

THE UNITY OF IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE  
AS THE ONTOLOGICAL BASIS OF HEGEL'S  
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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Michael Eugene Morris

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Karl Ameriks, Director

Graduate Program in Philosophy

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Abstract

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In this dissertation I examine the ontological and systematic basis of Hegel's social and political philosophy. I argue that the structures of the will, discussed in paragraphs five through seven of the *Philosophy of Right*, present the key for understanding the goal and the argumentative structure of that work. Hegel characterizes the will in terms of the oppositions between the universal and the particular, the infinite and the finite, and the indeterminate and the determinate. Ultimately, he argues that we must grasp the will as the unity of these oppositional moments. The *Philosophy of Right* presents an extended attempt to grasp this unity.

In order to central problem presented by the structure of the will, I argue that we must first recognize the will as the highest instantiation of the more general structures that constitute the notion. On my interpretation, the term "notion" designates Hegel's doctrine of substance. More specifically, this term presents his conception of substance

in terms of categories normally associated with human subjectivity, in terms of representation and purposive action.

The will presents the highest or truest instantiation of the notion. Various notions can be ranked along a spectrum in accordance with their degree of success at resolving the basic problem facing all objects – namely the problem of integrating or essentially relating identity and difference through self-constituting activity. The unification of identity and difference presents the central problem or paradox of Hegel’s philosophy. It is a paradox that takes many forms. In this dissertation, I show how change, the structure of judgment, and the nature of the object all exhibit this paradox. I also show how Hegel’s doctrine of the notion develops as a direct response to this paradox. Additionally, I argue that Hegel’s account of the structure of the will – as the unity of the universal and the particular, the unity of the infinite and the finite, and the unity of the indeterminate and the determinate – presents the highest manifestation of the paradox that arises when we seek to explain the unity of identity and difference.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ONTOLOGICAL BASIS OF HEGEL'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

#### 1.1) Metaphysics and the *Philosophy of Right*

Interpretations of the *Philosophy of Right* often ignore the more esoteric side of Hegel's terminology, with its manifold relations to the obscure and allegedly obsolete pronouncements of the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*. Such interpretations focus directly on Hegel's specific discussions of private property, contractual agreement, punishment, Kantian morality, the family, civil society, and the state. Sometimes this emphasis stems from expedience, from a desire to treat the more approachable and allegedly relevant themes of Hegel's philosophy without delving into the murkier questions presented elsewhere in the Hegelian system. In other cases, this emphasis stems from a more principled view about the development of Hegel's corpus.

In *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, Allen Wood aptly expresses a principled reason for neglecting Hegel's speculative logic in favor of concrete social and political issues. He argues that we should not "suppose that Hegelian social thought is *grounded* in Hegelian metaphysics, and conclude that speculative logic is a propaedeutic to Hegel's theory of modern society." He goes on to say: "In fact, the relation may be very nearly the reverse of this; often Hegel's treatment of metaphysical issues is best viewed as an attempt to



interpret these issues as an expression of cultural and existential concerns.”<sup>1</sup> This interpretation has a degree of plausibility in light of Hegel’s intellectual development. During the 1790s, for instance, Hegel showed far more interest in Rousseau, the French Revolution, and the social aspects of religion than he did in the more theoretical debates about the completion of transcendental idealism. It was not until 1801, with the publication of the *Differenzschrift*, that Hegel showed a marked interest in the more abstruse problems of theoretical philosophy. Thus while Hegel sees the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia* as the ground of his social and political philosophy, one might argue that his intellectual development and the genesis of his thought suggest the conceptual priority of the social and the political aspects of his thought over those that are metaphysical.

Wood also justifies his non-systematic and non-metaphysical interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right* in terms of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Hegel’s corpus. Wood notes: “If Hegel understood his philosophy as the activity of pure thought-thinking itself, its legacy has rather been that of enabling us to understand how all human thought expresses its concrete social and cultural context.”<sup>2</sup> If Hegel conceived his philosophy as a grand metaphysical system in the tradition of continental rationalism, as the apotheosis of pure thought, then the legacy of his philosophy proved highly ironic, at least according to Wood. With the exception of the British Hegelians, who receive significant attention in Chapters Two and Three of this dissertation, most philosophers who have drawn inspiration from Hegel’s work have developed his thought in explicitly non-metaphysical

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<sup>1</sup> *Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, p. 6.

directions. While philosophers such as Lukács, Adorno, Kojève, Habermas, and Wood himself have developed Hegel's thought in various broadly Marxist directions, other philosophers, including Brandom, Pippin and the later Pinkard, have presented interesting non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel that emphasize various pragmatist and post-Kantian epistemological themes.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2) Hegel's Immanent Metaphysics

Despite the weight of historical precedent Wood's somewhat plausible suggestion about Hegel's intellectual development, in this dissertation I will present an explicitly metaphysical interpretation of certain key Hegelian themes, and I will argue that these themes provide an indispensable basis for understanding the central arguments presented in the *Philosophy of Right*. Hegel is, first and foremost, a metaphysician interested in various pre-Kantian themes. This manner of stating the problem may be somewhat prejudicial, since "pre-Kantian" may be taken to mean "pre-critical," "non-critical," and

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<sup>3</sup> In his widely influential interpretation of Hegel's theoretical and practical philosophy, Robert Pippin presents Hegel as an explicitly post-Kantian philosopher, as a philosopher who radicalizes and develops the subjectivity and spontaneity at the heart of Kant's Copernican revolution. At the beginning of his book on Hegel's theoretical philosophy, entitled *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*, Pippin states his basic thesis as follows: "I shall claim that these...references to Kant's critical idealism are indispensable for a proper understanding of Hegel's position, and that they point to the basic Kantian issue that clarifies the important ways in which Hegel's position extends and deepens Kant's antiempiricist, antinaturalist, antirationalist strategies. That issue, as Hegel himself again tells us, is the apperception theme, Kant's claim about the 'self-conscious,' ultimately the 'spontaneously' self-conscious, character of all possible human experience" (6). Pippin argues that Hegel continues Kant's basic project of uncovering the necessary conditions of empirical experience, and that he does so in way that (a) radicalizes the role of spontaneity, that (c) denies the ultimate legitimacy of the distinction between the understanding and intuition, that (d) rejects the thing in itself, and that (e) emphasizes the role of history and intersubjectivity in the determination of the non-empirical conditions of experience. In numerous essays, Pippin extends this same basic framework to Hegel's practical philosophy. See, for instance, "Hegel's Ethical Rationalism," "Hegel on the Rationality and Priority of Ethical Life," and "Naturalness and Mindedness: Hegel's Compatibilism." In his book, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Terry Pinkard develops this line of interpretation in relation to the *Phenomenology*. For a criticism of these epistemological/pragmatic interpretations of Hegel, see Karl Ameriks' "Hegel and Idealism," Frederick Beiser's "Hegel, A Non-Metaphysician?" and Rolf-Peter Horstmann's "Substance, Subject and Infinity: A Case Study of the Role of Logic in Hegel's System."

even “naively metaphysical.”<sup>4</sup> Stated in a less prejudicial manner, we can say that Hegel’s philosophy stands in a broad metaphysical tradition that includes Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Leibniz, and Spinoza.<sup>5</sup> This claim requires two caveats or points of

