

## **Individuals: the revisionary logic of Hegel's politics<sup>1</sup>**

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A common place in the interpretation of Hegel's political philosophy is that it contains powerful criticisms of liberal individualism and advances strongly institutionalist proposals.<sup>2</sup> My aim in this essay is not to contribute directly to this discussion. Rather I want to examine Hegel's analysis of the category of 'individual' in the *Science of Logic*. Getting to grips with the logic of 'individual' is important in helping us make sense both of his criticism of the politics of individualism, discussed at length in the literature, and his recognition of the positive, liberating function of modern individualism.

What the discussion in the *Logic* shows is that there are two ways of understanding the category of 'individual' the first of which Hegel's argument undermines, the second it preserves. The one he undermines is the conception of 'individual' understood as something that counts as one by virtue of not being reducible to something else. This sense of individual comes very close to what modern metaphysicians call a 'simple', which is whatever is taken as basic in our discussions about the world.<sup>3</sup> If we look at contemporary moral and political philosophy, we will have no difficulty in finding examples of this use of 'individual'. References to the cognitive and volitional powers of individuals, their practical skills, level of epistemic competence, rights, self-expression, want-satisfaction, preferences and so on, presuppose that we use 'individual' to mean something that counts as one by virtue of not being reducible to something else. The substantive moral and political claims advanced on behalf of individuals, so understood, can, of course, be criticised without recourse to logical arguments, Hegel's or anyone else's.<sup>4</sup> Our task here, however, is not to argue for or against substantive positions in politics or ethics. Rather it is the more modest one of understanding Hegel's own views. The advantage of going about it through the *Logic* is that his criticisms of the political manifestations of these simples are shown to be not mere correctives of individualism, they are an invitation to rethink systematically what we mean by 'individual', what we care about politically, and who in each case is the 'we' who undertake such critical reflection on our words and on our aspirations.

I just said that there is a second way of understanding 'individual' that Hegel's argument preserves. If we look in the literature on Hegel's social and

political philosophy, however, we do not find such a notion; we find attention focused on his positive arguments about interpersonal relations, such as recognition, and the practices and institutions of ethical life. The notion of individual presupposed in these discussions is the notion of the simple outlines above and this is what gives rise to the usual conundrum about how Hegel can strike a balance between 'the individual' and 'the social'.<sup>5</sup> A rare exception is Kenneth Westphal who comes up with a positive definition of individuality summarised in three theses that make up what he calls 'moderate collectivism':

MC1. Individuals are social practitioners. Everything a person does, says, or thinks is formed in the context of social practices that provide material and conceptual resources, objects of desire, skills, procedures, techniques, and occasions and permissions for action et cetera.

MC2. What individuals do depends on their own response to their social and natural environment.

MC3. There are no individuals, no social practitioners, without social practices and vice versa no social practices without social practitioners, individuals who learn, participate in, perpetuate, and *who modify* those social practices as needed to meet their changing needs, aims, and circumstances (including procedures and information). (Westphal 2003: 107 emphasis in the original)

These three theses do not appear to be making excessive philosophical demands of the sort that would warrant a re-conception of the category of individual.<sup>6</sup> Moderate collectivism is a readily graspable view about the ways we form and are formed by our environment and is routinely assumed in disciplines such as social anthropology or political economy. What I want to show, however, is that for Hegel to think consistently in this fashion requires that we give up on the unitary conception of individual and replace it with one that is quite a bit more demanding than the moderate theses Westphal attributes to Hegel. Hegel's alternative to the unitary conception is one in which 'individual' is an incomplete term: in order to fully characterise what makes someone an individual, further information must be adduced. Hegel's logical revision of the category of 'individual' supports Westphal's analysis of moderate collectivism while at the same time presents us with an open question concerning the complete specification of any given individual, a question, which, I want to argue, has important practical implications.

Section 1 examines the material from the *Logic* and substantiates the claims made in this introductory section about Hegel's criticism of the unitary

conception of individual. His positive conception remains however puzzling. Section 2 uses the resources of an argument by Peter Geach to help with this. Section 3 shows how the logical arguments map onto practical arguments. Section 4 returns to Westphal's moderate collectivism and draws some tentative conclusions about the relation between logic and politics.

## 1. 'Posited abstraction': the category of 'individual' in the *Logic*

Hegel treats the logical category of 'individual' (*das Einzelne*) in the second and final volume of the *Science of Logic* entitled 'Subjective Logic or the Doctrine of the Notion'. The volume has three sections, 'Subjectivity', which is where the discussion of 'The Individual' is located, 'Objectivity' and 'The Idea', which concludes the whole book.

Under 'Subjective Logic' Hegel treats mainly, though not exclusively, certain aspects of Kant's transcendental philosophy. The introduction to this volume, entitled 'The Notion in general', contains a detailed discussion of Kant's transcendental deduction from the first *Critique*. Given the prominence of this discussion, it is plausible to think that the whole volume on 'Subjective Logic' is concerned with the subjectivity of the synthetic unity of apperception or 'I', which Hegel also calls a 'unity of consciousness' (L 584, 6:254) and the conceptual nature of its synthesis, which allows Hegel to refer to the thinking activity of this 'I' as the 'Notion' (*Begriff*). Hegel credits Kant with the categorial expression of the unifying function of the 'I':

It is one of the profoundest and truest insights to be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the *unity* which constitutes the nature [*Wesen*] of the *Notion* is recognized as the *original synthetic unity of apperception*, as unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness (L 584, 6:254)

