side*, and c) *the speculative or positively rational one*. These three sides do not constitute three *parts* of the Logic, but are *moments of everything logically real* [jedes Logisch-Reellen], i.e., of every concept or of everything true in general (E §79).

Most commentators, who analyze this passage, equate the logical with logical thinking.⁷³ In his discussion of § 79, Peperzak says that “Hegel describes correct thinking as the methodical interplay of three moments.”⁷⁴ He thus substitutes “correct thinking” for “the logical.” In his discussion of the category “speculation,” Inwood directs the reader to §§79ff, and says that “the speculative (or the positively rational) is only the third phase of Hegel’s thought, contrasting with the understanding, which sets up sharp distinctions, and the negatively

⁷³ Only Michael Wolff has taken special notice of Hegel’s use of the term “the logical” in his article “The moments of the Logical,” and he argues that we must understand the logical as referring to the content and object of the *Logic*. (Michael Wolff, “Die ‘Momente’ des Logischen,” in *Skeptizismus und spekulatives Denken*, 230). Wolff is right to identify the logical with that which is treated in Hegel’s *Logic*. However, given that Hegel’s *Logic* is not a traditional treatise on formal logic, treating judgments, syllogisms, and rules of valid reasoning, Wolff’s definition is not very helpful for someone who has not studied Hegel’s *Logic*.

⁷⁴ Adriaan Peperzak, *Modern Freedom: Hegel’s Legal, Moral, and Political Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 57.

rational or dialectic, which breaks them down again.”⁷⁵ The speculative is characterized as the third phase of “Hegel’s thought” rather than the third moment of the logical. Finally, Burbidge prefaces his discussion of the three moments of the logical by remarking that “for Hegel, thinking involves three distinct operations.”⁷⁶ Here again, the logical is represented merely as “thinking.”⁷⁷

These commentaries might be helpful in explicating these three moments in terms that are accessible to the readers of Hegel; however, they overlook Hegel’s need for and use of a term which makes explicit the necessary processual character of “what is true.” The logical (directly pointing at the Greek term *logos*) suggests a universal principle. It neither has the immediate epistemological reference the concept of truth has in post-Kantian philosophy, nor does it have the expressly religious nuance that the absolute has. The term “the logical” is also a better choice than idea, which has the connotation of an ideal or a subjective representation.

My concern with Hegel’s use of the term *das Logische* rests on this central ambiguity: According to Hegel, the logical is and is not the same as logical thinking. If we simply equate the two, we run the risk of reducing the logical to an

⁷⁵ “But since it is the final and most distinctive phase of his thought, he often refers to his philosophy and logic, etc., as ‘speculative’” (Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 272).

⁷⁶ John Burbidge, “Hegel’s Concept of Logic” in *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), 91.

⁷⁷ Indeed this subjective and/or human connotation of thinking is responsible for the claim that one must study the philosophy of subjective spirit, especially the psychology, where Hegel discusses thinking, to understand the Logic. See Burbidge, *On Hegel’s Logic*, Ch. 1-3 and Fulda, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 26-7. See also Frederick Beiser’s discussion of absolute idealism in *Hegel*.

element of abstract thinking (an abstract idea of freedom, so to speak), which is a result – as I have tried to show above – that employs and enacts the antithesis of thought and reality. However, positing their immediate diversity also points to the same antithesis. Hegel shows in the Logic that the logical and logical thinking *are* one and the same in so far as logical thinking is taken to be the necessary *movement* of the determinations of thought – the process of thinking’s self-determination. The determinations in their totality do not constitute the logical: that is, the logical cannot be reduced to Hegel’s Logic. Rather, the logical governs the process of their production and development. As this governing principle, its activity and results are *not* restricted to thinking alone but also discernible in nature (for example, where self-relation suspends causal necessity, i.e., in a living organism) and in history (as the manifestation of human freedom). Hegel needs to deter his readers from intuitively applying to the logical the already prominent prejudice of regarding thinking as a merely subjective faculty and thoughts as formal categories. Hence, he chooses to describe the moments of “the logical” rather than those of, say, “speculative thinking” or “pure thinking.”

It must be noted here that the antitheses we have discussed throughout this chapter are determinative examples of the many antithesis of finite thinking. Hegel uses other oppositions, such as identity and difference, or universality and particularity throughout the Logic in order to show in each case the speculative identity of the contrary terms. Whichever categories happen to constitute the specific instantiation of the moments of the logical, it is misleading to take one

specific example to be the prototype of the movement between categories in the Logic. Most of the time such formulations taken to be expressions of Hegel's theory – such as the identity of identity and difference, or being at home in one's other, or the concrete universal as the universal which returns to itself in its particularity – are very abstract, and hardly helpful to understand better the dynamic, which we have called here “the logical.” However, without the analysis of a single case, it is impossible to explicate the dynamic except by repeating Hegel's own words for it. In the next chapter, we will look at the process of self-sublation that gives us the dynamic of self-determination, and the moments of the logical, in various transitions in the Logic.

CHAPTER TWO

The Dialectic of Indifference: Hegel's Derivation and Analysis of Self-determination in the *Science of Logic*

In the opening pages of my dissertation, I pointed out that understanding freedom as self-determination leads to a paradox: Accounting for reality as a self-determining whole seems to rid us humans of free agency. Comprehending the law of change seems to make it impossible for us to posit ourselves as agents of change. In this chapter, I argue that it is the particular's claim to universality that is the force and trigger of change. The self-determining whole is neither an absolute substance nor a mystical spirit – that is, there is no always already independent self or subject that determines the course of human reality.⁷⁸ However, this does not leave us with the model of a mechanistic universe where change is brought forth by the reciprocal interactions of things and people – a necessity without ground or reason. The dynamic of self-sublation – which

⁷⁸ As George di Giovanni points out, “Hegel is [in the *Logic*] claiming to have achieved comprehension of the *logos* that governs the universe – but not because (as he would have had to claim within the parameters of ancient metaphysics) he has managed to transpose himself outside the cosmos, so to speak, or to gain access to God's mind before the creation of the world. He can make this claim, rather, because for Hegel now the source of all intelligibility (the *logos* itself) is the activity of thought itself as exercised in science.” George di Giovanni, “A Reply to Cynthia Willett,” in *Essays on Hegel's Logic*, ed. George di Giovanni (SUNY University Press: New York, 1990), 95. This activity (the *logos*) cannot be ascribed to an independent agent because there is no “activity of thought” apart from the self-sublation of thought-determinations, comprehended in the *Logic* as constituting in their totality “self-determining thought.”

underlies the progression in the Logic and is grasped at the end as self-determination, i.e., the Absolute Idea – implies that in human history the constant redefining of our self-understanding, i.e., what it means to be a human being, our goals, values, relations and institutions, is brought about by the challenges raised to them by human agents’ particular perspectives. In as much as these particular perspectives challenge and thus lay claim to the universal, they make it more concrete and rich in content. There is no “universal perspective” as such: there is no particular position or real individuals who occupy such an abstract locus. However, this process of making and understanding ourselves is also always fixed as it finds determinate expression in our institutions, laws, cultural productions, philosophical and scientific theories.

An appropriate and timely example of this process could be found in our “global” effort to define what it means to be a human being and to legislate the rights, freedoms, and obligations that such a being has by virtue of belonging to that category. What underlies all the privileges and rights that are attributed to us as humans is that we are endowed with reason. And precisely this category of the human being, who is the subject of the rights and freedoms appropriate to the worth of a free and rational being, has been criticized and deconstructed in the last century from many angles. This category, which was supposed (and pronounced in Article 2 of the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”) to be neutral with respect to religion, race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc, has been criticized as representing a white male bourgeois (heterosexual, Protestant,

Anglo-Saxon, etc.) prototype.⁷⁹ The common ground of the many challenges is that this apparently neutral category masks an exclusionary and discriminatory reality that displays itself in our social institutions (such as education, marriage, official history), economic and political system (such as right to private property, inheritance, slavery, right to vote) as well as cultural and international relations (such as internalized discrimination, racism, sexism, orientalism, imperialism, etc.).

Humanity's "self-determination" is not brought about by providence, an invisible hand, or by the "gate-keepers" of the abstract category somehow "acknowledging" the hypocrisy of their ways. First the supposed indifference of the initial category is exposed by holding the abstract definition to account with respect to a reality that does not live up to its demands. This is done by real living human agents. However, this leads to an ever-growing recognition of diversity and particularity as different individuals and groups take issue with their own

⁷⁹ One of the main contributions of postmodern and postcolonial theory in the last 50 years has been to challenge the attribution of universality to pronouncements that have been the productions of the West and to uncover how the claims of rationality and right are systematically used to justify and perpetuate systems of dominations and subjugation. In her discussion of the problematic concept of universality in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, Judith Butler gives an example of such critique within the development of feminist theory: "A recent resurgence of Anglo feminism has sought to restate the importance of making universal claims about the conditions and rights of women (Okin, Nussbaum) without regard to the prevailing norms in local cultures, and without taking up the task of cultural translation. This effort to override the problem that local cultures pose for international feminism does not understand the parochial character of its own norms, and does not consider the way in which feminism works in full complicity with US colonial aims in imposing its norms of civility through an effacement and a decimation of local Second and third World cultures" in Judith Butler, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* (New York: Verso, 2000), 35. In support of my point, she writes "universality has been used to extend certain colonialist and racist understandings of civilized 'man', to exclude certain populations from the domain of the human, and to produce itself as a false and suspect category" (38).

exclusion. It becomes impossible to talk meaningfully about such a universal category. According to Hegel's argument, a more comprehensive (i.e., more concrete) understanding of "the human"⁸⁰ is possible only through the self-sublation of both the abstract category and the particular views themselves. In the case of the latter, self-sublation does not imply assimilation because, according to Hegel, such assimilation would be a mere cancellation or abstract negation of the particulars and the result would be the same as the initial abstract concept. Self-sublation means that the particulars do not merely subsist and revel in their particularity, but overcome their indifference to one another and the universal category. They, thus, rather lay claim to being human *and* to what it means to be human and, by laying claim to the universal, acknowledge themselves as *its* particularizations.⁸¹ As the dusk at which the proverbial owl flies seems to be not yet present with respect to the renegotiation of the universal (or beyond my

⁸⁰I must add here that although I concentrate on the domain of the political in my discussion here, scientific advances (such as research in evolutionary theory and cognitive science) as well as new forms of expression (in art, literature, and cinema) all represent challenges brought to our self-understanding and my argument should apply also to these domains.

⁸¹ Hegel's analysis and critique of "diversity" would constitute a timely critique of both "identity-politics" and "multiculturalism" that grew out of "standpoint theories" in the 80's and 90's. The regard for difference for its own sake necessarily becomes an indifferent respect for diversity, seen, for example, in the liberal plea for tolerance. According to Hegel, diversity signifies an indifference of difference, which rids difference of all content and significance. In the demand of tolerance and respect for "the other" it is irrelevant which concrete other or difference is at issue. To talk more substantially of difference – not as "difference as such" but by concrete specifications of "the different" – requires the overcoming of mere diversity, i.e., the indifference of difference, and that for Hegel is only possible if one sees what diversity really is, namely, inner differentiation within a cultural or communal whole. In my essay "Who Inherits the White West? Intersections of Racial and Cultural Hegemony" (*Studies in Practical Philosophy* 3:1 (2003)), I discuss, in the context of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, the hegemonic structure of liberal tolerance. I argue that insofar as tolerance implies an act of "granting" humanity, equality and dignity to the other, it remains indifferent to its self-identification as the benefactor.

grasp), I cannot claim to know how these struggles are shaping our self-understanding and changing our institutions. However, I can point to the events of the past century, such as the abolition of slavery, Geneva conventions, universal suffrage, oral and alternative histories, and gay marriage, all of which are expressions of this struggle and attempts at a renewed self-understanding and institutions that express it.

Hegel's concept of freedom as self-determination allows us to step beyond the paradox mentioned above. Our freedom consists precisely in our relating to ourselves as free, as moments of a self-determining whole. However, this "self-determination of the whole" is not an external necessity and "being a moment" does not signify a passive state of being conditioned. The universal is self-determining to the extent that we, as human agents, both manifest and challenge its temporary expressions. This understanding of freedom is a result of my interpretation of Hegel's analysis of self-determination in the Logic. Hegel's Logic, in my analysis, shows that the self-determining whole is nothing but both the result and the very process of the self-sublation of its moments. Thus, as much as the progress is something that we can collectively take credit for, the continued injustices and oppressions are also results of our indifference, of our denial of being moments of humanity's self-determination.

1- Overview of Hegel's Project in the *Science of Logic*:

In the preceding chapter, I showed that the concept of self-determination is the proper subject-matter of Hegel's Logic. I argued that Hegel's task in the Logic is to spell out the meaning and prove the actuality of this concept through the analysis of thinking's own self-determination. Thus, to judge whether Hegel accomplishes this goal, we need to evaluate whether he is able to show that the *movement* of thought-determinations in the Logic is the result of the *activity* of thinking itself. The activity (i.e., self-determination) must show itself in the end to be the result and ground of the movement we see in the Logic, as "being" passes over to "nothing," as "contingency" reflects "(blind) necessity," and as universality brings forth "particularity." Richard Dien Winfield gives a succinct account of Hegel's task and, if indeed accomplished, the result of Hegel's Logic. He argues that philosophical analysis has a twofold challenge in the beginning:

Negatively speaking, philosophy must liberate itself from reliance upon dogmatic givens, be they contents or procedures that have not already been established within and by philosophical investigation. Positively speaking, philosophy must ground itself, legitimating its subject matter and method by its own means alone... Taking these coordinate features together, whereby philosophy starts with indeterminacy and then exhibits self-determination, it follows that philosophy will commence by presenting nothing but self-determination *per se*, which, it should already be clear, amounts to the logic of self-grounding.⁸²

⁸² Richard Dien Winfield, "The Method of Hegel's *Science of Logic*," in *Essays on Hegel's Logic*, ed. George di Giovanni (New York: Suny University Press, 1990), 53-4.

In this chapter my goal is to show that thinking's self-determination consists in the self-sublation [*Sichaufheben*] of abstract categories and arbitrary relations, results of the assumption of indifference between thought and reality, and subject and object respectively.⁸³ Through a close textual analysis of the opening transitions in the Logic, I show 1) how it is that thought-determinations “move” from one to another, 2) how “new” categories result from such movement, 3) how the new category retroactively posits the former categories as moments within itself, and finally, 4) how this is not an external act, but the result of the self-sublation of the categories themselves and thus the activity of self-determining thought. In this exposition, I focus on the role of indifference and its overcoming in each of these steps.

While the exposition of Hegel's concept of sublation, which I discuss in the next section, is wrought with complex terminology specific to Hegel's philosophy, Hegel's analysis and my exposition is also burdened with the awkward and obscure attribution of agency to concepts such as “thinking determining itself,” “something sublating itself,” or “existence returning to itself.”

⁸³ See especially pp. 8-10, 61, 65-69 above. I argued in the preceding chapter that one must suspend the presuppositions of finite thinking to “begin logical analysis.” I identified two grounding presuppositions of finite thinking in Hegel's critique: the antithesis of concept and reality (the view that thinking is a formal activity and that its results, concepts, are abstract universals) and the antithesis of subject and object (the view that thinking, as an activity of a particular human being, is thus always fraught with contingency and cannot know the object as such). In my Introduction, I formulated the two antithesis as relations of indifference because finite thinking sees their relation as one between two independent and mutually exclusive terms. Hegel's formulation of these relations of exclusion or indifference as “antithesis [*Gegensätze*]” must be seen as a result of his analysis of diversity in the Logic, where he shows that to be able to differentiate any two things (including thought and being, or subject and object) we need to think them in a mutually-repelling (or antithetical) relation to one another.

However circular it might sound, I must first point out that, according to Hegel, categories of thought are not merely abstract determinations of a subjective thinking or knowing, but capture real processes and relations between existing things in the world. The objection to this claim presupposes the truth of the antithesis of finite-thinking, namely, the antithetical determinations of thinking and reality, and subject and object. Even if we grant, as Hegel does, that the analysis of self-determination in pure thinking and the analysis of it in nature and human history are not one and the same but necessarily complementary, this does not justify the claim that self-determination, as it transpires in pure thinking, is “different” (or rather “diverse [*verschieden*]”) from actual self-determination. These expressions, thus, are partially accountable by Hegel’s challenge to the reader to suspend the antithesis of finite thinking: between thought and reality and subject and object.

However, this initial response does not clarify exactly what is meant by the claim, for example, that something sublates itself, or by the claim that selfhood (being-for-self) is to be found in “the self-relation of sublating [*Beziehung-auf-sich-selbst des Aufhebens*]” (SL 163/L I 154). Thus before I begin my analysis of the function of indifference in Hegel’s derivation of self-determination, I would like to consider the objection that Hegel obfuscates the distinction between categories of thinking and properties of existent things and conflates what is true of thought with what is true of reality as such:

Hegel often conflates the logical sublation of a concept with the physical sublation of a thing. For example, death is “the sublation [*das Aufheben*] of the individual [animal] and hence the emergence of the genus, of spirit” (*Enc. II* §376A). Death physically sublates the individual animal, but the result of this is not the next stage in the physical process, viz. a corpse, but the next stage in the logical process, the genus, and indirectly, spirit. The reasons for such confluations are that (1) sublation proceeds from the lower to the higher, not from, e.g., an animal to a corpse; (2) Hegel sees a deep connection between the development of the concepts [sic.] and the development of things, which is essential to his idealism.⁸⁴

Inwood’s criticism is flawed in two respects. First, death ends the living animal, but it does not “sublate” it physically. The only manner in which the individual animal could be said to be “preserved as a moment” is in its contribution to the life of its species, which today we can more concretely understand through evolutionary theory as consisting of 1) the gene pool of the species being further determined through the individual’s unique genotype and offspring, as well as 2) the life of the species being further determined by the animal’s phenotype and adaptation to its environment. What is lacking in the animal in comparison to a human being, according to Hegel, would be the self-consciousness as to how the individual animal partially determines the life, habits, and future of the species. Second, Hegel is not talking about “development of concepts” in the plural. Whether it happens to be the development of a single living individual, or the increase of complexity in higher life-forms with respect

⁸⁴ Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, (Blackwell, 1992), 284-5. Inwood’s general account of the meaning of “sublation” is appropriately neutral with respect to this problem: “Hegel associates *aufheben* with several other words: Thus when something is sublated (*aufgehoben(e)*), it is ideal (*ideel*), mediated (or ‘reflected’), in contrast to immediate, and a moment of a whole that also contains its opposite... What results from the sublation of something, e.g. the whole in which both it and its opposite survive as moments, is invariably higher than, or the truth of, the item(s) sublated” (284).

to lower ones, or progression in the history of philosophy, or art, or finally development of higher forms of self-consciousness in the manifestations of freedom in human history, the development is one of self-determination. And here in the Logic, we are interested in finding this very concept of self-determination.

Inwood's objection must also be treated, though, as part of a general line of objection to Hegel's Logic: namely, that when Hegel analyzes how "the fact [*Sache*] emerges from the ground into existence," for example, Hegel conflates the relation between the category of ground and the category of existence, on the one hand, with the relation between real ground and an existent thing, on the other hand. Etienne Gilson raises such an objection to Hegel's project in the Logic:

Abstract contradiction is none the less abstract for having been 'sublated.' If you turn actual existence into a problem of logic, you certainly will logicize existence, but you will not existentialize logic... [you will have] a perpetual overcoming of abstract contradictions. And indeed nothing is easier to achieve. In the order of pure abstraction, everything is given together, and there is no reason why one should choose. No room is left, there, for any "either-or," precisely because, there, nothing exists... Existence and existence alone is a necessary prerequisite for actual contradiction.⁸⁵

I hope to show in the following that Hegel does indeed existentialize Logic. He achieves this by analyzing categories and relations of thinking in and for themselves – *as if* they are existing entities, independent of their occurrence in a finite mind and *as if* they have their content wholly on their own account, irrespective of their relation a consciousness. At each step and with every new

⁸⁵ Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Graduate Theological Union, 1952), 147.

category, Hegel tries to comprehend the self-determining whole *through* that individual category. Thus, we begin with “being” and ask what it means if “all there is” is “being as such.” Pure being, however, only gives us nothingness, etc. At each step, the category is posited as an individual, capable of accounting for what it is – and at every step, the category is shown to be inadequate to give an account of itself.

Thus, I agree with Stephen Houlgate that Hegel’s Logic “provides an account of the basic structure of *being*, as well as of thought... [The identity of thought and being means] neither that beings exist only for conscious thought nor that they are capable of conscious thought themselves but that they exhibit a logical *form* or structure that is intelligible to thought and is the same as the structure of our basic categories.”⁸⁶ However, I would add that rather than a “logical structure,” what the analysis of thinking shows is a dynamic, or a movement, that is intrinsic to both thought as such and reality as such. As John Burbidge points out in a recent article, in the Logic, “thought *moves* from the original concept to its opposite; thought *brings together* the two terms and integrates them into a unity, using the principle of sufficient reason, thus generating a new network of meanings. This dynamic is inherent in the very

⁸⁶ Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic: From Being to Infinity* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006), 117.

nature of reason itself. It is what constitutes the rationality of the logic, and by implication the rationality of the world itself.”⁸⁷

As I have argued above and in the previous chapter, self-determination is the object of Hegel’s Logic. The Absolute as the self-determining whole is what the Logic both presupposes and proves through deriving it from a seemingly presuppositionless beginning, i.e, the idea of pure indeterminacy. As long as the whole, as in “being as such,” constitutes the beginning as completely undifferentiated, independent, and unconditioned,⁸⁸ both the reflection it brings forth and the distinctions that appear in this undifferentiated unity must be the results of its very own activity, of its self-determination. Hegel’s Logic begins with the category of being and ends with the absolute idea. Being is the most abstract category and the absolute idea is the comprehension of the totality of thought-determinations and the movement that produces them as the very activity of self-determining thought. Beginning with the thought of indeterminacy, although necessary due to Hegel’s claim of a presuppositionless beginning, is also not to be taken at face value. This indeterminacy is “pregnant with

⁸⁷ Burbidge, John W., “The Relevance of Hegel’s Logic,” in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 3: 2-3 (2007), 219.

⁸⁸ In its immediacy, being is undifferentiated: there is no determinacy and thus no distinction in it. It is independent and unconditioned: there is no other that limits it, nor one that precedes or conditions it.

determination.”⁸⁹ In the following, we see how the thought of indeterminacy progressively determines itself.

2- *Aufhebung*: Self-sublation and Self-determination:

Something [*das Etwas*] is the *first negation of negation*, as simple self-relation in the form of being... The negative of the negative is, as *something*, only the beginning of the subject [*Subjekt*] – being-within-self [*Insichsein*], only as yet quite indeterminate. It determines itself further on, first, as a *being-for-self* [*Fürsichseiendes*] and so on, until in the Concept it first attains the concrete intensity of the subject. At the base of all these determinations lies the negative unity with itself... *Something* is the negation of the negation in the form of being; for this second negation is the restoring of the simple relation to self; but with this, something is equally *the mediation of itself with itself*. Even in the simple form of *something*, then still more specifically in *being-for-self*, *subject*, and so on, self-mediation [*die Vermittlung seiner mit sich selbst*] is present (SL 115-6/L I 102-3).