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<sup>4</sup> My claim about the affinities between Hegel and the realism of pre-Kantian metaphysics might seem strange in light of Hegel’s remarks about rationalism at the beginning of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, in the section entitled, “First Attitude of Thought to Objectivity.” In this section, Hegel considers and rejects certain tendencies of thought that he identifies with the position of “pre-Kantian metaphysic[s]” (paragraph 28Z) or the “metaphysicians before Kant,” (paragraph 35Z). Two things should be noted about this criticism, however. First, Hegel does not mention any names. As we shall see in a moment, his negative remarks about “metaphysicians before Kant” do not extend to Leibniz. Second, and more importantly, Hegel does not criticize these metaphysicians for their ontological realism, for their belief that thought can grasp the world. In fact, he praises them for their realism. At the beginning of the discussion, he says: “This method of thought has never become aware of the antithesis of subjective and objective: and to that extent there is nothing to prevent its statements from possessing a genuinely philosophical and speculative character” (Paragraph 27). Here Hegel actually praises the rationalist metaphysicians for their failure to distinguish between the subject and the object – i.e. between the categories of thought and the categories of being. In Paragraph 28 he repeats this point: “This metaphysical system took the laws and forms of thought to be the fundamental laws and forms of things. It assumed that to think a thing was the means of finding its very self and nature: and to that extent it occupied a higher ground than the Critical Philosophy that succeeded it.” So Hegel does not criticize pre-Kantian metaphysics for its commitment to the rational perspicuity of the basic structures of reality. Instead, he criticizes certain anonymous pre-Kantian metaphysicians for their reliance upon the *understanding* in opposition to *reason* (see Chapter Three, Section 4). In other words, he criticizes them for their static and atomistic rather than dynamic and holistic conception of the world and its objects. This conception can be seen in certain (non-Leibnizian) rationalist conceptions of God and the soul as mere things rather than as unified processes. This criticism can be seen most clearly in Hegel’s discussion of rational psychology, where he adopts Kant’s criticism in the Paralogisms to his own end. Hegel says: “The pre-Kantian metaphysic, we say, viewed the soul as a thing” (Paragraph 34Z). Hegel praises Kant for rejecting this conception of the soul, claiming: “Unquestionably one good result of the Kantian criticism was that it emancipated mental philosophy from the ‘soul-thing’, from the categories, and consequently, from questions about the simplicity, complexity, materiality, etc., of the soul” (Paragraph 47). However, while Kant sees this failure to cognize the unified substance or thing that grounds our mental life as a failure of finite cognitive thought, Hegel takes this “failure” as the recognition of the true nature of the self. *The self is its activity*. Hegel makes this clear, when he says: “Mind is essentially active in the same sense as the Schoolmen said that God is ‘absolute actuality’. But if the mind is active it must as it were utter itself. It is wrong therefore to take the mind for a processless *ens*, as did the old metaphysicians” (Paragraph 34). So Hegel criticizes some pre-Kantian metaphysicians for their failure to construe things – God, the mind, etc. – in terms of the categories of action. *This criticism is not directed against Leibniz*. This becomes clear in Hegel’s account of Leibniz in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where he repeatedly praises Leibniz for conceiving the monads as “the entelechies of Aristotle taken as pure activity” (p. 331), for emphasizing that monads consist in “their own activity and desire” (p. 345), and for recognizing the role that the “spontaneity of immanent development” (p. 345) plays in the constitution of the monad. In the same work, Hegel’s account of Wolf (pp. 348 – 356) makes it clear that the latter, with his “metaphysics of the understanding,” (p. 353), is a primary target of Hegel’s criticisms in the first volume of the *Encyclopedia*. For a similar discussion of Hegel’s evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of traditional metaphysics in the opening sections of the *Encyclopedia*, see Rolf-Peter Horstmann’s *Wahrheit aus dem Begriff*, pp. 23 – 26.

<sup>5</sup> Recent metaphysical interpretations of Hegel’s philosophy can be found in Charles Taylor’s *Hegel* and in Frederick Beiser’s introductory book by the same title. In many ways, my interpretation follows the one set out by Beiser. However, in contrast to both Beiser and Taylor, I don’t place as much

clarification. First, we must distinguish between *transcendent* and *immanent* metaphysics. The term “metaphysics” often designates the study of things that transcend human experience and the material world, things such as a transcendent God, the creation of the world, and the immortality of the soul. In this sense, Hegel is not a metaphysician. He explicitly rejects transcendent metaphysics. In his rejection of transcendent metaphysics, Hegel is closer to Aristotle and Spinoza than he is to Plato, Plotinus, or Leibniz.<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes, however, the term “metaphysics” is used as a synonym for ontology, as a term that designates the study of the most basic things, kinds, or categories. In this sense, Hegel is a metaphysician, one who believes that the most basic things, kinds, or categories are immanent in experience.<sup>7</sup> Thus Hegel’s philosophy develops a kind

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emphasis on the theological aspects of Hegel’s system, and where it is relevant for this dissertation, I tend to take a relatively deflationary view of “Geist.” Beiser, for instance, sees Hegel’s metaphysics and his theology as inextricably linked. He says: “Much traditional scholarship has put forward a straightforward metaphysical interpretation of Hegel’s thought, stressing the central role religion plays in it. According to this interpretation, Hegel’s philosophy was an attempt to justify through reason some fundamental Christian beliefs, such as the existence of God, providence, and the trinity” (*Hegel*, 53). Beiser then goes on to contrast this religious-metaphysical interpretation with other non-metaphysical and non-religious interpretations. Beiser equates a metaphysical interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy with one that emphasizes Hegel’s theological claims. In contrast to this, I believe we must strongly distinguish the metaphysical or ontological aspects of Hegel’s system from the religious aspects. With regards to religion, I believe Hegel remained true to the conception of religion he develops in his early writings on the subject, in works such as the “Fragment on Folk Religion and Christianity,” “The Positivity of the Christian Religion,” the “Bern Fragment,” and “The Life of Jesus.” In all of these writings, religion is portrayed as an insufficiently reflexive form of human awareness of self and society. Thus religion presents an important historical phenomenon insofar as it provides clues about how the people of various epochs have conceived themselves, but it doesn’t have significance in any traditionally theological sense. To put the point differently, Hegel emphasizes the relation between religion and art. He sees both of them as self-expressive human phenomena.

<sup>6</sup> Of course, Hegel goes even farther than Aristotle in his instance upon immanence. Although there are many important similarities between Aristotle and Hegel, it should be noted that Hegel would reject Aristotle’s unmoved mover. At the other end of the form/matter spectrum, he would also reject the intelligibility of prime matter. Hegel’s discussion of being at the beginning of the *Science of Logic* presents his rejection of prime matter in complete isolation from all form.

<sup>7</sup> Beiser states all of this quite clearly, and I fully agree with him on this point. He says: “For Hegel, the problem with traditional metaphysics is not that it attempted to know the infinite, but that it had a false interpretation of the infinite as something transcending the finite world of ordinary experience. It is

immanent metaphysics. Insofar as Hegel rejects transcendent metaphysics, we may characterize his philosophy as distinctly post-Kantian. However, insofar as he believes in the ability of thought to grasp the essential nature of reality, his philosophy marks a return to the ontological realism of Leibniz and Spinoza.<sup>8</sup>

The second caveat involves the nature of Hegel's return to a form of pre-Kantian realism. Hegel doesn't simply ignore Kantian and post-Kantian concerns about the relationship between thought and the world, between the subject and the object. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* directly addresses the various worries and problems that arise from the difference – or division – between consciousness and its object. The *Phenomenology* responds to these concerns, and it lays the basis for the immanent metaphysics presented in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*.<sup>9</sup> In the Introduction

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indeed striking that Hegel commended the old rationalism precisely because it assumed that thinking could grasp reality in itself, and in this respect he even held that it stood on a higher level than Kant's critical philosophy" (*Hegel*, 53). I agree completely with this point, although I would insist upon a non-theological interpretation of the term "infinite."

<sup>8</sup> In the following passage, Hegel expresses his commitment to the pre-Kantian claim that thought can grasp the basic structures of the world. He says: "It has been the conviction of every age that the only way of reaching the permanent substratum was to transmute the given phenomenon by means of reflection. In modern times a doubt has for the first time been raised on this point in connection with the difference alleged to exist between the products of our thought and the things in their own nature. This real nature of things, it is said, is very different from what we make out of them. The divorce between thought and thing is mainly the work of the Critical Philosophy, and runs counter to the conviction of all previous ages, that their agreement was a matter of course. The antithesis between them is the hinge on which modern philosophy turns. Meanwhile the natural belief of men gives the lie to it" (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 22Z). Given the frequent disparaging remarks Hegel makes about common sense or "natural belief," and given his generally progressive view of history, one that favors modernity in many ways, we might expect him to endorse the standpoint of modern philosophy, with its "divorce between thought and thing." However, Hegel makes it clear that his allegiance, on this issue, lies with the ancients and with natural belief. Shortly after the passage above, he continues: "The business of philosophy is only to bring into explicit consciousness what the world in all ages has believed about thought. Philosophy therefore advances nothing new; and our present discussion has led us to a conclusion which agrees with the natural belief of mankind" (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 22Z).

<sup>9</sup> Thus while the *Phenomenology* directly addresses the Post-Kantian problematic, the *Science of Logic* deals with a very different set of considerations, considerations that are more closely related to pre-Kantian rationalism and even ancient philosophy than they are to the transcendental idealism of Kant. In the Forward to the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Findlay notes the difference between the transcendental realism of Hegel's *Logic* and Kant's transcendental idealism. He says: "The liberating activity of the Universal or the

to the *Science of Logic*, Hegel explains the purpose of the *Phenomenology* in relation to the *Logic*. He says:

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* I have exhibited consciousness in its movement onwards from the first immediate opposition of itself and the object to absolute knowing. The path of this movement goes through every form of the relation of consciousness to the object and has the Notion of science for its result. This Notion...therefore needs no justification here because it has received it in that work.<sup>10</sup>

The *Phenomenology* considers “every form of the relation of consciousness to the object,” beginning with the most immediate conception of this relation.<sup>11</sup> The book moves dialectically, uncovering inherent contradictions in each form of the relation of consciousness to the object until it reaches the standpoint of “absolute knowing” or the “Notion of science.”

Hegel describes *absolute knowing* as “thought in so far as this is just as much the object in its own self, or the object in its own self in so far as it is equally pure thought.”<sup>12</sup>

He also argues that the *Logic* “presupposes [this] liberation from the opposition of

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Ego is further said to be one that liberates the essential or true nature of the object: it may profoundly change the *manner* in which things stand before us in sensation, intuition, or representation, but this change of manner is no subjective distortion as maintained in the Critical Philosophy: it is a bringing out of what the thing in itself truly is” (*Encyclopedia Logic*, ix). Though his account of Kant’s transcendental idealism may be somewhat prejudicial, the basic distinction stands. Hegel’s philosophy presents what Kant would describe as a kind of transcendental realism. Shortly after this passage, Findlay continues: “It is not necessary for one to observe how much all these dicta hark back to Plato and Aristotle rather than to Kant and Fichte” (*Encyclopedia Logic*, ix).

