5 Hegel's Metaphysics and Social Philosophy

Two Readings

Charlotte Baumann

Since thinkers from Marx to Popper have criticised Hegel's metaphysics for its supposedly authoritarian implications, it is only natural that the late 20th century Anglo-American efforts to rehabilitate Hegel's philosophy were predicated on either downplaying or disregarding Hegel's metaphysical doctrines. Robert Pippin (2008), Terry Pinkard (1994), Robert Brandom (2019), John McDowell (2009), Axel Honneth (2000), and others have respectively developed different Kant-inspired, historicist and pragmatist readings of Hegel, all of which have been grouped as "non-metaphysical" Hegelianism. More recently, however, not only is there growing interest in Hegel's metaphysics, but even the so-called non-metaphysical Hegelians have started explicitly discussing Hegel's metaphysical commitments, with Pippin (2019) publishing a book-length study on the subject.

This latest development revives an old question: what are the social-philosophical implications of Hegel's metaphysics? While others have posed this question,² my approach in this chapter is unique insofar as I contrast the former non-metaphysical reading with a traditional way of interpreting Hegel's metaphysics and social philosophy, whose lineage includes not Wittgenstein, Sellars, or Brandom, but rather Schelling, Marx, and Adorno.³ I will engage with the former non-metaphysical view exclusively in terms of Pippin's work. Pippin's interpretation is particularly interesting, as it shares a minimal commitment with a more traditional metaphysical reading: Pippin has always insisted that, for Hegel, not everything is historical and changing. Pippin's Hegel proposes a metaphysics in the sense of basic, ahistorical notions that enable any intelligible claims, "the distinctions and relations without which sense would not be possible".⁴ Pippin's Hegel is therefore more Kantian than the Hegel of Pinkard.⁵

I will oppose Pippin's reading to my own, more traditional metaphysical interpretation, which draws on German Hegel scholarship in particular but also intersects with interpretations by Frederick Beiser (2005) and Stephen Houlgate (2006, 2008). I agree with Rolf-Peter Horstmann (1984), Christian Iber (2000), and Dieter Henrich (2007) that Hegel

proposes a pre-Kantian metaphysics of structures or, as Horstmann puts it, a "relation-ontological model". Hegel's metaphysics is pre-Kantian and akin to Spinoza's and Leibniz's rationalism, in that it does not discuss norms of knowledge.

Rather, Hegel looks into the nature of the mind-independent, physical world, as it is independently of being thought or judged, as well as the underlying structures of society and human thinking. Hegel's metaphysics is a metaphysics of structures or relations, rather than a substance-metaphysics, because Hegel views structures/relations as more fundamental than substances *pace* Spinoza and Leibniz. (The relation of a substance to its accidents is one among several types of structures for Hegel). Everything in the world – whether biological, chemical, physical, or social – is defined by its internal structure as well as the structure of its external relations; separate, internally unstructured substances have no properties – besides the fact that they are unrelated, empty units, which is precisely their structure. For Hegel, there is only a limited number of basic types of structuring, all of which he discusses in his *Logic*. This means that everything has a characteristic structure, which necessarily displays one or several of the logical structures analysed in Hegel's *Logic*.

While I agree with Horstmann et al. regarding the type of metaphysics Hegel pursues, I further develop their approach to show that commentators such as Henrich (1983) and Michael Theunissen (1982, 1994) are mistaken to allege authoritarian implications of such a metaphysics. This is possible, because the authoritarian worries of these thinkers are not linked to the traditional notion of metaphysics *per se*. In other words, they do not oppose as authoritarian the very idea that there are truths that do not depend on our shared convictions but are eternally valid. And, in contrast to Pippin, they do not reject the notion that the legitimacy of a society depends on that society displaying a specific and complex predetermined logical structure. Rather, the worries of Henrich et al. arise from the specific claims Hegel is taken to make about the structures of the best society.⁷

Hegel's metaphysics is not only important to understand his theory of freedom. Michael Thompson (2018b) rightly proposes that a metaphysical reading of Hegel is particularly relevant today, because (i) it offers normative resources that many perceive as lacking in relativist pragmatist or postmetaphysical approaches; and (ii) Hegel's metaphysics helps to turn the focus away from equal individuals towards the social whole, the power it has over individuals – and, I would add, the very unequal positions of power individuals occupy within it. While both metaphysical readings discussed here explicate normative implications of Hegel's metaphysics, in different ways, my traditional metaphysical interpretation also turns the attention to the structure of society as a whole.

For Pippin, Hegel's *Logic* provides norms that determine how thinking beings can best make sense of the world. He presupposes that societies

are made up of social and epistemic practices between free individuals and he argues that the most fundamental norms underlying those practices are ahistorical and eternal. Those norms are rather formal, as they do not define what is good, but what makes a particular conception of the good coherent and intelligible. The formal norms of intelligibility are, however, taken to have very real consequences, since actually existing in the social world requires claiming a status that others understand and accept. This is why Pippin notes that the *Logic* not only helps in "achieving compatible commitments", but also concerns the correct "self-understanding" of "one's involvement with institutions and with others" not as "domination" or "sacrifice" but as constitutive of one's actual social existence.⁸

In my reading, Hegel's metaphysics has a descriptive, a critical or evaluative, and a prescriptive function. This is so because, for Hegel, truly grasping an entity requires showing which of the more or less coherent logical structures it displays. The description of any phenomenon thus always comes with an evaluation of its coherence and internal problems. In fact, I take it that Hegel's metaphysics does not only discuss successively more consistent types of structures or successively more successful ways of uniting elements into a whole. When analysing each of these structures, Hegel discusses the relative freedom and unfreedom of the whole towards its elements and vice versa, often explicitly speaking of "self-determination" or "being with oneself in the other", which is his famous formula for freedom.9 Hegel asks, for example, whether a whole subsumes its elements forcefully, by imposing its laws, or whether it picks up on their internal structures to the effect that the whole's freedom or self-determination co-exists with or even requires the self-determination of its parts.