“Something” is a term we would apply to anything and everything, any existing thing or even God – as we might say, “something must have created this universe.” Hegel claims that “something” is the “beginning of the Subject,” by arguing that it contains self-relation and self-mediation. This in turn implies that any “something” relates negatively to itself and, while distinguishing itself from the rest of the world, also differentiates its very own being. To understand how Hegel can make such an absurd claim – how does a pen, for example, relate

⁸⁹ “To be fully concrete, a universal must have no given particularity which means that its initial determination can only be that of sheer indeterminacy. Of course, to be concrete a universal cannot remain indeterminate, but any determinacy that it does come to have must be latent in, and emanate from, this initial indeterminacy itself, rather than from any external source... Only if indeterminacy itself is pregnant with determination is concrete universality possible.” Will Dudley, “Impure Reason: Hegel on the Irrationality of the Rational,” *Owl of Minerva*, 35.1-2 (2003-04): 31.

negatively to itself and distinguish itself from other pens and all other objects through inner differentiation? – we need to keep in mind that such active self-differentiation, as well as the self-consciousness that it requires, is only applicable to human beings.

However, even for any determinate object that we can vaguely refer to as a something, it is true that it must have some form of distinction, some quality that picks it out as a something or determines it as an individual thing. I believe here we can grant Hegel the truth of the claim that all things have qualities [or determinacies] and that things are to a lesser or greater extent the source of their own determinacies. The color of the flowers of a plant is a more intrinsic determination than the color of printing paper. Given that the subject matter of the Logic is self-determination, Hegel inquires at each stage whether a category (e.g., *Dasein*, quantity, existence, contingency) can account for itself as an individual (e.g., something, number, the thing, the contingent), or whether it is able to completely account for its individuality. If the argument is not to be hopelessly circular, i.e., Hegel begins with the self-determining whole and ends with it, then self-determination would have to be derived as the individuated category itself, by reaching the category that does indeed account for its very being. And this is achieved, as I show at the end of this chapter, in Hegel's concept of the absolute idea.

a) How does thinking move, or how do thought-determinations bring forth others?

Hegel begins the Logic with the category of being. Pure being is being that is thought without any determinacy or content, without any inside, outside, or relation. As a thought-determination, it is indeterminate and undifferentiated. As the minimum requirement for anything to be given to us in experience, it must simply be. As such pure givenness, being is pure immediacy. It simply *is*. Because nothing is to be intuited or thought in it and because there is no mediating factor doing the intuiting or thinking, it is “pure, empty intuiting” (SL 82/L I 67) and/or “pure, empty thinking” (E §86). Similarly, pure nothing is the absence of all determination and content (SL 82/L I 67). Hence, as the indeterminate immediacy, or contentless equality with itself, nothing is the same as pure being.

Hegel’s beginning is ambiguous with respect to the question we raised above. It is not clear whether it is the category or thought of being that is analyzed or “being as such.” However, Hegel shows this distinction to be meaningless.

“Being as such” is itself an abstraction, a category of thought:

In the pure reflection of the beginning as it is made in this logic with being as such, the transition is still concealed; because *being* is posited only as immediate therefore *nothing* emerges in it only immediately... When being is taken in this simplicity and immediacy, the recollection that it is the result of complete abstraction, and so for that reason alone is abstract negativity, nothing, is left behind, outside the science, which, within its own self, from *essence* onwards will expressly exhibit the said one-sided *immediacy* as a mediated immediacy where being is *posited* as *existence* and the mediating agent of this being is *posited* as *ground* (SL 99/L I 85-6).

Thus, the most puzzling category of metaphysics, the subject matter of countless treatises, is here shown by Hegel to be a poor abstraction that cannot signify anything, or rather simply signifies nothing. Abstraction implies mediation, the formalizing or generalizing act of reflection. Only by ignoring this constitutive act, or only by positing its result, i.e., being, as indifferent to this act, can thinking pretend to attribute givenness or immediacy to being.

Hegel argues that in ordinary thinking when we try to define being, we start talking about the being of *something* or being *in relation to* something – we introduce determination to pure being.⁹⁰ However, pure being is pure indeterminacy, and “only in this pure indeterminacy, and because of it, is being *nothing* – something *that cannot be said*; what distinguishes it from nothing is something merely *meant*” (E §87R). Both being and nothing are indeterminate in the same way, and therefore their difference is completely empty: “The difference, then, exists not in themselves but in a third, in subjective *opinion*” (SL 92/L I 77). Since there is neither determinacy nor content in either of the distinct terms, all we have is the movement we have seen in each: being has “passed over” into nothing, and nothing has “passed over” into being [*daß das Sein in Nichts, und das Nichts in Sein – nicht übergeht, – sondern übergegangen ist*] (SL 82-3/L I 67). Hence the truth about being and nothing (what each really signifies/is) is

⁹⁰ We may consider being, “perhaps in the image of pure light as the clarity of undimmed seeing, and then nothing as pure night – and their distinction is linked with this very familiar sensuous difference. But, as a matter of fact, if this very seeing is more exactly imagined, one can readily perceive that in absolute clearness there is seen just as much, and as little, as in absolute darkness...that pure seeing is a seeing of nothing” (SL 93/L I 78).

this movement that is intrinsic to each, the movement that is necessitated by each towards the other.

The unity, whose moments, being and nothing, are inseparable, is at the same time different from them and is thus a third to them; this third in its own most characteristic is *becoming*. *Transition* [*Übergehen*] is the same as becoming except that in the former one tends to think of the two terms, from one of which transition is made to the other, as at rest, apart from each other, the transition taking place *between* them. Now wherever and in whatever form being and nothing are in question, this third must be present; for the two terms have no separate subsistence of their own but *are* only in becoming, in this third” (SL 93/L I 79).

The reader might be, and perhaps should be, puzzled as to why this simple movement is said to constitute a “unity [*Einheit*].” However, according to Hegel, it is simply the result of the human desire to understand – the first moment of the logical (E §80). The movement does not cease to be as we comprehend it as becoming. Actually becoming is the very category in ordinary thinking that signifies the vanishing of being into nothing (in ceasing-to-be) and the vanishing of nothing into being (in coming-to-be).⁹¹ Becoming, thus, is not a concept that abstracts from being and nothing – it does not capture the general character of the two terms, as formal concepts are supposed to do. It is a determinate unity (i.e., it

⁹¹ Burbidge explains the instability of the fixities of the understanding as follows: “In much philosophical discourse, understanding a term involves abstracting it from its context, and then holding it fixed as an unchanging entity. It then subsists in some kind of static realm, and becomes the basis of Frege’s and Inwood’s permanent and unchanging concepts. But when we think about the actual process of thinking we are aware that understanding a term introduces a move on to other terms – to those contraries from which it is differentiated, and to those subtle determinations that distinguish it from close synonyms. This is the process Hegel calls dialectical reason: ‘the dialectical moment is the peculiar or typical self-cancelling of these kinds of finite determinations and their passing over into their opposites (EL § 80). Thought cannot stay fixed with its original isolated terms.’” John Burbidge, “The Relevance of Hegel’s Logic,” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 3, 2-3 (2007): 218.

has a content) in which there *is* both being and nothing. Being and nothing *are* in this unity as vanishing, or sublated, moments. The self-subsistence of both being and nothing, a presupposition of ordinary thinking, dissolves as their truth as *moments* surface in the movement which is becoming itself (SL 105/L I 92). It is in this sense that Hegel points to becoming as “the first concrete thought and hence the first concept” (E §88A).

In what way does a movement constitute its very moments? This is precisely what happens in becoming; only in and through it, being and nothing can be posited. Hegel points out that in the concept, or movement, of beginning we have a concrete example of becoming. “The matter [itself] *is not yet* in its beginning, but the beginning is not merely its *nothing*: on the contrary, its *being* is already there, too” (E §88R).⁹² *Beginning itself* is also this dynamic unity of being and nothing. According to Hegel, the same logic explains also infinitesimal magnitudes. If one is to assume the absolute separation of being and nothing, it becomes impossible to account for infinitesimal magnitudes. Ordinary thinking, in its analysis of infinitesimal magnitudes, would have to say that such magnitudes are *either* something *or* nothing. However, “[these magnitudes] *are* in their vanishing, not *before* their vanishing, for then they would be finite magnitudes, or *after* their vanishing, for then they are nothing” (SL 104/L I 91). We see here also the necessity of recognizing *intermediate states* between being

⁹² I’d like to point out one more time how inappropriate it would be to ask the question whether it is the thought of beginning that is at issue here or beginning as such.

and nothing – even calling them ‘states’ ossifies the movement in language, contrary to its nature or what is meant. Hegel points out that “becoming,” at this stage in the Logic, is still a very poor determination: “An inward deepening of becoming is what we have, for example, in *life*... and still in a higher form in *spirit*” (E §88A).

b) Sublation and self-sublation

In the analysis of becoming, we have seen that we cannot reduce either of the two terms to one another, since they have an opposed meaning for ordinary thinking – although the opposition relies solely on the thought of *determinate* being and nothing. However, they signify the same empty abstraction. As we comprehend what they really are through their movement, the attempt to identify or define them through a relation of simple sameness or distinctness is left behind. What becoming shows us is a more complex relation: “Pure being is immediate and simple, and for that very reason is equally pure nothing, that there *is* a difference between them, but a difference which no less sublates itself and is *not*” (SL 92/L I 78).

It is in the section on “becoming,” that Hegel thematizes the concept of sublation [*Aufhebung*]. Hegel claims that it is the difference between being and nothing that *sublates itself*, and that being and nothing each *sublates itself* in the movement of becoming. Sublation is not an external act done to being, nothing,

and their difference from outside, but these categories and the relation between them each sublates itself. Hegel explains the meaning of sublation as follows: “To sublatae [*Aufheben*] and the sublated [*das Aufgehobene*] (that which exists ideally as a moment [*das Ideelle*]), constitute one of the most important notions in philosophy... What is sublated ... is the result of *mediation*; it is a non-being but as a *result* which had its origin in a being. It still has, therefore, *in itself* the *determinateness from which it originates*” (SL 106-7/L I 93-4). What is sublated, then, 1) is the result of mediation (at this stage, this term simply means the movement of thought-determinations), 2) exists ideally (is not independent, but has its meaning and truth in another), and 3) is a moment of a more concrete reality or more comprehensive idea. Sublation, thus, is *not* simple negation. What is sublated loses its immediacy and independence, but it is not reduced to nothing. Rather, it is reduced to non-being, to being a moment, and thus has its truth and place in another. Being and nothing, as sublated, are no longer *pure* indeterminate immediacies. They have been mediated in and through becoming.

Only in becoming, being and nothing find their expression. But they are no longer the pure abstractions that they were before becoming was shown to be their truth. This movement has transformed them, or unveiled their true character: “Both being and nothing are the same, *becoming*, and although they differ so in direction they interpenetrate and paralyze each other” (SL 106/L I 92-3). As moments, nothing is now comprehended as “coming-to-be” and being as “ceasing-to-be.” Hegel explains that “[being and nothing] are **not reciprocally sublated** –

the one does not sublata the other externally – but each sublata itself in itself and is in its own self the opposite of itself” (SL 106/L I 93, bold emphasis mine).

Being does not throw light upon nothing; neither does nothing, in itself, convey the truth of being, but each unfold into the other.⁹³ It is clear how Hegel could argue that being does not show nothing to be an inadequate concept or vice versa, and that thus they do not reciprocally sublata one another: being and nothing have no content or relation, and thus, also no relation to each other. However, how are we to understand Hegel’s claim that it is being that sublata itself or that the distinction between being and nothing sublata itself?

The *drive* to find in being or in both [being and nothing] a stable meaning is this very *necessity*, which leads being and nothing further along and endows them with a true, i.e., concrete meaning. This progression is the logical exposition and course [of thought] that presents itself in what follows. The *thinking them over* [Nachdenken] that *finds* deeper determinations for them is the logical thinking

⁹³ Thus, for example, we cannot say that being is the *ground* of nothing, or nothing is the *ground* of being. Nor can we ascribe *causality* to their relation – for there is yet no relation. Likewise, the relation of one being the condition for the other is a more complex connection than what we have here. What we see in the progressive development of thought-determinations is the growing complexity and becoming more concrete of the related terms (being is the most abstract term, something is more determinate, and the finite is even more determinate). Correspondingly the relation between the terms of analysis is increasingly more complex. “The progression of the Concept is no longer either passing-over or shining into another, but *development*; for the [moments] that are distinguished are immediately posited at the same time as identical with one another and with the whole, and [each] determinacy is as a free being of the whole Concept” (E §161). “[The determination of the transition of being and nothing into each other] is to be understood as it is without any further elaboration of the transition by reflection [*ohne weitere Reflexionsbestimmung*]. It is immediate and quite abstract because the transient moments are themselves abstract, that is, because the determinateness of either moment by means of which they passed over into each other is not yet posited in the other [*an diesen Momenten noch nicht die Bestimmtheit des andern gesetzt ist, vermittelt dessen sie übergehen*]; nothing is not yet *posited* in being, and *vice versa*. It is therefore inadmissible to employ more developed forms of mediation here and to hold being and nothing in any kind of relationship – the transition in question is not yet a relation [*Verhältnis*]... The kind of connexion [*Beziehung*] cannot be further determined without the connected *sides* being further determined at the same time” (SL 103/L I 90).

by which these determinations produce themselves, not in a contingent but in a necessary way (E §87R).⁹⁴

The thought of being, for ordinary thinking, has the significance of an existing thing. Being includes the thought of determination. However, when we isolate and analyze what is included in this thought (in the manner of thinking it over [*Nachdenken*]) we find that it contains nothing. A similar reflection is carried out in the case of nothing. However, that being ceases to be when we reflect on it and that nothing comes to be is not simply a result of our reflection; it is necessitated by the thought of immediate indeterminacy, of abstract emptiness. Thus, as much as the understanding's drive to define and identify is the source of our *discovering* this movement, it is not its cause or ground.⁹⁵ According to Hegel, being's passing-over to nothing, and finding its true expression in "ceasing-to-be" as a moment of becoming is its own doing, the necessary result of its contentlessness, lack of meaning and lack of distinction from nothing. Whether we begin with the question "what is true?" or "what is

⁹⁴ See also my comments on this passage on p. 74ff above.

⁹⁵ Hegel's claim is that sublation is not an external act performed on these categories, but the result of their own instability. Burbidge explains this process as follows: "Hegel is suggesting that when we focus on the original term in its precise definition we find that *it* requires our moving on to the contrary and other determinations. We do not introduce some casual consideration from outside because of our sense of where we want to go. The meanings inherent in the initial concept require that thought move over to an opposite, precisely because the determinations set a limit, and we can understand the limit only if we are clear about what is on the other side." Burbidge, John W., "The Relevance of Hegel's Logic," *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 3. 2-3 (2007): 218.

real?” or “what is the principle of the whole?” or “what is thinking?”⁹⁶ the answer “being” only points to its own overcoming:

Every subsequent meaning that they [being and nothing] acquire must therefore be regarded as only a *more articulate determination* and a *truer definition* of the *Absolute*; hence, any such determination or definition is no longer an empty abstraction like being and nothing, but is, instead, something concrete within which both being and nothing are moments (E §87R).⁹⁷

What is critical for our discussion here is to note that being and nothing are already abstractions, results of mediation, and reflection is not even able to individuate them to inquire what they would be in and of themselves. So Hegel’s attribution of self-sublation here is less clear than his description of this process in the context of the following transitions in the Logic. Hegel himself admits that “the transition is still concealed... [because] the recollection that it [being] is the result of complete abstraction, and so for that reason alone is abstract negativity, nothing, is left behind, outside of science” (SL 99/L I 85-6).

“The unstable unrest” (SL 106/L I 93), which is becoming, is itself sublated in the next category in the movement of thinking: in *Dasein*⁹⁸. Becoming

⁹⁶For Hegel, these questions could not be posed as separate or treated as indifferent to one another.

⁹⁷ See also how Hegel’s argument here lays the groundwork for his analysis of the self-sublation of the finite, and his definition of the Absolute as this very self-sublation: “[The true comprehension of the absolute, i.e., unconditioned] consists in showing that contingent being in its own self withdraws into its ground in which it is sublated, and further, that by this withdrawal it posits the ground only in such a manner that it rather makes itself into a positedness... the non-being of the finite is the being of the absolute [*Das Nichtsein des Endlichen ist das Sein des Absoluten*]” (SL 442-3/L II 62).

⁹⁸ *Dasein* is translated as “determinate being” in Miller’s translation of the *Science of Logic*, and as “being-there” in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, translated by Geraets, Suchting, and Harris. In the following, I do not change the translation; however, I use *Dasein* in my discussion of the text.

cannot consistently contain the two opposing moments in their unity: it is not a stable concept. Thus, Hegel argues, becoming collapses into a stable unity, that of *Dasein*, which is the vanishing of the vanishing movement – or, the collapse of the constant vanishing of being to nothing and vice versa. This is an inadequate account of this transition; however, we may be able to give a clearer account in the next section, through the discussion of the transition from *Dasein* to *Daseiendes*, or to something [*Etwas*].

c) Individuation and Indifference

“*Being-there* [Dasein] is being with a *determinacy*, that is [given] as immediate determinacy or as a determinacy that [simply] is: *quality*. As reflected *into itself* in this its determinacy, being-there is *that which is there* [Daseiendes], *something* [Etwas]” (E §90). The idea of *Dasein* as such, or quality as such [Bestimmtheit], is too abstract to yield any definite relations or to allow for any specification and differentiation of meaning. *Dasein* in general can refer to countless objects in infinitely many ways. Hegel’s strategy in dealing with this wholly indeterminate concept of determinacy is to treat it in the case of a determinate being [Daseiendes] (that which is there): in the individuated case of the idea of *Dasein*. Something, then, becomes the object of analysis; it is posited as having a particular determinacy that identifies and defines it. This move from the general category of *Dasein* to a something [Etwas] is the first positing act in

the Logic.⁹⁹ It is a move that is repeated further on, e.g., in the passage from the category of existence [*Existenz*] to an existing thing [*das Existierende, das Ding*] and in the move from contingency [*Zufälligkeit*] to the contingent [*das Zufällige*].¹⁰⁰

The difference between the two concepts, “Dasein als solche” and “ein Daseiendes,” can be summarized as follows: The former is an abstract category, achieved through the generalizing and formalizing act of the understanding. The latter is an individual, with the potential for self-determination. If the thing in question is truly an individual then it is the ground of what it is. The positing act therefore allows us to observe the given category as it would be for itself. The abstract category, namely *Dasein* in general, is static. It describes a state or a generality, such that it doesn’t pick out one individual thing, but describes partially any number of things that can be picked out by it, as an abstract category

⁹⁹ The transition from becoming to *Dasein* could arguably be seen as the first positing act; however, *Dasein* itself is an abstract category or generality that does not fit the act of individuation that is achieved in the positing act in general.

¹⁰⁰ The passage from the category of *Dasein* to *Daseiendes* or something (and similarly from the category of existence to the analysis of “the thing [*das Ding*]”) is initially a move of external reflection. The initial positing of a thought-determination as what is independent [*ein Selbstständiges*] must be accounted for by the subject matter itself. This positing act can be grasped only after such a positing act as separate from that which is posited can be accounted for within the system, that is, only within the Doctrine of Essence. There, the positing reflection itself becomes thematized, and accounted for, as a necessary category of the Logic and determinate being is more appropriately comprehended as posited being: “In the sphere of essence, positedness [*Gesetzsein*] corresponds to determinate being” (SL 406/L II 20). This move also underlies Hegel’s use of terms that are normally used as adjectives as substantives: such as the logical [*das Logische*], the true [*das Wahre*], or the absolute [*das Absolute*]; by individuating them, Hegel can ask what they are in and for themselves. It is arguable that this positing act also underlies the move from the Logic to *Realphilosophie*: The Logic proves that thinking is a self-determining activity and that its result, the concept of self-determination, is neither a regulative ideal nor an abstract form, but a real process.

or *Merkmal* does.¹⁰¹ The process of positing it, or individuating it, turns this partial description towards itself.¹⁰² It posits self-relation and thus transforms it into an activity. It makes it possible to ask: If this partial description were the unique determination of the subject matter (or, the object of analysis), what would it be like? It would be the result of the thing relating to itself in its thereness.

In the following I discuss the results of this first movement of self-determination in the Logic. The task at hand is to comprehend something as what it is in and for itself, that is, to comprehend it according to its true nature. Thus, we must identify and evaluate all content that thinking attributes to that something to see whether this content has its source in the object of analysis itself. It must also be noted that it is this positing act that allows for the progressive further determining of something at this point in the analysis and of the logical categories in general.¹⁰³ This individual concept, by virtue of being a one, is shown to have

¹⁰¹ “Abstract thinking, therefore, is not to be regarded as a mere setting aside of the sensuous material, the reality of which is not thereby impaired; rather it is the sublating and reduction of that material as mere *phenomenal appearance* to the *essential*, which is manifested only in the Concept. Of course, if what is taken up into the Concept from the concrete phenomenon is to serve only as a *mark* or *sign*, it certainly may be any mere random sensuous particular determination of the object, selected from the others on the basis of any random external interest and of a similar kind and nature as the rest” (SL 588/L II 226). “What we are dealing with in logic is not a thinking about something which exists independently as a base for our thinking and apart from it, nor forms which are supposed to provide mere signs [*Zeichnen*] or distinguishing marks [*Merkmale*] of truth; on the contrary, the necessary forms and self-determinations of thought are the content and the ultimate truth itself” (SL 50/L I 31). See also “There is nothing more characteristic of the superficiality [*Merkmal der Äußerlichkeit*] and degradation of logic than the favorite category of the “characteristic [*Kategorie des Merkmals*]” (E §165R).

¹⁰² What Hegel calls “reflected into itself”: “As reflected *into itself* in this its determinacy, being-there is *that which is there* [Daseiendes], *something* [Etwas]” (E §90).

¹⁰³ “Progression is attained in the Logic, moreover, only through a series of reflections that reduce to mere ‘moment’ thought’s previous attempts at **self-objectification**.” George di Giovanni, “A

an inner nature as well as relations to what it is not: it is a being-in-itself, but also it is a being-for-another.

Hegel begins his analysis of something by pointing out that something is being-within-self [*Insichsein*]. It has an intrinsic determinacy (insofar as it is defined solely through it) and it has being – this is all we know about our object of analysis in the beginning. However, any positing of a determination is also the positing of the negation of determinations excluded by it.¹⁰⁴ Given the logic of individuation and the positing of the determinacy as a being in its own right, such a determination excluded by the first must itself be “a something.” At first, any given two somethings, a something and an other, are indifferent to one another [*gleichgültig gegeneinander*] (SL 116/L I 103). This indifference functions at two levels: first, immediately within the argument, where the thought determinations pass-over to others and bring forth further determination, and second, at the level of the meta-reflection on the argument, where thinking comprehends the meaning of the transitions. At the level of the movement of thought-determinations, we see that “something *and* other are at first indifferent to one another; an other is also

Reply to Cynthia Willett,” in *Essays on Hegel’s Logic*, ed. George di Giovanni, (SUNY University Press: New York, 1990), 97. Until we reach the absolute idea, the aspect of being-for-another challenges the individuality and the posited independence of the concept at hand, that is, shows it not to be a true (i.e., self-determining) individuality.