<sup>10</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 48.

<sup>11</sup> Here we must distinguish between “consciousness,” as a section in the *Phenomenology*, and consciousness considered as a general structure that, at least implicitly, characterizes each stage in the progression of the *Phenomenology*. As I argue in Appendix to Chapter Four, all awareness involves at least some minimal distinction between the subject and object. The sections that comprise the “Consciousness” section of the *Phenomenology* also argue for this point. Thus, for instance, the beginnings of the distinction between subject and object can already be seen in the dialectic of the here and the now. Both terms always refer to (a) some objective point in space and time, and (b) the present position of the subject. So the section on consciousness uncovers the basic subject-object structure of awareness, experience, and cognition. This same basic structure, however, plays an important role in all of the various kinds of awareness, experience, and cognition considered throughout the *Phenomenology*.

<sup>12</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 49.

consciousness.”<sup>13</sup> Thus the *Science of Logic* begins with the assumption that the structures of the world are accessible to the human mind. This assumption rests upon the extended argument presented in the *Phenomenology*, an argument that overcomes the opposition between consciousness and its object, an argument that demonstrates the isomorphism of the categories of thought and the categories of reality.<sup>14</sup>

Hegel expresses this isomorphism in his claim that logic is metaphysics. Hegel claims that the study of the categories of thought presents us with the basic categorial structures of objects in the world. Thus he says: “Logic therefore coincides with Metaphysics, the science of things set and held in thoughts—thoughts accredited able to express the essential reality of things.”<sup>15</sup> The *Science of Logic* presents Hegel’s immanent metaphysics. It presents an account of the basic categories that structure objects in the world.

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<sup>13</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> Hegel’s claim about the “isomorphism” of the categories of thought and the categories of reality should be understood in more or less Aristotelian terms. In *De Anima*, a book Hegel praises as “still by far the most admirable, perhaps even the sole, work of philosophical value on this topic [psychology],” Aristotle argues that in perception and cognition the mind takes on the form of the object (*Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 378). In cognition and perception, the same (identical) form exists in two different kinds of matter – in the object and in the mind. Hegel construes the form/matter distinction in terms of the distinction between action and the matter in which the action is performed. As I argue at length in the chapters that follow, Hegel holds that objects are constituted through their own self-determined action. Here action must be understood as a kind of teleological, rational, or rule-governed process. In cognizing an object, the mind recapitulates the action that constitutes the object, and in recapitulating the action that determines the object it comes to grasp the inherent norm that governs the action. Here we might also think of Kant’s account of concepts as rules for judgment – i.e. as rules for determining a mental process. Hegel argues that the structure of judgment exists in the object itself. In other words, the norm that governs the act of judgment exists already in an implicit form in the object. In the act of judgment, the mind thus recapitulates the basic action/structure of the object, and as the mind becomes conscious of its own acts of judgment, it becomes conscious of the basic form or structure of the object. Thus while the categories of thought and reality are identical in form (or rule), they are different with regards to (a) the matter in which they occur, and (b) the degree of consciousness with which they are performed.

<sup>15</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 24.

In his doctrine of the notion (Begriff), Hegel develops this thesis about the isomorphism of the categories of thought and reality, and he also presents his criticism of various pre-Kantian conceptions of substance.<sup>16</sup> The Aristotelian conception of substance and the Leibnizian doctrine of the monad figure prominently in Hegel's development of the notion. *Like both philosophers, Hegel insists that final causality plays an essential role in the constitutive structure of all genuine objects.* Like Leibniz, he also insists that all genuine objects must be grasped in terms of categories normally associated with human consciousness. Leibniz insists that all genuine objects, all monads as he calls them, must be constituted in terms of perception and appetite, functions normally associated exclusively with consciousness or mind. Similarly, Hegel holds that

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<sup>16</sup> In *Wahrheit aus dem Begriff* and *Ontologie und Relation*, Rolf-Peter Horstmann presents an interpretation of Hegel that places great emphasis on the doctrine of the notion or the "Begriff." In many ways, my interpretation follows a line quite similar to the one laid down by Horstmann. Like Horstmann, I argue that (1) Hegel's philosophy should be interpreted as a kind of immanent metaphysics; that (2) Hegel critiques various traditional conceptions of substance; that (3) Hegel presents the *object qua notion* as an alternative to these traditional doctrines of substance; that (4) both Hegel's critique of the traditional doctrines of substance and his development of the notion rest largely upon his conception of judgment and the object as the relation between unity and difference; and that (5) Hegel's conception of the notion explains the object in terms of categories drawn from the teleological structure of organisms and the basic relational structures that characterize subjectivity. These five central theses of Horstmann's interpretation can be gleaned from the following two passages from *Wahrheit aus dem Begriff*. First: "Hegel's Kritik an der traditionellen Metaphysik hat eine gewichtige Basis in seiner Überzeugung, daß man mit ihren Mitteln nicht in der Lage ist, eine akzeptable Theorie dessen, was ein Objekt in Wahrheit ist, vorzulegen. Dies deshalb, weil sie auf Grund ihres „unreflektierten“ Urteilsverständnis fassen kann und andererseits unfähig ist, eine „organologische“ Konzeption des Objekts sachlich zu decken" (p. 59). And second: "Objekt in Wahrheit erkennen, heißt, ihren Begriff erkennen, denn das, was das Objekt in Wahrheit ist, ist sein Begriff. Außerdem ist nur das in Wahrheit Objekt, was man nicht als Mechanismus denken muß, sondern was organologisch als Einheit inkompatibler Bestimmungen oder als organismusartig gedacht werden kann" (p. 55). My interpretation differs from Horstmann's in one crucial respect. Horstmann claims that on Hegel's view, there is only one genuine or true object (see pp. 75 – 81). Among other things, this claim fails to account for Hegel's view that there are degrees of reality and truth (See Chapter Two). While there is one object that is most true or most real – i.e. one object in which the basic structures of the notion are fully articulated, developed, or realized – there are many other kinds of "genuine" objects according to Hegel's ontology. Additionally, I would argue that Horstmann's interpretation fails to take account of the way that the basic structures of teleology can be embedded in inorganic objects. Similarly, it fails to take account of the way that the basic structures of subjectivity can be embedded in merely natural – which is to say non-mental – objects.



all genuine objects consist in some form of representation in conjunction with some form of purposive action.<sup>17</sup>

Hegel's doctrine of the notion goes beyond Aristotle's conception of substance and Leibniz's conception of the monad in one important respect. In relation to these philosophical predecessors, Hegel places even greater emphasis on the role of action, claiming, somewhat paradoxically, that a thing constitutes – or even creates – itself through its action. On Hegel's view, both Aristotle and Leibniz assume that actions must be *explained by* or *grounded in* the thing that acts. Aristotle and Leibniz privilege objects over actions, the categories associated with being over the categories associated with becoming.<sup>18</sup> Hegel reverses this priority. He argues that action precedes – in an

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<sup>17</sup> Beiser also discusses the notion in organic and purposive terms reminiscent of Aristotle and Leibniz. He says: “The term ‘in itself’ (*an sich*) means not only something by itself, apart from its relations to other things, but also something potential, undeveloped and inchoate. The term ‘for itself’ (*für sich*) means not only something self-conscious, but also something that acts for ends and that has become organized and developed. The pivotal term ‘concept’ (Begriff) means the purpose and the essence of a thing, its formal-final cause” (*Hegel*, p. 81). In addition to supporting the basic interpretation of the notion presented in this dissertation, this passage also makes an interesting point about the related possible meanings of the phrase “for itself.” As Beiser argues, this phrase denotes both *self-consciousness* and *purposive and self-organizing action of a thing*. On Hegel's view, all self-directed action involves at least some minimal form of what we might call self-representation – i.e. a basic, often pre-conscious, representation of the thing in relation to that which is not the thing.

<sup>18</sup> Perhaps this states the point too strongly. There are many ways in which Aristotle and Leibniz emphasize the categories of action as crucial for determining the nature of the object. Hegel acknowledges this in his description of the Leibnizian monads as “the entelechies of Aristotle taken as pure activities” (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, p. 331). In light of this admission on Hegel's part, perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Hegel goes beyond Aristotle and Leibniz in his *consistent* and *complete* development of a general insight shared by all three philosophers, an insight about the centrality of action in the determination of objects as objects. In his essay, “Hegel's Speculative Sentence,” Jere Paul Surber emphasizes the difference between Hegel and Aristotle's conceptions of judgment. Even if Aristotle's ontology presupposes the fundamental activity of genuine objects in terms of their final/formal causes, Surber argues that Aristotle's views on predication, which Hegel rejects, emphasize the passivity of the object. As Surber puts it: “Hegel sees the Aristotelian notion of predication as strictly paralleling this receptivity: Predicates are externally and ‘passively’ received by the grammatical subject, which seems to play no role in the development of the determinations themselves” (p. 215). For an account that forcefully emphasizes the differences between the Hegelian notion and Aristotelian substance, see also Richard Aquila's “Predication and Hegel's Metaphysics.” Aquila specifically argues that Aristotle fails to recognize the radical implications of his own teleology. He says: “Hegel is maintaining that a strict teleology, carried to its logical conclusion, cannot possibly be grounded upon an ontology of substance” (p. 232).

ontological or explanatory sense – the object. Thus Hegel’s doctrine of the notion presents a conception of substance that emphasizes the constitutive role of purposive action in the constitution of the object.