Hegel's Logic progresses from the least coherent and inclusive structure, which allows for problematic and limited types of freedom only, to the structure which enables most freedom and truly contains diversity. The Logic therefore prescribes which structure is best and which, hence, the best society ought to display. In his social philosophy, I therefore take Hegel to propose a structural theory of freedom. Hegel's attention is primarily directed at the respective whole – not because he glorifies the whole as an instantiation of God as critics have worried, but because the social whole or structure determines the options, roles, functions, and freedom of human beings. Any serious discussion of freedom, therefore, has to focus on the social structure, how it functions, and whether it is beneficial for and controlled by individuals. This is why Hegel highlights the social whole and its rationality, in the sense of a coherent, harmonious organisation of its elements. I will argue that, for Hegel, the most coherently organised social order necessarily coincides with the society that is most inclusive and self-determining and that maximises the freedom of each individual.

After discussing the two varieties of metaphysics (Sections 1–3), I will argue that my alternative metaphysical Hegel is more realist when it comes to assessing the power of social structures (Section 4), focused on structural freedom rather than agency (Sections 5 and 6), and more empowering for and lenient towards individuals who can make their interests count and are free to be irrational and egoist (Section 7).

Ι

The Metaphysics of Pippin's Hegel

Pippin takes Hegel to reject the old, pre-Kantian "substantive metaphysics" of Spinoza and Leibniz, a metaphysics that wants to know "what there really is," by detailing the "furniture of the universe". Hegel's new or post-Kantian metaphysics concerns "the authority and legitimacy of our claims to know". Tor Pippin, the three books of Hegel's *Logic* look into "meta-concepts" or notions that underlie different types of predication and interpret them as increasingly more successful attempts at defining something: "S is p" (Logic of Being) allows only for inadequate definitions of objects; "S is essentially p" (Logic of Essence) allows for better definitions; and "S is a good p" (Logic of the Concept) allows for the best and most exhaustive definitions. The more intelligible the definition of something is, the more "actual" it is for thought. "

As Horstmann rightly claims, ¹⁴ Pippin's Hegel uses Aristotle not to overcome Kant but to enrich him. The point Pippin's Hegel takes from Aristotle is not that objects, independently of being thought, are like thought. Pippin's Hegel rejects any metaphysics that "identifies thoughts with the essentialities of things". ¹⁵ Rather, Pippin's Hegel assumes that the only relevant objects are objects "as thought/judged". ¹⁶ They are all that any sense-making being will ever have. There may well be entities that are non-conceptual, but if there are, they are a non-topic. Pippin takes Hegel to broadly agree with the Aristotelian notion that nature "is something that is only actual as the object or content of mind". ¹⁷ I agree with Horstmann ¹⁸ that, for Pippin, "the object is a subjective representation of an object", besides which there is something else, namely the world insofar as it is not conceptualised and made sense of by a subject. ¹⁹

Therefore, when Pippin says his Hegel rejects what Pippin calls "impositionism",²⁰ one has to take this claim with caution. Pippin's Hegel rejects the Kantian self-limitation to the human subject and its species-specific way of knowing;²¹ he, therefore, rejects the notion of structures "imposed by us"²² onto content received from the world. There are limitations on how one can make sense of anything, but those limitations are logical, imposed by the aim of making coherent and intelligible assertions. Nevertheless, Pippin's Hegelian metaphysics is still an impositionism of sorts, insofar as it looks at the rules any finite, rational being necessarily uses to

make sense of the world – and, hence, imposes onto the world, which is otherwise senseless for any finite, rational being.

It is easy to agree with Pippin that it is pointless to try to inhabit a perspective besides the one that any thinking being necessarily inhabits. Nevertheless, it is helpful to note that Pippin's approach includes (i) empirical concepts, (ii) meta-concepts or norms that are "presupposed in any [empirical] specification",²³ and (iii) the world insofar as it is not "thought/judged".²⁴ Some may want to say that (iii) refers to a nonconceptual leftover, but this is too narrow. The world insofar as it is not thought or known also includes houses, cars, and tables, whose existence bears the mark of human concepts, but which are not identical to the representation or knowledge of them and which would continue existing if there were nobody to make sense of them. The world insofar as it is not known or thought about is irrelevant *for thought*, almost by definition. Nevertheless, it provides an input or matter required for empirical concept formation.

The fact that there is a remnant, something that does not belong to the theory of Pippin's Hegel, contradicts Hegel's claim to an *absolute* idealism, which encompasses everything, the entire subject and (all kinds of) object(s). The leftover of the world is also relevant in Pippin's social philosophy, where the natural and physical world can become relevant only when given the right normative form, while also providing some matter for thought or norm-based behaviour.

II

My Reading of Hegel's Metaphysics

Iber summarises the traditional metaphysical way in which many, primarily German Hegelians, interpret Hegel's metaphysics: Hegel supposes that "reality, be it spiritual or natural reality, is essentially structured by relations of form [Formverhältnisse], which are in turn graspable according to the formalities of our thought structures". Hegel enquires into the basic structural relations underlying mind-independent reality (as well as social reality and human reasoning). These structures can be analysed by means of human thinking, not because they stem from us, but because our reason is one realm within which these structures are at work. This is why Hegel's ontological inquiry takes the form of a logic, i.e. a science of thought.

I take Hegel's *Logic* to address the following question: how can plurality and the whole, unity and difference co-exist in the world, and what patterns enable or structure their co-existence? The *Logic* progresses from the simplest pattern possible to ever more complex and coherent patterns. After proposing that all that exists is just one undifferentiated being, Hegel is immediately forced to make space for plurality. He

proposes there must be "determinate being(s)" (WL1 115–38/109–28), a multiplicity of entities, which have being as a shared feature or are "something" distinct from "another" (WL1 225–131/117–122). He then goes on to discuss among other things: the "many" that are also just "one" entity spread out into many units (WL1 182–208/164–84); the unity that consists in "indifference" to the distinctions between things (WL1 445–56/375–88); things as the "appearances" that share the same origin or "essence" (WL2 147–63/499–511); the one "substance" and its "accidents" (E1 §\$150–2; WL2 186–99/530–40); the difference in unity that he calls "the concept" (WL2 273–300/600–21); the mechanical laws uniting objects (WL2 409–27/711–26); the organism as an internally differentiated system (E1 §216; WL2 476/766); and so on.