¹⁰⁴ Determination requires and implies relation to an other. “The individual [*das Individuum*] is a relation-to-self through its setting limits to everything else; but these limits are thereby also limits of itself, relations to an other, it does not possess determinate being within itself. True, the individual is *more* than merely an entity bounded on all sides, but this *more* belongs to another sphere of the Concept; in the metaphysics of being, the individual is simply a determinate something” (SL 113-4/L I 101).

immediately a determinate being, a something” (SL 116/L I 103-4). Their reciprocal indifference means that neither of the two somethings owns up to the othering act that posits the other as the other of itself: “the negation thus falls outside both” (SL 116/L I 104). Each something is taken abstractly, apart from its relations to others and each is thus equally a something, or equally an other (SL 117/L I 104). However, such a remark on their equivalence as somethings can only be the result of an external viewpoint, which brings us to the second level of indifference: The other can only be distinguished from the first, or posited as equally valid as a something, by external reflection or by comparison, or as Hegel points out, by a third.¹⁰⁵ Thus, as long as the relation to the other is not owned up by each something as its intrinsic limit, each is limited by something other than itself – whether it be the determinate other or the third that compares the two – and hence externally determined.

All we could say of the object in the beginning was that it has a determinacy and that it is. This seemed sufficient at the time for individuating or specifying our object of analysis. However, now we are faced with two relations of indifference: 1) Something is what it is in distinction to an other, but this distinction is not factored into what something is. In our attempt to determine

¹⁰⁵ “Otherness thus appears as a determination alien to the determinate being thus characterized, or as the other *outside* the one determinate being; partly because a determinate being is determined as other only through being *compared* by a Third, and partly because it is only determined as other on account of the other which is outside it, but is not an other on its own account” (SL 118/L I 105). The third is the *activity* of thinking itself, which is external to the immediate movement (passing-over) of the categories at this point. As was the case with the positing reflection, this external reflection is thematized and its externality is sublated in the doctrine of essence.

what something is, insofar as we abstract from its relations to other things, we treat something as indifferent to such relations, or others in general. The result of such abstraction is that we can no longer identify what specifically makes this something what it is. 2) The difference between something and other falls outside of both, in a third, and something and other are both indifferent to this external authority, which distinguishes them. The choice of which “something” is the primary one, a “this,” is an arbitrary act and consequently implies the arbitrary positing of the other as “other”.

The previous analysis describes something and other in a relation of exclusion. Something is not its other. However, upon further reflection we see that it is not indifferent to its other as it appeared to be at first either.

A determinate, a finite, being is one that is in relation to an other; it is a content standing in a necessary relation to another content, to the whole world... If a specific content, any determinate being, is *presupposed*, then because it is *determinate*, it is in a manifold relationship with another content; it is not a matter of indifference to it whether a certain other content with which it is in relation is, or is not; for it is only through such relation that it essentially is what it is (SL 86/L I 71).

Hegel formulates this relation of exclusion as a negation. What something is not limits it; and as much as it has this limiting relation to its other, something is a being-for-other [*Sein-für-Anderes*]. This requires that we revise how we understand the object of our analysis, the self-determining individual. Something that would be purely an effect of its relations to other things could not be an individual, a self-sustaining and self-determining being. It seems at first that there

must be some aspect or quality in the object of our analysis that is immune to its relations to others, something that makes it what it is on its own account. Thus, Hegel writes, “something *preserves* itself in the negative of its determinate being [*Nichtdasein*]” (SL 119/L I 106). This capacity to be equal to itself in the face of infinitely many relations to possible others constitutes the something as a being-in-itself [*Ansichsein*].

d) Determinate negation and the return to self

The overcoming of the indifference of something and other leads the argument to the point where something assumes the other into itself. It “gathers” the determinacy it has due to its distinction from an other into itself through positing it as its moment, as being-for-other. Now the argument is faced with the apparent indifference of the categories of being-in-itself and being-for-other.

By identifying determinacy with negation, and negation with otherness, Hegel defines all determinateness in the field of being-for-other of something.¹⁰⁶ This necessarily leads to the conclusion that something which excludes all relation to otherness has no determination. Being-in-itself, as the negation of all other relation, becomes simple indeterminacy, or being. Hegel writes, “things are

¹⁰⁶Determinacy is the result of negation: “Determinateness is negation posited as affirmative” (SL 113/L I 100). The other and negation seem to be defined through one another: Mediation “contains a reference to an other, and hence to *negation*” (SL 85/L I 69). “The second is equally a determinate being, but determined as a negative of the something – an other” (SL 116/L I 103).

called ‘in themselves’ in so far as abstraction is made from all being-for-other, which means simply, in so far as they are thought devoid of all determination, as nothings” (SL 121). Hegel’s concept of the “in-itself” clearly must avoid this consequence.¹⁰⁷ Thus, exclusion through simple negation or abstraction must be distinguished from sublation, or determinate negation.¹⁰⁸

We see in this section that being-in-itself, which seems to be the result of simple negation or abstraction, must be comprehended as the result of an active negation¹⁰⁹. Allowing for some psychologism, we can describe the movement as follows: being-in-itself is a return to itself of something from its relations to its others, such as to retain a sense of self. It is a reactionary and conservative move performed by something on behalf of its unity. It is the adamant positing of self-relation, thus, a sphere of independence. Thus, the active negation is a continuous, self-differentiating and self-perpetuating process. Hegel repeatedly points out that the resolution of a seeming opposition in the dialectic movement does not result in the retreat to an earlier category, but that it calls forth a higher unity or more

¹⁰⁷ Here we see once more that it is being-in-itself that is negatively defined. It is an abstraction from the relations to other(s) that something has, and as such, it is the positing of independence and self-relation. “The being that is kept firmly distinct from the determinacy, *being-in-itself*, would be only the empty abstraction of being. In being-there the determinacy is one with being and is at the same time posited as negation; this determinacy is *limit* [Grenze], *restriction* [Schranke]. Thus, otherness is not something indifferent outside it, but its own moment” (E §92).

¹⁰⁸ While the former is criticized by Hegel, the latter is the driving force of the dialectic in the Logic.

¹⁰⁹ This is not a term that Hegel uses. I use it in my analysis here to show that negation at stake here should not be taken as a single act with a single result – which both sublation and determinate negation could suggest. It is more properly considered as negativity, a continual and simultaneous relating to and sundering from the other of the in-itself.

concrete determination that has the former moments as well as the process of their overcoming within it. Being-in-itself is not a return to being as indeterminate immediacy, or to being-within-self [*Insichsein*] that preceded all reflection of otherness. Being-in-itself is not something given or presupposed, but rather something achieved and *preserved*. Even if we accept that Hegel avoids the abstract concept of the in-itself through this formulation of active negation, we should still ask whether this active negation produces a new determination, whether it adds content to something.

Hegel introduces a third perspective or position of something, namely, what is within something [*an ihm*] as the seed of self-determination. The idea of “what is within something or present in it [*am Etwas* or *an ihm*]” mediates the strict opposition and indifference between being-in-itself and being-for-other and contains the first occurrence of the moment of “return to self.” The apparent indifference and independence of the two moments, i.e., being-in-itself and being-for-another, is explicitly formulated in the following section as the problem of the distinction between determination [*Bestimmung*] and constitution [*Beschaffenheit*], and later in the relation of inessential and essential, inner and outer, necessary and contingent, etc.

Being-in-itself and being-for-other are, in the first instance, distinct; but that something also has *within it* the same character that it is *in itself*, and, conversely, that what it is as being-for-other it also is in itself – this is the identity of being-in-itself and being-for-other, in accordance with the determination that the something itself is one and the same something of both moments, which, therefore, are undividedly present in it. This identity is formally given in the sphere of determinate being, but more expressly in the

consideration of *essence* and of the relation of *inner* and *outer*, and most precisely in the consideration of the Idea as the unity of the Concept and *actuality* (SL 120/ L I 108).

First, showing that being-in-itself is the result of a simple negation of otherness, it is seen that being-in-itself can no longer be considered to be independent of the relation to the other. However, this also does not mean that there is inner unity to the something. The immediate determinacy has sublated itself and something is now characterized by its self-relation: its positing itself in the presence of other relation. Second, and following from the first, denying the immediate externality of the other, and defining both something and other through their relation rather than their relation through the two terms, *the relation is posited as preceding the initially distinct terms*. This allows us also to comprehend them as moments and the relation as a self-relation. It is here that, for the first time, self-relation is posited as a result, not as the mere abstraction we saw in something or being-in-itself. The self-relation that characterizes “what is within something” has incorporated the content of the movement within it.

3- The Inadequacy of Indifference and the Drive for Self-determination

In the previous section, we saw that the attempt to grasp what something is on its own account required that we define it as a quality, through its determinacy. However, this definition immediately pointed to what is excluded from something, and brought into our consideration an excluded determinacy, or an other. The attempt to find the meaning of something in its seeming independence while accounting for its relation to another required that we comprehend something in its self-relation, as a distinguishing of itself from others that brings forth an inner differentiation into something (its being-in-itself and being-for-another, its determination and constitution, etc.). We see the same transition – from 1) indifference of abstraction (something), to 2) indifference of relation (something and other), to 3) the self-sublation of both in a more concrete or comprehensive concept containing the former as moments (what is within something) – also in Hegel's analysis of distinction [*Unterschied*].

The analysis of the relation of distinction is located in the beginning of the doctrine of essence and is the result of the analysis of the concept of identity (or, rather, the relation of self-identity). In the doctrine of essence, it is no longer categories, but rather relations that are the object of analysis. In the doctrine of being, we ask at each new step whether the given category is adequate to account for itself, define or determine itself by its means alone. In the doctrine of essence,

we ask whether the relation that is posited at each step is adequate to the whole posited by that relation. Although the specific terms that are being defined and compared have become more complex, thinking's movement is still defined by the moments of the logical¹¹⁰. As Hegel points out in § 79 of *the Encyclopaedia Logic*, the analysis of any object of thought, i.e., the logically real, includes three moments: the understanding fixes the object of analysis and situates it in relations of exclusion and opposition; dialectical reason shows the intrinsic incoherence of the fixed definitions and relations of exclusion and brings forth their self-sublation; and, finally, the speculative moment comprehends the movement as an activity, as the development of the subject-matter itself.

In these transitions self-sublation is performed through the determination and overcoming of two distinct forms of indifference: 1) Indifference of abstraction – or the positing of independence – is the result of the first instinct of thought to abstract from the manifold and thus individuate the object of analysis as a one. However, understanding's positing of the object as independent and fixed makes it inert and reduces it to an empty self-relation. 2) Indifference of arbitrariness – or external reflection – is the result of reason's drive to find meaning in this empty abstraction by trying to specify its content while holding on to its independence. The precise determination of what the object is and how it manifests itself in reality falls to a third, discriminating between diverse determinations of the object arbitrarily, i.e., without any necessary connection to

¹¹⁰ See my discussion of the logical in the third part of my first chapter, especially p. 78ff.

the object's nature. The self-sublation that brings forth a more concrete comprehension of the object is an overcoming of these two forms of indifference. The third, speculative moment, is the result of reason's comprehension of the source of these diverse determinations as well as the movement that produced them to be the object itself – what Hegel calls “the return of the moments to the self.”

The doctrine of essence begins with a relation that was left unaccounted for in the doctrine of being: that of positing reflection [*die setzende Reflexion*], which we have seen examples of above in the inexplicable reference to a third in the course of the argument. In the beginning the idea of essence seems to be vulnerable to the same inadequacy: “But when the Absolute is determined as *essence*, the negativity is often taken only in the sense of an *abstraction* from all determinate predicates. In that case the negative activity, the abstracting, falls outside of essence, and consequently essence is taken only as a result *without this premise that belongs to it*; it is the *caput mortuum* of abstraction” (E §112). Ordinary thinking is interested in definitions, or in the result of abstraction, e.g. abstracting from the contingent and particular aspects of something to get at its essence. But by exclusively concentrating on the result, thinking ignores the movement that brought about the definition of the subject at hand: the relations it considered and excluded as well as the activity of reflection itself is posited (or presupposed) as external to the relations that were discovered and observed. External reflection [*die äußere Reflexion*] is the kind of thinking that is premised

on the subject/object distinction. When thinking differentiates itself from the object of thinking, it assumes the independence and mutual externality of the two sides. The positing act of reflection [*Setzen*] (for example, the positing of *Dasein* as a *Daseiendes*, or positing of the being-in-itself as the result of the dialectic of something and other) is seen to be an external act of thought, which is not accountable by the subject matter itself: it is an external attribution of determinacy to the subject matter. However, as shown by this qualification itself, the truth of external reflection is that it is an “attribution of determinacy” and thus is a “determining reflection [*Bestimmende Reflexion*]. With this, the course of the movement of thinking in the doctrine of essence is determined: The relations of reflection will be evaluated as determinate relations that define the subject matter as such.¹¹¹

Hegel’s analysis of the movement from identity to diversity, and to distinction is the result of the overcoming of a double indifference: First, the identity that is at issue here is not the formal identity of abstraction.

Formal identity or the identity of the understanding is this identity, insofar as one holds onto it firmly and *abstracts* from distinction. Or rather, *abstraction* is the positing of this formal identity, the transformation of something that is inwardly concrete into this form of simplicity – whether it be the case that a part of the manifold that is present in the concrete is *left out* (by means of what is

¹¹¹ This result was already carried out, according to Hegel, in the previous transitions between categories of being: For example, “what is present in something” gathered into itself the determinacies that seemed to have their source in an external standpoint, a third. It must be noted here that the appearance of external reflection as the relation that determines the subject matter does not mean that thinking was external up to this point, after which it will not be external anymore. Rather it means that thinking all along had the false impression that it was analyzing and describing an object external to it and now this illusion is negated: The object *is* shown to be the result of its own determining reflection.

called *analysis*) and that only one of these elements is selected, or that, by leaving out their diversity, the manifold determinacies are *drawn together* into One (E §115).

At this point in the movement of thought, the constitutive act of reflection has been incorporated into the object itself, as its own negativity and the indifference of abstraction, which marked the immediacy of the categories of being, seems to be no longer at issue. Second, and this we see in the following movement as well as the further transitions in the doctrine of essence, the relation of distinct terms is not a relation of indifference, where the distinct terms subsist as independent things. The diverse terms are what they are in and through their relation to one another. They are what they are only in their totality, as moments of their relation. This we see initially in the relation of “ground”: “*Ground* is the unity of identity and distinction; the truth of what distinction and identity have shown themselves to be, the inward reflection which is just as much reflection-into-another and vice versa. It is *essence* posited as *totality*” (E §121). It is the necessity to explain the much more complex totality of actuality as self-grounding that constitutes the move from the doctrine of essence to the doctrine of the concept.¹¹²

Let us see how the relation of self-identity deepens to that of ground, or how only through the relation of ground can we understand what is really meant by self-identity:

¹¹² “The identity that is inwardly concrete...is first the ground and then ... the Concept” (E §115R).

The essence of something, what it is in-itself by virtue of itself, is its pure relation to itself (E §115). “Essence is simple immediacy as sublated immediacy. Its negativity is its being; it is self-equal [*sich selbst gleich*] in its absolute negativity, through which otherness and relation to other has vanished in its own self into pure equality-with-self [*Sichselbstgleichheit*] Essence is therefore simple identity-with-self [*einfache Identität mit sich*]” (SL 411/L II 26). In the doctrine of being, the immediacy of being showed itself to be a “positedness,” a result of reflection. Thus, when we try to comprehend the object of analysis now, we should not treat this self-relation as a static connection between two determinacies, but as a “reflected relation” (E §115). It is this ability to relate to itself in what it is not that preserves the unity of something and constitutes its self-identity, or individuality. However, this negativity implies then necessarily a sustained activity of “self-repulsion,” and thus “contains the determination of *distinction* [*Unterschied*] essentially” (E §116).

As we said earlier, while in the doctrine of being, the categories of thought were the immediate objects of analysis, here in the doctrine of essence it is relations that are given as immediate in the beginning of analysis. Here, thus, we have the relation of an immediate distinction [*unmittelbarer Unterschied*], or what Hegel calls the relation of diversity [*Verschiedenheit*] (E §117). In the analysis of being-in-itself and being-for-another, the key insight was that the former is the result of an abstract negation of all otherness, and thus has no prior or independent content. Thus an implicit being-for-another was seen to precede the

very determination of being-in-itself. Here this immediate relation of self-identity “falls apart [zerfällt] within itself into diversity because... it posits itself as its own negative within itself” (SL 418/L II 34). Self-identity cannot contain in a stable manner its own negativity: ever new attempt at positing its own unity reflects the ongoing repulsion of itself from itself. Here, we see that being-in-itself has developed into “reflection-into-self” – having incorporated the abstracting act – and being-for-other has become “positedness” – having incorporated the non-externality of the other (SL 419/L II 35).

Thus the reflection that is implicit, and external reflection, are the two determinations into which the moments of difference, namely identity and difference, posited themselves. *Reflection in itself [Reflexion an sich]* is identity, but determined as being indifferent to difference [*bestimmt, gleichgültig gegen den Unterschied zu sein*], not as simply not possessing difference, but as being self-identical in its relationship with it; it is diversity [*Verschiedenheit*]... *External reflection [äußere Reflexion]*, on the other hand, is their *determinate* difference ... a determination to which the [merely] implicit reflection is indifferent; difference’s two moments, identity and difference itself, are thus externally posited determinations, not determinations in and for themselves” (SL 419/L II 35).

Hegel’s analysis above shows that the indifference of abstraction and the externality of the positing reflection, which seemed to be left behind as we moved from the doctrine of being to the doctrine of essence, have not been overcome.¹¹³ The reason for this is that the concept or relation that we have at this stage, i.e., self-identity, is still too abstract to contain and account for its self-reflection as a

¹¹³ Hegel summarizes the critique of the inadequacy of indifference relations as follows: “[I]t is precisely philosophy, and above all speculative logic, which exhibits the nullity of the mere identity that belongs to understanding, the identity that abstracts from distinction. This philosophy then also insists, to be sure, that we should not rest content with mere diversity but become cognizant of the inner unity of everything there is” (E §118A).

self-differentiation. Thus, incorporating the relation of diversity into the concept of identity results in the relation of opposition: “Diversity, whose *indifferent* sides are just as much simply and solely *moments* of one negative unity, is *opposition* [Gegensatz]” (SL 421/L II 38). Or, in the less detailed account of the *Encyclopaedia* which omits the relations of opposition and contradiction [Widerspruch], the higher unity, which will be shown to be still inadequate, is the ground.¹¹⁴

In summary, what we see in this transition is the following (and here I simplify the transitions and omit the details so as to present the core argument): what something is in its essence points to its distinction from everything else. However, there are many other things, and each is a something, and each distinct term “*is* what it is *on its own account* and each is indifferent vis-à-vis its relation to the other, so that the relation is an external one for it” (E §117). Such *diversity* [Verschiedenheit] can be attributed to the terms themselves only by someone or something that stands outside of this indifferent manifold and compares them. Thus, the essence of the object of analysis is even farther from being determined according to what it is in and for itself than it was with the category of identity.

¹¹⁴ Hegel later points out that the relationship of the whole to its parts is a further development and more concrete expression of this reflection of identity and diversity in one another: “The *relationship of the whole and the parts* is the immediate (and therefore the thoughtless) relationship and overturning of self-identity into diversity. We pass from the whole to the parts and from the parts to the whole, forgetting in each the antithesis to the other, because we take each of them by itself – now the whole, and now the parts – as an independent existence. Or, since the parts are supposed to subsist *in* the whole and this [is supposed to consist} *of* the parts, it follows that, in one case, the whole is *what subsists*, in the other case, the parts, and each time the other [term] is correspondingly *what is unessential*” (E §136R).

However, positing of the indifference of the terms to one another implies a perspective that is left outside of the diversity itself and like a *deus ex machina* arrives at the scene to affirm the existence of relation where no such relation is allowed by the terms themselves. There is nothing in the analysis that can account for such an intrusion, and so this relation must be internal to the diverse terms themselves if the thing is to be self-determining. The required explanation of what constitutes the identity of an individual thing can be given only when the external viewpoint is incorporated into the relations between the diverse elements: that is, when the result of the comparing reflection can be assumed to have its source within the relations of the distinct terms themselves, in their very opposition. This requirement brings forth the relation of a distinction that is internal to each moment itself. “Hence, the distinction of essence is *opposition* through which what is distinct does not have an *other in general*, but *its own* other facing it, that is to say, each has its own determination only in its relation to the other” (E §119). With the category of distinction, we seem to have found a relation that comprehends the identity of an individual thing, and the multiplicity of diverse things as both determined by relations of mutual limitation. External reflection, the arbitrariness of comparison, and the contingency of assigning determinacy or relation, are all sublated as the other is acknowledged to be one “determined” by the relation itself.

The incessant movement of self-repulsion, positing of diversity, and the owning up of this diversity as posited by the self, repeats the overcoming of the unstable unrest of becoming that we saw in the previous section. Here the comprehension of this movement brings forth the idea of a self-grounding thing. In this way, the relations and the distinct terms themselves are seen as the differentiations of the subject-matter itself. However, as the relation of ground and existence leads to the relation of a thing and its properties, and so on, the two forms of indifference (abstraction and externality) are seen to show the inadequacy of each of the relations thinking analyzes in the doctrine of essence. As we come to analyze the world of appearance as a totality at the end of the doctrine of essence, we once again come across the opposition of abstract identity and external determinacy in their more developed or concrete forms, as inner and outer (E §140).

In the discussion of the relationship of the inner and outer, Hegel makes the puzzling claim that “what is only something-internal, is also (by the same token) only something-external; and what is only something-external is also as yet only something-internal” (E §140). To assert that something is merely internal or inward implies that it does not yet relate to its *Dasein* or existence as manifesting what it is in itself; and something merely external or outward does not relate to its reality as a unity, it lacks self-relation altogether. What something is, in both cases, is determined to be a result of what it is for others. The example Hegel gives for this apparent contradiction is the child as the rational essence or

inwardness which is so ‘merely internally’ because it has not yet been realized or manifested. But, Hegel remarks, the child is as much that rational essence ‘merely externally’ because she is so for others, for the adults, and recognized by them to be the rational essence internally. Hegel’s point is that something merely internal can only be for others, because if it were not only for others but also for itself, it would imply self-relation, a relation of that inwardness to what is outer and it would cease being merely internal. Likewise something merely external by virtue of excluding the relation to what is internal is merely for others.

What is common to both is the indifference of the manifold expressions of the subject matter to what it is in itself, and the indifference of each to their unity. The lack of self-relation and unity would be overcome by the acknowledgment of the inner and outer to be the same – not merely posited as such. It is the concept of actuality which posits their unity. However, as the externality of appearance is owned up by the object of analysis as its own manifestation, in the relation of actuality, the empty identity of self-relation and the indifference of distinction shows itself again, in the relation of possibility to contingency, and in the relation of substance and its accidents. Indeed, these two forms of indifference are never finally overcome in the Logic. The definition of a category, a relation, or an individual always relies on the abstraction of the understanding (the first moment or aspect of “every concept as well as everything true”), which necessarily brings

forth the other moments. It is first the concept, as concrete universality, that exhibits a true return to self of the sublated moments.¹¹⁵

[The universal] preserves itself in its determinateness, not merely as though in its connection with the determinateness it remained indifferent to it – for then it would merely be compounded [*zusammengesetzt*] with it – but so that it is what we have just called the illusory reference inwards [*Scheinen nach innen*]. The determinateness, as determinate Concept, is bent back into itself out of the externality [*aus er Äußerlichkeit in sich zurückgebogen*]

Life, ego, spirit, absolute Concept are not universals merely in the sense of higher genera, but are concretes whose determinatenesses, too, are not species or lower genera but genera which, in their reality, are absolutely self-contained and self-fulfilled.