### **1.3) The Notion and the *Philosophy of Right***

This chapter seeks to motivate a central assumption that guides this dissertation – namely, the assumption that the *Philosophy of Right* must be interpreted in light of Hegel’s metaphysical doctrines, particularly his doctrine of the notion. In order to motivate this assumption, Section Two shows how the discussion of the structure of the will, presented in paragraphs five through seven of the *Philosophy of Right*, provides crucial insights for understanding the basic structure and argumentative strategy of the book as a whole, while Section Three argues that the structure of the will presents the highest or most developed instantiation of the notion (Begriff). If the structure of the notion explains the structure of the will, and if the structure of the will explains the structure and the argumentative strategy of the *Philosophy of Right*, then the development and articulation of the notion, discussed in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*, provides crucial insight into the foundations of Hegel’s political theory.

Section Two examines paragraphs five through seven of the *Philosophy of Right*. These paragraphs present the structure of the will as (a) the unity of the universal and the particular, (b) the unity of the infinite and the finite, and (c) as the unity of the indeterminate and the determinate. Section Two highlights the importance of these complex and peculiar Hegelian terms, and it uses these terms to establish connections between the three moments of the will and the three parts of the *Philosophy of Right*.

This section does not explain the meaning of these terms, but rather it demonstrates the need for such an explanation.

While Section Two demonstrates the centrality of the structure of the will for an interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right*, Section Three argues that the structure of the will presents the highest development or instantiation of the structure of the notion. The will presents one specific instantiation of a more general set of structures, a set of structures Hegel uses to describe all *genuine objects*.<sup>19</sup> Like the will, all genuine objects consist in the unity of the universal and the particular, the unity of the infinite and the finite, and the unity of the indeterminate and the determinate. Thus Section Three demonstrates the intimate connection between this central theme of Hegel's immanent metaphysics and the basic structure of his political theory. Section Three also introduces Hegel's doctrine of the notion. It briefly examines the relationship between Hegel's doctrine of the notion, Spinoza's conception of substance, and Kant's account of apperception. Moreover, Section Three introduces the most general character of the notion, the structure that characterizes the notion as the unity of identity and difference.

## **2) The Structure of the *Philosophy of Right* and the Structure of the Will**

In paragraphs five through seven of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel characterizes the will or the self in terms of three moments.<sup>20</sup> Although these paragraphs have received

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<sup>19</sup> In this dissertation I will use the term "genuine object" as more or less equivalent to the term substance. I avoid the term substance because Hegel uses this term to describe one particular conception of the nature of genuine objects. In other words, he uses it to describe one model for understanding what objects are. In more systematic terms, we can define a genuine object as an object whose existence does not depend upon the way that any mind external to the object (whether human or divine) cognizes it or the world. Thus genuine objects have their own inherent principle of individuation. As Hegel ultimately argues, such objects actively individuate (or differentiate) themselves from their environment.

little attention in the secondary literature, they provide crucial insights that explain the structure the *Philosophy of Right*.<sup>21</sup> The *Philosophy of Right* contains three sections. The first deals with abstract right, the second with morality, and the third with ethical life. Each of these sections emphasizes and develops a different moment of the will. Thus the structure of the will prefigures and explains the structure of the book. Moreover, the structure of the will provides crucial insight into the basic argumentative strategy that runs throughout the book, and it helps to explain the otherwise mysterious dialectical

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<sup>20</sup> In the Remark to paragraph five, Hegel points out that we should not think of the will as a distinct faculty. Thus we should not take Hegel's account of the will as an account of some feature or distinct capacity of the self or subject. On Hegel's view, the will *is* the self or subject. It is important to distinguish Hegel's conception of this claim from a possible Kantian interpretation of it. A Kantian might say that the will is the self, meaning that the pure or true self is simply the capacity for self-determination as distinct from the desires and abilities given by the empirical – i.e. none-pure or none-true – “self.” Thus we might say that Kant reduces the self to a more or less traditional conception of the will. By contrast, Hegel uses the term “will” in a much broader sense. He uses the term to designate the entirety of our theoretical and practical actions as they are materially embedded. Thus he uses the term in an expansive sense, a sense that includes what we might otherwise refer to as the subject or the self, depending on the specific context.

<sup>21</sup> For the purposes of my argument, it is very important to distinguish between the function of the “Preface” (Vorrede) and the “Introduction” (Einrede) to the *Philosophy of Right*. Given the nature of the development of his philosophical system, Hegel takes a low view of the kind of preliminary remarks offered in the “Preface.” He argues that the value and even the exact meaning of such preliminary remarks can only be established in the systematic development of the work itself. Thus, at the end of the “Preface,” Hegel says: “But it is time to close this preface. After all, as a preface, its only business has been to make some external and subjective remarks about the standpoint of the book it introduces” (*Philosophy of Right*, 13). The remarks in the “Preface” are “external” and “subjective.” They present mere opinions that have not been developed immanently from the process of the systematic presentation. In light of these remarks, it would be irresponsible to base too much of one's interpretation on the “Preface.” However, the remarks in the “Introduction” have a radically different status. The “Introduction” serves to connect *The Philosophy of Right* with the material presented prior to it in the systematic development of the *Encyclopedia* as a whole. The material in the “Introduction” plays a systematic and foundational role with regards to the material presented in the *Philosophy of Right*. Here paragraph two provides crucial insight into the role of the “Introduction.” This paragraph begins with the claim that, the “science of right is a section of philosophy.” It then goes on to explain the implications of this claim as follows: “As a section, it has a definite starting-point, i.e. the result and the truth of what has preceded, and it is what has preceded which constitutes the so-called ‘proof’ of the starting-point. Hence the concept of right, so far as its coming to be is concerned, falls out side the science of right; it is to be taken up here as given and its deduction is presupposed.” The “Introduction” defines the concept of right in terms of the concept of the will. Hegel makes this connection in paragraph four, where he says: “The basis of right is, in general, mind; its precise place and point of origin is the will.” So the “Introduction” presents the concept of right and the concept of the will. The justification and systematic articulation of these concepts falls within the larger scope of the *Encyclopedia* as a whole. In contrast to the remarks in the “Preface,” which Hegel dismisses as relatively superficial, the remarks in the “Introduction” provide a summary of the “foundation” for the philosophy of right, a summary that must be filled out in relation to the full development of Hegel's system.

transitions from abstract right to morality and from morality to ethical life. Few interpretations of the *Philosophy of Right* recognize the importance of paragraphs five through seven, the paragraphs that describe the structure of the will. Even fewer interpretations recognize the centrality of these paragraphs for the structure of the book as a whole.<sup>22</sup>

Paragraphs five through seven introduce a host of abstruse terms that lie at the heart of Hegel's metaphysics. These paragraphs describe the will as (1) the unity of the infinite and the finite, as (2) the unity of indeterminacy and determinacy, and as (3) the individual that unites the universal and the particular. Hegel characterizes the first moment of the will in terms of universality, infinity, and indeterminacy. He characterizes the second moment in terms of particularity, finitude, and determinacy. Finally, he describes the third moment of the will in terms of the unity of each of these pairs of oppositional terms. Hegel's peculiar use of these terms must remain opaque until we

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<sup>22</sup> Wood's book, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, devotes less than two pages to the themes discussed in these paragraphs. Another significant study of Hegel's practical philosophy, Fredrick Neuhouser's *Foundations of Hegel's Ethical Theory* spends even less time focusing on these paragraphs. Merold Westphal's essay, "Hegel's theory of the concept," presents an exception to the trend of ignoring these paragraphs. In this essay, Westphal provides an argument remarkably similar to the one presented in this chapter. He insists that (a) paragraphs five through seven are essential for understanding the *Philosophy of Right*, (b) that these paragraphs rely heavily upon Hegel's logic, on his doctrine of the notion, and on his conception of the relationship between universality and particularity, and (c) that this relationship ultimately points back towards Hegel's views on the relation of identity and difference. He also emphasizes the Aristotelian terms that Hegel uses to describe the notion. Speaking of the "Introduction" to the *Philosophy of Right*, he says: "It is indeed derived from the Logic, in particular from the analysis of the Concept [Begriff or notion] as universal, particular (or specific) and individual. This triadic structure of the Concept thus becomes the basis for getting at the genuinely speculative element in Hegel's political philosophy" (412). Ultimately, Westphal's approach differs from the one presented here in the emphasis it places on inter-subjectivity as the basis for resolving the tension between identity and difference, universality and particularity. Emphasizing the specific kind of inter-subjectivity that occurs in friendship and love, he says: "Such reflections on the way friends and lovers relate to their counterparts illuminate *the kind of identity with difference which the concept expresses* [emphasis added]" (417). As with the interpretation presented here, Westphal sees the problematic relationship between identity and difference as the core problem of the notion, of freedom, and of Hegel's political philosophy. Unlike this interpretation, he sees love and friendship – specifically social or inter-subjective categories – as the means for resolving this tension

have a greater familiarity with the structure of the notion. This section does not attempt to clarify the meaning of these terms. Instead, it demonstrates the centrality of these terms in Hegel's description of the will, and more importantly, it employs these terms to demonstrate the link between the three moments of the will and the three parts of the *Philosophy of Right*.