The purpose of this introductory discussion is to set out the problem the second volume aims to resolve, namely to uncover the nature of the Notion, 'what the Notion is' (L 585, 6:255). The question arises for Hegel because Kant does not fully explain how the thinking activity of the I can truly be thought as ground of all objectivity. Having acknowledged Kant's contribution then, Hegel aims to show that this Kantian inheritance needs revision and extension.<sup>7</sup> He argues that in order to grasp the I's unifying function, precisely so as to account for the 'unity of the Notion and reality' (L 587, 6:258), neither the (Kantian) categories of the understanding nor the mere thought of the 'I' can help. This is where he introduces what he calls 'the Idea'

(ibid.), which is a concept that represents or expresses 'the unity of Notion and reality'.<sup>8</sup> These general introductory remarks on 'The Notion in General' give us not just the context of the whole volume, but also of the chapter that immediately follows, on 'The Notion', which ends with a discussion of 'The Individual'. Prior to this discussion, however, Hegel makes some puzzling remarks in which he attributes individuality *to* the 'Notion'. I will therefore examine first this material and then turn to the explicit treatment of the category of the individual.

Hegel attributes individuality to the notion in the course of his critical engagement with Kant. He starts the section by identifying the limitations of Spinoza's conception of substance as lacking a unity that is manifest. I take this to mean that the unity of Spinozan substance is just given.<sup>9</sup> The requirement for such unity to be unmysterious to thought is what moves the argument forward and brings the 'Notion' properly into the discussion. By means of this move, Hegel introduces the 'Notion' qua transcendental unity of apperception and the whole Kantian thematic of the volume. It is in this context that he makes the claim that 'the Notion is the *individual*' (L 582, 6:252). He then explains the claim as follows: the identity of the Notion has 'the determination of negativity', which in turn, gives us the 'Notion of the Notion' (L 582, 6:252). These claims appear very opaque; one way of understanding what Hegel is saying here is by taking them as a Hegelian summary of an argument that can be found in Kant and which states that the notion (*Notio*) (A320) of transcendental subjectivity 'is known only through the thoughts that are its predicates' (Kant 1999: A346/ B404), i.e. it is not known in itself. So in Hegel's terms it is a 'negatively' determined individual. At the same time, Hegel says, the Notion is also a universal. This is again a difficult claim to understand not least because Hegel has not yet explained what theory of universals he espouses. But from the negative determination the plausible conclusion can be drawn that the Notion is not a substance and also not a universally distributed particular. So at this stage 'universal' can at most mean a class to which all particular acts of unification of the manifold belong. This is another way of trying to say that the Notion is a necessary principle of all cognition by every subject of cognition. So the Notion (understood still as the transcendental 'I') possesses universality and an individual identity that is to be conceived of negatively. Given the specificity of the context of the discussion of the individuality of the Notion, it would seem unlikely that we can draw any conclusions besides those relating to Hegel's interpretation of Kant. However there is something interesting going on here that has broader relevance to his conception of 'individual' as such. In attempting to convey more precisely the identity of the 'I', Hegel describes it as 'self-related negativity' that has individuality in the sense of 'opposing

itself to all that is other and excluding it' and which is individuated 'through its unity with the positedness' that constitutes the '*nature* of the I as well as of the Notion' (L 583 emphasis added, 6:252). The basic description of the individuality of the 'I' is given precisely in terms of what we called previously the standard modern view, as 'opposing itself to all that is other and excluding it', its individuation, however, is presented as something that is not a straightforward matter. Rather what makes something the individual it is has to do with its 'positedness', so individuation is a sort of relation that reveals the nature of the thing as individual such and such. It is in this manner, Hegel concludes that the concept of 'individual' gains 'concreteness' (L 603, 6:277).

With this in the background, let us now turn to the section on 'The Individual'.<sup>10</sup> The argument repeats the basic moves we found in the discussion of the individuality of the Notion adding detail and clarifying the structure of the presentation: we start basically with what seems to be an easy and unproblematic way of picking out individuals and then Hegel points out that the 'individual' is not thereby determined and that determination requires at least two relata. The first move is to describe individuality partially as what is involved when we identify something specific, a particular, a 'this ...' (L 618, 6:296). This identification is 'illusory' Hegel claims. This basic understanding of individuality makes it 'an illusory being within the universal' (L 619, 6:297). The idea seems to be that in seeking to determine that which is individual, we resort to features that are general, we seek to determine it 'through abstraction which lets drop the particular and rises to the higher and the highest genus' (L 619, 6:297). This abstraction, Hegel notes, 'is a sundering of the concrete and an isolating of its determinations; through it only single properties and moments are seized' (L 619, 6:297). So what is individual then? Hegel wants to hold onto to the idea of its connection to the original 'this' of particularity and also to the abstraction or formality of universality. His designation of individuality is 'posited abstraction' (L 621 and 622, 6:299 and 300). I want to suggest that we understand this designation as an invitation to consider fully determined individuality as a unity of form (the universality) and a substantive or 'concrete' element (the particular).