The universal is a process in which it posits the differences themselves as universal and self-related. They thereby become *fixed*, isolated differences. The isolated *subsistence* [Bestehen] of the finite which earlier was determined as its being-for-self, and also as thinghood, as substance, is, in truth universality, the form with which the infinite Concept clothes its differences – a form that is, in fact, one of its own differences. Herein consists the *creative power* of the Concept [*das Schaffen des Begriffs*] (SL 604-5/L II 244).

It is the spontaneous return of the moments to the self (which *is* only as the result of such movement), i.e., the speculative moment, which restores unity in the dialectic movement of self-determination. The challenge of otherness threatens the “self” of self-determination, and the assumption of indifference threatens the “determination” of self-determination. The overcoming of the other’s indifference without losing the sense of self-relation is the impulse or the

¹¹⁵ “Determinacies are abstract when their source is external to the entity they determine, so to be determinate without abstraction an entity must be the source of its own determination or particularity. In other words, to have a conceptual structure is to be a self-determining whole, or to be what Hegel calls a concrete universal” in Will Dudley, “Impure Reason: Hegel on the Irrationality of the Rational,” *Owl of Minerva*, 35 (2003-04): 29. It is remarkable that only the absolute idea, at the end, seems to escape the inadequacy of indifference: it is never *defined* by Hegel, but said to *be* simply the whole self-movement of thought in the Logic: its *self-determination*.

driving force of the dialectic, which is, in each case/step, completed by the concept's return to self from otherness. This return to self is not a simple cancellation, but rather the self-sublation of the abstract self as well as the distinct other, resulting in a unity in which both are moments.

Whenever a relation of indifference is posited between the object of analysis and something else, or a relation of equivalence is affirmed between different aspects of the thing or different views about it, self-determination loses its jurisdiction. Whether it is a category of being, such as quality, or one, or being-for-self, or a relation of essence, such as identity, ground, or necessity, Hegel's analysis of the movement of thought derives its necessity and legitimacy from the claim that it is the very category or relation that is analyzed that "sublates itself" and leads to a more comprehensive and concrete definition of the subject-matter.

Self-determination happens only through this movement of active overcoming of indifference and active restoration of unity. If there is no movement, it means that the self has become lazy in its unity and indifferent to its relations, which constantly and further determine it. Self-determination requires the new positing of an other (or the positing of a new other) and return to self from that other. And the positing of an other can only happen when the self has momentarily fixed itself. Thus complete fluidity is as much an enemy of the movement of self-determination as strict fixity of the determination of self.

Only through difference there is identity, and only through otherness there is a self. And the identity or the self is never a given or a fixed state, but the

activity of production or the ever challengeable result of a process. But this process is not merely an infinite process of ever-more additions of new differences or new others, but an infinite process of return to self. The self or the identity does not expand to infinity without any possibility of closure, but it is the very activity and result of ever self-renewing closure. The closed aspect does not concern the content of further determination but the structure of the process of self-determination itself.

CHAPTER THREE

Self-determination of Humanity and the Place of Individual Freedom in the *Philosophy of Right*

My main task in this chapter is to ascertain the role of indifference and of its overcoming in the sphere of human action and “real” self-determination. What we saw in the previous chapter was a formal analysis of self-determination: comprehending the movement of thought-determinations as the activity of thinking itself, or self-determination of thinking. As I pointed out in Chapter One, Hegel’s aim is not to construct self-determination as an ideal that has validity only for thinking. It is necessary for self-determination to be proven in the sphere of human action, in the interaction between real, finite human individuals.

In the following, I analyze and evaluate Hegel’s concept of freedom, as it finds expression in his *Realphilosophie*, relying on my analysis of self-determination as the self-sublation of relations of indifference. First, I show the role of indifference and of the overcoming of indifference in Hegel’s analysis of the will in the *Encyclopaedia*.¹¹⁶ I show that Hegel’s analysis of the will is based on the critique of two forms of freedom that are characterized by indifference: *Willkür* (arbitrariness) and the indeterminacy of the will (abstract personality).

¹¹⁶ Hegel’s account of the will in the *Encyclopaedia* is a more systematic account (in its logical development) than the one Hegel offers in the “Introduction” to the *Philosophy of Right*.

Second, I compare two general interpretive strategies of approaching Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, show the underlying presuppositions of each, and argue for one that emphasizes its critical results. Third, I argue that the determining difference between abstract right and morality, on the one hand, and *Sittlichkeit*¹¹⁷ on the other, is Hegel's concept of the latter as a "second nature" that is the basis of objective freedom. Only on the basis of the concept of *das Sittliche* does Hegel's critique of abstract freedom (in both its forms) find relief. Consequently, I argue that, in so far as the individual is the driving force, as a particular, and result, as the existence of *das Sittliche*, of the self-determination of spirit, true individual freedom must be comprehended in its appropriate sphere, namely, the political history of humanity's self-determination.

1- Indifference and Free will

In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel's subject matter is the existence [*Dasein*] of freedom (PR §30R). To properly evaluate Hegel's analysis of concrete freedom, we need to clarify a few terms and distinctions in Hegel's

¹¹⁷ *Sittlichkeit* and *das Sittliche* (translated generally as ethical life and the ethical, or ethical sphere, respectively) do not appear to have a distinct meaning in the *Philosophy of Right*. See page 160 below for a brief discussion of the substantive *das Sittliche*. The third part of this chapter is devoted to analyzing this concept with respect to the place of individual freedom in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.

*Realphilosophie*¹¹⁸: spirit [*der Geist*] and Hegel's distinction between theoretical and practical spirit – which refer to rational cognition and rational will respectively. The simplest and most straightforward designation of the term spirit is humanity. To be human is to know oneself as a rational being, that is, to know oneself as self-determining. Here two spheres that are distinct but inseparable must be identified: 1) The human being is marked by the desire to understand and situate itself in a world that is external and utterly other at first, and 2) The human being also acts in that external world and modifies it according to its purposes. Thus, to be human is to know oneself *in* and *as* the drive and activity of understanding and willing.

Spirit has to be grasped as *drive* [Trieb] however, for it is essentially activity [*Tätigkeit*], and what is more, it is in the first instance

1) the activity [theoretical spirit S.S.] by which the apparently *alien* object receives, instead of the shape of something given, singularized [*Vereinzelten*] and contingent, the form of something recollected, subjective, universal, necessary and rational . . .

2) *Practical* spirit has the opposite point of departure, for unlike theoretical spirit it starts not with the apparently independent object but with *subjective* determinations, with its own *purposes* and *interests*, and only then proceeds to objectify them. . .

The difference here is not absolute however, for *theoretical* spirit is also concerned with thoughts, with *its own* determinations; and, conversely, the purposes of the *rational will* are not something pertaining to the *particular*

¹¹⁸ I discuss Hegel's analysis of these concepts in the third part of the *Encyclopaedia*, "Philosophy of Spirit." "The Philosophy of Spirit" includes three sections: Subjective Spirit, Objective Spirit, and Absolute Spirit. I concentrate on the concluding sections of Subjective Spirit, where Hegel defines and develops the concept of will, and the opening paragraphs of Objective Spirit, where Hegel lays out the subject matter of the *Philosophy of Right*. In the section on Objective Spirit, Hegel presents a much truncated version of his argument in the *Philosophy of Right*. For the purposes of this dissertation, the minor differences of expression and analysis between the two texts are insignificant. *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften*, 1830. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1959. For the passages from "Subjective Spirit," I use Petry's translation *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, 3 volumes. Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing Company, 1979. For the passages from "Objective Spirit," I use the translation by William Wallace, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

subject [besondern Subjekt], but something which is *in and for itself*. Both modes of spirit are forms of reason, for ... [both] bring forth that which constitutes reason, a unity of the subjective and objective... [Both] have *this* common deficiency, for the starting point in both is the apparent *separation* [Getrenntheit] of the subjective and objective, the unity of these opposed determinations having first to be brought forth. This is a deficiency incident to the nature of spirit, for spirit is not a being, an immediate completedness, but rather that which brings itself forth as the pure activity of sublating that which it has itself made, -- the implicit presupposition of the opposition between subjective and objective (E §443A).

Spirit, in less straightforward terms, signifies self-conscious reason for Hegel. The movement of thought-determinations in the Logic showed us that the theoretical activity of distinguishing and relating, or analysis and synthesis, is indeed, or at the same time, a practical activity of positing and comprehending. For Hegel, rational cognition (knowing the object as self-determined) is thus not distinct from the rational will (positing the object as self-determined). I tried to show in the previous chapters that Hegel's account of self-determination entails overcoming of indifference: the indifference that is assumed to hold between the subject and objectivity. The subject is generally seen as the agent of an activity independent of the particular determinacies or relations posited by it, and objectivity is generally seen as a manifold of determinacies independent of the subject. Spirit is "merely subjective" and the will's self-determination is merely implicit insofar as the manifestation of self-determination remains finite and has validity only relative to the intelligence and will of a particular individual. I perceive things, I act out of habit, I dream, I feel joy, I compare courses of action and choose one, I make moral judgments, but in all these, as a merely subjective will, the "results" of my activity are relevant and valid for me alone:

Since in the first instance practical spirit has its self-determination within itself in a manner which is immediate and therefore *formal*, such spirit *finds itself* as a *singularity* which is determined in *its inner nature*... Within this it certainly contains reason, since *implicitly* it constitutes with reason the simple identity of subjectivity, but it holds it as an *immediately singular* and therefore also *natural, contingent and subjective* content. This, although it can be in implicit conformity with reason, determines itself to the same extent out of the particularity of need and opinion, etc., as well as the subjectivity which posits itself in opposition to the universal [i.e., evil] (E § 471).

Taken in its immediacy, the will, or practical spirit, is subjective and formal. Immediacy, however, is more properly understood as a result of mediation, i.e., of abstraction. This immediate sense of self signifies a *formal* self-relation because the self-relation is achieved through an abstract negation of its contingently given determinacies. Indeed, this characterizes a highly prevalent understanding, which defines intelligence and will only as powers¹¹⁹: I have reason because I have the capacity to think, and I am free because I have the capacity to choose. In defining my intelligence and will as powers, I posit them not only as distinct from the thoughts and purposes that are their results, but, more importantly, I posit these “faculties” as indifferent to their particular determinacies. The thoughts that seem to come to me on their own accord do not exhaust my capacity of think. And the particular interests I have do not define who I am.

¹¹⁹ See also Hegel’s critique of treating intelligence (or the will) as a faculty [*Vermögen*] or a power [*Kraft*] of the soul: “Like *power*, *faculty* is represented as being the *fixed determinateness* of a content, as intro-reflection. Although *power* (§136) is certainly the *infinity* of form, of inner and outer, its essential *finitude* involves the *content’s* being *indifferent* to the form [*Gleichgültigkeit des Inhalts gegen die Form*]. In this lies the irrationality which ... is introduced to spirit when it is considered as a multitude of powers” (E §445R). Here, Hegel’s implication that the indifference of form and content constitutes the irrationality of the analysis under discussion lends further proof to my thesis that reason – and freedom – are processes of “overcoming indifference.”

Hegel finds this immediacy and formal relation to self to be present in what he calls “practical feelings,” such as pleasure, pain, shame, contentment, fear, etc. According to Hegel, these feelings are “practical” because they are inner differentiations of the *will* – though this need not be apparent to us since we generally take ourselves to be passively undergoing these feelings. According to Hegel, especially the feelings of pleasantness or unpleasantness must be seen as states that result from an implicit comparison of the will *with* the immediate and given content. In this comparison, the simple identity of the formal self-relation, where I am only with myself, functions as the criterion, or the “ought,” of my response to the given determinacy. As long as I can relate to this affect as I *ought* to relate to myself, i.e., I am *able* to relate to myself in this affect, then it is agreeable, it is pleasant. If it disturbs my self-relation – I do not recognize myself in this affect or I am uncomfortable in it – then it is unpleasant.

For example, the unpleasantness of a bitter taste is not “caused” by the bitterness in the object. The taste is unpleasant, rather, because in this taste I do not *willingly* relate to my particular determinacy – I am not *with myself* in it and I want it gone. Or, “when I am *frightened* I have a *sudden* sense of the discord between something external and my positive self-awareness” (E § 472A). According to Hegel, feelings, such as fear, joy, shame, anxiety, hope, etc., are forms of these two relations (pleasantness and unpleasantness) with “added” content that “derives from intuition or presentation” (E § 472A). In a typically Hegelian move, then, Hegel reverses the usual order in which we would

conceptualize this relation. Generally, the will is regarded as indeterminate with respect to its objects – at least before its first encounter with a particular object. A bitter taste is thought to be the cause of an unpleasant feeling, which, in turn, is thought to be the cause of the will’s choice to avoid something. Conversely, a pleasant feeling is seen as the cause of the drive or inclination towards the object that itself causes that feeling. Hegel here argues that neither these feelings of pleasantness and unpleasantness nor the bitter object itself can be seen as “causes” of the will’s inclination. The will, as self-determining, comprehends its state of pleasantness or unpleasantness as the result of its own activity: my self-relation is the inner measure that determines my choices and judgments.

A comparison of Hegel’s argument with the Hobbesian account is illuminating here since what Hegel calls “pleasantness and unpleasantness” in these passages bring to mind Hobbes’s definition of “good and evil” in the *Leviathan* – though with a significant difference. According to Hobbes, the beginnings of our actions, or voluntary motions¹²⁰, are found in the objects that cause them. An endeavor, “when it is toward something which causes it is called appetite... and when the endeavor is fromward something, it is generally called aversion.”¹²¹ What is at stake here is the conclusion Hobbes derives from this definition, that “whatsoever is the object of any man’s appetite or desire that is it

¹²⁰ “There be in animals, two sorts of motions peculiar to them: one called vital... the other is *animal* motion, otherwise called *voluntary motion*; as to *go*, to *speak*, to *move* any of our limbs, in such manner as is first fancied in our minds” in Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 47.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, 47

which he for his part calleth *good*: and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*... [these words are] ever used with relation to the person that useth them: there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves.”¹²² Although the nature of the object itself does not lend a universal determination, it is itself the cause of my inclination or aversion. Accepting the independent nature of the object (as a cause) makes the human’s attitude to it a contingent and particular one – for it is not even necessary that the same object affects me in the same way at all times.¹²³

By reversing the relation of causation, Hegel introduces a criterion that is internal to the will: the “ought” of self-relation.¹²⁴ Hobbes ignores this fundamental element in Hegel’s account, i.e., self-relation. In the Hobbesian

¹²² *ibid.* 48-9.

¹²³ This also is an expression of how the two forms of indifference imply one another: the indifference of reality to thought (the presupposition of an independent reality) implies and presupposes the indifference between what is objective and what is subjective (the arbitrariness of the subjective feeling of pleasantness, or as Hobbes says, good).

¹²⁴ My interpretation of Hegel’s analysis here differs in a significant way from Wallace’s interpretation (based on Hegel’s formulation of this argument in the “Introduction” to the *Philosophy of Right*). Wallace argues that “insofar as my actions are simply the results of prior causal chains, originating in my heredity and environment and operating through my desires, without any integrating agency that seeks to make coherent sense of the lot of them, it looks as though it is not really *I* who am acting; “I” am just the accidental point of intersection of these various causal chains. In such a case, there is no sense in speaking of a “will”: What is going on is simply mechanical causation. If, on the other hand, *I think that I have a will, or would like to have a will*, then what I have – or would like to have – is something that integrates these various causal inputs in a way in which they would not, by themselves, be integrated” (Robert M. Wallace, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Reality, Freedom, and God*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 15, the emphasis are mine). According to my understanding of Hegel’s analysis here, it is not my individual (and contingent) desire to have a will or subjective opinion of possessing one that brings unity to these determinacies. As a thinking (rational) being, I am the activity of relating to myself in my determinacies. And this self-relation is not one that I can opt out of, but one that marks my every thought and action. I can choose to ignore it, but that does not do away with its reality. Thus, self-relation is internal to “my desires” and the unity I find in them is not the result of a contingent act.

account, the individual relates to herself as she relates to an external nature: the inclination or aversion is *found* in me in the same way I come across a colorful object or pungent smell. Hegel would say that the human individual in Hobbes's account is "external to herself." My immediate response to the bitter taste as well as the future direction of my will towards object of that category is governed by the mechanism of causal necessity. Moreover, Hobbes treats the individual in a social vacuum, in the so-called state of nature. Thus he ignores that my desires, inclinations, and purposes always have as their background the values of my society. However, according to Hegel, it is precisely in a social order that I know myself as a person and thus it is wrong to assume that I approach an object as a blank slate or with a particular attitude that has its source in my "natural" determination. The object as well as my purpose is always already replete with meaning and value.

My "likes and dislikes" develop as I modify my self-understanding through my choices such that they have meaning only in the context of my active self-relation. In the Hegelian account, I do not contingently and thus inexplicably have certain desires, inclinations and purposes. The objects of my will are not immediate determinacies that affect me from without. My inclinations and choices are indeed mine *insofar as* I affirm them and understand myself through that affirmation.

However, the question now becomes this: why is it that with certain objects or determinacies of my will I am with myself – and find them pleasant –

and in others I am divided, so to speak, and in conflict with my own determinacy? Perhaps, this “inner criterion” of self-relation merely buries the problem of free self-determination deeper, hiding the fact that I cannot identify what exactly grounds the disruption or composure of my self-relation! “In practical feeling, it is a matter of contingency whether the immediate affection [a bitter taste, for example] corresponds to the inner determinateness of the will or not [pleasantness or unpleasantness]. This *contingency*, this *dependence* upon an *external* objectivity, is in contradiction of will cognizing itself as determined in and for itself” (E §473A). Here we clearly see the continuation of “the task” in the Logic: the comprehension of the object as determined in and for itself. As an other, or an external relation was proven to be the result of the positing act of reflection, here we see that the “will cannot stop at *comparing* its immanent determinateness [unpleasantness] with an externality [bitter taste] and simply *discovering* the agreement between these two aspects, but must progress into *positing objectivity as a* moment of its self-determination, and so into itself *bringing forth* this agreement, which constitutes its satisfaction” (E §473A). The indifference of the formal will to what is external to it (the objects or situations that are pleasant or unpleasant to it) is *overcome* by positing its seemingly contingent “states” as results of its own drives and inclinations. So, to keep with our example, the unpleasantness of the bitter taste is a result of my inclination towards certain types of food – rather than being a contingent response or simple effect of the coffee beans.

Inclinations and passions have as their content the same determinations as practical feelings. What is more, while on the one hand, they also have their foundation in the rational nature of spirit, on the other hand they are, as pertaining to the still subjective and single will [*einzelnen Willen*], burdened with contingency, and appear as particulars that relate externally both to each other and to the individual [*individuum*] and thus have the relationship of an unfree necessity (E §474, translation modified).

Here, we see the second form of indifference defining the will. The multiplicity of inclinations as constituting the will has brought forth the loss of the identity of the formal self-relation and has left the will in the realm of arbitrariness. The will is the aggregate of its inclinations and passions: inclinations have no inner hierarchy, they are formally equivalent to one another in constituting the will and the will is indifferent to these various impulses insofar as it does not have an inner criterion for choosing which to follow and satisfy. If we accept this picture, then there is no willing subject, there is no self that is free, but simply a mechanical relation and interaction of various forces.

However, according to Hegel, there is a unifying principle of all these inclinations and drives: they *all* seek fulfillment. This aspect at first seems to be a commonality, and is thus posited as a general category. What is required, as our analyses in the previous chapters have shown, is to comprehend their unity not through a general character all *happen* to have, but through the principle that is at work in each and every one of them. This reflection “sublates” the independence of the various inclinations (though it does not sublimate their equivalence with respect to the will). The subject “is the *activity* of the formal rationality of satisfying impulses” (E § 475) and this activity of the subject which is *constitutive*

of its drives is defined as the will's "interest". This initially brings to mind the claim that simply by virtue of possessing a will, the human individual is posited as selfish [*selbstsüchtig*] or driven by self-interest [*Eigennutz*]. However, according to Hegel, and against Hobbes and Kant as I will show below, it is a mistake to interpret this principle as indicating the necessary or essentially selfish or self-interested [*selbstsüchtig* or *eigennützig*] nature of the will or of the natural inclinations.¹²⁵

The main distinction between selfishness and self-interest generally is taken to be that the former expresses a natural disposition (to privilege oneself over others) while the latter signifies a reflective attitude, in which the will distances itself from its natural dispositions and posits an end (long-term interest, happiness) that is not immediately given to it.¹²⁶ In both cases the "end" of action is unquestionably taken to be a form of self-satisfaction. While Hegel mainly takes up and criticizes the claim of the selfish nature of the human being, his

¹²⁵ The self-relation, which we saw to be the implicit criterion of the judgments of pleasantness and unpleasantness, is not a material and particular relation, but a formal and universal one. While it is inadequate as long as it is posited as an abstraction or ideal, this formality cannot ground the determination of particular purposes that selfishness or self-interestedness imply.

¹²⁶ In the Hobbesian account, for example, the human animal is marked by both these traits: "in the way to their end, which is principally their own **conservation**, and sometimes their **delectation** only, [human beings in the state of nature] endeavour to destroy, or subdue one another... So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory. The first, maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety, and the third, for reputation" (*Leviathan*, 99, bold emphasis mine). Given these principles, the "end" of the human animal is not rationally determined, but a natural determination: that of self-preservation. Reason comes into the picture only as the instrument by which the animal calculates its best chances of survival: "A law of nature, *lex naturalis*, is a precept or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved" (*Leviathan*, 103).

argument in this section could be seen as a refutation of both selfishness and self-interest as constituting the nature of the will. For Hegel, we cannot fix the nature of human inclinations or drives as “selfish” since the nature of humanity is to be free, to develop its nature from within itself. And, this “self-developed” nature, i.e., the so-called “second nature,” is a thoroughly social one. Even the reflective expression of selfishness as self-interest would be an inadequate expression of the “activity of the subject” here for two reasons: First, the self in question has its identity only in reference to the formal idea of free personhood, and personhood cannot be thought apart from the necessary sociality of human nature. There are, after all, no “persons” in nature. Second, the “interests” in question, that is my ends and purposes, do not have the source of their content in me, but in the ethical community of which I am a part. Especially the second claim is generally overlooked by rational choice theories, for example, which take the individual’s interests to be “particular” or peculiar [eigentümlich] – as if the individual somehow generated those ends by himself. The falsity of this claim, namely, that the will is essentially selfish or self-interested, is especially striking in an introductory philosophy classroom: that everyone has “their own” thoughts and opinions as well as “their own” desires and purposes is a conviction that is almost impossible to break, even though the actual statement of the variety of what constitutes self-interest only proves their striking conformity and points to an ironic lack rather than abundance of self-interest.