All these structures are not thought determinations or ways sensemaking beings coherently think of elements as belonging together. Rather they are patterns that exist in physical nature (independently of whether anybody makes sense of nature or not), as well as in human thought and interaction. Hegel assumes that everything in the world, be it natural, physical, or social, has a structure and displays one or several of the basic types of structuring discussed in the Logic. He presupposes a hierarchy of natural and spiritual entities from less to more complex, just as he supposes a hierarchy from simple to ever more complex logical structures. Simple things and elements of complex entities display simple structures from the beginning of the Logic, while complex logical structures systematically characterise more complex things and the interconnection of all things. This means that while the constellations at the beginning of the Logic can be exemplified by a stone, as well as by legal personhood, the later structures are only present in complex natural phenomena, organisms, and, finally, human thought, action, and interaction.

To understand this type of metaphysics, it is helpful to think of laws and regularities in nature like the elliptical movement of planets.²⁶ Ellipses are not empirical concepts; Kepler did not discover the elliptical form by observing nature. The ellipsis is a structure or shape that is arrived at by pure reason and yet it is also present in mind-independent reality. In other words, Hegel does not propose that planetary movements are described as elliptical in astrophysics. Rather, he says that planetary movements are elliptical, whether anybody knows or conceptualises it. And Hegel believes that this is a commonly held assumption. He laments our taking for granted that we cognise nature by means of reason, presupposing that physical, external nature is itself rational, while we do not accept that the same holds for social reality (EPR: 15/12). Hegel offers a "philosophical exposition that uses a so-called a priori method in an otherwise empirical science" (VG 87f/64). But like Kepler, this does not mean he is "importing ideas into matter" (VG 87f/64). The logical principles and structures that can be known a priori are present or active in the mind-independent world, as well as in society and human thought.

"Pre-Positing": Absolute Idealism and the Two Different Hegels

A key difference between my reading and Pippin's can be explained via Hegel's notion of pre-positing/presupposing and reflection. For Pippin, the *Logic* discusses "positing" and "reflection" on such positing, the presuppositions of judgements, and the "consciousness" of those presuppositions.²⁷ This point goes back to the core of Hegel's disagreement with Kant. Hegel delivered a scathing critique of Kant's position, which is derisively characterised as "pre-positing" and "external reflection" (WL2 31/404f.) with Kant developing a "philosophy of reflection" (GW). "Prepositing" or "presupposing" means positing something as un-posited, cheating oneself into believing that what one presupposes is independently true. Among other things, Hegel is referring to Kant's thing-initself. The thing-in-itself, the unknowable external reality is nothing but a posit by Kant.

The question is "What does Hegel conclude from this insight? Does he embrace this idea, as Pippin suggests, ²⁸ and argue that all objects are posited by thinking? Or is Hegel making the critical point that taking the object as an independent substance inaccessible to thought is but a creation of thought, a (possibly false) assumption?" Kant shows that an inaccessible object is necessarily implied in a judgement-based theory of knowledge, but judgements only provide a flawed and limited kind of knowledge, for Hegel. In fact, while metaphysicians like Spinoza or Leibniz are superior to Kant, insofar as they assume that "the determinations of thought are the basic determinations of objects" (E1 §28), one of their mistakes is to develop their theories by way of judgements.²⁹ When one overcomes this problematic type of knowledge, one can revitalise metaphysics and overcome Kant's unwarranted "fear of the object" (WL 45/51). That is to say, when one stops attributing predicates to subject terms, guided by the principles and requirements of subjective thought, and begins observing an object's own internal structure and the unfolding of its elements, then one can start to see that the object is itself rational and conceptually structured. This is the position of my metaphysical Hegel: mind-independent reality, the physical and external world is knowable, and akin to thought.

Interpreting Hegel in this way allows one to make better sense of both Hegel's absolute idealism and his opposition to the "subjective idealism" of Kant and Fichte. It is a significant weakness in Pippin's approach that he not only interprets Hegel's *Logic* as a theory of judgement, but also proposes a strong link between Hegel and these two thinkers. For Hegel, Fichte's and Kant's "subjective idealism states: There are no external things; they are but a determination of our self" (VGP 207) and "real

existence . . . external being is sublated in the simplicity of the I, it is only for me, it is ideally within me" (WL1 137/155).³⁰ Hegel's absolute idealism, by contrast, agrees with "ordinary realistic consciousness" (E1 §45A) – i.e. Hegel accepts that there are many objects that would continue to exist (and have the same logical structure) after the demise of sense-making beings. Nevertheless, Hegel's philosophy is a form of idealism, as he proposes that what seems to exist independently must be considered an "ideal moment" of a broader system (E1 §160A), whose basic structure he calls "the Idea".³¹ Schelling (1994: 138, 143, 151), Hegel's erstwhile friend and collaborator, notes in many places that Hegel wanted to encompass the material world in his philosophy: "existence", "nature", and not merely their concepts. And he remarks that Hegel follows a pre-Kantian, Leibnizian rationalist metaphysics in doing so, presupposing that mind-independent reality can be known through pure reason.³²

Does this difference matter for Hegel's *Realphilosophie*? Yes. A structural metaphysical reading can do justice to the richness of Hegel's thought, as it relies on Hegel's method of sublation (*Aufhebung*). The German term "aufheben" means "to keep", and Hegel claims that he keeps elements of all criticised positions and relations. In my reading, this means that simpler logical relations are elements of the more coherent structures discussed later in the *Logic*. It also means that all parts of the *Logic* have some relevance for each part of his *Realphilosophie*. This is to say: you can show how the simple types of structures presented in the Logic of Being are at work in parts of today's social world – in simpler relations like abstract right.³³

For Pippin, by contrast, only the end of the *Logic*, namely the concept as he interprets it, captures modern society. Furthermore, the "domain of relevance" of the *Logic* is, on Pippin's reading, primarily the realm of philosophy: "those objects about which we say nonempirically what they are: *Geist*, the state, friendship, art, religion".³⁴ Hegel's metaphysics provides guidelines to define something coherently and argues that the more intelligible something is, the more actual it is for sense-making beings. This is most relevant for notions that can be defined "nonempirically", meaning: (almost) exclusively conceptually, with little reference to sensory detail. The notions Pippin mentions like art or friendship function as norms, which actual empirical phenomena need to embody in order to count as true art or a true friendship.

In my reading, on the contrary, Hegel's metaphysics applies to the entire natural and social world. Hegel detects basic structuring principles that are part of the thing's *own* structure, the physical blood circulation (not the description of it), the interaction between organs, the structure of a plant, and so on. Before discussing Hegel's social philosophy in more detail, it is important to specify what exactly Hegel refers to when he speaks of society, on the two readings.

