

Beyond the Pale: The Spectre of Formal Universality

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Abstract: Frederick Neuhouser's *The Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory* expertly answers many standard objections to Hegel's theory, and offers a careful reading of its basic principles. However, questions remain whether Neuhouser can successfully reconstruct Hegel's theory while avoiding its links to Hegel's logic. Hegel's normative conclusions depend on logical principles about the self that are not adequately translated into Neuhouser's normative and consequentialist arguments.

Frederick Neuhouser's book on Hegel's social theory is filled with exciting arguments, perceptive analyses, and deft textual interpretations. Neuhouser succeeds in avoiding many of "the common mistaken (and unattractive) readings" (93) of Hegel's social theory. His overall tone is irenic rather than polemical. Opposed views are given their due and treated with respect. Neuhouser poses and reposes objections to Hegel's theory to make them as strong as possible before replying to them. His expositions, defense, and partial revision of Hegel are carefully reasoned and should put to rest many of the standard objections.

Throughout, Hegel's theories are read in ways congenial to contemporary American philosophical concerns about normativity and community. Historical connections with Rousseau are joined to the more commonly cited connections with Kant. The key point taken over and extended from Rousseau is that individual members must possess general wills (48), and this is the special good realized in an ethical community.¹ Hegel is defended as having a much more nuanced view of the relation of the individual and the social whole than critics imagine. In his expert and effective chapter six ("Hegel's Social Theory and Methodological Atomism"), Neuhouser shows that Hegel fails to see that a methodological individualist can find associa-

tion to be a value in itself, and that Hegel's opposition to social contract theories nonetheless brings him closer to some liberal individualist theses than commonly thought.²

Neuhouser wants to clarify and argue for Hegel's conception of social freedom. Hegel distinguishes three types of freedom in society. All of them concretize the notion of freedom as self-determination. They match the three large divisions of the *Philosophy of Right*: the freedom of the person to follow their arbitrarily given desires (abstract right), the freedom of individuals to determine their will according to self-legislated principles (morality), and the social freedom of the citizen within the organic social and political whole (*Sittlichkeit*).

Neuhouser avoids positioning Hegel at either extreme of the debate between liberals and communitarians. Individuality and membership do not have to be competing values; properly understood, each enables the other. Hegel will not choose; instead he attempts to combine the need for membership with the moral dignity of the individual. Neuhouser argues effectively against reading Hegel as accepting the "my station and its duties" view of the relation of the individual and the state, but Hegel also avoids the usual opposite pole of making individual interests the key to all social normativity.

In his exegesis and argumentation Neuhouser insists that he need not rely on the "metaphysical" parts of Hegel's system. It is "easier than is commonly thought" to make Hegel's social points "without involving his unique metaphysical views" (23). Indeed, Neuhouser claims that the establishment of the rationality and normative superiority of modern political institutions *must* be prior to the overall claims of the system that reality is rational through and through.

Contrary to what is usually assumed, Hegel's argument that the modern social order is essentially rational is, in one important sense, logically prior to his grander claim that reason (or God) pervades all of reality. For establishing the latter view depends, in part, on being able to show first that the social order, as one piece of all reality, is rational. (271)³

This seems puzzling from the point of view of Hegel's system, which tries to establish its basic structures without reliance on empirical surveys. Hegel works from the already established set of categories and conceptual motions found in the logic. These guide his empirical investigations. (See, for example, §4 of the *Philosophy of Right*.) Hegel might agree that establishing the rationality of reality in general does imply an already established rationality to social and political institutions, but the mode of establishing that social rationality does not begin with discussions in the field of social theory. The logic plays

the prior role, in that the rationality of any concrete sphere of reality follows upon the logical claims about the movements and structures of thought.

Still, Neuhausser is right to say that Hegel's work can be useful within the discourse of social and political theory without demanding that Hegel's logic be brought into play. This is parallel to the way that descriptive and diagnostic claims from Hegel's aesthetics have entered very productively into discussions of art today, without bringing with them his whole theory of spirit. The question remains, though, whether normative claims taken from the *Aesthetics* or from the *Philosophy of Right* can be argued for satisfactorily without invoking Hegel's logic. Neuhausser says that they can be defended at the level of discourse in social philosophy, and he advances such arguments. He admits that these arguments do not provide the kind of fundamental justification Hegel would demand, but he also claims that the deeper Hegelian project is controversial as to what it might be and whether it can be accomplished. Since it brings its own uncertainties, the deeper project adds little or nothing to the probative value of the arguments within social theory.