What “interest” constitutes the will then, if it is not self-interest? And, what interest unifies the various inclinations and drives if it is not their selfish nature? Hegel explains that “an action is not only the subject’s purpose, but also the activity with which it carries out this purpose, and it is only through the subject’s being in even the most un-self-interested [*uneigennützigsten*] action in this way, that there is any acting at all” (E §475R). The will’s interest is to find itself (its own activity) in its determinacies, and this will soon appear (in Hegel’s analysis) in its proper expression: the free will wills the free will. Why should the will want to privilege its activity over determinate ends? Or, why is it rational that I define my interest as the drive to find my activity [*Tätigkeit*] in my particular choices? Because: I have a free will only insofar as I define myself through this activity. I posit my ends in the objective world and I know myself as free insofar as I comprehend my particular choices and judgments as the expressions of my will. When this activity is bracketed, the human individual is an animal, a machine or a computer program. Thus, Hegel writes, my interest “should not be confused with *self-seeking* (or selfishness) [*Selbstsucht*], which puts its particular content *before* the objective one” (E §475A1).

If Hegel’s argument here is persuasive, and I believe it is, then we can already see the reasons for Hegel’s critique of 1) the presuppositions and results of the Hobbesian social-contract theory, which, by positing the natural (and thus necessary) selfish nature of the individual, can only comprehend the state and its laws as an instrument against anarchy, as an external agreement that limits

individual freedom so that individuals can live peacefully side-by-side; and 2) the Kantian idea that the proper sphere of my freedom is in my moral actions, where I determine my will according to the requirements of reason (universal validity), and thus, in opposition to or indifferent to (depending on the case) my natural inclinations and personal satisfaction. In both accounts, it is assumed that there is no rational content inherent in my inclinations and individual purposes.¹²⁷

Hobbesian account places reason as an instrument to facilitate self-preservation and sometimes happiness while the Kantian account is marked by the division of the heteronomy of ends of our sensible nature, which is determined by natural necessity, from the autonomy of reason, which is not itself subject to blind necessity. What Hegel shows in the above analysis is that to recognize oneself as “having” inclinations and purposes already imbues them with rationality: they are no longer independent (natural and contingent) givens indifferent to reason, but they owe their being and content to my relating to myself through them.

In the following sections Hegel develops the analysis I presented of practical feeling, inclinations, and interest. Again the first steps of the analysis is marked by the indifference of the determinations of the will. The *reflecting will* represents the abstract negation of all determinate content in thinking. So what is

¹²⁷ “Their [the inclinations’ and drives’] true rationality cannot reveal itself through their being considered by means of *external* reflection, since this misses their single principle and purpose by presupposing *independent* natural determinations and *immediate* drives. The immanent reflection of spirit itself is however to overcome their particularity as well as their natural *immediacy*, and to endow their content with rationality and objectivity, within which they have being as *necessary* relationships, *rights* and *duties*... The treatment of drives, inclinations and passions in accordance with their true capacity is therefore essentially the doctrine of legal, moral and ethical duties” (E §475R).

different in the “reflecting will” from the initial unity of formal self-relation, which negates feelings of pleasantness and unpleasantness, is that it is a thinking negation: I say to myself or think to myself that I am not simply what happens to me or that I am not simply the sum of my feelings, thoughts and actions. This, then, brings forth a thoughtful relation to my drives and inclinations: I can choose between them. This “freedom to choose” or “freedom to do as one pleases” constitutes *Willkür*.¹²⁸ This resembles the indifferent equivalence of drives and inclinations that we saw earlier. However, *Willkür* leads to an ideal freedom – “I could have chosen otherwise” – where what constitutes my freedom is my knowledge that my action was not determined by anything other than me or externally conditioned. It is merely ideal insofar as the claim always has the nature of a hypothetical, and can never be proven in the context of a single action by referring to the determining ground within the actor.

And finally the merely formal “interest” of the previous analysis is given a concrete meaning, as happiness. However, both *Willkür* and happiness are still inadequate expressions of free will and the universal interest that guides and constitutes its activity, because *Willkür* lacks an inner arbiter of its various inclinations, and happiness, posited as this arbiter, is a contingent positing of one

¹²⁸ *Willkür* has no single English equivalent and is translated as arbitrariness, arbitrary will, arbitrary choice, capacity for choice, freedom of choice, whim, caprice, and I am sure I am missing some. Thus, I will use the German original whenever I refer to Hegel’s concept as defined here. It is through the abstraction performed by the reflecting will that “such a particularity of drive is no longer immediate but first pertains to the *will*, the will joining up with it and so endowing itself with determinate singularity and actuality. It is thus that will assumes the standpoint of *choosing* between inclinations, and constitutes *Willkür*” (E §477).

inclination or drive over others as long as it has its content in those drives themselves.¹²⁹ In non-Hegelese, my freedom to choose has no determining principle as to what I should choose and it is thus the battle ground of the various inclinations that I experience in their immediacy. For example, I find myself divided between multiple options, should I go to the movies tonight, or tidy up the house, or grade the student papers, etc? In this situation, I find my freedom in my not being forced or obliged to do any of them. I might posit my happiness as the *determining principle* of my choices, but then my understanding of happiness itself has its content in those very inclinations: I simply privilege one particular inclination over others and posit it as the arbiter of specific battles: I believe, for example, that my happiness entails a well-balanced life, which in turn requires designating time and energy equally to work, personal entertainment, social relationships, etc. and perhaps thus I choose to go to the movies; or, I believe my happiness dictates that I do not procrastinate and take care of my tasks as soon as they arise, and thus I choose to grade papers, and so on. According to Hegel, and keeping with his earlier definition of interest, it is only when the will “sublates” the particular and contingent content that is attached to happiness in this way, that the will becomes free: the will’s “true and free” end is, then, my knowing myself

¹²⁹ “As the *contradiction* of actualizing itself within a particularity which is at the same time a nullity for it, and of possessing in this particularity a satisfaction which it has at the same time emerged from, will [as *Willkür*] is initially the *unending process* of diversion [*Zerstreuung*], of sublating one inclination or enjoyment by means of another, and of being satisfied as it is dissatisfied by further satisfaction” (E §478). “[S]ince happiness has affirmative content only in drives, it is they that arbitrate [*liegt in ihnen die Entscheidung*], and subjective feeling and whim which have to decide where happiness is to be posited” (E §479).

as self-determined and my being “with myself” in my purposes, inclinations, and actions. Of course, we must and will ask how this new formulation is not a new abstraction.

This “free will” is the last category of subjective spirit. The will knows itself as free as *Willkür*; however, the free will finds itself “in relation to an external and already subsisting objectivity” (E §483).¹³⁰ The question that faces us, then, is whether this objectivity is independent of the freewill and indifferent to it. If that is indeed the case, then freedom is reduced at once to the indeterminacy (i.e., independence and indifference) of the will set in opposition to a world of reciprocal relations of necessity. If we are not to regress back to the arbitrariness of choosing, then the remaining option is to posit freedom as a “merely inner” determinacy of the will and comprehend it as an ideal. This ideality, as we will see in the next section, is apparent in the Kantian definition of autonomy as a normative principle. This principle guides my actions only insofar as I evaluate my purposes and find my freedom to consist in acting from a universal principle that is necessary and valid for all rational beings. Not only can I not prove to anyone that I acted freely, but I cannot even prove to anyone that I acted morally. I am left alone with my conscience (allowing for the transparency

¹³⁰ This objectivity is, Hegel continues, “split up into the anthropology of particular needs, the external things of nature which are the object of consciousness, the relationship between singular wills which are conscious of their diversity and particularity. These aspects constitute the external material for the *Dasein* of the will” (E §483)

of intentions) to see whether I acted from duty or from some inclination or heteronomous end.

The problem is that freedom as *Willkür* and as autonomy are merely subjective suppositions. What must be done, then, is to show *what* in human action, human social interaction, and political organization “proves” the essentially self-determining character of subjective spirit:

Objective spirit knows its freedom in that it recognizes that the truth of its *subjectivity* constitutes *absolute objectivity* itself, – and it not only apprehends itself *internally* as Idea, but brings itself forth as the external *presence* of a *world* of freedom (E §444 A).

This ‘reality’, in general, where free will has *existence*, is *Right* – the term being taken in a comprehensive sense not merely as the limited juristic right, but as the actual body of all the determinations of freedom. These determinations, in relation to the *subjective* will, where they, being universal, ought to have and can only have their existence, are its *duties*; whereas as its temper and habit they are *manners* (E §486).

In a certain sense, freedom is always and only of the subjective will. So, we could on the one hand say that despite the various rights enumerated in the *Philosophy of Right*, there is only one right: that of the subjective will. However, in positing itself in existence [*Dasein*] the individual will is at first *Willkür*: it is exposed to a world of things where it is supposed to both satisfy its needs and produce the means to satisfy them. However, it is also exposed to other wills, which not only get in its way of material satisfaction and production, but also challenge its simple self-identity by claiming the same right for themselves. While an agreement or contract (not to infringe on each other’s existence) suffices to deal with the first problem – limiting everyone’s *Willkür* so that all can coexist –

it exacerbates the second problem: the self-relation that constitutes the will's ought. How can the will be free with this inner and thus non-arbitrary measure when it is exposed to others who claim to have that measure in themselves? It is here, in morality, that the real problem finds explicit expression: how can the will know itself as free (as it did in subjective spirit) when now the universal seems to be external to it?

In subjective spirit, we see that the independence of self-relation (or indifference of formal identity) and the externality of determinacy (or equivalence of external content) sublimate themselves as the will posits its determinacies as its own. This activity constitutes the will's self-determination. The question in objective spirit becomes: what aspects of human reality manifest this sublation? And since Hegel argues that the state is the concrete actuality of freedom, the more specific question becomes: How are the contingencies of drives and inclinations, the arbitrariness of choosing, and the whimsical determination of what counts as happiness "sublated" in the state?

2- What Hegel Accomplishes in the *Philosophy of Right*

The subject matter [*Gegenstand*] of the philosophical science of right is the *idea of right* – the concept of right and its actualization (PR §1). The science of right is a part of philosophy. It has therefore to develop the *idea*, which is the reason within an object [*Gegenstand*], out of the concept; or what comes to the same thing, it must observe the proper immanent development of the thing [*Sache*] itself (PR §2). The basis of right is the realm of spirit in general and its precise location and point of departure is the *will*; the will is *free*, so that freedom constitutes its substance and determination and the system of right is the realm of actualized freedom, the world of spirit produced from within itself as a

second nature (PR §4). [Right] is the *Dasein* of the absolute concept, of self-conscious freedom (PR §30). Each stage [*Stufe*] in the development of the idea of freedom has its distinctive [*eigentümliches*] right, because it is the *Dasein* of freedom in one of its own determinations [*Bestimmungen*]... Morality, *Sittlichkeit*, and the interest of the state – each of these is a distinct variety of right, because each of these shapes [*Gestalten*] is a determination [*Bestimmung*] and *Dasein* of freedom (PR §30R).

It is quite difficult to identify in the passage above what exactly will be “developed” in the *Philosophy of Right*. If right¹³¹ is the *Dasein* of “self-conscious¹³² freedom,” then freedom constitutes the concept of right. The subject matter of *Philosophy of Right*, then, is “freedom and its actualization.” And Hegel says as much: “the idea of right is freedom, and in order to be truly apprehended, it must be recognizable in its concept and in the concept’s existence” (PR §1A). According to this, *Philosophy of Right* will develop the Idea of freedom. Since the *Philosophy of Right* assumes the concept of freedom as already established, both in the Logic and in the Philosophy of Subjective Spirit (PR §2), our task seems to be to describe how freedom has *actualized* itself. As the analysis of self-determination in the Logic has shown, this is necessarily a retroactive analysis. Philosophical analysis cannot chart an ideal path of freedom into the future. All it

¹³¹ “The adjective *recht* has most of the senses of the cognate ‘right’... The neuter singular of *recht* becomes the noun (*das*) *Recht*. This means: (1) a right, claim, or title; (2) justice (as in, e.g., ‘to administer *justice*’... but not justice as a virtue, viz. *Gerechtigkeit*); (3) ‘the law’ as a principle, or ‘laws’ collectively (as in, e.g., ‘Roman law’, ‘international law (*Völkerrecht*)’, not particular laws, viz. *Gesetze*)” (Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 259).

¹³² And is there any other kind of freedom? Hegel’s analysis of self-determination has shown that it is through the “return to self” that self-determination *is* at all, and so the stipulation here is merely for emphasis rather than a qualification. And, perhaps, one could object that I ignore the idea of absolute freedom, of an absolute will for which willing is the creation of the objectivity *ex nihilo*, I would answer, that it is a mere abstraction of thinking and a representation of the self-determination of the whole within religious consciousness. See also Hegel’s comments in E § 147A, where this absolute will is treated (ironically) in Hegel’s discussion of “necessity.”

can do is to comprehend the present as the work of freedom. Thus, Hegel, in the *Philosophy of Right* will be looking back and at his present and comprehending it as the actualization of freedom.

But, what does Hegel mean by “actualization”? According to Hegel’s discussion of the inner and the outer, the unity of which constitutes actuality¹³³, actualization of freedom must be the *process* by which spirit, or humanity, determines itself *together with its expressions* in reality: our way of life, fashion, culture, institutions, technology, legal and political system, economic relations, etc. Now, without a careful analysis, we cannot posit all of our reality as willed by spirit, ourselves. After all, we are natural and finite beings and as such, our thoughts and actions are not completely self-caused or grounded in our freedom. However, given Hegel’s analysis of the will described in the previous section, the truth of human freedom is that it wills its freedom and that it is only free in *knowing* itself as free. Now, this does not mean that everyone self-consciously carries out the steps of the analysis we saw earlier: recognizing that one’s fears, for example, are not caused by the object, but is the result of one’s own positing act, of a fearsome object; that one’s inclinations are not natural determinacies, but choices based upon one’s self-understanding; and finally that one’s self is not a fixed identity of character, but an activity of self-production – where, it must be added, all these processes are meaningful only in a linguistic and political

¹³³ See my analysis in Chapter Two, pp. 124ff.

community, since such a community is the condition of the rise [*Erhebung*] above our animal nature.

Then, what does it mean to say that the truth of human freedom is that it wills its freedom and is only free in the knowledge of its freedom? And how does such a freedom “actualize” itself? As we saw above, according to Hegel, freedom cannot point to a mere capacity, power, or potentiality because such freedom of indeterminacy cannot account for the source of determinacy: the content of the ends of the will is unaccounted for. Freedom then is always already actual; indeed, human freedom *is* only in knowing itself as actual. Then, what is there to develop? One could object that the question runs deeper. How do we know that we are free? How do we know that the human reality is the result of human self-determination – that it is *not* the result of whim or chance? I believe the only answer Hegel gives to this question, ultimately, is that it is through the sublation of what seems to be arbitrary or contingent in our self-understanding, that we know ourselves as free. There is nothing that is in itself absolutely contingent, or random, in existence and in thinking. Whatever seems contingent is indeed the effect of a cause that cannot be comprehended as a ground: something, which can be describes but not accounted for... something without reason. It is an occurrence within a mechanism of blind necessity. Thus, any positing of contingency in human reality makes that aspect of ourselves into an external restriction. And our freedom consists precisely in overcoming what seems at first to be without reason or ground.

It is difficult to “understand” freedom: 1) understanding means formulating the law of its action or development, and the law of freedom is to be its own law. There is no transcendent content or original source that limits or conditions this activity; 2) in the temporal order of its expression, freedom is a process of creation, of the emergence of the new, which always first appears as a contingent particular, either as a random occurrence or arbitrary positing of a particular subject. In the temporal order, we can come to an awareness of our self-determination only retroactively, through overcoming the indifference of the randomness of the given and the arbitrariness of reflection, which, in turn, is achieved by our positing them as results of our actions. So our knowledge of ourselves as free is the result of our *own positing act*. This sounds paradoxical: we achieve freedom only through presupposing it and we know ourselves as free only through positing ourselves as such. What must be pointed out is that the knowledge at stake is not an “inert” judgment or a descriptive proposition, but one that restructures both our self-relation and our relation to the world at large. As we take responsibility, own up to certain elements of human reality (for example, a war), and consider the events that seem to befall us as results of our own actions, we reflectively posit ourselves as free, as part of the reasons or determining grounds of that reality or event.

This paradox both underlies and explains the circularity of this process. We cannot break this circularity by finding an *Archimedean point* that would give us the principle for free action, as well as rational thought. The conception of

freedom as *Willkür*, that is, as a formal principle, as well as the idea of freedom as a regulative ideal fall short of comprehending self-determination: they reduce freedom to a formal condition of action and while these definitions negate the circularity by excluding the reflexive nature self-determination (or, grasping it as pure form) they do not sublimate it. I believe that it is not possible to truly “sublate” this circularity. Or, rather, I believe that Hegel reaches this circularity itself through the sublation of the claims and oppositions of finite thinking, which desires an Archimedean point (as the “Understanding”) and thus finds itself always recreating the oppositions that it attempts to overcome.

The search for the Archimedean point is itself the product of the either/or logic of finite thinking. We see this clearly stated in Frederick Beiser’s essay “Two Concepts of Reason in German Idealism.” In this essay Beiser identifies the historical roots as well as the diverse implications of two concepts of reason, i.e., contemplative and productive reason, which are distinguished by the fundamental issue of “whether meaning or intelligibility is something given to us or made by us.”¹³⁴ Beiser defines this distinction as follows: “In one sense, reason is a *power of contemplation*, the capacity to perceive an **independent** reality, which is an intelligible entity of some kind, whether that be a substantial form, a final cause or an archetype. In the other sense, reason is a *power of production*, an activity that

¹³⁴ Frederick C. Beiser, “Two Concepts of Reason in German Idealism,” in *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus/International Yearbook of German Idealism*, edited by Karl Ameriks and Jürgen Stolzenberg, Volume One, (New York: Walter de Gruyter Publishers, 2003), 16.

creates order in things, but an order that does not exist independent of our power of constructing it.”¹³⁵

Given my analysis of the indifference that is constitutive of finite thinking in Chapter One, we can see that both these concepts of reason are characterized by indifference. Contemplative reason presupposes and posits the independence and ontological priority of “the rational” to human thinking and thus makes the rational indifferent to thought: whether we think it or not, attempt to know it or not, or will it or not, there *is* reason. Productive reason negates this independence but in this negation posits “the rational” within the subject. According to the latter view, since the subject is always a particular human being, that which is universal in the subject must be defined through the negation of the particularity of content and expressed as a formal principle. Beiser identifies this distinction between the two concepts of reason also as the source of the distinction between subjective and objective idealism: “Idealism can be the doctrine that experience is a construction of subjectivity or the doctrine that experience is an appearance of the forms or archetypes of things; in other words, the realm of the ideal can be what depends on the subject or what depends upon the intelligible or archetypical. The former sense of idealism corresponds to the productive concept of reason; the latter sense of idealism corresponds to the contemplative concept.”¹³⁶

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, 16, bold emphasis are mine.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, 23.

Although Beiser does mention a third possibility “that a priori concepts arise in the mind yet still correspond with things,” he discusses it solely with respect to Kant, namely, as the possibility “Kant desperately wanted to avoid.”¹³⁷ There is no mention in Beiser’s text of Hegel’s attempt to overcome this opposition; indeed, the only reference to Hegel, situates Hegel’s “absolute idealism” as a form of Platonism or objective idealism: “the traditional interpretation of absolute idealism as a form of Platonic idealism – the thesis that everything is an appearance of the idea – is fundamentally correct.”¹³⁸

Corresponding to this conflict in the two concepts of reason (between the ancients and the moderns) there is another tension that concerns

the ancient problem of the relation between the will and reason. The classical tradition, at least in its Platonic form, had been fundamentally *rationalist*, assigning primacy to reason over the will. The most basic form of rationalism consists in the claim that reason provides standards of goodness, rightness or justice independent of will and convention. . . . In contrast, the *via moderna* has been essentially voluntarist, giving the will primacy over reason. What determines whether something is good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust, is simply the will itself. I desire something not because I know it is good or bad; but something is good or bad simply because I desire it.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, 20.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, 20. Beiser’s analysis in his more recent book, *Hegel*, also shows that he attributes to Hegel the concept of contemplative reason. Following his discussion of Hegel’s ambivalent relation to the historicist doctrines of his time, Beiser comments that according to Hegel “the fundamental idea that philosophy brings to history is that of reason, and more specifically the idea that ‘reason governs the world, and that world history is therefore a rational process; (VG 28/27). This thesis follows straightforwardly from his absolute idealism, according to which everything is an appearance of the absolute idea” (263-4). Ironically, and perhaps making explicit the very prejudices of the author, Beiser’s commentary on Hegel ends with the verdict that history (which represented for Hegel, according to Beiser, the “authority of reason”) refuted Hegel: “the disillusioning events of the early 1840’s [showed that] Hegel had bet his whole system on history; and he had lost” (313).

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, 19.

In Beiser's analysis here, we see the roots of Hegel's critique of both sides: the mechanism of Hobbes's world, which reduces freedom to "doing as one pleases" and the inexplicable abstraction of the indeterminacy of the will (as *Willkür*) that expresses the subjective freedom of morality.¹⁴⁰

When we hold on to this either/or logic of defining these concepts, Hegel's claim to have "sublated" this opposition of subjectivity and objectivity is interpreted to mean that he privileges one over the other, positing logical or ontological priority of one over the other.¹⁴¹ Hegel's position, however, is that we

¹⁴⁰ In her article "Reasons for Conflict: Political Implications of a Definition of Terrorism," Nuzzo writes "In opposition to a simplistic reconstruction of historical processes on the basis of the linear, deterministic, and nondialectical logic of causality, which assumes causes as originally given, *and* in opposition to a merely extrinsic teleology, which justifies the means on the basis of ends, I suggest a different idea of historical development, articulated by the dialectical notion of a regressive constitution of reality as *historical* reality" (336). Here we see the two forms of indifference again: fact as immediate reality (the "authority" of what is, the inner necessity of which is indifferent to "human" action and thinking) and "end" as merely subjective purpose (its legitimacy solely based on the positing act of the subject, which is indifferent to objective reality). Both are "external": the first in its assumption of the independence of the intelligible to human reason and the second in its assumption of the indifference of reason (thus the possibility of self-legislation) to natural necessity. Nuzzo's suggestion here is precisely to see our present reality as the result of our self-determination and comprehending it as self-willed. But this then makes what seems to be the effect (the political present, or in her analysis, "the war on terror") of a cause (the past as given, or in her analysis terrorism) indeed the ground of what preceded it. If we are to understand our present reality as self-willed – and that is the only way we will "truly" take responsibility for it – treating the war as the end or final cause explains and gives substance to what precedes it: but remember what precedes it is not a fact, its signification (and definition as terrorism, for instance) must come from somewhere. Nuzzo argues that terrorism is posited as the cause of the war on Iraq only after the war already *is* (if not in deed, at least as the decision in the minds of the people who posit terrorism as the cause).