Hegel characterizes the first moment of the will in terms of *universality*, *infinity*, and *indeterminacy*. In paragraph five he describes the first moment as follows:

The will contains ( $\alpha$ ) the element of *pure indeterminacy* or that 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 [emphasis added].<sup>23</sup>

Hegel describes the first moment of the will as the moment of “pure indeterminacy” and “unrestricted infinity.” He also describes it as the moment of “absolute abstraction or universality.”

In paragraph six, Hegel goes on to describe the second moment of the will using contrasting or oppositional terms. In opposition to the universality, infinitude, and indeterminacy of the first moment, the second moment is characterized by *particularity*, *finitude*, and *determinacy*. Hegel describes the second moment as follows:

( $\beta$ ) At the same time, the ego is also the transition from undifferentiated indeterminacy to the differentiation, *determination*, and positing of a *determinacy* as a content and object. Now further, this content may either be given by nature or engendered by the content of the mind. Through this positing of itself as something *determinate*, the ego steps into *determinate* existence. This is the absolute moment, the *finitude* or *particularization* of the ego [emphasis added].<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 6.

The second moment of the will is the moment of “determination.” It involves the positing of a “determinacy.” This second moment characterizes the will in its “finitude” and “particularization.”

Finally, in paragraph seven Hegel describes the third moment as the unity of the first and second moment. The third moment unites the universal and the particular, the infinite and the finite, the indeterminate and the determinate. In paragraph seven Hegel says that the “will is the unity of both these [i.e. the first two] moments.”<sup>25</sup> Hegel’s description of the final moment focuses specifically on the will as the unity of the particular and the universal. He says of third moment: “It is particularity reflected into itself and so brought back to universality, i.e. it is individuality.”<sup>26</sup>

This brief examination of the structure of the will raises a host of questions about the meaning of terms like infinite, finite, indeterminate, determinate, universal, and particular. Before examining the meaning of these terms in an attempt to clarify the structure of the will, however, we can already note the role these various terms play in determining the overall structure of the *Philosophy of Right*. Thus, for instance, we can see how Hegel’s discussion of abstract right develops the first moment of the will.<sup>27</sup> “Abstract Right,” the first section of the *Philosophy of Right*, develops the notion of personhood, a conception of the agent or self that emphasizes the first moment of the

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<sup>25</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 7.

<sup>27</sup> More accurately stated, abstract right develops a conception of the self that emphasizes the first moment of the will, though it does give some consideration to the second. In paragraph seven Hegel argues that the two moments of the will can only be properly understood in relation to one another. The genuine unity of the two moments of the will is only achieved with the standpoint of ethical life. However, both “Abstract Right” and “Morality” consider the first two moments of the will, though “Abstract Right” emphasizes the first, while “Morality” emphasizes the second.

will. In the following passages, Hegel introduces the concept of personhood that informs the standpoint of abstract right. The terms employed in these passages demonstrate a clear relation between the concept of personhood and the first moment of the will. Hegel describes personhood as follows:

The *universality* of this consciously free will is *abstract universality*, the self-conscious but otherwise *contentless* and simple relation of itself to itself in its individuality, and from this point of view the subject is a person [emphasis added].<sup>28</sup>

Personality begins *not with the subject's mere general consciousness of himself as an ego concretely determined in some way or other*, but rather with his consciousness of himself as *a completely abstract ego in which every concrete restriction and value is negated without validity*. In personality, therefore, knowledge is knowledge of oneself as an object, but an object raised by thinking to the level of *simple infinity* and so an object purely self-identical [emphasis added].<sup>29</sup>

Personhood, like the first moment of the will, deals with universality. Moreover, it deals with abstract universality. Here the term “abstract” designates the fact that this point of view considers universality in isolation from particularity. From the standpoint of personhood, we consider the self or the will as “contentless,” a term more or less synonymous with “indeterminate.” Hegel describes the first moment of the will as the “pure indeterminacy” that involves the “dissipation of every restriction and every content...immediately presented by nature, by needs, by desires, and impulses.” Similarly, he describes personhood as a conception of the self as “contentless,” and he contrasts it with a conception of the self as “concretely determined in some way or other.” Here we see concrete determinateness contrasted with that which is contentless and therefore indeterminate. Finally, Hegel describes personhood as a conception of the

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<sup>28</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 35.

<sup>29</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 35R.



self as “pure infinity,” thus drawing on the notion of infinitude that he uses to characterize the first moment of the will. While it is not yet clear exactly what these terms mean, the close affinity between the first moment of the will and the conception of personhood that informs the discussion of abstract right should nonetheless be evident.

The second part of the *Philosophy of Right* focuses on morality. While the section on abstract right considers the self as a person, the section on morality considers the self as a subject. This discussion of the self as subject draws upon the second moment of the will. Hegel characterizes subjectivity as follows:

It is as subjectivity that the concept [Begriff or notion] has now been determined, and since subjectivity is distinct from the concept as such, i.e. from the implicit principle of the will...it constitutes the *determinate* existence of the concept [emphasis added].<sup>30</sup>

The general point of view here [i.e. the standpoint of morality] is that of the will’s self-difference, *finitude*, and appearance.<sup>31</sup>

In the will which is *self-determining*...its specific *determinacy* is in the first place established in the will by itself as its inner *particularization*, as a content which it gives to itself.<sup>32</sup>

Hegel’s description of the subject employs the same terminology as his description of the second moment of the will. Specifically, he speaks of the subject as determinate, finite, and particular. Both the second moment of the will and the conception of the self as subject involve the determination of content.

While the first moment of the will and the conception of the self as a person both abstract from all content, the second moment of the will and the conception of the self as

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<sup>30</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 106. Hegel’s use of the term “Begriff” is highly idiosyncratic. As suggested above, and as is argued at length in the chapters that follow, this term designates Hegel’s conception of substance.

<sup>31</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 108.

<sup>32</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 109.

subject consider the self or will in terms of its determinate content. The first moment of the will involves the “dissipation of every restriction and content,” while the second moment consists in the “positing of a determinacy as a content and object.” The same contrast can be found in the distinction between the personhood and moral subjectivity. Considered as person, the self is “contentless.” It is a “completely abstract ego in which every restriction and value is negated and without validity.” Considered as subject, the self determines itself through the “content which it gives itself.”

Thus far I have been arguing that the three moments of the will correspond to the three parts of the *Philosophy of Right*. The relationship between the first two moments of the will and the first two parts of the book should be clear. Hegel characterizes the first two moments of the will in terms of the opposition between the universal and the particular, the opposition between the infinite and the finite, and the opposition between the indeterminate and the determinate. He then describes the third moment of the will as the unity of these various oppositional terms. Hegel uses the same oppositional terms to characterize the first two parts of the *Philosophy of Right*. The first part of the book conceives the self in terms of personhood, a conception of the self that emphasizes universality, infinitude, and indeterminacy. The second part of the book conceives the self as subject. It characterizes the self in terms of finitude, particularity, and determinacy.

The third part of the book – the part on ethical life – develops the third moment of the will. In the same way that the third moment of the will unites the first two moments, so also the third part of the book unites the crucial insights contained in the first two parts. At this point in our investigation, the relationship between the third moment of the

will and the third part of the book remains difficult to see. Although at one point Hegel describe ethical life as affecting the “identity of the universal will and the particular will,” for the most part his characterization of ethical life does not explicitly rely upon the oppositional categories discussed thus far.<sup>33</sup> However, once we have a better sense of the meaning of these various oppositional terms, and thus a better sense of the structure of the will, we should be able to see more clearly the relationship between the third moment of the will and Hegel’s discussion of ethical life.

### **3.1) The Structure of the Will and the Structure of the Notion**

Hegel characterizes the will in terms of three sets of oppositional terms – universality vs. particularity, infinitude vs. finitude, and indeterminacy vs. determinacy. Careful attention to these terms reveals important parallels between the structure of the will and the structure of the *Philosophy of Right*. These parallels suggest the importance of the structure of the will for the structure and the argumentative strategy of the *Philosophy of Right* as a whole. If this suggestion is correct, then a careful interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right* must grapple with the meaning of complex Hegelian terms like universality, particularity, infinitude, finitude, indeterminacy, and determinacy. These terms quickly lead us into the heart of Hegel’s metaphysics, into some of the more abstruse themes and discussions presented in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*.

Sections 3.1 through 3.5 introduce Hegel’s conception of the notion, and they consider the relationship between the structure of the will and the structure of the notion. *They argue that the will presents the highest instantiation of the notion.* If this is correct, then the lengthy development and articulation of the notion, presented in the *Science of*

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<sup>33</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 155.

*Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*, should provide crucial insights into what Hegel means when he characterizes the will as the unity of the universal and the particular, as the unity of the infinite and the finite, and as the unity of the indeterminate and the determinate. These structures of the will are the structures of the notion, and they must be understood in relation to Hegel's development of the notion.

Section 3.2 introduces the notion as Hegel's attempt to conceive the substance as subject, as his attempt to re-conceive more traditional doctrines of substance in terms of categories normally associated with the subject. Section 3.3 briefly shows how various kinds of things, from the most basic considerations of matter qua matter to plant life and ultimately the self, display the structure of the notion. Section 3.4 examines Hegel's remarks about the historical origin of his conception of the notion. It briefly examines the relationship between Kant's doctrine of apperception and the structure of the notion. Section 3.5 presents Hegel's account of the basic structure of the "I," considered with regards to its cognitive or theoretical activity. The structures that determine the cognitive activities of the self are the same as the structures that determine the practical activities of the self – i.e. the structures that constitute the moments of the will. This section also introduces the problem of the unity of identity and difference, the problem from which Hegel ultimately develops his account of the notion. Finally, section 3.6 provides further textual evidence for the claim that the will instantiates the structure of the notion.

### 3.2) The Notion: Substance as Subject

The term “notion” designates Hegel’s alternative to certain traditional conceptions of substance.<sup>34</sup> As early as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel announces that philosophy must conceive *the substance as subject*. This slogan proclaims his project of re-conceiving the substance in terms of structures normally associated with consciousness or subjectivity. In the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel says “everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*.”<sup>35</sup> In the same way that Leibniz employs mental categories such as perception and appetition

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<sup>34</sup> There is a certain degree of ambiguity in the way that Hegel uses the term “notion.” Sometimes he uses it to express the telos or form that dwells in, but is still distinct from, the particularizing matter. In this sense, the notion must be distinguished from the idea. In contrast to this first sense of the term “notion,” Hegel uses the term “idea” to designate the concrete object as the unity of particularizing matter and form. It is with regards to this first sense of the term “notion,” that Hegel says, “the Notion as such is not yet complete, but must rise to the Idea which alone is the unity of the Notion and reality (*Science of Logic*, 587). We can see the same sense of the term “notion” in the following passage: “The subject [of the assertoric judgment] is a concrete individual in general, and the predicate expresses this same as the relation of its actuality, determinateness, or constitution to its Notion (This house is bad, this action is good.) More precisely, therefore, it involves (a) that the subject ought to be something; its universal nature has posited itself as the self-subsistent Notion; and (b) on account of its express differentiation from its self-subsistent universal nature, appears as an external existence with such and such a constitution” (*Science of Logic*, 659). Here we have three basic moments: (1) the object in its *particular* constitution, (2) the universal instantiated in the object, and the (3) the object as an individual that unites the universal and the particular. Hegel claims that in an assertoric judgment, the subject presents the individual as the unity of the universal norm and the differentiating particulars, while the predicate expresses the relation between the particulars and the notion using evaluative terms like “good,” or “bad.” In this passage Hegel links the term “notion” with the term “universal.” In this context, the term “idea” would express the unity of the notion and the particularizing matter in which it is instantiated. At other times, however, Hegel uses the terms “notion” and “idea” interchangeably. In this second sense of the term “notion,” Hegel takes the notion as the unity of the universal and the particular, or, more accurately, as the entirety of the universal-particular-individual relation. This sense of the term can be seen in the following passages: “This universal Notion, which have now to consider here, contains the three moments: universality, particularity and individuality” (*Science of Logic*, p. 600). And: “Because the Notion is a totality, and therefore in its universality or pure identical self-relation is essentially a determining and a distinguishing, it therefore contains within itself the standard by which this form of its self-identity, in pervading and embracing all the moments, no less immediately determines itself to be only the universal over against the distinguishedness of the moments” (*Science of Logic*, 600). The first quote explains the notion as the totality of universality (norm), particularity (differentiating matter), and individuality (unity of first two terms). In this dissertation, I generally use the term “notion” in this second sense. In the second passage, which I find somewhat opaque, Hegel explains the relation between these two senses of the notion. He explains how the notion is both the “totality” of these three moments and the “universal” as one particular moment. Presumably this explains the ambiguity in his use of the term “notion.”

<sup>35</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 10.

to explain the structure of all genuine things, so also Hegel believes that the structure of genuine things must be construed in terms of categories normally associated with the subject. Hegel uses the term “substance” to designate various traditional conceptions of genuine objects, conceptions that rely upon the category of “necessity” rather than categories of purposive action usually associated with the subject. Hegel argues that these traditional conceptions of substance are inadequate, and in the *Phenomenology* he argues that we must grasp the substance as subject. In other words, he argues that we must conceive genuine things in terms of categories drawn from the realm of subjectivity.

Among other things, this means that we must emphasize “teleology” and “purposive activity” in our account of the structure of genuine objects. Shortly after proclaiming the need to grasp the substance as subject, Hegel goes on to define the subject in terms of self-determined, purposive activity. In this definition of the subject, Hegel draws explicitly on the precedent of Aristotle. Thus he says:

What has just been said can also be expressed by saying that Reason is *purposive activity*. The exaltation of a supposed Nature over a misconceived thinking, and especially the rejection of external teleology, has brought the form of purpose in general into discredit. Still, in the sense in which Aristotle, too, defines Nature as purposive activity, purpose is what is immediate and at rest, the unmoved which is also *self-moving*, and as such is Subject. Its power to move, taken abstractly, is *being-for-self* or pure negativity. The result is the same as the beginning, only because the beginning is the purpose; in other words, the actual is the same as its Notion only because the immediate, as purpose, contains the self or pure actuality within itself. The realized purpose, or the existent actuality, is movement and unfolded becoming; but it is just this unrest that is the self.<sup>36</sup>

This dense passage makes a number of points that are crucial for understanding Hegel’s conception of the notion and the more general contours of his philosophy. Here Hegel identifies the “subject” with the “self.” He defines the subject or self in terms of the “unrest” or “movement” of “unfolded becoming.” He makes it clear that this movement

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<sup>36</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 12.

is movement towards a “purpose.” Moreover, he says that in this movement towards a purpose, the subject itself is “unmoved” and thus “self-moving.” In this light, we might define the subject or self, which is the notion, as *a self-determined movement towards a purpose*.

In this passage, Hegel’s discussion of nature makes it clear that the categories of “self-determination” and “purposive action” do not merely apply to the subject or self in the traditional, narrow sense. In other words, these categories do not merely describe the structure of human subjectivity. The rhetoric of the second sentence alludes to a complex interpretation of the development of modern thought about nature. Hegel believes that non-teleological conceptions of nature arose primarily as a rejection of a conception of nature in terms of “external teleology” – i.e. in terms of the purposes or intentions of a transcendent God who created nature. The rhetoric of this passage makes it clear that Hegel rejects both the conception of nature as non-teleological and the conception of nature in terms of external teleology. In contrast to both of these positions, Hegel sides with Aristotle. He embraces a conception of nature that relies upon immanent teleology. He holds that the “purposive activity” that constitutes reason exists in nature. All of this should make it relatively clear that Hegel’s conception of the substance as subject – i.e. his conception of the notion – applies to natural objects.

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel uses the term “notion” to designate his conception of the substance as subject.<sup>37</sup> The transition from the “Doctrine of Essence” to the

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<sup>37</sup> On my interpretation, Hegel’s ontology admits of many genuine things – i.e. of many substances or notions. As I discuss in Chapter Two, these objects have differing degrees of reality or truth. While there is one “truest” or “maximally real” object, there are nonetheless many objects. In other words, there are many notions. Thus my interpretation runs contrary to the claim, made by some interpreters, that for Hegel there is only one notion. For instance, in his article, “Hegels Dialektik als Begriffsbewegung und Darstellungsweise,” Hans Frierich Fulda makes the following claim: “Ebenso wie in Spinozas Philosophie der Terminus ‘Substanz’ ein singulare tantum ist, ist es auch für Hegel der Terminus ‘Begriff’, sofern

“Doctrine of the Notion” presents Hegel’s rejection of some traditional conceptions of substance and his development of the notion. In his reflections on “The Notion in General,” Hegel discusses the transition from the traditional conception of the substance to his own doctrine of the notion. He says:

The relationship of substance considered simply and solely in its own intrinsic nature leads on to its opposite, to the Notion. The exposition of substance (contained in the last book) which leads on to the Notion is, therefore, the sole and genuine refutation of Spinozism. It is the *unveiling* of substance, and this is the *genesis of the Notion*, the chief moments of which have been brought together above. The *unity* of substance is the relation of *necessity*; but this unity is only an *inner* necessity; in positing itself through the moment of absolute negativity it becomes a *manifested* or *posited identity*, and thereby the *freedom* which is the identity of the Notion.<sup>38</sup>