Neuhausser comes to Hegel's theory with an important question that should be asked of other theories as well: What criteria are being applied when a social order is judged to be rational? He insists that "the normative standards that inform Hegel's social theory can be made plausible and compelling in detachment from his secular theodicy simply by articulating how they have their source in the ideal of practical freedom—or, more precisely, in a variety of forms of that ideal that are generally recognizable as good by modern subjects" (270). My concern in this essay is to examine whether this can be accomplished without reference to Hegel's logical, categorial analysis. I point out several issues involving formally universal freedom, and ask whether Neuhausser adequately replaces the appeal to the logic.

In the fashion of much philosophical discourse today Neuhausser distinguishes normative from ontological or metaphysical argumentation. Normative issues should be settled independently, as in Kant or Sellars or Rawls, as opposed to the appeals to the nature of the self made in Aristotle or Aquinas or Spinoza. I am suggesting that Hegel is closer to Aristotle, that the normative arguments about what social arrangements best achieve freedom and individuality demand correct concepts of the self.

The issue is whether freedom can be realized as formally universal or only in concrete social arrangements. This involves freedom in its negative aspect, the ability to abstract oneself from any determinate self-definition by social roles or other external factors.

The will contains . . . the element of pure indeterminacy or the pure reflection of the ego into itself which involves the dissipation of every restriction and every content either immediately presented by nature, by needs, desires, and impulses, or given and determined by any means whatever. This is the unrestricted infinity of absolute abstraction or universality, the pure thought of oneself. . . . this absolute possibility of abstraction from every determinate state of mind which I may find in myself or which I may have set up in myself, my flight from every content as from a restriction. (PR §5)⁴

The complementary other aspect of the will is

the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to the differentiation, determination, and positing of a determination as a content and object. (PR §6)

The full reality of the will

is the unity of both these moments. . . . It is the self-determination of the I, which means that at one and the same time the I posits itself as its own negative, namely as restricted and determinate, and yet remains by itself, i.e. as in its self-identity and universality. (PR §7)

In each of the three kinds of freedom this double movement is achieved in a different way. The peculiar issue on the third level, social freedom, arises because the “self-determination” of the will comes not just from “my” desires or from “my” self-legislated moral principles, but from social, economic, and political roles that I did not create. Even if I choose my role, the menu of available roles is imposed upon me. Social determinacy is something I am educated into, and then affirm. How is this self-determination?

If freedom were defined in terms of formally universal self-identity, then the accent would be on the identity of the self independent of its contingent social content. There would be no expectation that any particular content would be necessary for freedom. Such freedom might be conceived as always tragically hemmed in by contingent circumstances that were met by internal irony or external flight, or it might be conceived as always resisting, challenging, deconstructing, revising any fixed social content.

Hegel and Neuhausser want the realization of freedom to be more tightly linked to specific modern social contents of roles and duties. Freedom is tied to a concrete and particularized universality. Rather than a burden or barrier, that social content realizes full self-determination in the only way it can be.

Hegel argues that the relations of universal and particular, of form and content, and other modern separations are ultimately thinkable only in terms of more complex and mediated categories where such separations cannot be posited as final. This argument is made in his logic. Hegel then uses these

categorical relations as guides for constructing his studies of political and social reality. For his part Neuhouser offers what he calls transcendental arguments, which are arguments about the necessary conditions for the realization of various goals. Those goals must be first accepted as rationally desirable. That desirability is supported by consequentialist arguments. But since the connection between freedom and the fully concrete universal has not been forged earlier, in the logic, Neuhouser's consequentialist arguments are vulnerable to the objection that bad consequences are the price of formally universal freedom.

Neuhouser asserts that the modern self exists as determined by its social roles but also as approving and affirming those roles and their modern institutional structure from a disinterested, reflective, universal point of view. He argues effectively, against some critics of Hegel, that this reflective distance has an important place within the Hegelian state. It is necessary, though not demanded of everyone or at every moment, because modern individuals should have a self-mediated connection to the social whole, not the unreflective identity with their social roles characteristic of ancient societies.⁵

It is also essential that the objective social arrangements be such that reflection would lead individuals to rationally affirm them. This affirmation is to be rational in a universal sense, not based on a narrow calculation of self-interest. Modern individuals find that the fulfillment of modern social roles becomes the central defining feature of their lives, so that their individuality is not distinct from but is shaped by their reflective acceptance of those roles.⁶

The first issue I want to raise concerns this reflective distance. Why does the movement of negative freedom and its reflective abstraction from social roles bring one into the sphere of the universal and the space of reasons and rational evaluation? Hegel speaks in the citation above about "the unrestricted infinity of absolute abstraction or universality." But to link such "universality" with a rich notion of "rationality" is a task accomplished in Hegel's logic, not in his social philosophy.