How is individuality to be fully determined though? The clue to answering this question is in the structure of the section on Subjectivity. On the one hand, we have an analysis of subjectivity as a concept that has a very distinctive nature, it is a unifying concept (the Notion) and as such it is an individual, in the sense of an 'I'. On the other hand, 'individual' is one element, together with 'universal' and 'particular', in the forms of thought

about reality. At the end of the discussion of individuality we do not have a full determination of it either as a form of thought nor as an 'I' and the reason for this is that Hegel has not yet discussed judgement, which on Kantian grounds, is the basic unit of cognition. To determine something fully is a matter of a special kind of judgement that gives us just what the thing is; Hegel calls this 'essential determination [*Wesentlichkeit*]' (L 643, 6:326). Judgement for Hegel is both an 'original partition' (L 622, 6:301 and 628, 6:304) and a unity, bringing together subjects, 'this' or what something '*simply is* [*das Seiende*] or *is for itself*' (L 627, 6:306) with predicates that signify something universal (ibid.). Using traditional subject-predicate logic, Hegel seeks to show that the basic form of thought in which a genus or universal is predicated of something aims at something that is not quite captured in the judgement form. To say truly of *x* that it is *y*, requires a certain agility in thinking that the universality of the *x* is concrete and the particularity of the *y* is an 'individualised universal' (L 662, 6:349). Hence, Hegel says, 'we have before us the determinate and fullfilled [*erfüllte*] copula, which formerly consisted in the abstract 'is'' (L 662, 6:350). The emphasis on the unity achieved through this new perspective on the copula or the judgement function, 'S is p', Hegel says, amounts to a step forward from judgement to syllogism (L 663, 6:351). While I am not going to follow Hegel's argument here, except to note that the move to syllogism is pivotal for the transition from the section on Subjectivity to that on Objectivity, it is clear from the material we covered so far that the direction of argument about the categories that Hegel puts in the section on Subjectivity is towards forms of thought that permit gathering together single elements of thought into systematic wholes in which these elements signify by virtue of the role they play in the bigger whole.<sup>11</sup>

So given this context how is individuality determined? Or in other words, what is Hegel's positive theory? And following from this: can a positive theory of individuality be extracted without committing to every claim contained in the *Logic*? Taking each question in turn: first in some sense individuality cannot be fully determined without losing its individual character, that is to say, we have to acknowledge what, especially in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel designates as the 'negative' character of individuality (see §163 and §165). At the same time, a positive theory can be extracted given that individuals are determinable in judgements. In what follows, I will make a sideways step that can help extract such a positive theory from the material Hegel has given us in the *Logic*. The step is sideways because it does not treat Hegel's arguments but Geach's reconstruction of the Aquinian conception of 'form'. While this interpretative path may look unpromising, rendering the obscure yet more obscure, I believe that Geach's 'thin' -i.e. guided by logico-

linguistic concerns- reconstruction of Aquinas's argument, can help us advance our understanding on Hegel's the positive theory of individuality.

## 2. A hunch about form: Geach on Aquinas

Hegel's *Science of Logic* is both about basic categories of thought, that is, how we think or philosophers have thought about what there is, and about what there is. This ambition of considering thought and being in a single project can seem very remote from the logico-linguistic concerns of the tradition we are about to discuss. However, as we shall see, one of Geach's motivations for getting predication right is that it saves us from being metaphysically misled. Of particular interest and relevance to our current concerns is Geach's discussion of form in Aquinas. I want to suggest that Hegel's positive theory of the category of individual can be illuminated if we think of 'individual' as a 'form' in the manner Geach explains. The key advantage of understanding 'individual' as form is that we do not need to replace the concept with some other, all that is needed is to reflect more deeply about the conceptual commitments we incur in using the term. Admittedly drawing on medieval arguments recast in response to post-Fregean logico-linguistic concerns is a rather roundabout way of making sense of the category of Hegel's individual especially of its positive content. However, neither the thirteenth nor the early twentieth century aspects need intrude. My aim is not to engage in scholarly debate about Aquinas, nor to champion a specific position in the philosophy of language, rather it is to show how Geach's interpretation of 'form' is very fruitful when applied to Hegel's conception of the individual.<sup>12</sup>

Geach's work aims to show that the formal analysis of language undertaken by logicians has an important role in clarifying our everyday use of language, and this purpose can be served by drawing on both medieval and Fregean theories of logic and language.<sup>13</sup> The particular argument that concerns us here on Aquinas's notion of form is a perfect example of this approach. Geach's interpretation of form takes its cue from Frege's notion of a concept (*Begriff*). Frege delimits sharply between concepts and objects assigning to them different logical roles. One way of putting this by means of an example, is to say 'Socrates is a man' our thought can be divided into two constituents, the object-expression 'Socrates' and of the concept-expression 'is a man'. On Geach's interpretation, Aquinas's notion of 'form' falls on the concept side of the distinction; what falls on the other side is what Aquinas calls the *supposit*, which he uses to designate a complete entity.<sup>14</sup>

This does not take us very far because it is not really clear what forms are. Geach illustrates the meaning of 'form' with Aquinas's example 'quo albedus Socrates est', 'that by which Socrates is white'; what interests us is the phrase introduced by *quo* because this is what designates the form function. It is useful here to consider how one might say otherwise 'that by which Socrates is white' given how odd it sounds to contemporary ears. A synonymous expression, Geach claims, is 'albedo Socratis', or 'the whiteness of Socrates' (Geach 1955: 5).

Although Geach's clarification enables us to recognise form expressions without the use of the cumbersome *quo*, it leaves us in the dark about their role. One may ask for example, why should a contemporary audience, which is not especially interested in the history of philosophy, spend time considering 'that by which...' expressions. The contemporary philosopher may argue that she has to hand an accepted theory about subjects and predicates, according to which, as Geach himself reminds his audience, the logical subject and predicate have different ways of signifying. Another way of putting this concern is why can't we absorb 'that by which X is y' expressions into 'X is y' expressions? The reason Geach gives, and the motivation for focusing on Aquinas, is that he wants to add something controversial to the accepted theory, namely that the 'realities signified' (Geach 1955: 5) are *not* different in type. This is what thinking about forms contributes to the debate; it allows us to think of 'realities signified' without committing ourselves to the search of a thing, such as 'whiteness' – a form in the Platonic sense- which would then lead us to a confused search of how Socrates partakes of whiteness or how whiteness belongs to Socrates.