Hegel’s discussion in the “Doctrine of Essence,” the “last book” mentioned in the passage above, presents an immanent critique of the doctrine of substance. The doctrine of substance explains the “unity” of the genuine thing in terms of “necessity.” Thus Hegel says the “unity of substance is the relation of necessity.” Hegel argues that necessity cannot adequately explain or ground the unity of the genuine object.<sup>39</sup>

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dieser Terminus in seiner Grundbedeutung genommen wird. Es gibt also einen und nur einen Begriff, der Gegenstand des kennzeichnenden Ausdruck ‘der Begriff’ ist” (*Seminar: Dialektik in der Philosophie Hegels*, p. 129). Fulda doesn’t provide any justification for this claim, though there are two relatively straightforward reasons one might make it. First, if one ascribes a kind of strong monism to Hegel, a monism according to which there is only one genuine object, then it naturally follows that there is only one notion. Second, one might argue that since Hegel uses the definite article when speaking of *the* notion, it follows that he must be referring to one particular thing. The first reason for making the claim may be correct, though obviously I disagree with it. If it is correct, however, its correctness can only be established as the result of an overall interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy. As such, it doesn’t serve as a *prima facie* objection to my interpretation of the notion. If the second claim were convincing, it would present an important objection to my interpretation. However, this claim misconstrues the meaning of the definite article in this context. In the same way that Frege speaks of the “Der Gedanke,” without intending to imply that there is only one thought, and in the same way that a nature documentary might speak of the eating habits of “the arctic fox,” without intending to imply that there is only one arctic fox, so also Hegel speaks of “the notion,” without intending to convey that there is only one notion. For a further defense of the claim that there are multiple notions, see Rolf-Peter Horstmann’s *Wahrheit aus dem Begriff* (pp. 45-46).

<sup>38</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 581.

<sup>39</sup> More accurately stated, Hegel argues that necessity cannot explain the relationship between the unity and the plurality of the object. Leibniz and Spinoza conceive the relationship between the substance



Therefore he argues we must replace the category of necessity with the category of freedom.<sup>40</sup> Hegel associates freedom with the categories of purposive action. He argues

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and its properties, or between the subject and its predicates, in terms of logical necessity. (Leibniz actually has two apparent models of substance – one in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and one in the *Monadology*. Hegel’s conception of the notion closely follows Leibniz’s account of substance in the *Monadology*. In this context, I’m speaking of Leibniz’s conception of substance in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, where he takes mathematical concepts as a model for his conception of substance.) Here the terms “substance” and “subject” present the thing as a unified object, while the terms “properties” and “predicates” present the manifold plurality contained in the thing. Leibniz and Spinoza grasp the relation between the substance and its properties, or between the subject and its predicates, in terms of logical necessity. The predicates are logically deducible from the subject. The properties necessarily follow from the substance. In this sense, Leibniz and Spinoza explain the relationship between the unity and the plurality of the thing in terms of logical necessity. In contrast to this position, Hegel argues that we can only grasp the relation between the plurality and the unity of the thing if we grasp the thing as a teleological process. We must employ categories normally associated with action, or the subject, in order to grasp this relation.

<sup>40</sup> Of course “replace” isn’t really the right word. In Hegelian terms, the relation of necessity must be sublated (Aufgehoben) in freedom. Or, to employ another important Hegelian slogan, we must grasp “the unity of freedom and necessity.” It is widely, though I think wrongly, assumed that Hegel accepts a deterministic conception of the world, and that he thus possesses some compatibilist conception of freedom that, depending on the school of interpretation, can best be described as a form of modified Spinozism or a form of modified Kantianism. On the first interpretation, freedom consists in self-knowledge. Through knowledge of the world and our self we come to accept, and even identify with, the forces that determine us. It is this acceptance/identification that constitutes freedom. On the second interpretation, freedom consists in a certain mode of self-description and self-understanding, one that relies upon reasons rather than causes. This interpretation, popularized by Robert Brandom and Robert Pippin, accepts the Kantian distinction between theoretical and practical descriptions of the world, while rejecting Kant’s underlying metaphysical basis for this distinction. Both of these interpretations provide ways of understanding Hegel’s claim about “the unity of necessity and freedom.” In contrast, to both of these determinations, I would argue that Hegel uses the term “necessity” to designate (a) some general form of the grounding relation, and (b) and some very general notion of determination from without. We might represent this general grounding relation as “B because of A.” In Spinoza’s philosophy, as Hegel sees it, this general meaning of necessity is further specified in terms of the kind logical deducibility evident in mathematical proofs and in terms of mechanistic causality. On this view, necessity always has the form “A→B.” If all grounding relations takes this form, then the world consists in long series of causal chains in the mode of matter (reflected in long series of deductions in the mode of mind), all with the form ... → N → N+1 → N+2 →... In a world like this, everything is determined from without, thus everything is necessary in the second sense presented above. Hegel rejects this conception of necessity, though his final picture retains the core notion (of conceptual connection as “B because of A”) presented above. Hegel replaces the “A→B” relation with the “B for the sake of A” relation, the kind of relation we use when explaining our actions. For instance: I went to the fridge in order to (or: for the sake of) getting a beer.” This introduces freedom into the notion of necessity in two ways. First, it introduces indeterminacy. “A→B” implies that B *must* follow A, that events of type B always follow events of type A. By contrast, “B because of A” allows for contingency. If A is “getting a beer,” then there are obviously many different events that could fill in the B slot – going to the fridge, swiping the beer someone else who just got it from the fridge, going to the store, etc. More importantly, this conception of necessity allows for the possibility of “determination from within.” Thus when Hegel speaks of the unity of necessity and freedom, he is speaking of (a) a kind of grounding relation that includes contingency, and (b) and a conception of things as determined both from without and within. Among other things, I take the following passage as support for my claim that Hegel construes necessity in the non-standard fashion suggested here. Hegel says: “This leads on to the concept of a series of natural things [a series running from less developed to more developed specimens], and in particular, of living things. The desire to understand the necessity of such a development makes us look for a law governing

that the unity of a genuine object can only be determined by the purposive action of the object itself. Genuine objects are constituted by their own purposive action. Hegel designates this conception of the genuine object with the term “notion,” in order to differentiate it from more traditional conceptions of the substance.

As these passages from the *Phenomenology* and the *Science of Logic* demonstrate, Hegel’s critique of substance and his development of the notion present central themes in his philosophy. As I shall argue in the chapters that follow, these arguments stem from basic metaphysical or ontological considerations about the necessary conditions for any genuine object.

### **3.3) Instantiations of the Notion: Plants, Matter, and the Self**

Throughout the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel makes it clear that all basic objects instantiate the structures of the notion. For instance, Hegel often discusses the development of a plant as an example of the manner in which the purposive action of the notion constitutes the object. Hegel says:

This disruption of the notion into the difference of its constituent functions – a disruption imposed by the native act of the notion – is the judgment. A judgment therefore means the particularizing of the notion. No doubt the notion is implicitly the particular. But in the notion as notion the particular is not yet explicit, and still remains in transparent unity with the universal. Thus, for example, as we remarked before... the germ of a plant contains its particular, such as root, branches, leaves, etc.: but these details are at first present only potentially, and are not realized till the germ uncloses. This unclosing is, as it were, the

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the series, or a basic determination which, while positing variety, recapitulates itself within it, and so simultaneously engenders a new variety. But to augment a term by the successive addition of uniformly determined elements, and only to see the same relationship between all the members of the series, is not the way in which the notion determines. It is in fact precisely this conception of a series of stages and so on, which has hindered advances in the recognition of the necessity of formations” (*Philosophy of Nature*, paragraph 249Z). Hegel argues that there is a necessity that governs the series, but that this necessity cannot be determined by a law, that it cannot be construed as a kind of algorithm that always repeats the same relation in producing one member of the series from the previous one. So even where there can be no universal laws, necessity, in Hegel’s sense, is possible.

judgment of the plant. The illustration may also serve to show how neither the notion nor the judgment are merely found in our head, or merely framed by us. The notion is the very heart of things, and makes them what they are. To form a notion of an object means therefore to become aware of its notion: and when we proceed to a criticism or judgment of the object, we are not performing a subjective act, and merely ascribing this or that predicate to the object. We are, on the contrary, observing the object in the specific character imposed by its notion.<sup>41</sup>

Although this passage presents a number of rich insights and terminological peculiarities that receive clarification in the chapters that follow, there are a number of important points we can glean already. First, we should note the use of terms that should already be familiar from our brief examination of the structure of the will. In this passage Hegel explains the structure of the notion in terms of the relationship between the *universal* and the *particular*. He explains the activity of the notion in terms of the (a) the particularization of the universal, (b) the structure of judgment, and (c) the development of a plant from the undifferentiated unity of the seed to the detailed and organized complexity that characterizes the mature plant.

Second, we should note Hegel's remarks about the peculiar and idiosyncratic manner in which he employs the term "notion" or "Begriff." As it is normally used, the German term "Begriff" might best be translated as "concept." As such, the term is generally associated with the mental process of thought. However, in contrast to the more traditional meaning of the term, a meaning associated with a mental entity or process, Hegel uses the term to designate certain conceptual structures that exist in the objective processes in the world as well as in thought.