Hegel does not, in fact, believe that the ability of the self to abstract from any given determination automatically leads an individual into rational universality and the space of reasons. In the *Philosophy of Right* and in his *Aesthetics* he discusses the modern ironic self that becomes a contentless point that deprecates all social structures and values. It is not that Hegel favors such selfhood. Indeed, he sees it as a dead end, as bordering on evil. But it is a real subject position that can be occupied. Argumentation from the logic

is needed to show that the ironic self-description is not the right concept of the self, that ironic life is not the true fulfillment of the self's freedom. The ironic life may be a correct response to some social structures, but that is because those structures do not yet adequately embody the larger movements described in the logic.

If reflective distance from social roles can exist as a social possibility without entering into the space of reasons, then Neuhouser's link between reflective distance and rational affirmation needs further defense. In Hegel's terms that defense would come from logical analyses of the notions of form and content, especially the notion of formal universality. But these are not available in their purity to Neuhouser's argument.

What does the move away from immediate identification with social roles open up? What space for reflection and subject-creation lies outside of institutional identities? The space of reasons is a subspace of possible linguistic and other interactions and self-definitions. For Neuhouser it is contrasted with the more immediate space of drives and desires, invoking the standard Platonic distinction between persuasion and rational discourse. There is a jungle that needs to be tamed with rational tools. But why assume that taming the jungle is the preferred alternative to going native? Think of Bataille, Deleuze, and others who argue that desires and images are hardly immediate, but have their own complex mediations and transitions and identities. The space beyond public identities is full of linguistic moves, puns, plays, deconstructive transitions, contingent links, images, sub-identities, dreams, actings-out, excesses, eccentric subject positions and self-definitions and self-deconstructions and self-abasements. In the face of this multitude, demanding justification might seem a weak tactic—weak in Nietzsche's sense: not leading to creativity and self-affirmation. Hegel will argue that the condition of the possibility of the jungle is the larger space of spirit's logically described motions. But that is not an argument fully available on the level Neuhouser wishes to explore.

Neuhouser wants to argue normatively, not metaphysically. Self-distance as rational reflection within the structured whole may seem clearly superior normatively, given its consequences. But this begs the question against Nietzschean and Deleuzian claims that favor decentered selves and urge dissensus against social order that is taken as inherently repressive. One issue here is broadly speaking the value of anomie. Neuhouser's argument does not deal with an alternative that might glorify alienation and anomie as living in the truth, and recommend self-creation outside the social whole

as the only honest life. Such Nietzschean arguments depend on analyses of the nature of the self and the will to power. Dealing with them would replay Hegel's fight with the more extreme romantics, whom he fought because their position is an existential possibility that an individual might adopt, even if not one with an appropriately self-sufficient status. My aim is not to defend the Nietzschean and Deleuzean alternatives, but to argue that their existence shows something lacking in Neuhouser's argumentation, and to suggest that the normative issue will not be settled without first settling the question about the correct concept of the self.

A related issue appears with the notion of self-determination. When Neuhouser speaks of freedom as self-determination, he insists that this does not require a pure causal initiative.

Each form of practical freedom—personal, moral, and social—will imply a distinctive interpretation of what it is for one's action to be one's own, or to proceed from one's own will rather than from an external source. But in none of these cases does freedom consist in what Kant calls "transcendental freedom" and defines as "the power of beginning a state . . . through spontaneity" (KRV, A451/B473). In other words, practical freedom for Hegel is not, and does not presuppose, a capacity to initiate action through an act of will that is exempt from causal determination. (287n11)⁷

This means that for Neuhouser modern selfhood is not naked. Self-determination comes from rational acceptance of particularity, not from a presuppositionless generation of particularities from a pure beginning. The self can from its inception be determined by "given" directionalities.⁸ There is no escape from givenness.