Hegel's Social World and Social Individuals

For Pippin, Hegel's metaphysics is not concerned with the "furniture of the universe".³⁵ Similarly, Hegel's social philosophy is not concerned with what there is in society, cars, buildings, human bodies, quasinatural regularities. Pippin's Hegel is interested in "the normative, the type of actions that are characterised by the effort of 'doing it correctly'".³⁶

Pippin's Hegel basically transforms Habermas's notion of a social space governed only by the structures of rational argumentation, by saying that (i) what counts as rational argumentation is largely historical and intersubjectively developed rather than *a priori*, and (ii) the entire modern social world is a social space thus reconceived. For Pippin, the modern social order derives its authority not from an appeal to brute force or a God-given right, but from an appeal to reasons, as does the authority of the different positions and roles within this society. This is why modern society is more "actual" than earlier societies, a better expression of "what a real social order is", ³⁷ namely one that is appropriate to thinking beings. The acts and roles of human beings function like claims that others freely reject or accept based on collectively shared norms.

For Pippin, "freedom is normatively constrained judgement and rational action". The norms or reasons that make me an actual subject can only be obtained from and validated within practices or social roles by receiving, interpreting, and presenting as reasons the considerations that people usually have as parents, consumers, property owners, and so on. Being an actual subject is not a natural fact but requires acting in a way that makes me an intelligible instance of subjectivity. While the norms or definitions of what it is to be a subject or a property owner are themselves historical, their intelligibility depends on ahistorical meta-concepts outlined in the *Logic*. The historical norms are constantly revised, discussed, and improved and lose their validity if most individuals come to find them indefensible. Additionally, and importantly, norms are only binding for any individual if there is a "genuinely subjective" endorsement on the part of that individual, rather than a mere "re-enactment of an inherited convention". *40

My traditional metaphysical Hegel, by contrast, makes the realist point that society does not primarily consist in practices and norms that bind persons only if they agree with them and that cease to exist once we all disagree with them. Everything is structured, but only some aspects of some structures are norm-based practices. In fact, there is an enormous infrastructural, legal, logistical underbelly to our social world that would not change immediately even if we changed our collective mind.

Let us take the market as an example: while exchange of equivalents, equal rights for all persons, and the "fulfilment of a contract" can be

considered some of the norms of the market, those norms are different from the structure of the market in the sense of economic laws like the price mechanism. One could say that human beings may refrain from participating in market relations; in this sense, there is an element of consent. However, one does not really have the option of not participating – unless one goes to absolute extremes. Similarly, a particular person may decide not to abide by the norms governing fatherhood. But from parental leave to the lack of baby changing units in men's restrooms, there are many legal, institutional, and even infrastructural limits that make dissenting very difficult. And even if we all managed to erase racism from every corner of our minds, there would still be books, songs, and statues, as well as unequal income distribution, housing segregation, missed job opportunities, maternal deaths, incarcerations, life chances, and much more that would still bear the mark of racism.

In my reading, Hegel starts with the basic assumptions that (i) all interpersonal (and other) relations distribute positions of power, functions, and roles – and exist within a large structured web of relations (i.e. *pace* Pippin, structures are not those of rational coherence that free and equal agents require of each other); (ii) those structures have an independence from human beings that goes beyond mere habit (i.e. *pace* Pippin, structures are not just binding if and to the extent that we consider them valid); (iii) in contrast to what Pippin's Hegel suggests, structures are not necessarily something good or conducive to human freedom.

It is worth expanding on point (iii). Pippin's Hegel blurs the distinction between "the normative", in the sense of practices that involve notions of how one does something right, and the normative question of whether those practices are good. Partly, this has to do with the fact that Pippin only looks at modern society, within which, he assumes, authority is justified by convincing reasons.⁴² And, partly, it has to do with the notion that social practices enable us to be subjects in the first place. But there are stable social practices and roles – e.g. the Mafia code or cisgender, "real" masculinity - which provide a sense of self and reasons that are adequate given the contexts. And yet, these stable social practices and norms, however, are not necessarily positive ones. To make matters worse, the possibility of individual criticism or "genuinely subjective" 43 endorsement is limited. Since human beings are subjects only by participating in practices, they can criticise practices only based on other practices in which they partake. Freedom and my evaluation of society thus have much to do with a coherence of commitments. But this coherence can be interpreted very differently: the equality of persons may seem to contradict a strong male-female distinction, while the importance of specific roles speaks in favour of it. And even if modern social norms were coherent, it is debatable whether they work to the benefit of most people.

Pippin adds other elements to his account to avoid this problem. For example, Pippin suggests that, for Hegel, the "realisation of the object's

potential", like one's masculinity, only carries a normative weight if this "object itself is a rationally required component of the objective human world, required for that world to be truly a human one". 44 Again, this is a vague criterion for an important distinction. Discourses on masculinity, for example, go both ways, with some arguing that a strong male-female distinction and/or proactive men are important for our value system, the family, or even the survival of mankind, and others denying it.

In my reading, by contrast, the normative question of whether a structure is good is separate from the question of whether there are structures at play (which there always are). This is so for two reasons. First, human beings are in a much stronger position to evaluate and make demands on society. This is so not only because Hegel's *Logic* provides them with the notion of what the best social order ought to be like. More importantly, human beings have complex identities that do not coincide with practices or roles – and which enable them to notice and complain when a structure works to their disadvantage. Human beings cannot only reason or, indeed, have valid needs within the realm provided by them. This is so because of the natural composition of human beings, their reflective capacity, and simply because norm-based practices are not all there is in society, and hence human beings are subjected and react to much more pressures and realities than reasons and norms.