¹⁴¹ And thus, Alan Patten, for example, is able to define Hegel's concept of freedom as "rational self-determination" as if rationality has some "extra" content or principle that "tempers" or guides self-determination (Alan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). However, I am not able to find a "definition" of reason in his book. He says that freedom is letting the best part of ourselves determine us – the best part being "reason" – which suggests perhaps his implicit acceptance of "productive reason."

cannot presuppose either concept of reason and we also cannot presuppose their distinction. So whenever this distinction arises in thinking, we need to ask whether it is valid. In the “movement” of thought determinations in the Logic, this is precisely what we did: in each case that this distinction arose, we saw that it dissolved itself (or sublated itself). We do not have to “choose” between reason and freedom or accept their dualism. However, finding their unity in self-determination is empty unless this concept signifies something real in both thought and reality. My description of this process as a sublation of indifference is guided by the attempt to make its content and principle explicit such that we have a well-defined “criterion” of rationality and freedom while accepting our ultimate finitude and the impossibility of ever stepping out of this process.¹⁴²

In the light of this analysis, Hegel’s task in the *Philosophy of Right* may be described from two opposing perspectives. One could argue that in this work Hegel gives the necessary and sufficient conditions of a free society: a society where human beings are recognized as persons (as bearers of fundamental rights

¹⁴² Thus, I think Ayer is wrong to argue that “I do not become free by becoming conscious that I am not,” and that, against Wallace’s evaluation, Engels is right in his formulation of Hegel’s freedom as “the appreciation of necessity.” Our freedom consists in understanding the necessity which rules us *as self-willed*, that is understanding our values, our society, and our conception of who we are as results of our own self-determination. Since Wallace understands Hegel’s concept of self-determination not through the absolute idea, but through genuine infinity, he cannot go beyond the theological standpoint of representing this process as the self-understanding of God rather than the self-production of humanity. (Ayer and Engels quoted in, Robert M. Wallace, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Reality, Freedom, and God*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 209). Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring; Herr Dühring’s Revolution in Science* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), 157; *Marx-Engels Gesamt-Ausgabe*, vol. 20, p. 106. A. J. Ayer, “Freedom and Necessity,” reprinted in Gary Watson, ed., *Freedom of the Will* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982], 18; originally published in his *Philosophical Essays* [London: MacMillan, 1954]).

such as life, property, and self-possession), as moral agents (capable of making moral decisions with respect to their subjective conceptions of the good), and as members of an ethical community (belonging to a family as a loyal part of the constitutive ethical bond, participating in civil society as a self-interested [!] individual, pledging allegiance to a state as an informed citizen). All this, Hegel certainly does. Indeed, most commentaries on this work concentrate on this formulation of Hegel's task. They critically evaluate Hegel's particular arguments in various sections – such as his critique of Kantian morality, or his theory of punishment, etc. – and attempt to make intelligible Hegel's claim that the state is the actuality of concrete freedom (PR §260).

However, in this list of the various registers – of the legal, ethical, social, and political conditions – of human freedom, Hegel also critically analyzes the forms of freedom that find expression in each of these “shapes.” Accordingly, Hegel's task in the *Philosophy of Right* is also to identify the different forms and shapes of freedom and evaluate their adequacy to their concept, i.e., freedom. If my analysis in the previous chapters is correct, this task requires 1) taking the ordinary conceptions of freedom, such as “doing as one pleases” or immediate determinations of freedom, such as abstract personality to task, by asking whether they fulfill the demands of freedom as self-determination – asking whether they are adequate to their concept; 2) showing their inadequacy through the relations of indifference they presuppose or unjustifiably posit; and 3) through the inclusion

of the determinacies and relations previously excluded or posited as irrelevant, constructing a more concrete and self-adequate concept of freedom.

I do not mean by this that the *concept* of the will is further developed in this text. We saw in the previous section that the analysis of the immediacy of the will – both in its formal self-relation and in the immediacy of its content as practical feeling – shows that the will is in truth the willing of its own freedom. Thus, the will has already been fully developed – but only as a concept! Furthermore, we know from the Logic what self-determination requires, that is, we have a criterion with which to evaluate the forms of freedom that find their expression in these shapes of freedom. Since the state is the concrete manifestation of spirit's freedom, the more specific task must be to see whether the various forms of freedom (especially, abstract personality and *Willkür*, but also right to own property, right to free speech, freedom of conscience, etc.) as they are realized and organized in a state are adequate manifestations of genuine self-determination.

I do not suggest that these two tasks are mutually exclusive, but they differ in what they emphasize in Hegel's analysis.¹⁴³ The first formulation emphasizes

¹⁴³ The preference for the first formulation of Hegel's task usually signals and presupposes a non-metaphysical approach to Hegel's political theory. As Beiser points out most recent commentaries on Hegel's political thought have taken this approach. Generally Allen Wood and Robert B. Pippin are credited with introducing a non-metaphysical reading of Hegel. See Frederick Beiser's *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2005) and Andrew Norris' "Beyond the Fury of Destruction: Hegel on Freedom" (*Political Theory*, Vol. 32 No. 3, June 2004, 409-418). Beiser admits that such an interpretation ignores Hegel's own description of his project; however, he does not think that this undermines those interpretations' validity: "although the architectonic structure of the *Philosophy of Right* – its routine divisions into the dialectical moments of universality, particularity and

the determinate “content” or actuality of freedom – what Hegel calls shapes [*Gestalten*] (PR §30R). The second formulation emphasizes the critical aspect of Hegel’s project insofar as he points out the partiality of these determinate forms by finding in each case either formality or arbitrariness subsisting without sublation. However, characterizing Hegel’s project as both simultaneously, or one and *also* the other, is misleading for two reasons. First, the first formulation claims that Hegel lays out the conditions of human freedom, implying that, for example, property, family, corporations, and a monarch¹⁴⁴ are necessary elements of a free society. Such attribution of necessity to “shapes” of the actuality of freedom implies that these institutions are not subject to further determination or sublation.¹⁴⁵ The second formulation describes a movement characterized by the critique of determinate shapes of freedom. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel shows that any *determinate* shape or relation is marked by relations of indifference – by what is left unaccounted for in the abstraction that sustains universality and the equivalence that is attributed to particularity. Thus, Hegel’s reader must be

individuality – reflects Hegel’s speculative logic, this structure is somewhat artificial and arbitrary, more imposed upon than derived from the subject matter. Hegel is indeed at his best when he lays aside his metaphysics and simply explores his subject matter” (Beiser, *Hegel*, 196). However, ignoring Hegel’s systematic exposition of self-determination and his derivation of the concept of spirit, or reason, or of will, brackets the argument that grounds and supports the *Philosophy of Right*, turns it into an abstraction which has validity outside of the system of which it is a part.

¹⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that, now that the rule of monarchic government is seen to be out of the question (by general opinion), Hegel’s inclusion of the monarch is explained away, while right to property and law protecting private property, for instance, are unnegotiable elements of freedom!

¹⁴⁵ As one peruses the secondary literature on the *Philosophy of Right*, it is striking to find out that most commentators “end” their commentary with the state, ignoring what follows: world history as the final court of judgment.

suspicious of the claim that Hegel attributes such endurance to the shapes of freedom. Second, the first formulation emphasizes the external coordinates of freedom: the determinate¹⁴⁶ rights, norms, and social structures that freedom requires and implies. The second formulation treats these as Hegel's examples of the "reality of freedom," and sees them as historically situated. Being a systematic philosopher *par excellence*, it is unlikely that Hegel's project equally addresses these two tasks.

Given these considerations, I suggest that Hegel's main task is better captured according to the second formulation.¹⁴⁷ Thus what I am interested in is not whether Hegel's right in finding in private property, or the family, conditions of human freedom, but rather what exactly is "added" to the subject matter

¹⁴⁶ It would be a misunderstanding of Hegel's position to claim that he gives universal status to "positive" laws (cf. PR §3). However, as we will see below in Hegel's critique of "abstract right," simply claiming that there must be a system of laws or a political constitution (for freedom to be actual) is also an inadequate formulation: treating laws as results of agreement and as generalities, and ignoring that those laws have their content in the *Sittlichkeit* [ethical life] of the community. I will attempt to continue my line of argument without falling back to the ultimate relativism of social contract theory and formalism and subjectivism of a rational morality.

¹⁴⁷ In this dissertation, I do not claim to have a final answer on the question of whether Hegel simply rejects that the state, as well as the Idea of the state as it finds expression in Hegel's philosophy, are vulnerable to critique and destined to sublimate themselves or whether he implicitly grants this view -- especially through his discussion of world history. Attempting to reach a final answer would require both a thorough historical scholarship (of Hegel's time and contemporaries and his specific responses to the events of his day) and a comprehensive textual analysis of Hegel's writings -- and even these efforts do not guarantee an indisputable result (proved by the diverse, and often contradictory, interpretations of Hegel's project). My aim is to show that the results of Hegel's Logic, especially his derivation and comprehension of the concept (and reality) of self-determination require that reason not be ossified and reduced to its various manifestations (such that no finite set of laws or particular political constitution may signal *the* rational as such). In this sense the significance of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* does not lie in its final (and positive) results, but the logic of the critique of inadequate forms of freedom. This critique is not arbitrary or *merely* subjective, but objective and valid insofar as it is based on the method of self-determination proven in the Logic. In interpreting Hegel's text, the real challenge for us is to find those implicit overcomings and posit them as such. The challenge beyond the confines of this dissertation, is to identify and criticize forms of freedom that rely on relations of indifference.

presented in abstract right and morality that overcomes the abstractness of personality and arbitrariness of subjectivity in *Sittlichkeit*? That is, what exactly constitutes “objective freedom” for Hegel?

3- *Das Sittliche* as Second Nature

The question of the *perfectibility* and of the *education of the human race* arises here [namely, “World History”]. Those who have proclaimed this perfectibility have had some inkling of the nature of spirit, which is to have “Know Thyself” as the law of its *being*, and, as it comprehends what *it is*, to assume a higher shape than that in which its being originally consisted. But for those who reject this thought, spirit has remained an empty word, and history has remained a superficial play of *contingent* and allegedly ‘merely human’ aspirations and passions (PR §343R).

Hegel’s account of the objectivity, or concrete realization, of freedom depends on his concept of *Sittlichkeit*. *Sittlichkeit*, usually translated as “ethical life” or “customary morality,” comprises the third part of the *Philosophy of Right*, following Hegel’s analysis of abstract right and morality. The latter two do not represent separate spheres of human action or historical stages preceding *Sittlichkeit*, but rather are abstractions from it. And insofar as each takes itself to be indifferent to *Sittlichkeit*, they are inadequate expressions of the sphere of freedom.

Das Sittliche, a term which Hegel uses more often than *Sittlichkeit* in the *Philosophy of Right*, brings to mind all the other substantivizations in Hegel’s terminology, such as the absolute, the logical, the rational, etc., where Hegel posits an adjective as an individual. Similar to them, *das Sittliche* signifies a self-

relating activity of a content. Here, the content at stake is human nature, and its self-relating activity is both its self-understanding and its self-creation. I argue in the following that Hegel sees in our “artificial” and self-created nature the very basis and activity of our freedom and uses the term *das Sittliche* to designate that “second nature.” If we interpret *das Sittliche* as having a fixed content, then we identify a determinacy that is immune to the transforming work of freedom. Thus, I argue, Hegel comprehends by *das Sittliche* nothing but the “perfectibility” of humankind and sees in the historical development of this content the very basis for our institutions.

What distinguishes *das Sittliche* from the legal and the moral is its absolute immediacy. The person is the immediate in abstract right, in the form of immediate self-relation. The legal or what is rightful, is thus an external determination of freedom, one reached by negotiation and agreement and posited as a law that “limits” the freedom of the person such that it can coexist with the freedom and rights of others. Personal conviction is the immediate in morality, in the pure self-positing of *Willkür*. Morality thus includes the idea of a universal, as the good, for example, that does not limit the freedom of the individual “externally” – as it was the case in abstract right – but from within. However, that universal in morality does not have objective reality: it is an obligation or an ideal that guides personal conviction, and by which personal conviction can evaluate itself (as a conscience). Furthermore, since morality is limited to inner world of the human agent, morality does not provide us with tools and institutions with

which we can negotiate the “universal content.” Thus, morality reproduces and relies on abstract right for its existence.¹⁴⁸ In contrast to these abstract forms of freedom of abstract personhood and *Willkür*, the determinations (rights and duties) that have their source in *das Sittliche* “have an absolute authority and power” (PR §146). They “are not something *alien* to the subject. On the contrary, the subject bears *spiritual witness* to them as to *its own essence*, in which it has its *self-awareness* [Selbstgefühl] and lives as in its element which is not distinct from itself” (PR §147).

Hegel points out here what has been implicit all along in his derivation of the will and what is treated as indifferent in social-contract theories and subjective morality (expressed in Hegel’s discussion of abstract right and morality, respectively): as part of a community, my “identity,” as a person and a moral subject,¹⁴⁹ is always already shaped by its values, manners, and taboos, etc. (and this will be explicitly stated in PR § 151). “In an ethical community [*einem*

¹⁴⁸ The “result” of Kantian morality is the separation of the legal and the moral, which relegates the determination of the former to the realm of opinion and mere agreement and thus accepts the right of personhood in the abstract way it finds expression in a social-contract theory.

¹⁴⁹ On the one hand, the concept of the person is a “higher” determination of individuality than the concept of the subject, since it involves the positing of a merely inner relation (or activity) into existence: “The person is essentially different from the subject, for the subject is only the possibility of personality, since any living thing whatever is a subject [self-determining to an extent]. A person is therefore a subject which is aware of this subjectivity” (PR § 35A). But given that the freedom of personality is purely formal and the result of the mere negation of determinacy, it falls short of being freedom in any meaningful sense: “It is inherently in *personality* that, as *this* person, I am **completely determined** in all respects (in my inner arbitrary will, drive, and desire, as well as in relation to my immediate external existence [*Dasein*]), and that I am finite, yet totally pure self-reference, and thus know myself in my finitude as *infinite, universal, and free*” (PR § 35, bold emphasis is mine). According to Hegel, it is only in the subject, in the reflective (or thoughtful) relation of the subjective will to its ends and objects that freedom can be realized at all (PR § 107A).

sittlichen Gemeinwesen], it is easy to say *what* someone must do and *what* the duties are which he has to fulfill in order to be virtuous. He must simply do what is prescribed, expressly stated, and known to him within his situation” (PR § 150). This might strike one at first as a complete negation of freedom. However, the context of this statement is Hegel’s developing for us the idea of a “second nature” and the concrete expression of this second nature as *das Sittliche* community. Thus the obligation in question here is not a self-conscious one, but one that is always already at work in us.

After all, as much as human beings have natural needs that they need to satisfy, they have come to acquire non-natural needs, such as shelter, clothing, cooked food, and growingly complex comforts and pleasures of their own concoction. In this immediate unity of their collective life, humans do not distinguish between these two types of needs, the latter are as necessary to them as the former. Thus, Hegel describes the human being’s immersion in her second nature as “unconscious”: “If we consider ethical life from the objective point of view, we may say that ethical man is unconscious of himself” (PR § 144A).

Hegel’s explicit definition of *das Sittliche* as a second nature follows his description of its immediate *authority*. However, this initial definition must not be taken at face value. If we do not ponder on what “having a second nature” signifies about the human being and take it in its immediacy, *das Sittliche* is simply custom and habit: “if it is simply *identical* with the actuality of individuals, the ethical [*das Sittliche*], as their universal mode of behavior,

appears as *custom* [Sitte]; and the *habit* [Gewohnheit] of the ethical appears as a *second nature* which takes place of the original and purely natural will and is the all-pervading soul, significance, and actuality of individual existence” (PR §151, bold emphasis is mine).

Understood as a second nature, “*ethical substantiality* has attained its *right*, and the latter [i.e., the right of ethical substantiality] has attained *validity*” (PR §152). That there *is* a second nature which we have not only adopted, but relate to as our true nature shows that this second nature is the result of an implicit consent on the part of the individual will. By consent, I do not mean to misrepresent the immediacy of immersion that Hegel is describing with a reflective attitude (and the arbitrariness of a “yeah” or a “nay”). Given the pure self-relation that we saw constituting the subjective will’s inner criterion, we might say that this pure self-relation has acquired a concrete content, one that is immediately shared in this community. We are at one with it to such an extent that it does not occur to us to question it. Of course, today, after centuries of exposure to and relations with distinct “cultures” it is difficult to relate to Hegel’s description here as pertaining to any *particular* culture and it is equally unlikely that the ethical substantiality at hand represents any particular people’s customs here.

Indeed, given Hegel’s analysis, this immediacy of second nature need not be specific: that we expect other human beings to respond when talked to, to become attentive when we call for help, to recognize shame and embarrassment,

to laugh; that we understand our “character” through ideas such as honor, courage, respect, honesty, duplicity, etc. – these are not “natural” determinations but determinacies that arose as the human beings raised themselves above a given animal nature.¹⁵⁰ The specificity of determinations might change over time, but their *necessary* character has not changed: As much as the Greek citizen, for example, found it beneath him to interest himself in money matters, but found his “true” individuality in his participation of the matters of the city state, it is now “natural” for us to have a job and “earn our living.”

The immediate determination of *das Sittliche* as *custom* is inadequate in so far as it ignores 1) what indeed a second nature means at all, and 2) how the customs come to take these determinacies. Manfred Riedel points out that “the world of spirit as a second nature is not the *deutera physis* of Aristotle, the native custom and morality of the polis based on law (*nomos*) and tradition (*ethos*), but rather a nature produced and set to work by man, and therefore, closer to

¹⁵⁰ We can I believe even see this in the most common place (or we can see it *best* in the most common place): “The hills are alive with the sound of music, with songs they have sung for a thousand years...” I do not perceive the hills as some material object immediately given to my perception (and I am not sure that we are ever able to do that), but I see the hills mediated by their description and signification in the songs that have been sung for a thousand years. This does not mean there is no particularity, that my “perception” is completely conditioned by this context of meaning. It simply means that it does not come out of nothing – its uniqueness (if there is one) is always already relative. It is because of this common place aspect of the majority of what constitutes our second nature that I believe we can understand Hegel’s claim that “the ethical man is unconscious of himself.” The individual immersed in her second nature would believe to be seeing the hills as they really are!

Hobbes's *Leviathan* than to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* or his *Politics*.”¹⁵¹

Indeed, despite my lack of scholarly evidence in Hegel's own work, Hegel's description of the inner and objective freedom, which we will see to be the two moments of *das Sittliche*, closely resembles Rousseau's account of the perfectibility of human nature, in *the Discourse on Inequality*.¹⁵² Rousseau 1) describes the “perfectibility” of the human animal as the proper locus of its freedom, and 2) explains the “result” of this perfectibility as the emergence of new needs, which in turn is described by Rousseau as the “first yoke.” Although Rousseau's characterization of the consequences of this perfectibility in the subjection of the many, the “yoke” of created needs would designate for Hegel a self-created limitation, which is effectively what freedom is.

¹⁵¹ Manfred Riedel, “Nature and Freedom in Hegel's ‘Philosophy of Right’” in *Hegel's Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives*, edited by Z. A. Pelczynski, 137 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

¹⁵² “But if the difficulties surrounding all these questions [i.e., freedom, understanding, instinct, and the question of what precisely constitutes the distinction between the human and the animal] should leave some room for dispute on this difference between man and animal, there is another very specific quality which distinguishes them and about which there can be no argument: the faculty of self-perfection, a faculty which, with the aid of circumstances, develops all the others, and **resides among us as much in the species as in the individual**” (J. J. Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, translated by Donald A. Cress, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 25, my emphasis). According to Rousseau, the invention of tools led to leisure time, which humans “used to procure for themselves many types of conveniences unknown to their fathers; and that was the **first yoke** they imposed on themselves... those conveniences having through habit lost almost all their pleasure, and being at the same time degenerated into true needs, being deprived of the became much more cruel than possessing them was sweet; and they were unhappy about losing them without being happy about possessing them” (*ibid.*, 48). It is only through limiting ourselves “artificially” in this manner that we come to then reflect on that determinacy as one that we have willed ourselves. While Rousseau is speaking about a “yoke” the very possibility of this critical distance (and also the possibility of rejecting these yokes) has as its condition our very perfectibility as our second nature. I believe Hegel's idea of *das Sittliche* simply expresses our collective creation of ourselves in this manner. This idea finds its clearest expression in Marx's “Alienated Labor” where he defines the individual through its creation of and participation in its species being through its concrete productive activity.

Hegel argues that “the *right of individuals to their subjective determination to freedom* is fulfilled **in so far as they belong to ethical actuality**; for their *certainty* of their own freedom has its *truth* in such objectivity, and it is in the ethical realm that they *actually* possess *their own* essence and their *inner* universality (PR § 147)” (PR §153, bold emphasis is mine). As an animal the human being has no idea about her freedom, nor does she have any freedom. Freedom becomes real only when human beings take it into their own hands to determine the necessity that will rule them. That it is not a conscious process initially (and perhaps still not) is not a problem. As long as the determinacy is recognized as self-imposed, or *can* be recognized as such, it will receive its continued existence from an implicit or explicit affirmation of the will.

Here we also see that in the temporal order of humankind’s development ethical substance or community precedes all other forms of freedom and right, i.e., abstract right, morality as well as civil society and the state. “In abstract right, I have the right and someone else has the corresponding duty; and in morality, it is merely an obligation that the right of my own knowledge and volition, and of my welfare, should be united with my duties and exist objectively;” however, “in the ethical realm [*das Sittliche*], a human being has rights in so far as he has duties, and duties in so far as he has rights” (PR §155). What it means to be a human being, which has as its condition the rise above the animal nature that is only achieved in the collective life of humans, constitutes both its freedom and its necessity. The recognition that our freedom (right) is our necessity (duty) insofar

as we are “human beings” constitutes the truth of *das Sittliche* and also prepares the way to its inner differentiation, first in the family, then, in civil society, and then in the state. Indeed, given that the truth about our “second nature” does not lie in the particularity of custom but rather in the very principle of freedom it embodies, even the “self-transparency” of self-rule that is crystallized in the state (as its political constitution, etc.) should be seen as an abstraction from the activity and universality of *das Sittliche*. Thus, as I will argue towards the end of my analysis here, the true location of freedom where the negotiation of human nature takes place is in the difficult battle between world spirit and absolute spirit: the unending expression of the human will in the finite world and our expression of our self-understanding in our self-consciously free activity.

Hegel’s discussion of *das Sittliche* uncovers the essential significance of freedom. As we might have come to expect from Hegel’s analysis of self-determination, both in the abstract element of thought and in the sphere of human action, *das Sittliche*, as a concrete universal, is not a blob of substance but contains inner differentiation. This inner differentiation is expressed first in Hegel’s discussion of the family. Family, on the one hand, contains the immediacy of “belonging” to *das Sittliche* – constituting the moment of universality and necessity of its self-determination. On the other, the family has within it the development of independent personhood – corresponding to the moment of particularity and contingency of the self-determination of human (second) nature. The family is the locus of our acquiring our second nature and so

our first *education*. Hegel does not use the term education at the stage of the family because he takes the family to represent the immediate immersion in our second nature or the rising above animal nature. As such, it is not a self-aware cultivation of identity but its necessary presupposition.

Children are free *in themselves* ... As far as their relationship within the family is concerned, their *upbringing* has the *positive* determination that, in them, the ethical [*das Sittliche*] is given the form of immediate feeling which is still without opposition, so that their early emotional life may be lived in this [context], as the *basis* of ethical life, in love, trust, and obedience. But in the same connection, their upbringing also has the *negative* determination of raising the children out of the natural immediacy in which they originally exist to self-sufficiency and freedom of personality (PR §175).

The acquisition of a second nature takes place first in the family. Indeed it is the sole end of the family to affect this. Here we see the two aspects of the second nature splitting. The “substance” of my freedom is this second nature in its universal determinations: in the family, my needs and wants are transformed from their natural determinacies, and I relate to my acquired nature as if it is “natural.” The second aspect is the principle of freedom: my sense of self that develops within the family and the self-sufficiency (independence) of personhood. It represents in my person the true significance of my second nature, that I am the result of my self-determination.