Hegel too accepts historical givenness in the concrete existence of selves and societies. But he wants *philosophy* to start from a pure beginning. The logical process and the self are not identical; selves are shaped within the process. Still, it is the pure beginning of the speculative method that will allow Hegel to claim strong rational necessity for his results.

Neuhouser does not wish to make use of this questionable strategy of Hegel's. So the issue becomes how one gets from given particularity to universality and on to rational acceptance. What does Neuhouser substitute for Hegel's "metaphysical" establishment of the structures and movements of rational thought? Neuhouser discusses how we come to attain a universal and disinterested rational point of view as a way of judging and disciplining the particular givenness and preexisting dynamisms of the self. The move is, in part, an appeal to the social *Bildung* that constitutes and educates the

self, and Neuhausser provides very good accounts of the ways family and civil society form a citizen into someone with a more universal point of view. But where is the argument that *Bildung* can achieve more than an educated particularity? Why not just a Rortian conversation of cultural backgrounds, each claiming universality from within its own ambit, but refusing a totally detached point of view? Again the issue requires a logical analysis of what it means to be or think the universal.

Neuhausser's most explicit way of linking freedom's detachment with true universal rational judgment and determinate social content is by a lengthy argument about the conditions that would allow individuals to be free of determination by alien wills.

In this argument, Neuhausser makes a significant and unexpected move when he allows that an arbitrary will could be fully self-determined if it were alone.

If it were possible to imagine a world inhabited by a single arbitrary will, its freedom actualized in its dominion over things, there would be no basis for regarding the freedom of the arbitrary will as incomplete and in need of some further configuration of the will in order for self-determination to be fully realized. (29)⁹

What is surprising in this thought experiment is that in the solitary case freedom in its fullness does not require rationality, which becomes required only in the external situation of multiple subjects. This shows a consequentialist theme in Neuhausser's argumentation.¹⁰

Neuhausser then places a dialogical condition on rationality.

True sovereignty is not the authority to make one's own arbitrary pronouncements into the law of the land; rather, to be sovereign with respect to the principles that bind one's actions is, first, to have a part in the collective project of determining those principles and, second, to comprehend the rational basis of the principles that come to be settled on through the just and inclusive exchange of reasons. On this view, each individual is capable of both discerning the good and grasping its rational basis, but only to the extent that he is open to a genuine exchange of reasons with fellow subjects, as carried out within the institutional framework provided by a rational social order. The "thinking for oneself" that characterizes sovereign moral subjects is not fundamentally a "thinking by oneself" but rather a "thinking together with others." (249)

This dialogical requirement, though, seems to require some argument that the self must be dialogical, as well as some argument that the openness of dialogue has an inbuilt directionality toward rational agreement rather than wandering in the wilder spaces mentioned earlier. Being with others might

be structured very differently. Neuhouser alludes to broadly Habermasian themes but does not fill them out. He suggests a consequentialist argument, but the partisans of solo freedom can argue that we should accept any bitter consequences as the price of freedom.

The question whether the free individual needs dialogical and social definition of its roles thus becomes acute. The “romantic” self-creation and self-decentering mentioned earlier has social analogues today that are more mundane and less radical than those discussed by, say, Bataille, but still embody distanced formal universality. For instance, there is the pioneer fleeing the congested center, or the artist as professional outsider. Hegel’s remarks in the *Aesthetics* on the modern artist’s lack of identity with any substantial content could be inflated into a description of a kind of individuality that rejects any *Beisichsein*. The freedom such people seek will be neither Rousseau’s nor Hegel’s.

Then there are versions of liberal selfhood that come close to those outsider roles, such as the eternal social critic and reformer. Neuhouser is concerned to find room for the social reformer in the Hegelian social whole.

Taking certain social roles to be central to one’s identity in the way Hegel’s theory envisages is not incompatible with rejecting some basic features of those roles and struggling to refashion them in ways that bring about the kinds of substantive social change that an account of the rational social order ought to allow for. (278)

As Neuhouser explains it, Hegel’s rational society has room for differences, but not for *radical* critique. A radical critique is one that rejects modernity’s basic values or that affirms those values but denies their possible realization within modern social institutions. Neuhouser points out that for Hegel the possibility of radical critique is foreclosed because modernity’s basic institutions are in fact adequately rational.