Second, the Logic shows that not all structures benefit the elements involved. In fact, more specifically, Hegel proposes that the market economy is a "monstrous system" that needs to be "tamed like a wild beast" (IS 230/249), as he puts it in the early Jena years. Lisa Herzog has convincingly shown that this remains Hegel's position in his *Philosophy* of Right, 45 where, while drawing on Smith's account of the price mechanism or "invisible hand", he remains critical of said mechanism. I want to propose that Hegel understands the market laws with the help of his logical notion of "objective laws," which he describes as the "cunning of reason" (E1 §209A). Objective laws pick up on the internal characteristics of objects (their weight and volume or, in a social context, the preferences and decisions of individuals). Nevertheless, because the object contains its characteristics as a mere "aggregate" (WL2 411/712), i.e. in an unstructured manner, it cannot establish relations to other objects based on its character. Therefore, the relations between objects take the form of a law-like, external imposition or "violence" (WL2 420–1/721) towards the objects. Similarly, market laws function like an "external" or "blind necessity" (E3 §532) imposing prices, deciding who can buy and sell, and where investments are made, and they do so by accumulating the unstructured decisions of atomistic market participants.

This means that modern individuals experience the market as not reflecting their needs, interests, or intentions – which enables them to reflect on, formulate, and specify their interests. And it also leads Hegel to conclude, as will be seen at the end of the next section, that the function

of the political institutions is for individuals to collectively control and re-appropriate the market.

V

Overcoming Moralität and the Standpoint of Agency

In my reading, Pippin's Hegel fails to truly overcome the standpoint of *Moralität*, or, indeed, the standpoint of agency. Hegel derives the term "*Moralität*" or "morality" from the French "le moral" as opposed to "le physique" (E3 §503). Morality encompasses everything internal that a subject wants to externalise (E3 §503), which includes purposes, intentions, and one's notion of the good. In the Morality chapter in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel shows that freedom based on individual agency is important, but flawed and insufficient. While Pippin is adamant that Hegel does not pursue a theory of "causal agency", ⁴⁶ of atomistic agents independently causing their actions, his Hegel, in contrast to mine, nevertheless remains concerned with agency – with its social conditions or constitution.

I will sketch Hegel's argument in the Morality chapter to show where the two interpretations diverge. Hegel distinguishes three types of acting: acting on purpose, with intention, and based on one's conscience. "The aim [of the Morality chapter] is that this subjective will becomes identical to the concept of the will; in itself it is identical with it" (PRV21: §114). The structure of the Morality chapter is based on the assumption that the subjective will, the will of any one particular actor, ought to become identical to the concept of free willing. The concept of free willing is self-relation, an identity with oneself (EPR: §108A); Hegel interprets the (Kantian) demand of a non-contradiction of the will as an identity between the will's internal aim and its external expression, or the "maxim" and the "act" (PRV19: §105).47 With each new form of acting Hegel discusses, the aspect of self-relation in the individual's interaction with the world can thus be expected to increase ideally to a point where change brought about by the act is nothing but an expression of the individual will and, hence, the individual act of willing completely instantiates the form of free willing.⁴⁸

Interestingly, Hegel presents the three types of acts both in terms of the self-relation or the "return into oneself" (EPR: §141N), and in terms of a "breach" (EPR: §118) between those aspects of the act that are wanted and those that are not, wherein the subject fails to be free. Hegel summarises the progression of the Morality chapter as follows: "Subjectivity – return into itself – α) knowledge of what is immediate – β) the universal of the deed – γ) the universal nature in terms of the concept – the good" (EPR: §141N). When acting on purpose, one wants the "immediate" movement of one's muscles and their immediate

effect; one wants and achieves an "alteration to this given existence [Dasein]" (EPR: §115). The problem is that there is a "breach within the action . . . between what is given and simply there and what is produced [by me]" (EPR: §118). What is "given" conditions my act and is not part of my freedom. My deed is at the mercy of "external forces" and has "remote and alien consequences" (EPR: §118) and, indeed, a social meaning I did not take into account. Acting with intention, by contrast, means wanting the "universal of the deed" (EPR: §141N), its social meaning and usual consequences, which therefore form part of my freedom.

When introducing intention, Hegel thus makes a point that Pippin,⁴⁹ Michael Quante,⁵⁰ and others have highlighted: the "act-description" of my act is not within my control; or, in Hegel's words, acts have a "universal predicate" (EPR: §119) and exist within "circumstances" (EPR: §119A) that I must acknowledge. If I want my act to be understood correctly and not done away with, my action has to "conform to what is recognised as valid in the world" (EPR: §132).

If this were Hegel's last word on the matter, Katerina Deligiorgi rightly points out, agency would be reduced to "social etiquette" whereupon acts are evaluated against "what is socially current at any one time". However, Hegel says that when realising an intention, there is a "breach" between "what is given externally as a universal will and the particular determination I attribute to it" (EPR: §118). The universal meaning of an act is given to me by social custom. What I intend with this deed, in terms of my well-being or simply what I want my deed to mean, is not necessarily identical to the social meaning.

The subject thus encounters a dilemma that Pippin's and my Hegel tackle very differently. There seem to be two impossible alternatives: On the one hand, there is (i) the possibility of choosing between and enacting given social options. Hegel famously rejects choice as a strong form of freedom. He does so not because the options offered by society may be bad or one may not know how to decide between them. Rather, the problem is that the "will has some content, but not subjectivity itself as its content" (EPR: §120N):

The good and the right are also a content – not just a natural content, but a content that is posited by my rationality itself; and to make my freedom the content of my will is a pure determination of my freedom itself.

(EPR: §121A)

Freedom in a strong sense cannot consist in the formality that I have chosen this option, that I agree with the norm governing my behaviour. The highest degree of freedom requires that the content of my will, what I want, stems from me.

This notion of freedom (ii), at least when read along Kantian lines, also seems *impossible*. Enacting purely the "concept of the will", the pure form of free willing would, indeed, mean total freedom because it is me determining myself without any external input. However, Kant's pure principle of freedom is famously "non-productive" (EPR: §135A) for Hegel: one cannot derive any content, any specific aims, social structures or rules from Kant's formal principle of freedom. Hence, Kant's formal principle of freedom cannot inform any actions.

This is where Pippin and I diverge: For Pippin, Hegel chooses option (i). Pippin's Hegel opposes any prescription by "pure practical reason" or, indeed, by pure theoretical reason. For Pippin, individuals have to "genuinely subjectively" appropriate or interpret the socially given. ⁵³ In my reading, by contrast, Hegel argues for option (ii). Subjectivity, the free will, and reason have a specific, unchanging, and pure structure, and he proposes that wanting this structure (to exist in the world) is the true form of freedom. Kant was right to demand a pure, *a priori* principle of freedom, but he defined it incorrectly. If defined correctly, this *a priori* principle is productive and enables us to see what the best society is like.