Although Geach is making his argument in the context of Anglophone post-Fregean philosophy of language, the point he makes about predication and how we think about the ontological basis of what we say is clearly of much broader application. Another way of talking about Aquinian forms is to say that the attributes of the particulars we are talking about, the 'whiteness' of Socrates, for example, are themselves particulars -not Platonic forms.<sup>15</sup> This view, popularised in contemporary metaphysics in the discussion of 'tropes', speaks to the intuition that the whiteness of Socrates is a different whiteness to the whiteness of his chiton or the whiteness of his eye. To return to the Aquinian terminology Geach uses to make his point, the idea that a *supposit* relates to form by being an instance of something, e.g. 'here is Socrates' and 'here is something white', and something recognisable as such, e.g. 'this here Socrates is such and such'. By contrast, form signifies by enabling us to focus on the kind of thing something is, the kind of designation that is applicable to

the thing. The important point is that forms direct us to look what in the world they signify. 'Forms', Geach says, 'are what answer *in rebus* to logical predicates' (Geach 1955: 6). So he recommends that we should allow that 'logical predicates stand for something, as well as being true or false of things' (Geach 1955: 6). It is this idea of 'standing for something' that makes the Aquinian notion of form especially interesting in the Hegelian context.

How does Aquinas's concept of form allow us to think of the realities the logical predicates stand for? Let us go back to 'the whiteness of Socrates'. The claim is that this phrase stands for something and at the same time that 'whiteness' does not stand for a substance –or what amounts to the same thing that 'whiteness' is not a subject. Geach's answer is to point out first of all that 'whiteness' is of no use to anyone. What we in fact say is 'the (whiteness) of ...'. If we take this as the Aquinian form, rather than the abstract term 'whiteness', we see that 'the X of ...' is not complete, 'it needs to be completed with a name of something that has the form' (Geach 1955: 5). So we treat 'the whiteness of ...' in exactly the same fashion as the predicate '... is white', which also needs to be completed by a subject (*ibid.*). Aquinian form, whether in the phrase using the abstract term 'the Xness of ...' or the predicate phrase '... is x', is in Fregean terms 'unsaturated'. The 'of' in the first phrase is a 'logically inseparable part' of the phrase indicating 'the need to put a name after this sign' (*ibid.*). Here, as Geach notes, we have to tread carefully or we shall lose the distinction between form and logical individual. Form *simpliciter* is the reference of the predicate '...is white', form characterised or made specific is the reference of a phrase such as 'the whiteness of Socrates'. So we understand the original '*quo*' as a way of connecting a logical individual with some form, in the familiar manner of subject/predicate, but also as distinguishing the individual from its individualized forms, so we speak of Socrates and also his whiteness, wisdom, humanity etc, and similarly we can say *of* the whiteness of Socrates that it is off-putting, and *of* the whiteness of Alcibiades that it is attractive, etc.

Let us see now how this discussion can help us with a positive theory of Hegelian 'individual' as a concept that we may use in ordinary discussions. Hegel as we saw repeatedly refers to the individual as a 'this' (L 621, 622, 6:300), which naturally fits the position of *supposit* in our previous analysis: 'here is x' 'here is something y'. But it is precisely such a use that Hegel calls illusory. If we don't think of individual as a this, or at least if we entertain the thought that such a conception of the individual is in some way problematic, we will not be tempted to give metaphysical sustenance to the 'this' by considering the individual as a simple. The alternative that Hegel gives us in the *Logic* is to think of 'individual' as a 'posited abstraction', which in light of

the arguments from Geach just discussed, we can understand to mean that the term is asserted but it is not complete.

To put the same thing more simply to assert that someone is an individual, as in '...is an individual' and 'the individuality of ...' is to say something that is in need of completion. Replacing the unitary conception of 'individual' with this revised conception in which individual is a form has the advantage of leaving open the term to admit the further information of the kind we seek. To say '...is an individual' sounds a lot less informative than '...is white'. But they are different forms and different realities signified when we speak of the whiteness of Socrates or the whiteness of his chiton. Similarly when we are thinking of the form '...is an individual' we ought to concern ourselves with the realities signified and ask about what fills *that* in, what characterises that form. So if we say 'Mary is an individual' we may mean she has manners that somehow mark her out in a specific context, the how and the what of the context further serve to characterise the form. But we may also mean that she is a being capable of choice and that she can make up her own mind about something. In each case we mean something and something is understood depending on the filling we put to the form. Also in each case, if there is doubt, more questions can be asked, such as, what instances of dress count as distinctive, what behaviour we identify as distinctive, what transactions show capacity of choice. Discussion concerns concrete instances either of particular things ('this email here') or of further forms ('...is thoughtful').

The advantage of thinking of Hegel's positive theory of the category of the individual in terms of a form that needs specification is that we can think of individuals and objective spirit as being on the same side, so to speak, to the extent that the individualized form of 'individual' stands for some portion of reality, or in more Hegelian terms, some portion of spirit. By 'spirit' I understand here both 'subjective spirit', the whole range of states of mind we display in interacting with our environment, including our social environment, and 'objective spirit', the roles we occupy in institutional settings within organised social and political wholes. When we seek to characterise the portion of spirit we pick out with the term 'individual', we commit ourselves to referring to worldly specifics. As Hegel puts it in the *Logic*, seeking to clarify the idea of posited abstraction, 'the *this is*; it is immediate; but it is only *this* in so far as it is *pointed out*' (L 622, 6:300).<sup>16</sup> In each case, we are effortlessly referred to the world and specific encounters in the world to substantiate, explain, clarify what we say. Neither individuals nor individuality disappear in this way, rather we are directed to consider what they stand for.