But he also points out that for Hegel people living in earlier, less adequate institutions could rightly engage in radical critique and reform. In an important footnote he adds:

Even in these circumstances Hegel’s preferred response is withdrawal from the social world rather than critique or social activism (§1 38z). This is no doubt due to his belief that fundamental historical progress is never the direct result of human planning but takes place behind the backs of human participants, via the ruse of reason. (329n41)

For Hegel the withdrawn stoic was an appropriate response in the past, and is still socially possible today, even though the alienated stoics and artists

are out of date because the whole is now rational enough to tolerate them while inviting them to full social affirmation.

On a deeper level these social roles are rejected because of their formality and lack of concrete content. Hegel argues in the logic that the formal universal develops into a fully concrete universality. Self-determination requires concrete content.¹¹ But Neuhouser does not have that logical argument available. The argument he does offer is twofold. Objectively, the modern social institutional framework can be seen to provide a self-reproducing teleologically complete system for embodying freedom as concrete content in action. Subjectively, the framework is affirmed as central to the modern subject's identity.

On the objective argument, in some of the best parts of the book, Neuhouser considers subtly and at length the question in what sense for Hegel "the social order itself—the ensemble of institutions together with their members—constitutes a self-determining whole, one that is more thoroughly self-sufficient than any individual on its own can in principle be" (33, and chapter 4). Neuhouser distinguishes different kinds of holistic claims, and uses teleological-functional arguments to read Hegel's comments about the state being "divine" and transcending the individual. He argues that Hegel changed his views on the type of holistic value to be attributed to the state, and that the later views are subtler in the way the value of individuals and the value of the state are interrelated.¹²

What I want to follow here, however, is a crucial argument about the relation of the subjective side of freedom to objective social structures, Neuhouser claims that the freedom of the distanced moral conscience to legislate its own principles is inadequate because it cannot provide enough determinacy to the self:

Considered on their own—In abstraction from their places within the basic institutions of society—moral subjects lack the resources they need in order to give concrete, nonarbitrary content to the concept of the good. While socially detached moral subjects may sincerely desire to realize the good, in the absence of a more concrete vision of the projects and forms of life that best promote the freedom and well-being of all (the good), they cannot know what specific actions their allegiance to the good requires of them. . . . Because their self-conceptions are linked to the social roles they occupy, their participation in the institutions of *Sittlichkeit* is not only voluntary but also an activity through which they constitute—give real determinacy to—their very identities. (32-33)

We should ask: What makes this socially given content non-arbitrary? It is not enough to have it socially recognized. Hegel and Neuhouser would both

argue that the details of some social formations, for instance the Roman “legal personhood” Hegel describes in the *Phenomenology*, were based upon arbitrarily decreed social roles. So there must be something more that makes this modern content non-arbitrary. That something more is its inherent rationality. But how is that rationality subjectively defined and accepted?

Socially free individuals . . . regard the ends and projects they have by virtue of occupying those roles as their most important, life-defining aims. Those ends and projects are what give meaning to individuals’ lives and make them worth living, and for this reason they can be said to constitute (make up) the essential core, or substance, of who those individuals are. (24)¹³

But why should my identity have a dominant center? It is worth noting that while Neuhouser has a perceptive discussion of feminist critiques of gender roles in Hegel, he does not take on the more radical claim of some feminists and postmoderns that the very idea of an essential core or central identity is inherently oppressive and leads to self-formations that tie one to “work” roles that continue a masculinist tradition and confine selves within “striated space.” Once again we see where the concept of the self needs to be discussed.

Presuming, with Neuhouser, that self-identity should be centered, why should these social roles be taken as central? Why not take them as burdens I am stuck with? After all, Hegel doesn’t say that *every* social role must be central to my identity. The Stoic and the ironist find the center of their identities in standing outside of social roles, and this is an appropriate response to some social conditions. So it is not just any set of social roles in just any society that should be taken as central. It would appear circular to say that we should take these particular modern social roles as central to our identities because they are part of the overall rational society, which we know is rational, among other reasons, because we can rationally affirm its roles as central to our identities.

What allows that rational affirmation? If there is a functional argument that these roles are needed for the social whole to function, that is not enough, since that is true of any society, and the goal of the functioning needs to be examined. The functional argument is to be strengthened by adding that the social goal is the realization of free self-determination. But then the argument must be made that these social roles are that realization. Neuhouser makes that argument, but it relies on a presumed concept of what freedom is, and it needs more argument why formal universality is not enough. Hegel makes that argument by categorial analysis in his logic, then finds the categorial transitions mirrored in real life inadequacies in those social arrangements

structured according to the inadequate categories. Neuhouser does not have the logical analysis available in its purity, so the issue is whether or not the inadequacies in the social arrangements, by themselves, are sufficiently probative without the categorial backing.