From where does this new principle of freedom and its implied, complex structure suddenly emerge? Hegel only obliquely references the Actuality chapter in his Logic of Essence.⁵⁴ Throughout his Logic, Hegel discusses ever more complex ways of uniting plurality and the whole. I take it that these structures are nothing but basic types of freedom or "being with oneself in the other", ways in which a whole is self-related in its parts and those parts are "with themselves", affirmed or not by the whole and other elements. Hegel's *Logic* thus not only improves Kant's notion of what freedom is, namely not pure self-relation, but a selfrelation that involves otherness. More importantly, the development of the Logic shows that this revised principle of freedom is "productive"; it generates a very complex and specific structure from a first notion that unity and difference co-exist. Hegel references the Actuality chapter because after discussing atomistic persons and separate subjects sharing the same moral essence, he starts analysing the social whole – and how it is "actualised" in its elements, expressed and visible in their interrelation. 55

VI

The State-Subject and State-Organism

In my reading, Hegel thus proposes that the structures of free relations discussed in the *Logic* pre-define which structures the best type of state needs to display. Pippin's Hegel suggests something ostensibly similar. The political state can be considered good because it is the "embodiment of rational self-legislation". The problem is, of course, that any state is self-legislating if sovereign, which means that one needs a much

more detailed argument to show why Hegel's version of the modern state best embodies self-legislation. Pippin can refrain from specifying further, because the notion that the state embodies self-legislation is unimportant for his account. The argument is neither that individuals ought to want the pure principle of self-legislation and measure the state against it, nor that one can deduce a concrete state structure from such a principle. Rather, the argument is that human beings need social practices to have reasons for acting and, then – almost as an afterthought – that modern practices are good, because they are similar to a subject. And Pippin attributes only a "light," "non-regulative" notion of political institutions to Hegel.⁵⁷

This contrasts with a more traditional metaphysical reading. From this viewpoint, the question is "What are the key logical structures discussed form the Actuality chapter onward and what do they mean for Hegel's account of the state in his Philosophy of Right?" Henrich,58 Habermas, 59 and others have worried about Hegel's logical notions of absolute subjectivity and the organism, and their link to state-subject and stateorganism. Does the state-subject reduce human beings to its tools? Does the state-organism attribute predetermined functions to them? In my reading, Hegel's Logic paints a different picture. Hegel's reasoning concerns the whole, which in social terms he calls "the state", meaning society as a whole, as opposed to the political institutions, which he calls "the political state" (EPR: §§267, 273). Hegel argues that the whole or absolute cannot be something that exists alongside finite things (human beings). If it were, it would not be all-encompassing and would consequently be instable and incoherent. The whole must rather be present in finite things and their relations. The whole can only be present in finite things and their relations if it is nothing but an expression of their natures or characters (their respective interests and collective decisions).

Paul Giladi is therefore right to defend Hegel against Adorno's worries that Hegel disregards individuality in the search for unity. 60 Individuality requires negation or differentiation for Hegel, to be sure; however, that does not mean that individuals are nothing but knots in a web of relations or nothing but their differences from others. Hegel overcomes this viewpoint already within the Logic of Being and argues for an internal self-differentiation as well. What that implies first comes to the fore in Hegel's concept of "formed matter" (WL2 93f/454), whereby he proposes that matter has its own form. The total relations of form must express matter's form rather than impose a form onto unformed matter. 61 The separation between the absolute and finite things can only be overcome, as Hegel puts it, if the whole and finite things are "one and the same content," and only display "a difference in form" (E1 §153A). The most emphatic formulation of this reasoning can be found in the transition to the logical notion of the organism, which recovers and specifies a structure Hegel calls the Concept: "[E]xternal determinateness

[of finite things] has now further developed into self-determining" (WL2 444/740). "The object must spontaneously (out of its own impetus) unite into the unity of the Concept" (WL2 451/746). A whole with the form of the Concept is nothing but the relations things establish "out of their own impetus".

Pace Henrich, Hegel explicitly says that the (state-)organism does not refer to pre-established functions, "determinations that are external to/ for (them)" (WL2 457/750), into which human beings must fit. Pace Pippin, it does not mean that human beings only become individuals, and fully human, by inhabiting roles. Rather, human beings have identities and (particular economic) interests, and the state-organism, namely the estates assembly with representatives for each professional group, is where they coordinate those interests to ensure that their relations benefit all groups.⁶²

The organism is an aesthetic Romantic ideal.⁶³ It denotes both the beauty of a proportionate, balanced order (where no organ or social group dominates the others) and a natural, free self-organisation of the participating groups. Hegel contrasts an organicist state with a mechanistic or "machine" state (VD 481/22), where rulers treat social groups like lifeless parts of a machine. Hegel speaks of a "spiritless" administrative state where a "formless mass" of atomistic individuals is "regulated from above" (VD 484/25). The rulers feel an "illiberal jealousy of the independent command and organisation of an estate, corporation etc." (VD 481/22) and do not allow for "the participation of one's own will in universal affairs" (VD 482/23). In an organicist state, by contrast, estates assembly is the powerful legislative and market-regulating organ where different groups represent and coordinate their interest to their mutual benefit. They do so not only by making laws, but also by approving the budget (see E3 §544), regulating prices, and even, if necessary, "determining everyone's labour" (EPR: §236).64

Hegel's notion of absolute, self-knowing state-subjectivity adds two propositions: in the best social order, subject and object need to be identical (human beings and social groups are both the subject and the object of law-making) and human beings must know what they aim for in law-making. In the best social order, the members of the estates assembly consciously try to preserve an organic, well-balanced, and mutually beneficial organisation of interests as well as spaces where individuals can freely live other, less immediately interdependent aspects of their personalities.

VII

Empowering Real Individuals vs. Subjectivity as a Status

Despite its focus on the social whole and predetermined rational structures, the Hegel of my metaphysical reading empowers individuals – much

more so than Pippin's. Critics of a metaphysical reading of my sort have often admonished that individuals do not collectively decide what the best and most rational social order is like. This is true. However, Hegel is clear that human beings are free not to do what is most rational.⁶⁵ And it must be said that even on Pippin's reading, present-day individuals do not freely decide what the best society is either. They merely pick up on and, within the given social limits, evaluate what previous generations have assumed to be so.