### 3. Individuals in practice

The position defended in the previous two sections comes to this: to say that someone is an individual is to say something though not very much unless there is further information available that helps us specify, *individualise*, the individual in question. This is not a matter of the pragmatics of conversations, of filling in missing information by knowing something about the context. For Hegel, it is a matter of the logic of individuality. The category 'individual' signifies through being completed, fully determined. The purpose of the present section is to find out what such full determination amounts to. In part making the 'individual' complete requires an extended description of social, political, and also cultural properties, which make the practical individual a region of spirit. In addition, however, the high degree of historical specificity Hegel assumes in his treatment of individuality allows him to incorporate in his discussion the different philosophical contents provided by empiricist and Kantian conceptions of individuality. So the specification of 'individual' is not *just* fulfilled through positive identification of roles, choices, interests, but also through reference to aspirations that attach to modern conceptions of individuality associated with assertion of the right to self-determination, non-interference by others, but also the universalist aspirations that come with a moral self-conception of individuals. The upshot, I want to argue, is a dynamic practical conception of individuality.

Before we concern ourselves with the fulfilled or completed individual, it is important to rehearse some of the criticisms of individualism we find consistently in Hegel and which are underpinned by the criticism of the unitary conception of individual. Already in his early work, the so-called 'Theological Writings' dating the mid-1790s and including the Jena period writings of the early 1800s, Hegel was centrally concerned with articulating a positive conception of freedom, a conception that is 'positive' in the sense that it contains substantive commitments that express or constitute human freedom.<sup>17</sup> Integral to this project is Hegel's criticism of individualistic conceptions of freedom, on the grounds that they are merely negative and thus cannot find genuine expression in specific practical commitments (cf. NL 66, 2:448-9), or, alternatively, because they are concerned with the availability of alternatives, to do or to refrain from doing, which Hegel considers vacuous (cf. NL 89f, 2:477f). The clearest example of such arguments can be found in the 'Natural Law' essay, Hegel takes issue explicitly with empiricist and idealist conceptions of freedom- these last represented by Kant and Fichte. The empiricist ones are paradigmatically negative on Hegel's presentation and advocate non-interference with individual choices while they are unconcerned about offering a normatively convincing conception of the

individual in question. This conception of individual, individual in substance, as Frederick Neuhouser calls it, is central to empiricist contract theories, which assume an instrumental gain from participation in the state (see Neuhouser 2000: 182). The idealist conceptions by contrast supply this normative conception, the individual as moral agent, but ground it in a notion of spontaneity that remains mysterious. This empiricist and idealist inheritance in thinking about freedom and individuals is submitted to a more nuanced and thorough critical discussion in the *Phenomenology*. Importantly for our purposes, in this work, as Robert Pippin argues, Hegel's 'critique of the ultimacy of individuality' (Pippin 2006: 135) takes in the very model of mind presupposed by individualist conceptions of agency, which in turn underpin individualist conceptions of freedom. Pippin argues against a model that assumes that the inner has primacy over the outer and seeks to show that we are agents only insofar as we are also members of a social world that allows us to have and make sense of intentions, interests, and aims.<sup>18</sup> To summarise then we have a set of positive claims about individuals qua members of a social world, but also a philosophical inheritance of individualism in connection with freedom that is certainly criticised but also *presupposed* in Hegel's positive argument. How these elements fit together is what I want to examine next.

Let us start with a text that appears to support an extreme form of collectivism, with little evidence of the moderation Westphal advises. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, Hegel describes the relation of members of the state to the whole in which they belong as follows:

The living reality of the state within its individual members is what we have called its ethical life. The state and its laws and institutions belong to these individuals; they enjoy their rights within it, and they have their external possessions within its nature, its soil, its mountains, its air, and its waters, for it is their land, their fatherland. The history of their state, its deeds and the deeds of their forefathers, are theirs too ... for it is their substance and being (*Wesen*) (LPH 102-3, 12: 123).

Hegel describes here what he later summarises as the 'spiritual being' -or 'essence'- of the individual (LPH 103, 12:124 ). This is a statement of fact of how things stand with individuals considered as members of ethical life. At its most comprehensive, ethical life extends to encompass the 'spirit of the nation' (ibid.) and so not just the laws and practices of the present, but also the history of the state and the natural environment it encloses within its boundaries. This discussion easily fits an organic view of ethical life where all

that matters is the collectivity and the shared 'spiritual being' that makes the 'living reality' of the state.

Note however that the context, a discussion of world history, may not be ideally suited for providing us with a view of the inner articulation of ethical life. Indeed if we turn to the *Philosophy of Right*, a work that does grapple with this issue, we find that, to begin with, not every item in the quoted list above makes equally *authoritative* claims in the lives of the members of ethical life. Hegel argues that it is the 'ethical substance', the laws and powers that regulate the lives of individuals not their natural environment (PR §§145-6). This ethical substance, in turn, is a highly organised whole in which different spheres of activity are sustained by a range of institutions and are defined by distinct roles that make up the worldly specifics of individuals and thereby give us their being (or 'essence' see PR §147). So members of ethical life are very finely characterised as family members, members of particular estates, classes and so on. These contents have normative weight: to be a son, a citizen, and a farmer is to be under certain obligations, there are certain things you have to do, they are marked out as the 'rules of his own situation' (PR §150 A). The conformity of the individual 'with the duties of the station to which he belongs' (PR §150) appears as a 'second nature' (PR §151). That Hegel describes second nature as an attainment indicates that whatever the facts of membership in *Sittlichkeit* the induction into ethical substance is not spontaneous. On the contrary it requires a process whereby the 'self-will of the individual' vanishes 'together with his private conscience which had claimed independence and opposed itself to ethical substance' (PR §152). Ultimately it is the 'individuality of the state' (PR §325) that takes precedence over particular individualities and it is duty to this political whole that ties members of the state together (ibid.).<sup>19</sup>