Suppose one argued, with Neuhouser, that anything short of full social freedom will involve determination of the self by alien wills. This could be met in a crude Nietzschean fashion, by treating alien wills as just other forces to be mastered or dealt with, similar to the forces of nature in the weather or wild animals. This would blatantly violate the Kantian principle of respect, which might be considered as independently established. A more sophisticated Nietzschean could then reply by reworking the principle so that respect for another means taking them seriously as worthy of an aristocratic *agon*. Domination is met by counter-domination, and if one loses, then one knows one's place in the order of rank. In that case the determination by the alien will is accepted, not on the basis of rational universality, but through a kind of rueful self-knowledge.

Then there are the heroes of science fiction novels such as those of Robert Heinlein who consider any social totality as on the verge of corruption and who move out to the ever expanding frontier. This anarchist strand is very present in contemporary culture. Recall Hegel's remark about America, that it would not be a true state until the frontier closed and its people were forced to turn and face one another. But what if the frontier never closed?

That frontier need not be spatial. It could be the open horizon for an endless reinvention of new social structures. The most sophisticated form of freedom as formal universality is not internal irony or external flight. Rather it insists on process over structure. It says that what we are is a process of invention going beyond structures.

For Neuhouser the construction of subjectivity is a matter of specification within an essential structure. There is a process, to be sure, of social political decision-making, but also fixed roles in an interlocking concretization of the moments of that process. The actions and relations in that structure/process may correspond to the moments of the concept as Hegel develops them, but the structure is argued for by a consequentialist argument for necessary conditions.

For the opposed view I am describing, the self finds itself within and identifies with a process, not with a position within a structure or with a fixed moment within the process, nor even with a regulative goal of structured *Beisichsein*. What we are at home in is the process of reinvention rather than

any invented structure. The self is constantly reconstructed in the act of redoing structures that exist only within this movement of transcendence that has no closure or teleology except its own intensity. This begins to sound like Deleuze. In a less radical mode it sounds like Dewey. What such individuals would be within would not be a set of institutions with the intricate particularizations of Hegel's theory, but at most a set of arrangements for creating institutions. And this begins to sound like Rawls and liberalism.¹⁴

Hegel would object to the way the self and the concepts of structure and process are handled in such views, and he would point out that the process of redoing structures has its own form. In identifying with that form the self would find itself within a fairly concrete social array. But this last point depends on his arguments about formal and concrete universality, which would be carried out as his logic faces off against, say, Deleuze's notion of events.

Neuhausser contends that what is needed to develop the normative social theory is to presuppose the value of freedom and self-determination. But the question remains what kind of freedom and what kind of self is determined. Hegel comes with more than those bare ideas; he has the syllogistic relations from the third part of the logic, and other logical categories. These help define what it means to be a self and to be self-determined. Those who differ about what it means to be a self (for instance by insisting only on formal universality) would redefine freedom and self-determination in ways that interrupt Neuhausser's arguments.

The bottom line issue, then, concerns the notion of individual selves and individual events and their relations to the universal. I began by pointing out how Neuhausser skillfully avoids positioning Hegel on one side or the other of the communitarian-versus-liberal divide. But dealing with alternatives beyond the pale of that debate requires analyses of the nature of the self that Neuhausser would prefer not to employ. If he is trying to present a reading of Hegel's views, as relevant and argued for by Hegel, then the conceptual argumentation should come from the categorial analyses in Hegel's logic. This presumes two points: that Hegel's logic succeeds in its aims, and that it backs the same claims as those Neuhausser wants to make. Both these points are debatable.¹⁵ If, on the other hand, Neuhausser is trying to develop an independent but Hegel-influenced view that borrows from Hegel where helpful, then the source and method of the needed concepts might be different from Hegel's, but the concept of the self still has to be discussed.¹⁶

Notes

1. “Identifying the general will with the true will of each individual is based on the idea that the individual will, apart from whatever particular ends it may embrace, necessarily, and most fundamentally, wills its own freedom” (p. 78). Neuhausser develops this into a perceptive interpretation of Rousseau’s claim that citizens must at times be “forced to be free.” To be forced to be free “means more than social contract promise keeping, more than what I would have in reflection willed, that is, he means for us to take seriously the thought expressed by this sentence—namely, that universal compliance with the general will effectively safeguards citizens from personal dependence and that this protection from dependence is so bound up with their freedom that obedience to the general will can be said to make them free, even when their obedience is not voluntary in the ordinary sense of the term” (p. 63).