But, in my reading, Hegel is more lenient, accepting, and empowering towards individuals in their entire personas, including their irrational, egoist, and natural aspects and particular interests. As noted, freedom is norm-based, "rational action" for Pippin.⁶⁶ The more reasons I can give for my action, the "freer" this action is, the more it is "genuinely mine".⁶⁷ This makes me a better or more complete actualisation of the essence of a human and thinking being. Since Pippin assumes that only social practices and roles provide us with reasons, this practically means the following: the more I can inhabit a role, take the reasons or considerations offered for a role to be mine, shape my drives, needs, and desires in a manner that is adequate to my role, the freer and the more fully human I am.⁶⁸

In my reading, by contrast, Hegel assumes that, legally, one cannot be more or less of a person and any act is, as a matter of fact, attributed to the individual who acted (even though the sentence will be more lenient if one was overtaken by emotions). Hegel does not add normative pressure to this legal fact; he does not add the notion that one is a better, fuller, freer actualisation of a human being, the better one can explain one's acts. In fact, I believe Hegel is open to the idea that freedom also requires not having to be a coherent subject all of the time. *Pace* McDowell (2007), irrational impulses do not need to be rationalised because they need not be attributable to me. Hegel allows for individuals to be irrational and egoistic, to act on natural impulses, and to refrain from giving reasons to themselves and others.⁶⁹ The term "rationality" has its most important application not in human beings, but in the social structure, which ought to be rational, in the sense of a coherent, inclusive, harmonious order.

Furthermore, for Pippin, individuals have to come to the "habitualised understanding" that what appear to be "sacrifices of individuality or the domination of individuals by larger social wholes" are actually part of their freedom.⁷⁰ They need to "accept the purpose of the world as their own" and want to participate in "the good" or "what the state of the world requires".⁷¹

In my reading, by contrast, there is no universal good, no "purpose of the world" or state besides the rational structuring and coordination of particular interests and the coherent inclusion of all aspects of human beings. Otherwise, the common good would be an empty notion.⁷² Hegel could not anticipate the complexities of today's identities and probably

underestimated those that existed in his time. Nevertheless, his reasoning implies that, when Sara Ahmed writes about a world that does not "accommodate" her as a homosexual woman of colour, it is not up to her to try to feel accommodated and come to believe that her true identity consists in the roles she inhabits. Rather, it is up to the social world to ensure that the groups she belongs to have the power to shape the world in such a way that it corresponds to their needs and interests as much as to those of others.

I thus agree with Honneth⁷⁴ that capturing the normative element of Hegel's argument involves focusing on his ideal of a complete inclusion of all individuals with all their aspects. The difference lies in what we take this to mean. This is not the place to discuss potential internal weaknesses of Honneth's position, such as an overly partitioned stereotypical view of human beings and their needs (for types of recognition), or his focus on recognition in the sense of the subject feeling supported and accepted (rather than human beings shaping their world). The fundamental difference between Honneth's more pragmatist and my more metaphysical approach relates back to the relation between the universal and the particular. Giladi is right to point out that Adorno criticised Hegel for prioritising the universal over the particular or prioritising unity over plurality. However, at least in my reading, the solution is not to say that what really matters for Hegel is intersubjectivity, human beings, and their structured relations.

Rather, the whole or unity is, indeed, of paramount interest for Hegel. This is his controversial but compelling core metaphysical proposition. However, the question remains: What does the best social whole look like for Hegel? I argue that it is an organic collective subjectivity. Unlike Honneth's, Pippin's, and, indeed, Giladi's reading, my Hegel is thus not concerned with the intersubjective conditions or "relational institutions" required for individuals to achieve self-realisation and a healthy subjectivity. In my reading, Hegel is not concerned with "the reciprocal satisfaction of their individual aims", others promoting my "preferred form of self-realisation". He is not concerned with my choice, my project, my perception of said project and of the participation of others in it. This is too subjectivist.

In my reading, Hegel begins with the social whole, admits its predominance, and then proposes that he knows how it ought to be shaped, namely as an organism and collective subjectivity along the lines described in his *Logic*. By proposing this metaphysical structure to be realised in social reality, Hegel empowers individuals through the backdoor, as it were, by pointing out that the best structure is the one in which individual (economic) groups coordinate their interests (which they have not as a matter of choice or self-perception, but as a by-product of occupying a position within a structured system). Hegel is, certainly, speaking of

"institutionalising cooperation" in the labour, and, indeed, commodity market. Giladi (2020) and Bernardo Ferro are right: Hegel not only rejects a purely representative democracy, but his critique of capitalism also raises the question whether what Hegel envisions is still a capitalist economy. But Hegel insists on the importance of coordination, not in order for individuals to realise their projects. Coordination is required because Hegel speaks of identities, and he understands those identities (e.g. being a woman or person of colour) as roles or positions of power within a structure wherein another group benefits from them and will have to pay a certain cost when the other group asserts its interests.

In this chapter, I have outlined key differences between a more traditional metaphysical Hegel, closer to Marx, and a more pragmatic and (politically) liberal Hegel proposed by Pippin. While the social philosophy and metaphysics of my more traditional Hegel certainly do not provide a blueprint for a better society, they offer much needed input and a different perspective on the social whole, its power, and the best way to be free within it. Hegel proposes that all relations are structured and that we cannot be free unless we re-appropriate them; unless we collectively negotiate our different interests, find a mutually beneficial and balanced compromise, and then shape social structures accordingly by means of laws and market regulations. I can only agree with Adorno who insisted that one ought to ask "what the present means in the face of Hegel", 81 rather than whether "Hegel has any meaning for the present". In other words, rather than claiming this and that Hegelian notion is outdated and idealist, it is more fruitful to acknowledge and discuss what Hegel believed necessary and possible, and measure reality against it.82

Notes

- 1. See, for example the contributions to De Laurentiis (2016).
- 2. See Thompson (2018a).
- 3. I return to Schelling's anti-Kantian take on Hegel in Section 3. Marx (1973) famously takes inspiration from Hegel's *Logic* to analyse the structures and mechanism of the capitalist economy. For him, Hegel's philosophy concerns not rules for judgement or thought, but the real, mind-independent, physical world, within which Hegel detects rational structures (Marx mistakenly interprets this as a God-like subject realising itself in the world, which he opposes). See Marx (2005: 27, 1973: 101). Adorno is also clear that Hegel's metaphysics, in opposition to Kant's, is supposed to grasp the world as it is apart from being thought or experienced. See Adorno (1993: 307).
- 4. Pippin (2019: 61).
- 5. Pinkard has proposed that Hegel's *Logic* discusses the implications of concepts encountered empirically in the history of philosophy, for example. See Pinkard (1990: 835).
- 6. Horstmann (1984: 250).
- 7. For very recent critiques of the authoritarian reading of Hegel, see Baumann (Forthcoming) and Giladi (2017, 2020).