Let us now take stock. The emphasis Hegel places on belonging, on being a member of a larger organised whole, fits with a classical view of what we may call 'embedded' values, one understands values and value-based demands by virtue of belonging to particular organised communities and having certain roles in these communities. This view is consistent with the logic of individuals we discussed in the previous sections. This is because 'individuals' can be spoken about as segments of spirit. If we look at the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Mind* and the consecutive layers of 'mind' (*Geist*), or elements of subjective and objective spirit, which Hegel discusses there, it becomes clear that specification of individuals spans anything from physical soul to ethical substance to the their moral and religious life. The content of the specified individual is given by propositions that are very fine-grained, giving us the physical as well as moral, social, political, religious properties of

the being in question; they are individual *because* not despite of the multi-layered spiritual being that defines them. Another way of putting this is that the term has use by directing us to the specifics, without spirit, which allows for the extended descriptions that specify the individual and her individuality, 'individual' is an abstraction 'devoid of life, colour and filling' (L 619, 6:297).

The question now then is whether there is any further content to 'individual' that allows us to square the classical view of embedded value with claims such as 'the individual's destiny is the living of a universal life' (PR §258A). Leaving behind the world-historical perspective may well have allowed us to pin down regions of spirit that identify individuals and set out the things that count for them as authoritative and make them the individuals they are, but such identification of individuals for the purposes of referring to them properly is cold comfort to those who fear that it also requires that individuals fully identify *with* the region of spirit they are. As many commentators have argued, Hegel is not advocating blind adherence to whatever ethical substance one is born into.<sup>20</sup> He insists on the rational relation of individual and her environment, a rationality guided by considerations of freedom; the individual finds her aspirations for freedom fulfilled in the rational state. If we take this strand of Hegel's argument seriously, we need to consider also the historical and conceptual inheritance of 'individual'. There is spiritual content, in other words, that refers us back to empiricist and idealist conceptions of individuality. While Hegel is critical of them, he does not deny that they have taken root in our thinking and more than that, he recognises that they express aspects of who we, now, are and aspire to be.<sup>21</sup> Hegel is a historical thinker, which, in this context, means that he appropriates and seeks to integrate the modern normative and psychological content of 'individual', despite the atomistic presuppositions of such content.<sup>22</sup> Such integration, in the *Philosophy of Right*, takes the form of a philosophical re-description of what is 'actual' so as to correct these atomistic presuppositions to fit something like what Westphal describes as moderate collectivism.

One problem with the moderate collectivist theses is they are very weak and simply direct us to attend to the context in which individuals form what they say and do, learn, become who they are and in turn transform. We can supplement them with what Neuhaus calls methodological atomism, which permits references to interests at the atomic level, but does not stand in the way of formation of shared interests and the non-instrumental participation in a social whole (Neuhaus 2000:13, 182). Methodologically the following is endorsed:

Laws and principles have no immediate life or validity in themselves. The activity which puts them into operation and endows them with real existence has its source in the needs, impulses, inclinations, and passions of man.... Thus nothing can happen, nothing can be accomplished unless the individuals concerned can also gain satisfaction for themselves as particular individuals. For they have their own special needs, impulses, and interests which are peculiar to themselves (LPH 70, 12:113)

The full view, however, does not prioritise individual self-satisfaction.<sup>23</sup> There is a further step that Hegel describes as consciousness of freedom:

Consciousness of freedom consists in the fact that the individual comprehends himself as person, i.e. that he apprehends himself in his individuality as inherently universal, as capable of abstraction from and renunciation of everything particular, and therefore as inherently infinite (LPH 144, 12:175)

This consciousness of freedom gives us a historicised version of Westphal's moderate collectivism: that Hegel does not just describe a procedure of what members of societies do: they are formed by them, respond to their environment, and then transform it through their doings and that they do so using competing often conflicting conceptions of themselves and that they are capable of reflective and self-conscious choices- 'since man alone, as distinct from the animals, is a thinking being' (LPH 144, 12: 175), by which they can stand by, and 'own'.

#### **4. Incomplete individuals**

The previous section described some of the practical implications of Hegel's revision of the category of individual. The conception of individual Hegel preserves allows for the integration of classical and modern contents of individuality: the embedded value perspective directs us to a conception of individuals as segments of spirit, at the same time, the same logic invites us to confront the historical content of our conception of individuals, as desirous atoms seeking satisfaction unless impeded in their course, and as moral agents guided by universal values and aspirations. The plurality of individual content leaves a lot of room for negotiation between the inherited normative content of individuals and Hegel's positive claims regarding individuals as sections of spirit. This can be seen as a virtue of Hegel's political philosophy

because it allows us to conceptualise different meanings of individuality, which result in a practically dynamic conception of individuality, as members of specific social wholes negotiate between them. This dynamic conception, however, is not Hegel's final word on the matter.

In the *Logic*, Hegel claims that the fully specified individual is 'the determinate determinate' (L 618, 6:296). If in reality determination is in accordance with the dynamic conception sketched above, then any content of 'individual', outside the *Logic*, will be partial. Logical determinations attain their determinateness because of the whole to which they belong. Stephen Houlgate explains this holistic commitment in terms of 'moments': 'a moment gains its character from the whole that it helps to constitute' (Houlgate 2006: 428). Logical holism has epistemic implications, since we cannot get to grips with a determination or concept without having the whole in view, but we cannot have the whole in view from some external vantage point. So given some version at least of logical holism, we are confronted with a practical question: the determinate individual is made determinate as part of a stage or 'moment' that is then taken up in further moments, till we reach the absolute Idea. This both supports the dynamic conception of individuality, merely adding that there is a cost, that no individual is ever completely individualised, and raises anew the question of perspective we encountered in the context of Hegel's discussion of world history.