This differentiation becomes explicit and is posited into existence [*Dasein*] in civil society: “A relation now arises whereby the particular is to be my primary determining principle, and the ethical determination is thereby superseded [*aufgehoben*]” (PR §181A). If we do not continue reading, we must

put exclamation marks and ask how Hegel could claim that the abstract negation of *das Sittliche* in the positing of particularity constitutes its “sublation.” But fortunately, this is not Hegel’s claim. Indeed, Hegel is aware of the abstract and thus inadequate nature of this negation, which underlies the harsh individualism of civil society – especially compared to the immediacy of communality and unity with it that marks the family member’s self-relation. “But I am in fact simply under a misapprehension, for while I believe that I am adhering to the particular, the universal and the necessity of the [wider] context nevertheless remain the primary and essential factor” (PR §181A). In my particularity I *believe* to be following my own ends. However, the content of those ends *and* my having ends at all are based on my “belonging” to an ethical community and formerly to a family that made possible the development of my free personhood.

The concrete person, who, as a *particular* person, as a totality of needs and a mixture of natural necessity and arbitrariness, is his own end, is *one* principle of civil society. But this particular person stands essentially in *relation* to other similar particulars...each asserts itself and gains satisfaction through the others, and thus at the same time through the exclusive *mediation* of the form of *universality*, which is *the second principle*” (PR §182).¹⁵³

The concrete person relates to herself as a particular end [*besondere Zweck*]. The negativity of free personhood is *posited* as the truth of individual

¹⁵³ The inadequacy of the shape the universal takes (as a generality) due to the particular’s unjustified indifference to the former finds a clearer expression in the Addition to this paragraph: “Each individual is his own end and all else means nothing to him. But he cannot accomplish the full extent of his ends without reference to others; these others are therefore *means* to the end of the particular person. But through its reference to others, the particular end takes on the form of universality, and gains satisfaction by simultaneously satisfying the welfare of others” (PR §182A, my emphasis).

freedom in civil society. The individual takes herself to be independent and sees the other individuals as “means” for her satisfaction. The mediation is external to the particular persons since it is not common ends or shared values that mediate their actions, but the necessity of coexisting with all the others and seeing in their cooperation an instrumental advantage to the achievement of one’s own ends. In this way, the very existence and content of *das Sittliche* that allowed them to have “human” needs at all is forgotten.

Then, no wonder that in the next paragraph, Hegel tackles the issue of selfishness and there appear one of the few references to selfishness in the *Philosophy of Right*: “The selfish end [*der selbstsüchtige Zweck*] in its actualization, conditioned in this way by universality, establishes a system of all-round interdependence... the external state, the state of necessity and of the understanding” (PR §183). We need to answer two questions: First, where does this selfishness, or the “selfish end,” come from here? Second, what distinguishes this independence in civil society from the same as it was analyzed in abstract right?

Selfishness is the result of positing the others as means [*Mitteln*]. Why do we posit the others as means? Under the misapprehension of our independence, we posit the universal, which is already constitutive of ourselves, as external to us. That is we reduce what makes us all human beings to a commonality – an abstract determination that has no inherent power and significance over my personhood. In relating to the universal externally I relate to all others, which

have the same relationship I have to the universal, also externally. What we see here is a perfect description of the mutual implication of the indifference of independence and of equivalence: The abstract formulation of our relation to other human beings – which denies the constitutive character of that universal for each of the particulars – posits thus the community of persons as an aggregate of diverse and indifferent elements. Such an aggregate has no inner unity or principle.

What distinguishes then the abstractness of personhood here from the one in abstract right? We must answer that from the perspective of the individuals themselves, it is nothing. However, there is indeed a big difference: at this stage in the analysis we have realized that abstract right has a basis, namely *das Sittliche*. This abstract negation and positing of independent personhood on the part of the individual cannot undercut and make obsolete the content that is always already at work in the individual – and this content is universal. Thus we are about to see a battle of wills, so to speak. The universal tells the particular: “you *are* only because I am,” and has some right in saying this because there is no “personhood” without a political/ethical community of individuals sharing language and customs. Only through having a second nature that I am able to recognize myself as free and have this certainty of my freedom. Even this certainty of one’s free personhood, which seems immediate to the individual, is itself mediated and a result of the historical development of our self-understanding as free beings. But, the particular says to the universal: “you are

only because I am,” and has some right in saying that because the universal is only in and through its “inner differentiations” that is the particular individuals.

“When it is divided in this way, the idea gives a *distinct existence* to its *moments* – to *particularity* it gives the right to develop and express itself in all directions, and to universality the right to prove itself both as the ground and necessary form of particularity” (PR §184). This battle is rigged, however, since the universality at stake is nothing but freedom. The individual, in its very opposition to the universal, manifests this universal and thus proves its authority. Each “has the other as its condition” (PR §184A), and “in furthering my end, I further the universal, and this in turn furthers my end” (PR §184A).

Das Sittliche as second nature signifies the principle of freedom. Also it contains a content that is contingent in its historical appearance, in the multiplication of needs (PR §186). This content then is only the *result* of freedom and thus must be grasped as self-willed. Hegel points out that *the end of reason* is to understand our reality as self-willed such that we engage in this activity of making ourselves self-consciously:

The end of reason is consequently neither the natural ethical simplicity referred to above, nor, as particularity develops, the pleasures as such which are attained through education [conveniences and technology, etc.]. Its end is rather to **work** ... to eliminate the *immediacy* and *individuality* in which spirit is immersed, so that this externality may take on the rationality *of which it is capable*, namely the *form of universality or of the understanding*” (PR §187R, bold emphasis mine).

This is very telling. In objective spirit, as I argued in the second part of this chapter, the universal as posited – in concrete laws, policies, and in our institutions – will always be an abstraction since self-determination cannot be posited as such. But *there is value* in positing this form of universality: it represents to us our implicit self-understanding. What is important here, according to my interpretation of Hegel’s concept of self-determination, is that the universality *be* posited even if this necessarily relies on and implies relations of indifference. The concrete determinations of *das Sittliche* on the one hand cannot be seen as completely arbitrary, because they are brought forth by the activity of spirit, or by the “work” of human individuals; on the other hand, that determinate content cannot take precedence over the activity and work that spirit is.

This brings us to what I take to be the most valuable insight in Hegel’s philosophy: that it is the particular human beings that both bring forth the need for change as well as effect change. I said in the beginning of my second chapter that it is the particular that is the force of the movement of self-sublation in the Logic and the force of change in reality. Here we get a clear statement of this from Hegel himself: “Since it is from particularity that universality receives both the content which fills it and its infinite self-determination, particularity is itself present in ethical life as free subjectivity which has infinite being-for-self” (PR §187).

How come, we might ask, is our second nature not some contingent result of reciprocal actions, why do we have to see it as a development and not as simple

mechanical causation? And thus how come laws are not external agreements, but expressions (albeit temporary) of the activity of freedom? There is a “measure” that is inherent to this process – which we saw in the first part of this chapter to be “self-relation.” This “inner criterion” of self-relation can only function or be effective in the activity of positing determinacies, relating to others, and manifesting itself in actions and work. Thus formalizing this inner principle would rid it of the sphere of its relevance. On the other hand, reducing it to a merely particular content – such as the “content” of pleasantness and unpleasantness – or to a negotiation of the individuals’ representations of happiness, would negate the reality of *das Sittliche*, i.e., the very universality that is its condition.

Again, not accidentally, the discussion of the particular, as the force of change, is also the context of Hegel’s discussion of education [*Bildung*]. As the family is the place of our submersion into ethical life (and simultaneously an unconscious rising above our merely animal nature), education is the place for our submersion into the self-consciousness of our second nature. We learn about *x*, but always also about ourselves. We see the products of human curiosity and ambition and in them come to recognize ourselves and our historicity.

So when Hegel describes particularity as opposed to the universal as “subjective need” whose satisfaction appears to be the “end” of civil society (PR §190), we know not to take it at face value: for we now know that the subjective need is not merely particular for that matter. And, indeed, Hegel tells us “a need is

created not so much by those who experience it directly as by those who seek to profit from its emergence” (PR §191A). This desire for “profit” in turn cannot be ossified as a natural “quality” of the human will insofar as the latter is essentially freedom and its content is essentially the result of the collaborative work of particular individuals.

In my analysis, I have frequently used the terms “human being” or “humanity” as the referent of Hegel’s analysis of the will and spirit. Hegel, I believe, avoids these terms for two reasons: 1) to avoid a “cosmopolitan” and thus a contractual idea of humanity, 2) to emphasize the *unnatural* object of his analysis. However, Hegel’s “only mention” of the human being justifies, I believe, my use of this term rather indiscriminately:

In right, the object is the *person*; at the level of morality, it is the *subject*, in the family, the *family member*, and in civil society in general, the *citizen* (in the sense of *bourgeois*). Here at the level of needs (cf. Remarks to 123), it is that concretum of *representation* which we call *the human being*; this is the first, and in fact the only occasion on which we shall refer to *the human being* in this sense” (PR §190R).

The context of Hegel’s discussion here is the distinction between the human and the animal:

The ways and means by which the animal can satisfy its needs are limited in scope, and its needs are likewise limited. Though sharing this dependence, the *human being* is at the same time able to transcend it and to show his universality, first by multiplying his needs and means [of satisfying them], and secondly by *dividing* and *differentiating* the concrete need into individual parts and aspects which then become different needs, *particularized* and hence *more abstract*” (PR §190).

What is this ability to transcend the immediacy of one's nature and to create a nature through the positing of "new" needs, but freedom? This ability of division and differentiation is nothing but our self-reflective attitude in evaluating ourselves in our production. Our activities of abstraction and of exclusion themselves are the sources of the creation of new needs. The capacity to "abstract" is necessary for self-determination. It is through seeing the abstract and posited character of these determinacies that we may challenge and transform them.

If I am right in interpreting ethical substance not so much as the concrete content of custom but as the fact that there is custom (or its very *Dasein*) – as witnessing our freedom – then I believe it is not merely a different interpretative strategy, but necessary to read Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* in the way I suggested in the previous section: That is, read it not according to the particular shapes Hegel seems to posit as necessary for freedom, but, as proving 1) the reality of self-determination through the proof of the activity of freedom – as we saw above, for example, in the real differentiation of *das Sittliche*; 2) the open-endedness of our creation of ourselves, *not* out of nothing and thus *not* arbitrarily, but with a necessity that only we can account for and affect. It is this latter statement that makes it necessary that laws be formulated, that there be a constitution, that the formally universal be posited as such. The necessarily indifferent character of such formal universality is an inadequacy but a necessary one. Because only in

laws, is it transparent to the individuals what it is concretely that they implicitly enact, manifest, and value.

In the course of the *Philosophy of Right*, abstract right and morality show themselves to rely on inadequate ideas of freedom. The last section shows us that they are not independent spheres, but mere abstractions from *Sittlichkeit*. What is “new” in *Sittlichkeit* that makes it the locus of objective freedom in Hegel’s system? It is only with *das Sittliche*, as second nature, that we *begin* to talk about “objective freedom.” Freedom is not “objective” that is “at work” in the formal laws of abstract right or the universal good of morality – both of which are abstractions. Indeed, even the laws themselves, for example, do not become less abstract in the state. They are still universals that are posited by the understanding. What is different is that the indifference to *das Sittliche* is sublated in this last part of the *Philosophy of Right*: it is seen to be the very substance of our freedom.

Thus, I conclude that while there must be a shape or determinate form that fulfills the task of the family (raising the human child to its actual humanity by immersing it in its second nature) this need not be the family as we know it – or as Hegel knew it. And, similarly, I conclude that there must be a political constitution (and a legal system) that represents to the individual a transparent¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ “Political institutions promote the kind of national and political self-consciousness which men do not acquire by being mere members of civil society, and they contribute to freedom because they clarify the principles on which the ethical, social and political life of their community is based” (74). (Pelczynski, Z. A., “Political Community and Individual Freedom,” in *The State and*

expression of her implicit self-understanding, her second nature; however this need not be Hegel's modern state or our liberal democracy. And, finally, I conclude that there must be a mediating sphere where the *work* of the particular finds expression, both the individual "interpretations" of our second nature as well as its expressions (in work and production); however, this need not signal "self-interest" as the motivation of all human action and it need not have the form of a capitalist market.

That the state must be a nation-state ruled by a bi-cameral monarchy, that the initial "belonging" or membership in the human race must be cultivated in a family, and that particularity be expressed in "self-interested" economic activity... I do not think Hegel's text shows or aims to show the necessity of these determinate shapes.

Finally, where must the freedom of the particular individual be located? The particular, as the force of change, works and, consciously or not, participates in the creation of both the idea of humanity and its reality. This dialectical relationship of the particular human being and the universal idea of humanity allow us to understand true individual freedom as thoroughly "political." It is political because 1) it is about power: power of the empty universals and arbitrary particulars over our "work" of making ourselves. 2) *Das Sittliche* as second nature *is* the concept of the political insofar as it transcends the false opposition of the

Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy, edited by Z. A. Pelczynski, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 76).

public and the private that has come to completely rule our self-understanding as well as its political expression.

The dialectic of indifference can be an overcoming of indifference and self-determination can cease to be merely a process but become an activity only through our taking responsibility for the way we create ourselves. This speculative move can be comprehended in pure thought, but its real significance is in its political expression in our conscious *transformation* of what seems to be necessary and / or the result of contingency, that is by acting against its necessity.

EPILOGUE

Ambiguous Function of Indifference: Philosophy and Self-Determination

The question of the relation between the thought (i.e., the comprehended idea) on the one hand, and the factual existence of right here and now on the other, must be clearly distinguished from the question of the relation of the universal and particular as elements of the concept of the true idea (realized in fact or not). The unity of the universal and the particular is proved by the (onto-)logic of the concept; the unity of the true idea and factual existence [of right] is a problem which cannot be solved by a mere (onto-) logical development. Besides a logic of essence, this would also demand a philosophy of history and of the here and now.¹⁵⁵

In his book on the “Preface” to the *Philosophy of Right*, Adriaan Th.

Peperzak argues that to prove the actuality of reason (and, thus, freedom) in the world, it is not sufficient to know what it means to comprehend a given, a factual existence, in pure thought. Thus, according to Peperzak, though Hegel’s Logic fulfills the latter task, it cannot alone prove the actuality of the rational, “the unity of the thought and factual existence of right.” The verdict is one that we encountered many times: Hegel’s proof of self-determination in thinking does not prove the reality of self-determination.

According to the interpretation I presented in this dissertation, Hegel’s Logic shows that the universal (the thought of right, for instance) is not merely a generality but rather is that which gives substance to the particular (for example,

¹⁵⁵ Adriaan Th. Peperzak, *Philosophy and Politics: A Commentary on the Preface to Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Boston: M. Nijhoff, 1987), 63.

the factual existence of right), and as such grounds and provides the criteria for its legitimacy. The Logic thus shows that comprehending and evaluating something given to experience or thought (a fact or an opinion) means “accounting for” or “grounding” that given. This comprehension rests on situating the given within a self-relating whole, the principle of which is self-determination. Such comprehension of the given in its necessary relation to the world and to reflection is not possible if its immediacy is taken at face value – when it is taken as a fact or an opinion – and its relations are ignored. But, then, what else is necessary for the grounding of the given, or accounting for a proposition of change? Peperzak says that “a philosophy of history and a philosophy of the here and now” are necessary to determine the unity of the true idea and factual existence, or the actuality of the rational and the rationality of the actual.

Peperzak might be right in pointing out that the knowledge of the *formal* dynamic of truth, or the activity of self-determination in the Logic, might not be sufficient to identify in our present the *exact* direction that is underway. However, if we take the results of Hegel’s Logic seriously, the formal dynamic must contain an answer to this problem. I have tried to show that understanding Hegel’s concept of self-determination as the self-sublation of indifference, always driven and accomplished by the particular human being, provides us with the conceptual tools necessary to carry out a critical analysis of our present.

Hegel’s concept of self-determination accounts for the dynamic of human reality without positing an ideal state, an “end” that signals complete

reconciliation. Actually, according to my interpretation of Hegel's system, there can be no such end. Self-determination is an activity that has legitimacy only in being enacted. Positing an end would signal a complete indifference to the inner contradictions of a finite totality (which objective spirit will ever be) rather than a complete realization of freedom. Freedom cannot be realized once and for all. Freedom is in acting and thus is always an achievement. As long as there is anything based on contingency in our account of who we are and how we live, and as long as our institutions and social relations mirror this inadequacy, we can count on the work of philosophy to do its job, to measure up "what is" to our self-understanding as free and to our understanding of our human reality as self-willed. Hegel's analysis of self-determination provides us with a method of necessary, and therefore legitimate, critique of the here and now: the critique of indifference. Contra Peperzak, then, philosophy's task, according to Hegel, is not the proof of the unity of the true idea and factual existence. What is it then beyond the securing of a method of critical analysis?

1- The Controversy Surrounding Hegel's *Doppelsatz*

"What is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational."

The interpretation of the *Doppelsatz* has been a source of major controversy in the secondary literature on Hegel's philosophy. Will Dudley points out that the various criticisms of Hegel's philosophy are generally based upon the

prevailing interpretation of this passage, which “superficially equates ‘actuality’ with ‘existence,’ failing to recognize, much less understand, Hegel’s technical use of these terms” and thus takes “Hegel’s claim to mean that everything in existence is rational in the sense of justified, and hence beyond criticism.”¹⁵⁶ Most critics of Hegel, moreover, take the supposed conservative results of his system to be a consequence of Hegel’s monism, or so-called identity logic,¹⁵⁷ and therefore argue that while Hegel’s Logic must be discarded, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Right* offer us keen insights and fine analyses of social theory and historical reality. Even though the conservative interpretations of Hegel’s *Doppelsatz*, for example that it claims the end of history or is a justification of the *status quo*, “are no longer given enough credit to be the distractions they once were,”¹⁵⁸ there is still much disagreement regarding its interpretation.

Hegel’s *Doppelsatz* appears in two passages of his published works. The first one is in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* first published in 1821.

Putting aside controversies about the sincerity of this Preface and whether Hegel

¹⁵⁶ Dudley, Will, “Impure Reason: Hegel on the Irrationality of the Rational,” in *Owl of Minerva*, 35:1-2 (2003-04), 35.

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, Patricia Mills’ objection, often quoted in feminist criticisms of Hegelian philosophy: “Hegel’s dialectical theory becomes a closed system, a system that is the quintessential form of identity logic in which difference is ultimately dominated and denied rather than reconciled.” Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, “Hegel’s *Antigone*,” in *Feminist Interpretations of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, 84 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

¹⁵⁸ Andrew Norris, “Beyond the Fury of Destruction: Hegel on Freedom,” *Political Theory*, 32: 3 (June 2004), 409.

was indeed paying lip service to the Prussian authorities of his time, the statement appears in a context in which Hegel is trying to situate the role of philosophy with respect to political and religious authority. Its second appearance is in the Introduction to the 1830 edition of the *Encyclopaedia*. In § 6 of this introduction, Hegel again speaks of the subject-matter and task of philosophy, refers to the public controversies that followed the appearance of the *Philosophy of Right* in print, and offers a defense of his earlier statement. Both appearances of this statement figure in Hegel's discussion of the task and subject-matter of philosophy.

Hegel's *Doppelsatz* is the statement of a philosophical programme that will oppose both the non-philosophical and philosophical distrust of reason and philosophy. In the same paragraph, Hegel identifies two approaches that oppose in principle the actuality of the rational. The first one represents a non-philosophical distrust of reason (or a realist distrust since Hegel defines all philosophy as idealism), and the second one characterizes a philosophical distrust of reason.

The conception that ideas and ideals are nothing but chimeras, and that philosophy is a system of pure phantasms sets itself at once against the actuality of what is rational [*Wirklichkeit des Vernünftigen*]; but, conversely, the notion that ideas and ideals are something far too excellent to have actuality [*Wirklichkeit*], or equally something too impotent to achieve actuality, is opposed to it as well (E §6R).

The view that treats ideas of reason as figments of the imagination displays a fundamental suspicion of reason, and by implication, also of philosophy. It

reduces truth to opinion and knowledge to description. Such thinking must be suspicious of philosophical explanation, that is, of any attempt to give a “rational account.” Whether the object of analysis happens to be rules of syllogistic reasoning, space and time, or the human will, such thinking is limited by the givenness of the phenomena and therefore limited to their description. Such description on the grounds of convention or experience is in effect not an explanation and cannot claim to give an account of the thing in question. Although I have characterized the first objection to the actuality of the rational as an objection coming from outside of philosophy, its philosophical expression can be found in strands of empiricism and materialism.

The second view comes from within philosophy. It holds that ideas of reason are too excellent to have actuality or too powerless to bring about actuality. This characterization could apply to Kant’s theory of reason. For Kant, the ideas of reason, such as freedom, virtue, or world, are not actual¹⁵⁹; they belong only to human spirit or thought. The philosophical objection to the actuality of the rational is based, in Kantian terms, on the separation between theoretical and practical uses of reason, or between the understanding [*Verstand*] and reason [*Vernunft*] in Hegel’s work. What Kant calls free spontaneous activity of the ‘I’ is constitutive of the actual, in so far as the latter is an object of theoretical

¹⁵⁹ Manfred Baum has pointed out that, to be precise, Kant claims that these ideas *cannot be known to be* actual. However, it is my contention that, according to Hegel, Kant’s position in effect denies the actuality of the ideas of reason, such as freedom, by suspending judgment on this question.

knowledge. According to Kant, reason *does* give us criteria for determining which representations are indeed representations of the actual. However, not all our representations belong to the same category. The representations of right, freedom, or God have a different status than those that can be given to us in intuition. Reason can only have a regulative (or legislative) role with the former kind of representations and is not constitutive of the actual as such.¹⁶⁰

Denying the actuality of the rational leaves us with few options: We may have to conclude that we cannot know the true and end up with skepticism, or be content with a naïve form of empiricism/positivism and endorse a philosophy of common sense, or finally conclude that this search or demand for truth is itself a figment of the imagination, a result of ideology, or religious dogma. When we admit that ideas of reason have no more validity or efficacy than the products of belief systems or political dogma, we must give up the search for the true. That in turn means that we must leave the arena to the power of rhetoric in determining what is right and what must be done.