2. For Neuhausser, “Hegel’s divergence from methodological atomism” comes less from his argument against social contract, than “in his denial that a consideration of the fundamental interests of individuals as such is sufficient to ground a complete account of the rational social order, and this for two reasons: first, because methodological atomism cannot do justice to the organic character of the rational social order (including the different rights and duties individual are said to have in their roles as citizens; and, second, because it cannot account for the social order’s status as unconditioned, or divine” (pp. 223–24). This “divinity” is read in terms of self-sustaining teleological unity that is self-determining in a more permanent way, but does not form a larger center of social subjectivity.

3. The word “metaphysical” has many meanings, and to say that for Hegel “reason (or God) pervades all of reality” (p. 271) confuses two of them: the study of rationally necessary categories of thought and the study of primary or foundational beings. Hegel is discussing the categories of thought rather than a large pervasive entity. Hegel’s aim is to replace “metaphysics” taken as a search for the foundational being, as well as “metaphysics” taken as laws of thought and reality based on abstractions from experience, or based on analyses of concepts taken to be obvious or self-evident. Like Kant, Hegel asks what must be thought, not what is. The logic argues for certain concepts as necessary for the self-affirmation of thought. In the process it makes room for dialectically related sets of concepts, but also rules inadequate some ways of conceiving and talking about, for instance, the self. It aims to eliminate alternatives that can still plague Neuhausser’s reconstruction. But Hegel’s result is not “ontology” or “metaphysics” as a list of those types of entities that “really” exist. Hegel offers no Quinean set of ontological commitments. Hegel is more like Aristotle, who allows various levels of “entities” to be described without reductionist intent. What is can be thought and described in many ways, and Hegel tries to relate rather than reduce those ways. The different spheres of the logic and the *Realphilosophie* give different “kinds” of being their due. The closest Hegel comes to a single “meaning of being,” in Heidegger’s term, is the movement of the logic as self-described in the Absolute Idea. This is the logic’s developed concept of “being.” But few of the things which Hegel allows to be spoken of as “beings” can embody the full movement of the Idea, which is not itself a foundational entity.

4. These citations from the *Philosophy of Right* are slightly modified from the T. M. Knox translation, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).

5. A modern citizen can conceive of herself “as an individual—that is, as a person with rights and interests separate from those of the community and as a moral subject that is able and entitled

to pass judgment on the goodness of existing social norms and practices” (p. 35, see also p. 95). There are issues about whether all modern citizens are capable of the kind of reflection required for the universal point of view, and Neuhouser treats these issues sensitively, giving a generally positive reading of Hegel’s remarks about trust and popular opinion. He may be too kind to Hegel on this matter, as the structures of public opinion and legislative influence as Hegel describes them do not allow much room for that general dialogue on matters of principle and social structure which Neuhouser elsewhere recommends. Things are rather one-way in the Hegelian state. But Neuhouser rightly claims that those arrangements could be improved in ways that would remain true to Hegel’s principles. (See also p. 294, footnote 48.)

6. Below I suggest that the claim that there must be a central definition for an individual’s life is an unjustified presupposition in Neuhouser’s argument.

7. Neuhouser agrees with Pippin that in terms of current debates Hegel’s notion of freedom is thoroughly compatibilist.

8. The self is described as determined in advance, for instance, in Spinoza’s *conatus*, Deleuze’s rethinking of Epicurus’s swerve, Whitehead’s subjective aim, Heidegger’s meanings of being, Nietzsche’s will to power. These think selves as already gifted with some determinations that are not escapable but can be affirmed, though perhaps not “rationally” so.