Let me explain. The dynamic, practical conception fits with and is sustained by a pluralistic theory of the contents of 'individual'. On the pluralistic model there is no finality of contents and that allows for ongoing redefinition of political, social, cultural identities and also friction among competing models. We may however take a more strongly integrationist path, than the one outlined in the previous section, in search of the complete, fully specified individual: the individual, in other words, who accepts her world and finds in it simply what is her own. However reflective, this would be a full identification with one's environment -and here there seems to be no obstacle in re-introducing, alongside institutions and practices, the history that makes one's environment, the natural landscape and so on. But then, what we are left with is the whole, the world-historical perspective we encountered previously. This too is not final, since Hegel invites us to think further, about 'the spirit which not merely broods *over* history as over the waters but lives in it and is alone its principle of movement' (EM §549), ultimately this is to think -or try to think- the Idea, the *für sich seiende Idee* (EM §577). From this perspective the category of individuality itself looks provisional.

To the question then, how does logic and politics relate with respect to the notion of 'individual?', we may answer as follows:

First, logic provides a detailed conceptual analysis of the term, which adds support to the criticisms of individualism while also providing a genuinely novel positive notion that fits Hegel's substantive positive claims, his corrective of modern individualism.

Second, the positive logical notion sustains a practically dynamic conception of individuals, which in turn shows that familiar conundrums about how Hegel seeks to integrate classical and modern views of social and political life are not intractable.

Third, the logical demands of determination of individuality are never met fully in reality; so logic does not dictate practice, it rather underdetermines it.

Fourth, the underdetermination of the practical notion of individual by its logical form is to be understood in a context in which the category itself is superable; which is also to say that the objects of philosophy exceed our social and political life.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> References to Hegel's texts are given parenthetically as in text citations. After an abbreviation a reference is given to the page number of the translations given below, after a coma, a volume and page number is given to the Suhrkamp edition of Hegel's works, *Werke* in 20 Bd., E. Moldenauer and K. M. Michel eds., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986. For the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Encyclopedia* only the paragraph numbers are given. The English translations and abbreviations used are:

A: *Hegel's Aesthetics*, trans., T. M. Knox, volume I Oxford: Clarendon, 1998.

EM: *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind. Part Three of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. W. Wallace, with *Zusätze* trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford University Press, 1988.

L: *Hegel's Science of Logic*, ed. H. D. Lewis, trans., A. V. Miller, Humanities Press: Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1991 [1969].

LPH: *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge University Press 1980.

NL: *Natural Law. The Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, Its Place in Moral Philosophy, and Its Relation to the Positive Sciences of Law*, trans. T. M. Knox. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975.

PhS: *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller Oxford University Press, 1977.

PR: *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, Oxford University Press, 1967.

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<sup>2</sup> See Wood 1990 and Wood 1991, Franco 1999, Neuhouser 2000, Honneth 2010, McCumber 2014. Criticism of liberal individualism does not mean also outright rejection of liberalism, see Brooks 2012 and also Sayers 2007. Exemplifying recent trends in rehabilitating individualism in Hegel is Ross 2008. Interestingly there is also a reverse trend, inspired by the recent rehabilitation of notions of collective intentionality; see Chitty 2014 (manuscript). Traditionally the debate has centred on whether it is possible or indeed desirable for Hegelian objective 'Spirit' to accommodate individuals politically, socially or metaphysically. An early contribution to this discussion, Hartmann 1929 contains an extensive argument that seeks to demystify 'Spirit' arguing that the term does not mean 'group-mind', but rather, it captures just the social sphere of familiar everyday interactions; see too Williams 1992 and Williams 1997, Pinkard 2008, and Deligiorgi 2010.

<sup>3</sup> For this use of 'simple' see Russell 1992, who introduces the term in part to distance his views from Hegelianism.

<sup>4</sup> See Wolf 1990, esp chaps 2 and 3, on moral individualism and Skorupski 2015 for an overview of criticisms of political individualism.

<sup>5</sup> Writing about recognition, for example, Robert Williams says that Hegel 'struggles to formulate a theory of individuality, to do justice to the individual and individual freedoms ...Individuality and difference must be given their due without, however, reducing the social to something inherently oppressive' (Williams 1992:83).

<sup>6</sup> The sort of philosophical demands traditionally have been thought of as excessive in the Hegelian context concern the existence of a supra-individual spirit that manifests itself through individual thoughts and actions. The *locus classicus* of this view, in the Anglophone reception of Hegel's thought, is Taylor 1975.

<sup>7</sup> In both the *Science of Logic* (e.g. in L 581, 6:251) and in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel defines the Notion as 'the principle of freedom, the power of substance self-realised' (§ 160). This suggests that his aim is to move beyond a formal conception of the principle of unity of cognition as such.

<sup>8</sup> The discussion of Kant in this section can help us understand the 'Idea' Hegel presents here in relation to something Kant says in the first Critique, when Kant identifies the 'common principle' from which the categories arise as 'the faculty of judgement' (Kant 1999: A81, B107). Kant claims that a full

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account in the sense of definition of that principle is not possible (see Kant 1999: A727, B755). The function the 'Idea' at this stage of the *Logic* then can be seen as a promisory note that such a full account is possible. At the same time, Hegel is using familiar Kantian terminology in making these claims: '[t]he pure concept [*Begriff*] in so far as it has its origin in the understanding alone (not in the pure image of sensibility), is called a notion [*Notio*]. A concept formed from notions and transcending the possibility of experience is an idea [*Idee*] or concept of reason' (Kant 1999: A 320/B377).