As the discipline that defines itself through the search for the truth of the whole, one purpose of philosophy is then to combat the distrust of reason. Hegel's *Doppelsatz* is the statement of this task. The trust in reason, though, is not an

¹⁶⁰ As Guyer writes, "in fact, Kant supposes that it is not only possible but necessary for us to use both the categories and the ideas of reason to form concepts of things in themselves as contrasted to appearances, especially to form the concept of freedom of things in themselves as contrasted to the determinism that reigns in the realm of appearances; but as knowledge-claims always require instantiation in intuition, such speculations, even if necessary, do not amount to knowledge." Paul Guyer, "Thought and being: Hegel's critique of Kant's theoretical philosophy," in *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick Beiser, 178 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

irrational leap of faith: reason grounds itself. In his recent article “Hegel’s *Doppelsatz*: A Neutral Reading,”¹⁶¹ Robert Stern identifies, mistakenly I believe, the “faith in reason” to be the core of Hegel’s philosophical programme, and argues that Hegel’s statement must be read as the expression of such faith. Stern discusses the progressive and conservative readings of Hegel’s *Doppelsatz* and offers an alternative, i.e., a “neutral” reading. He argues that while the two readings converge in so far as they offer a normative¹⁶² interpretation of Hegel’s use of “the rational [*das Vernünftige*],” the difference in their interpretation of the meaning of “the actual [*das Wirkliche*]” distinguishes them: “Hegel is assumed to be endorsing something as right or good, so the question is, is he endorsing things as they happen to be (as on the conservative reading), or things as they would be if fully “actual” (as on the progressive reading)?”¹⁶³

According to Stern, the progressive reading builds its case upon the technical meaning of the term “actuality,” as *distinct* from mere existence, and Stern says that its proponents are “right to claim that the *Doppelsatz* is not saying that ‘what is, is good.’ [However] they are wrong to suggest that instead it is

¹⁶¹ Robert Stern, “Hegel’s *Doppelsatz*: A Neutral Reading,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 44/2 (2006): 235–66. See his explanation of the expression *Doppelsatz* (double dictum) in footnote 2, p. 235. In the following, I will also use this expression to refer to Hegel’s statement “what is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational.”

¹⁶² Stern refers to Hardimon’s formulation: “‘Rational,’ as Hegel uses the term, has both an epistemic and a normative aspect; roughly speaking, it means both rationally intelligible and reasonable or good.” Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel’s Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation*, 53 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, 238.

saying “only what is actual, is good, and much that merely exists is bad.”¹⁶⁴ Stern argues that both readings are mistaken in interpreting “the rational” normatively, and that Hegel’s *Doppelsatz* expresses mainly a methodological requirement for philosophy: that it “must be committed to reason in its methods of inquiry.”¹⁶⁵ In his *Doppelsatz*, “Hegel is telling us that what is actual can be investigated by reason and what reason investigates is the actual.”¹⁶⁶

This circular formulation is very difficult to avoid.¹⁶⁷ The problem is that as soon as we leave Hegel’s terminology we risk positing “what is” as good, but then when we want to distinguish the merely existent from the actual, the only criterion we have is reason, and we do not explain the statement at all. If we follow Stern, then we are left with the fundamental intelligibility of the world as a philosophical programme. That might very well be what Hegel *meant*, but that is not what he *says*. That is, the *Doppelsatz* does not merely have the status of a *directive*, but it is the *statement* of what Hegel claims his philosophy achieves. What is it then that Hegel’s philosophy achieves? And, according to Hegel, what should philosophy strive to achieve in general?

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 238.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 236. He later writes, “The *Doppelsatz* can therefore be seen as an expression of Hegel’s faith in a rationalistic conception of philosophy, rather than a claim about the normative status of “the actual,” *however* ‘the actual’ is understood” (251).

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 239.

¹⁶⁷ According to Paul Franco, such an attempt at characterizing the distinction between the merely existent and the actual reduces the *Doppelsatz* to a tautology: “The actual is rational because the actual refers only to that part of existence which is rational” in Paul Franco, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Freedom*, 132 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

In §6 of the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel formulates the purpose of philosophy as follows: “It has to be seen as the supreme and ultimate *purpose of science* to bring about the reconciliation of the reason that is conscious of itself with the reason that *is*, or actuality” (E §6). Self-conscious reason here designates the expressions of our *explicit* self-understanding: the products of the self-consciously free activity of human beings, which for Hegel includes art, religion, and philosophy and constitutes “absolute spirit.” Reason that *is*, however, points to objective freedom: humanity’s *implicit* self-understanding, and its expressions in political institutions and products of human culture. Philosophy makes explicit our implicit self-understanding and examines the expressions of our affirmed and acknowledged self-understanding with the implications and presuppositions of our institutions, laws, and communal life. It is not the only activity that is aimed at formulating to ourselves and for ourselves what it means to be human. Hegel thinks that art and religion are also such activities. The difference between the three rests on the medium of their expression.

According to Hegel, aesthetic expressions of our self-knowledge – or our idea of humanity – have *feeling* as their medium. By feeling, Hegel here means an immediate givenness, since in art forms the subject matter is expressed through ‘signs’ or symbols. Consider, for example, a movie. It describes a slice of our reality, but in it shows something universal about ourselves. It brings us to an intuitive awareness of our self-determining activity. In his column “The Big Picture” in Los Angeles Times, Patrick Goldstein writes:

Want to see a classic example of the critics initially ignoring a film's underlying message? Go back and watch Don Siegel's 1956 classic B-movie thriller, "Invasion of the Body Snatchers." Made at the tail end of the Red Scare, it was initially viewed by critics as a cheap but effective horror film about a small town where residents are being secretly replaced by duplicate "people" hatched from alien pods... In recent years, the film has inspired heated critical debate. Everyone agrees it was a sly political allegory, but no one agrees on just what. Liberals see the pod invasion as an allusion to McCarthy-era paranoia and conformity; conservatives see the pods as a symbol for communism, where everyone would be forced to think alike.¹⁶⁸

We *intuit* our present and its grounds in the artistic presentation. However, insofar as an artwork is a sign of the times, it is left to opinion to determine exactly what it is a sign of. Of course, the seemingly diverse interpretations in the example above have a common ground: the demonization of "the other." Each side attributes a righteousness to itself on the basis of seeing its own "side" as the true defender of freedom while positing the other as "unfree" and thus alien. However, even this inner truth of the contradictory interpretations cannot be posited with certainty or known to be true, for the sign's abstraction makes it vulnerable to the contingency of opinion. Religion, according to Hegel, is closer to truth insofar as the medium is "reflective" and our self-understanding is "represented" in a relation: our relation to God. This is still lacking, however, because the representation cannot contain the activity of universality but pictures it as a static relation between two static terms: a finite human and the infinite God.

For Hegel, philosophy is the highest form of self-conscious reason. In philosophy we comprehend ourselves as free. Philosophy is a free activity insofar

¹⁶⁸ Patrick Goldstein, "A big message in a little robot?" *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 2008, Part E.

as it does not stop at givens but derives them through its cognizing activity. As we saw in the analysis of Hegel's Logic above, this derivation is itself a self-determining activity. Thus, for Hegel, the self-knowledge that human spirit achieves in philosophy is the knowledge of its *self-determination*.¹⁶⁹

Thus, Hegel argues in the *Philosophy of Right* that the history of spirit is

its own *deed*; for spirit is only in what it does, and its deed is to make itself – in this case spirit – the object of its own consciousness, and to *comprehend itself* in its interpretation of itself to itself. This comprehension is its being and principle, and the *completion* of an act of comprehension is *at the same time* its *alienation* and *transition* (PR §343).

The reconciliation between self-conscious reason and reason that is (E §6R), which Hegel pointed out as the *purpose* of philosophical science, is *not* a negation of contradictions, a silencing of discontent, or a justification of the *status quo*. In the historical process of self-determination, it points to the act of taking

¹⁶⁹ It is remarkable that I have found no discussion in the secondary literature of Hegel's remarks on Jellaleddin Rumi or Sufism in his discussion of Philosophy at the end of the Encyclopaedia. Though I have a limited acquaintance with this mystical strand of Islamic philosophy, I find that an allegory from one of its famous texts, *The Conference of the Birds* might be helpful in clarifying what it means to know ourselves as self-determined: This text describes the journey of a group of birds, all different species, embarking on a journey to find *Simorgh* – the “king” of the birds. They pass through valleys and mountains – each signifying the turmoil and tests of human life – and only thirty of them reach their destination. And, when they arrive at their destination, the birds notice that there is no king to be found. At the same time, they recognize that there are thirty of them, and “Simorgh” means, in Farsi, “thirty”. In this way, they understand that what they were looking for indeed was themselves, a unity that was formed through their journey. Their discovery of themselves as the Simorgh (as a whole or unity) consists in searching for that unity and in that search establishing it. Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *Conference of the Birds*, translated by Dick Davis, (London: Penguin, 1984). I believe Hegel's freedom is self-positing in this way. We are free insofar as we posit ourselves as free, not arbitrarily or abstractly, but by accounting for our present as the result of our own making.

responsibility for our present, comprehending our concrete life form as the achievement of human freedom.

2- Subject-Matter and Purpose: What is philosophy?

As we saw in the previous section, philosophy's task is to bring forth the reconciliation between our present and our self-understanding, to see in existence the expressions of our ends and aims. Such reconciliation is necessary for anyone who takes herself to be free, but philosophy, especially, is equipped with this task and the tools necessary for it:

For since *the rational*, which is synonymous with the Idea, becomes *actual* by entering into external existence [*Existenz*], it emerges in an infinite wealth of forms, appearances, and shapes and surrounds its core with a brightly colored covering in which consciousness at first resides, but which only **the concept** can penetrate [*durchdringen*] in order to find the inner pulse, and detect its continued beat even within external shapes [*äüßeren Gestaltungen*].¹⁷⁰

However, a complication arises from this description of philosophy. While philosophical thinking, as a critique of indifference, is marked by its vigilance toward unjustified assumptions of thought and the authority of immediate reality, Hegel sometimes seems to suggest that philosophy must indeed take the attitude of indifference to its present. Hegel warns us, in the *Encyclopaedia*, for example, that the purpose of philosophy is not criticism, but comprehension. The philosopher who takes the high moral ground and takes it upon herself to

¹⁷⁰ *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 21.

prescribe courses of action upon some supposed authority of philosophical knowledge simply displays a “smartness” that is functioning under illusions of grandeur:

this smartness is wrong when it has the illusion that, in its dealings with objects of this kind and with their “ought,” it is operating within the concerns [*der Interessen*] of philosophical science. This science deals only with the Idea – which is not so impotent that it merely ought to be, and is not actual – and further with an actuality of which those objects, institutions, and situations are only the superficial outer rind [*die oberflächliche Außenseite*]” (E §6R).

Hegel thus makes two points here: that such normative evaluation, which is born of a discontent with the way things are and is at best a critique of the *current* system, does not “operate within the concerns” of philosophy; and that the events, institutions, etc., of the present comprise the external (and contingent) existence of an actuality, which alone is the “subject-matter” of philosophy. On the other hand, Hegel claims that these external shapes, contingencies, infinite wealth of appearances are only “the superficial outer rind [*die oberflächliche Außenseite*]” and not the subject-matter of philosophy.¹⁷¹ Thus, according to Hegel’s statement here, it is not only the attitude that is in the wrong, but also the assumption that

¹⁷¹ Hegel makes a similar remark in the opening paragraphs of the *Philosophy of Right*: The same attitude is displayed in the opening paragraph of *Philosophy of Right*: “Philosophy has to do with Ideas, and therefore not with what are commonly described as *mere concepts*. On the contrary, it shows that the latter are one-sided and lacking in truth, and that it is the *concept* alone (not what is often called by that name, but which is merely an abstract determination of the understanding) which has *actuality*, and in such a way that it gives actuality to itself. Everything other than this actuality which is posited by the concept itself is a transitory *existence* [Dasein], external contingency, opinion, appearance without essence, untruth, deception, etc. The *shape* [Gestaltung] which the concept assumes [*sich gibt*] in its actualization, and which is essential for cognition of the *concept* itself, is different from its *form* of being purely as concept, and is the other essential moment of the Idea” (PR § 1R).

the concrete shapes, i.e., objects, institutions, occurrences of the present are within the purview of philosophy.

But the infinitely varied circumstances which take shape within this externality as the essence manifests itself within it, this infinite material and its organization, are *not the subject-matter of philosophy*. To deal with them would be to interfere in things with which philosophy has no concern, and it can save itself the trouble of giving good advice on the subject (E §6R).

Remarks such as these, which limit the subject-matter of philosophy in a manner that seems to exclude concrete reality and the “contingent” content of experience and opinion, are not limited to Hegel’s *Realphilosophie*. In the *Logic*, in the section “The Absolute Idea,” Hegel makes a similar remark that limits philosophical analysis:

The Concept is ... free subjective Concept that is for itself and therefore possesses *personality*—the practical, objective Concept determined in and for itself which, as person, is impenetrable atomic subjectivity—but which, nonetheless, is not exclusive individuality, but explicitly *universality* and *cognition*, and in its other has *its own* objectivity for its object. All else is error, confusion, opinion, endeavor, caprice and transitoriness; the absolute Idea alone is *being*, imperishable *life*, *self-knowing truth*, and is *all truth*.¹⁷²

As Angelica Nuzzo¹⁷³ points out, “Hegel’s main point in this last chapter is to establish the absolute idea as an omnipervasive structure that includes all opposition within itself. Its absolute character is determined by the fact that there

¹⁷² SL 825/ L II 484.

¹⁷³ Angelica Nuzzo, “The End Of Hegel’s *Logic*: Absolute Idea As Absolute Method,” *Cardozo Public Law, Policy & Ethics Journal* (December 2004), 205. Nuzzo’s answer is that this simultaneous identification and distinction from the rest shows that “only the method can be absolute form” (211). Nuzzo’s argument in this essay supports my thesis that philosophy must become meta-theory, and that the necessary method of critique, is laid down in Hegel’s *Logic*.

is no exteriority opposed to it... How can these claims be reconciled with the claim that there is indeed something – a whole realm of negativity – that remains as an uncomfortable rest (*übrig*) placed in front of the absolute idea and opposed to it in a sort of un-dialectical Manicheanism: “all truth” against “all the rest?” Is philosophy to remain indifferent to fact and opinion?

The problem is that these claims seem to counter my basic claim in this dissertation insofar as they seem to suggest adopting an attitude of indifference rather than its exposition and overcoming!¹⁷⁴ My analysis in the previous chapters suggests that such positing of indifference would create a sphere of determinacy over against the determining self, and as human being our attitudes of indifference are the sources of our unfreedom. Have I been overzealous in my analysis of the function of indifference in Hegel’s system, or is Hegel contradicting the results of his own system?

Hegel makes two distinct claims in the passages above. The first concerns the *purpose* of the philosophical science and the other its *subject-matter*.

According to the first, Hegel says that the analysis and critique of existing reality is not within the interest of philosophy. In the last passage, Hegel’s reason for

¹⁷⁴ In the context of his discussion of “becoming,” Hegel argues that against the statement “being and nothing are one and the same,” one might point out the absurdity of the claim that “it is all the same whether my house, my fortune, the air to breathe, this city, the sun, the law, spirit, God, *are* or *are not*. In examples of this kind, it is partly a matter of *particular purposes*, the *utility* that something has for me, being sneaked it. One then asks whether it matters to *me* that the useful thing is or that it is not. But philosophy is in fact the very discipline that aims at liberating man from an infinite crowd of finite purposes and intentions and at **making him indifferent** with regard to them, so that it is all the same to him whether such matters are the case or not” (E §88R, bold emphasis mine).

excluding the study of external reality is different. He states that such externality is not the proper object or subject-matter of philosophy. Moreover, both claims appear to contradict what Hegel stated to be the unique task of philosophy: that only the concept (the form of the activity of reason) can penetrate, distinguish, and decipher external existence, which necessarily accompanies the actualization of the rational. Granted, Hegel carefully distinguishes actuality from existing reality; however, one cannot but ask where actuality is to be sought, if not in the midst of existing reality.

The solution, I suggest, lies in determining which claim has priority for Hegel's exclusion of the treatment of external existence from philosophical science. Either it is the case that philosophy should not be concerned with situations and institutions that seem to call for both criticism and improvement *because*, as the superficial outer rind [*Außenseite*] of the actual that is rational, they are not the proper subject-matter of philosophy. Or, it is the other way around: those situations and institutions are not the proper subject-matter of philosophy, *because* their analysis and critique necessarily lies outside of the interest of philosophy. Which is the main *premise* of Hegel's stance: his limitation of the *purpose* of philosophy or his definition of its *subject-matter*?

The answer to this question is crucial for understanding the task of Hegel's philosophical system and thus his conception of philosophical science. It is also important insofar as evaluating my interpretation that philosophy must study precisely the seemingly contingent as well as the assuredly universal, both of

which are expressions of indifference. Whether Hegel's first premise is that empirical reality or external existence is not the subject-matter of philosophy, or that the prescriptive criticism of the way things are lies beyond its concern, his position strikes one at first as very conservative. At best this position implies quietism insofar as Hegel seems to be suggesting a suspension of judgment regarding the very reality in which thinkers or citizens live their daily lives. At worst, it is a fatalism that defends that "whatever will be, will be." In both cases, one is at a loss as to what freedom remains for the individual as well as what activity can be said to constitute the self-determination of spirit.¹⁷⁵

Hegel's delimitation of the subject-matter of philosophy such that it excludes the present and existent reality must then be the result of his resolve to define and clarify the interest of philosophy in opposition to "the ought" of the understanding. Hegel's definition of the purpose of philosophy as the "reconciliation of reason with actuality" (E §6) as well as his acknowledgment that *only* the Concept can accomplish this reconciliation through its recognition of itself "even within external shapes" (PR, Preface) suggest that the subject-matter of philosophy cannot *simply* exclude existent reality.

¹⁷⁵ Ruling out philosophy's engagement with the here and now by excluding the particularities of the existing reality from its field of analysis has the consequence of limiting philosophy to a sterile region of abstract thinking – a result that Hegel is at pains to avoid in his description and defense of the Logic as engaging "objective thinking." Besides, the quietism and fatalism, which I pointed out above to be the results of such a position, contradict the centrality and significance of the concept of freedom in Hegel's philosophy: not the freedom of some mystical entity, but freedom as an achievement of humanity, through the actions and thoughts of individual human beings.

Furthermore, it is naïve to think that Hegel has finished the project of the reconciliation of reason with actuality (in his critique of the oppositions of finite thinking and analysis of self-determination), and that philosophy has nothing more to accomplish. Such a claim on Hegel's part would contradict, if nothing else, the significant role he gives to absolute spirit in his system: it would indeed make absolute spirit obsolete by making its highest form, namely, philosophy, obsolete. Therefore, Hegel cannot consistently suggest that present reality is not the proper subject-matter of philosophy. I conclude therefore that his delimitation of the subject-matter of philosophy is meaningful only in the context in which he discusses it – in connection to his critique of the “ought.”

The result of Hegel's philosophy then is a new understanding of the *purpose* for philosophy. Philosophy must become meta-theoretical offering a critique of dominant beliefs based on the concept of indifference, which receives its legitimation in the Logic. This is not merely a suggestion, nor only valid for philosophical science, but necessary for finite freedom. Since it is the particular human individual that is both the result and the source of the self-determination of spirit, it also lies on her to bring this activity forth: “What is ethical [*das Sittliche*] concerns the content, which as such is the universal, an inactive factor [*ein Untätiges*] deriving its motivation from the subject [*an dem Subjekt sein Betätigendes hat*]” (E §475R).

The self-determination of spirit (or, humanity) requires and relies on the drive towards self-knowledge in the finite individual, which takes the form of a persistent questioning of indifference. Thus, Hegel is truer to his own conception of freedom when he defines the purpose of philosophy as follows: “The purpose of philosophy is, in contrast, to banish indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*] and to become cognizant of the necessity of things, so that the other is seen to confront *its* other... true thinking is the thinking of necessity” (E §119A1).

What is important for Hegel is to describe the reality in which we live as “willed” by spirit. If we cannot do this at each point in history, then we are left with the alternative of blaming something outside of us, i.e., natural necessity, providence, or chance, for our present predicament. A big part of what we like and do not like in our present world might be contingencies of the reality we find ourselves in. But the task of spirit is to understand itself, and that is achievable only through trying to grasp what seems contingent – and therefore *is* contingent for that level of consciousness – within a rational totality, which designates an order that we can and do account for. In his essay “The Rights of Philosophy,” Fulda situates Hegel’s understanding of the purpose of philosophy with respect to both state authority and public opinion and outlines its critical force as follows:

The critical task of philosophy [...] must restrict itself to the elimination of juridical claims that have become illegitimate, the correction of misconceived demands, and the clarification of aims and purposes that are being pursued in a largely unconscious or instinctive fashion. Where there is a contradiction between natural law and the state, as well as between general convictions and the political authorities, something that, far from denying, Hegel recognizes as a feature of the present, then philosophical science, which is the self-reconciliation

of spirit, finds itself “in contradiction with that contradiction and its concealment” (*EPW*, in *TW VIII*, 15). As a form of criticism, therefore, philosophy is directed against both sides here, against the arbitrary exercise and whims of political power (cf. *SGP*, 201, 370ff.) and against the short-sighted vision of public opinion. Finding itself in contradiction with the contradiction of both sides, philosophy has to encourage them precisely to reflect on one another and their predicament.¹⁷⁶

By the distinction between existence and actuality, which is central to the understanding of Hegel’s *Doppelsatz*, Hegel is doing exactly the opposite of what his critics claim he does: He is showing that “the real” is not fully, thoroughly rational. That is, it is not fully through our self-conscious willing, and perhaps often against our willing, against the ends of spirit. But only grasping it as willed by us – through taking responsibility for it – makes change possible. But spirit is the force and the outcome of change at the same time. A culture, a tradition moves, changes itself, by redefining and reinterpreting itself. And this process is at least partly driven by the attempt to grasp what seems contingent through its reasons, its functions, and its effects in the aspects of reality that we *do* account for. It could be that certain laws and forms of our self-understanding sometimes need to be radically changed to account for a policy or an inner conflict, which in the beginning seemed totally contingent, inexplicable. So what is needed to keep spirit moving is that our knowledge and ways of knowing, that is, the way in which spirit, a culture, understands itself, does not rule out the very possibility of such movement. If certain contingencies are declared insignificant or inexplicable

¹⁷⁶ Hans Friedrich Fulda, “The Rights of Philosophy,” in *Hegel on Ethics and Politics*, ed. by Höffe and Pippin, 42 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

before the fact, before actually attempting to understand them, or, if the necessary ossification of self-determination in our theories and institutions is taken to be final, then spirit becomes the prisoner of ideology.

It is generally accepted, as clearly stated also by Hegel, that the responsibility of acting and judging so as to bring about this self-reconciliation belongs to “an autonomous, and indeed highest, form of practical reason that for Hegel was represented by the ‘bearers of world spirit’.”¹⁷⁷ In his article, “The Rights of Philosophy,” Fulda adds that “Hegel could almost as easily have ascribed this role to the anonymous subjects in the collective decisions accomplished in the political process, as he did to the outstanding world-historical individuals.”¹⁷⁸ This claim that Fulda makes in passing is one of the main results of my dissertation.

According to Hegel’s argument in the *Logic*, self-determination is comprehensible only through the self-sublation of independence and equivalence. The acknowledgement of relations of indifference amounts to the acknowledgment of *relation* on the part of the “related.” It opens up the possibility of understanding and evaluating what generally appear to be contingent facts and particular opinions as moments of a self-determining whole. Similarly, according to Hegel’s argument in the *Philosophy of Right*, our very second nature as well as the determinate shapes of our political organization are

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.* 42.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* 48.

brought forth through the work of individual human beings. This production, though not self-conscious all the time and in all its aspects, must contain an element of free self-relating – for that is the very meaning of the individual will.

Thus taking seriously Hegel’s claim that “the right of world spirit is absolute in an unlimited sense” (PR §30R) need not bring forth an attitude of resignation, loss of agency, and desperation: Indeed, it points to the most radical freedom of all, that of self-creation. Having created “the human,” humanity already implicitly has this freedom. Accepting responsibility for it and finding ways to exercise it collectively is in the hands of individuals.

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