9. The thought experiment also departs from usual understandings of Kantian autonomy and it lacks Hegel’s attempt to forge a logical connection between self-determination and rationality. The cited passage occurs in the context of an argument for the necessity of moral freedom making possible real personal freedom. The passage continues “But when we consider the conditions under which the freedom of the arbitrary will can be realized in a world shared by more than one person—when we take into account the plurality of individual wills—we see that personal freedom cannot be the only kind of self-determination the inhabitants of such a world enjoy. More precisely, it cannot be the only freedom they enjoy, if they are to achieve the ideal of having wills that are fully self-determined. A person living in a world in which the personal freedom of a plurality of individuals was guaranteed could not be fully self-determined if he possessed only an arbitrary will, for there would be a respect in which his actions would be subject to laws that were not internal to his own (merely arbitrary) will. The reason for this is that realizing the personal freedom of a plurality of individuals requires that the actions of all be subject to constraints. That is, their actions must be bound at least by those principles (the principles of abstract right) that specify which of an individual’s actions are inconsistent with the personhood of others” (p. 29).

10. Hegel would deny that there could be a solitary individual, both because of his notion of mutual recognition, and because of the way the category of “repulsion” connects to the category of “being for self” near the beginning of the logic. If that categorial connection is granted, we cannot consistently think through the possibility of there being only a single consciousness.

11. There are, of course, significant difficulties in working out the nature of that “concreteness” and linking it to empirical details.

12. “For if the highest good realized in *Sittlichkeit*, social freedom, consists in properties that can be ascribed only to the community as a whole, not severally to the individuals who compose it, then the primary good of the rational social order appears to be realizable independently of the good of individuals. . . . Although I shall ultimately reject this interpretation of social freedom, I shall do so not because it necessarily saddles Hegel with a hopelessly reactionary social theory—on the contrary, it does not—but rather because it misrepresents the position Hegel actually held and in

doing so overlooks one of the most important (and appealing) features of Hegel's social philosophy, namely, his account of the distinctive kind of freedom that individuals enjoy as members of the rational community" (p. 46, see also p. 223, footnote 4).

13. While one's social roles require an interpretative performance (p. 108) that adds detail, their overall content is set by the articulation of the social whole. "These self-conceptions are articulated in terms of a set of basic projects that structure their lives and provide guidelines for determining the content of their wills—that is, for determining which desires it is appropriate for them to have and to act upon, and which desires they should reject as inconsistent with the kind of individuals they take themselves to be. In carrying out their social roles, then, socially free individuals engage in activity that is self-determined in the sense that it is determined in accord with their understanding of their own practical identities. . . . This activity . . . makes one into a determinate self—a particular individual with real, socially recognized standing in the world" (pp. 109–10).

14. This identity with process might also be reached by a retreat similar to the way modern Kantians retreat away from Newtonian causality towards a more general notion of temporal connection that allows for statistical quantum causality. In such a Kantian retreat Hegel's three modern institutions might be reduced to three general goals: biological generation and rearing, productive exchange with nature, and mutual governance. Just as a generalized Kantian category of connection does not imply any particular scientific theory, so these generalized goals would no longer imply a particular solid framework of rationally justified institutions. Moving up in generality changes Hegel's careful balances into a separation of form and content. Neuhausser at times seems to approach this, for instance when he describes the three modern institutions in ways that sound fairly general and formal: "The shared understanding of the good on which such a consensus depends amounts to a general agreement about the importance for all individuals of those goods the institutions of *Sittlichkeit* are distinctively suited to secure: personal and moral freedom, social recognition and self-esteem, substantive attachments to others, and satisfaction of the fundamental human needs to love and to be productive. It is difficult to see how any theory, liberal or otherwise, that takes sufficient account of the general requirements of human satisfaction and also recognizes the need for individuals to affirm the norms and structures that govern their social life could dispense with all manner of agreement concerning not just the liberties individuals deserve but also the basic kinds of goods the social order must enable them to pursue" (p. 269). But to avoid formal universality more is needed than these general descriptions.

15. I have expressed some worries about the overall success of the logic elsewhere. See *The Critique of Pure Modernity* (Chicago, 1987); "What is Open and What is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel?" *Philosophical Topics*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall 1991), pp. 29–50; and "Circulation and Constitution at the End of History," in *Endings: Questions of Memory in Hegel and Heidegger* (Northwestern University Press, 1999), pp. 57–76. Gunnar Hindrichs's review of Neuhausser's book claims Hegel does not come out where Neuhausser wants him to (*Philosophische Rundschau*, Vol. 49, No. 1 [March 2002], pp. 82–87).

16. Such argumentation might still borrow fragments from Hegel's logic without signing on to the whole—if the "all-or-nothing" unity claimed for Hegel's thought could be avoided.