<sup>9</sup> It is not my aim to adjudicate whether this is a justified criticism or not, for extensive treatment see Macherey 1990.

<sup>10</sup> A word of caution is perhaps apt here concerning with the well-documented and ongoing controversy about what the precise philosophical task Hegel set himself when embarking on his *Science of Logic*, very roughly whether that is he is developing his own metaphysics or whether he is attempting to give a systematic inventory –or perhaps deduction– of fundamental concepts of thought; see Burbidge 2006 and Houlgate 2006, chap 1. It is apt to raise this now, because unlike the introduction to 'Subjective Logic' with its extensive discussion of Kant's arguments, which can be read as a philosophical commentary, the section on 'The Individual' cannot. So the question of what kind of philosophical genre the *Logic* is arises here perhaps more urgently. My view, the defense of which exceeds the scope of the present paper, is that the *Logic* is a kind of content logic, aiming to offer a systematic exposition of thought *qua* thought of things. Nonetheless, the sort of 'systematic' reading I propose (using Brooks's 2012 terminology) requires only that Hegel is engaging in analysis of concepts, on which all sides of this debate agree –whatever else they claim he is also doing whilst doing this. And it is this conceptual analysis of 'individual' that concerns me here.

<sup>11</sup> In Hegel's terms the advance is 'from simple determinatenesses' to 'succeeding ones becoming ever richer and more concrete' (L 840, 6:569); he also describes this process as 'expansion' and also as forming 'a system of totality' (ibid.).

<sup>12</sup> While the influence of Geach's Fregean interpretation can be seen in Kenny 2002, it is not uniformly accepted; see Weidemann 1986 and Wippel 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Geach sets himself equally against logicians who see logic as a branch of mathematics and against ordinary language philosophers; see Geach 1980: 8-10.

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<sup>14</sup> 'For Aquinas, the real distinction between a form and the self-subsistent individual (*suppositum*) whose form it is comes out in the logical distinction between subject and predicate' (Geach 1955: 2-3). Geach refers to self-subsistent individuals and to individualised forms, to avoid confusion with the notion of individual I want to illuminate through Geach's analysis of form, I shall only refer to supposits and to fully specified or determined forms.

<sup>15</sup> As Anthony Kenny remarks, for Aquinas 'there is not, in the world, any dogginess which is not the dogginess of some particular dog' (Kenny 2002: 180).

<sup>16</sup> Given this analysis, it makes sense that for Hegel the category of the individual cannot ultimately be treated in isolation from that of judgement with its *relata*, which in turn explains why the section on 'The Individual' immediately precedes and serves to introduce precisely the chapter on 'The Judgement'.

<sup>17</sup> This use of 'positive', current in the contemporary debate, is owed to Berlin 1969. For detailed discussion of Hegel's distinctive use of the term 'positive' especially in his early works from the Berne period (1793-1796), see Deligiorgi 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Pippin's argument about what he calls 'the reciprocal dependence of the "inner" on the "outer"' (Pippin 2006: 136) concerns in particular the role of intentions, he argues that Hegel's critique of the ultimacy of individuality extends into an area in which 'the privileged and prior status of the individual or first-person point of view seems intuitively strongest: the dependence of outer manifestations of the subject's will on the inner intentions of that subject' (Pippin 2006: 135).

<sup>19</sup> See too Neuhaus 2000: 244f on how the state permeates non-political institutions.

<sup>20</sup> For detailed analysis see Neuhaus 2000:244-8

<sup>21</sup> Brooks 2012:55-61 offers a more negative picture of what I call here integration arguing that Hegel treats Kant's moral theory as an example of a theory that treats individuals in abstraction from their communities and that Hegel's aim is to reject that perspective and therefore overcome the standpoint of morality as such. I think that this reading underestimates what I

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see as the Kantian elements that Hegel wants to preserve and the positive claims he makes in the 'Morality' sections (see Deligiorgi 2016). More importantly, for our present purposes, the abstraction from content is itself a *content* for modern individuals, the moral standpoint is plainly available to them as a set of theoretical commitments well apart from anything else.

<sup>22</sup> It is only in this historical sense, that I think the self-actualisation interpretation of freedom, popularised by Wood 1990 is plausible. See for example the discussion of property rights, in which Hegel hails the recognition of 'the freedom of personality' as a 'universal principle' (PR §62 A), even while he is keen to show that abstract right is not the only form of right shaping human relations in the state. Further on he says; 'in considering freedom, the starting point must be not individuality, the single self-consciousness but only the essence of self-consciousness; for whether man knows it or not, this essence is externally realised as a self-subsistent power in which single individuals are only moments' (PR § 258 A). In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, he writes about the liberating function of modern individualism which offers new opportunities for the artist who 'acquires his subject-matter in himself and is the human spirit actually self-determining' (A 607, 15: 237-8). See too: 'the individual subject may of course act of himself in this or that matter, but still every individual, wherever he may twist or turn ...does not appear himself as the independent, total, and at the same time individual living embodiment of this society, but only as a restricted member of it' (A 194, 14: 254-5).

<sup>23</sup> In EM §408 and Z Hegel associates such separation of the self and individualisation of aims and interests with insanity. He contrasts this view with the conception of the 'I' as 'something away and beyond' (EM §415), which he attributes to Kantian and Fichteian idealism. And although he seeks to correct this transcendent conception of the I, he also wants to keep a positive conception of universality that involves the 'negation of immediacy' (EM § 429), and so also of individuality understood as mere given segment of spirit.