- 8. Pippin (2019: 271).
- 9. See for example VLM 93; 96; WL1 183/164; WL2 277/603; E1 §163A. That Hegel's entire *Logic* discusses forms of "being with oneself in the other" is my original proposition (Baumann 2012). Others have argued that Hegel discusses one relational topic throughout his *Logic*, which they do not identify with freedom (see Baumann 2012, Forthcoming: n41).
- 10. Pippin (2019: 44, 36, 137).
- Pippin (2019: 190). I have provided an overview of Pippin's claims in Baumann (2019).
- 12. See Pippin (2019: 254).
- 13. Pinkard's claim remains valid that if one goes into detail and interprets each specific Hegelian concept as underlying a type of predication, the story becomes very odd. See Pinkard (1990).
- 14. See Horstmann (2019: 1039).
- 15. Pippin (2019: 42, cf. 124).
- 16. Ibid., p. 131.
- 17. Ibid., p. 227f.
- 18. See Horstmann (2019: 1042).
- 19. One can also say, with John Burbidge (2014: 103, 106), that Pippin's Hegel still proposes a "logic", rather than "a fully-fledged metaphysics one that probes into the being and ground of the universe that exists whether we happen to be thinking it or not".
- 20. See Pippin (2019: 80).
- 21. Pippin (2019: 126, 286).
- 22. Ibid., p. 5.
- 23. Ibid., p. 15.
- 24. Ibid., p. 131.
- 25. Iber (2000: 15).
- 26. See VG 87/64.
- 27. Pippin (2019: 131, cf. 234).
- 28. Namely, Pippin (1989: 201).
- 29. See Horstmann (1990: 23-37).
- 30. As seen earlier, Pippin's Hegel denies that the object is "for me" and proposes that the only relevant object is the object "as thought/judged" (Pippin 2019: 131). Hence, he speaks of objects as they are "for thought" or "for any sensemaking being".
- 31. See Stern (2008).
- 32. Namely Schelling (1994: 144, 162).
- 33. See Baumann (2018b).
- 34. Pippin (2019: 303).
- 35. Namely Pippin (2019: 36, 137).
- 36. Pippin (2005: 66).
- 37. Pippin (2008: 259).
- 38. Pippin (2019: 147).
- 39. See Pippin (2008: 263–264).
- 40. Pippin (2008: 69).
- 41. Pippin (1997: 388).
- 42. Namely "The norm's sanctioning force has some relation to intelligibility and universal justifiability" (Pippin 1997: 394).
- 43. Pippin (2008: 69).
- 44. Ibid., p. 259.
- 45. See Herzog (2013: 51-58).
- 46. Pippin (2019: 271).

- 47. See EPR: \$135 for the demand of non-contradiction. As Angelica Nuzzo (2011: 643, 644) puts it, the imperative requires avoiding "a contradiction in the action itself", more precisely in the "actual realisation of action".
- 48. See PRV21: §114.
- 49. Namely Pippin (2008: 153).
- 50. Namely Quante (1993: 112).
- 51. Deligiorgi (2012: 190).
- 52. Pippin (2019: 310).
- 53. This stretches Hegel's expressions like wanting a "content that is posited by my rationality itself", having "subjectivity itself as a content", having "the concept of the will" as my intention. And it does not help in overcoming the standpoint of individual agency. Admittedly, Pippin proposes that the state mirrors a Kantian type of self-legislation. However, this argument has a very different status than proposition (ii).
- 54. See EPR: §§130, 132.
- 55. For the logical structure of Abstract Right, see Baumann (2018b); see also Baumann (2012).
- 56. Namely Pippin (2008: 260-262).
- 57. Pippin (2008: 262).
- 58. Namely Henrich (1983: 31).
- 59. Namely Habermas (1988: 53).
- 60. Namely Giladi (2017: 217).
- 61. Henrich (1976: 210) proposes: "the manifold of things must be itself differentiated and also opposed to the whole.... Only thus can the unification with the whole be in correspondence with what it [the manifold] itself is".
- 62. See Baumann (2018a).
- 63. See Chytry (1989: 142).
- 64. See also Houlgate (1991: 204–205). Giladi (2017: 222, 2020) is, therefore, right to insist that Hegel's rational state is not the liberal state of modern capitalism.
- 65. See VR1 14.
- 66. Pippin (2019: 147).
- 67. Ibid., p. 112.
- 68. For Pippin (2005: 69), drives need to be "rationalised", in the sense that I adequately take others into account when satisfying them. I can do so only as a concrete ethical being, i.e. along the guidelines provided by fatherhood, citizenship, market participation, and so on.
- 69. See Baumann (2018b).
- 70. Pippin (2019: 271).
- 71. Ibid., p. 309.
- 72. See Bauman (2018a: 71–78).
- 73. Namely Ahmed (2017: 14).
- 74. Namely Honneth (2003: 218-220).
- 75. Honneth (2014: 176).
- 76. Ibid., p. 62.
- 77. Zurn (2015: 162).
- 78. Giladi (2020: 329).
- 79. Namely Ferro (2019: 233).
- 80. See Baumann (2018a).
- 81. HTS: 1.
- 82. I am extremely grateful to James Clarke, Paul Giladi, and Terry Pinkard for their very helpful comments.

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- Abbreviations of works by Hegel German page number/English page number.
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- PRV21 Die Philosophie des Rechts. Vorlesungen von 1821/22. H. Hoppe (ed.). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005.
- VD 'Die Verfassung Deutschlands'. In *Frühe Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971.
- VG Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986; Lectures on the Philosophy of History. J. C. Friedrich (ed.), J. Sibree (trans.). Mineola, NY: Dover, 1956.
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