Hegel explicitly warns against a merely mental or subjective conception of the notion. He argues that "neither the notion nor the judgment are merely found in our head,

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<sup>41</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 166Z.

or merely framed by us.” Instead, he describes the notion as “the very heart of things,” as that which “makes them what they are.” Likewise, he says: “To form a notion of an object means therefore to become aware of its notion.” So the term “notion” does not merely designate a mental concept or a process of thought, but rather it designates a conceptual structure in the object itself, a structure that constitutes the object as an object and that also determines its specific nature.

All genuine objects instantiate the basic structures of the notion. In the passage just quoted, Hegel presents the notion in terms of the development of a plant. The teleological or purposive development of the plant presents an example of the basic structure that constitute the notion, a structure that Hegel describes in terms of the relation between universal and particular. However, the term “notion” designates the structures of objects that are both more basic and more complex than plants.<sup>42</sup> In the *Encyclopedia*, the term “notion” designates the structure of all genuine objects, including the objects of physics, chemistry, biology, anthropology, psychology, and politics. For instance, in the discussion of mechanics in the *Science of Nature*, the second volume of

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<sup>42</sup> See Beiser’s *Hegel*, Chapter Four. Among other things, Beiser does a nice job of showing how the organic view of the universe ultimately rests upon a teleological or “living” view of matter, one that can be traced back to Leibniz. He also shows how the failure of purely mechanistic accounts of gravity and the development of chemistry, with phenomena like magnetism and electricity, contributed to the plausibility of this view. Beiser says: “According to the organic conception, the essence of matter consists not in dead extension but in power or force, which expresses itself as motion. It is the very essence of these forces to act or to *realize themselves* [emphasis added]” (p. 86). The basic structures of self-realization – i.e. the structures that manifest themselves in more developed forms in the structure of the will that grounds Hegel’s political philosophy – already exist at the level of matter. The various claims in this chapter about the priority of action over the thing that acts can be understood in terms of this conception of matter, a conception that explains matter or the thing in terms of force. Matter doesn’t simply possess force. It isn’t, on this view, an extended something that also possesses various attractive forces, but rather the extended something that is matter derives from more basic forces. Forces ground or constitute matter. In other words, actions ground or constitute the object. For a more general discussion on *Naturphilosophie*, one that focuses on Schelling, see also Beiser’s *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism* (pp. 506 – 550).

the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel describes the most basic forces that constitute matter in terms of purposive striving – i.e. in terms of categories associated with the notion. He says:

Together, attraction and repulsion constitute gravity, which is the Notion of matter. Gravity is the predicate of matter, which constitutes the substance of this subject. Its unity is a mere should, a yearning.<sup>43</sup>

This passage confirms the interpretation presented thus far in a number of ways.<sup>44</sup> We can see how Hegel, at least in this passage, uses the terms “notion” and “substance” more or less interchangeably. If we take the term “substance” in its most general sense, as it seems to be employed here, then we can say that the notion presents one particular conception of the substance, the particular conception that Hegel endorses. If, however, we take the term in a narrow sense, identifying it with certain traditional conceptions of substance that rely upon the category of necessity, then we might say that the notion presents Hegel’s alternative to the ontology of substance.

Hegel’s discussion in this passage focuses on how the force of gravity constitutes the notion or substance of matter qua matter – i.e. matter as it is considered from the standpoint of mechanics, in abstraction from all chemical and biological forces or activities. Moreover, Hegel describes the force of gravity in explicitly purposive terms as a yearning or desire for unity. Gravity is the force of attraction that all matter exerts on all other matter.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *Philosophy of Nature*, Paragraph 262Z.

<sup>44</sup> In this passage, Hegel implicitly relates the structure of the notion to the structure of judgment when he describes the relationship between matter and gravity in terms of the relationship between the “subject” and the “predicate.”

<sup>45</sup> For a thoughtful reconstruction and at least partial defense of this position, see Stephen Houlgate *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History*, Chapter Six. Houlgate emphasizes this account of gravity as the striving of matter. He describes it as the “movement of uniting-with-other-matter that is intrinsic to matter as such” (p. 133). He goes on to describe the difference between Hegel and Newton’s conception of gravity. He says: “One needs to exercise caution, therefore, when considering

Gravity is a force that acts at a distance. Although Newton himself simply described the mathematical laws that govern gravity without hypothesizing about its nature, post-Newtonians generally made certain further assumptions, rejecting the Cartesian explanations of falling objects and of orbital rotation, explanations that rely solely upon the transference of motion through the contact of matter in a plenum. They likewise rejected more traditional forms of atomism – i.e. conceptions of the world as a collection of particles that bump around in the void like billiard balls without any attractive forces. However, with the acceptance of gravity as a genuinely attractive force that acts at distance, a new conception of the physical world becomes possible. On this conception, objects are not merely pushed along in terms of efficient causality. In gravity, objects move because of the striving implicit in their orientation towards some spatio-temporal point in the future. With regards to gravity, the motion of objects cannot be solely explained in terms of the state from which the object comes, but rather it must also be explained in terms of the state towards which the object is moving. Gravity, construed as an attractive force that acts at a distance, opens a space in the natural world for final causality, for the categories associated with purposive action. Thus in somewhat

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Hegel's claim that gravity is the unity of repulsion and attraction, because (unlike Newton) he does not understand gravity to be a force by which matter is passively attracted. True, he allows us to *say* (with Newton) that 'matter is attracted by the centre'; but he makes it abundantly clear at several points that gravity is actually matter's own, active 'seeking' or 'striving' to unity with other matter." This passage makes a useful distinction between force, construed merely as something acting upon things, and force as the striving by which a thing determines itself. For further discussions of Hegel's conception of gravity that follow a similar line of interpretation, see Dieter Wandschneider's essays "Die Stellung der Natur im Gesamtenwurf der hegelschen Philosophie," and "Die Kategorien ‚Materie‘ und ‚Licht‘ in der Naturphilosophie Hegels."

colorful – but ultimately justified – language, Hegel describes gravity as the striving of matter for unity with itself.<sup>46</sup>

So the basic structures that determine the purposive activities of plants also determine the purposive activity of matter. At a much higher level of complexity, the structure of the notion can also be found in the “I” or the self. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel first introduces the notion in terms of the structure of the self, the “I,” or pure self-consciousness. He says: “The Notion, when it has developed into a *concrete existence* that is itself free, is none other than the *I* or pure self-consciousness.”<sup>47</sup> Stated differently, the “I” or the self presents the highest instantiation of the notion. It presents a fully developed, articulated, unified, self-aware, and self-determined instantiation of the notion.

Here the Leibnizian conception of the monad provides a helpful comparison. Leibniz holds that perception and appetite, categories usually associated with the mind or with consciousness, constitute the basic structure of all monads. However, Leibniz recognizes that these basic functions come with different degrees of consciousness,

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<sup>46</sup> Striving is always the attempt to fulfill some telos. Stated differently, it is the attempt to act in accordance with some rule. In these terms, we can explain the difference between the basic striving of matter and higher orders of striving in terms of three features. First, we can differentiate the basic striving of matter from more complex forms of striving in terms of the complexity of the rules being followed. The rule that determines the striving of gravity is far simpler than the rule that determines the striving of the sunflower seed to become a sunflower. Second, we can distinguish different levels of striving in terms of the degree to which the achievement of the telos requires an “awareness” and appropriation of the world outside of the striving thing. In falling, the rock doesn’t “take account of” different obstacles, nor does it appropriate other matter to itself. By contrast, the flower can move as the sun passes across the sky. It thus, in some minimal sense, uses its “awareness” of its environment to further its ultimate purpose. Finally, we can distinguish lower and higher level strivings in terms of the awareness of the rule that determines the striving. This awareness, which Hegel identifies with consciousness, characterizes mind as distinct from nature, mental striving as distinct from merely natural striving.

<sup>47</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 583.

clarity, memory, and reflection.<sup>48</sup> Thus while all monads possess the same basic functions, some monads present these basic functions in more highly developed and articulated forms.

In these matters, we can compare Hegel's conception of the notion with the Leibnizian conception of the monad.<sup>49</sup> Hegel argues that all genuine entities are

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<sup>48</sup> "The Monadology." In: *Philosophical Essays*, pp. 214 -5.

<sup>49</sup> We might also compare Hegel with Schelling on this point. Here it is important to be clear about both the differences and the similarities between Hegel and Schelling. On the one hand, Hegel rejects Schelling's early conception of the absolute as "absolute identity" or "A = A." Hegel presents this criticism in the "Preface" to the *Phenomenology*. As I argue in Section Two of Chapter Five, the basic disagreement between Hegel and Schelling – the disagreement that comes to the surface in the *Phenomenology* – can already be seen in 1801, in the differences between Hegel's *Differenzschrift* and Schelling's *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*. Much latter, in the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel criticizes Schelling in even harsher terms for what he sees as Schelling's whimsical development of the philosophy of nature. Hegel says: "Crude empiricism and travestied thought-forms, capriciousness of fancy and the flattest methods of proceeding according to superficial analogy, have been mixed into a complete chaos, and this stew has been served up as the Idea, reason, science, divine perception. A complete lack of system and scientific method has been hailed as the very peak of scientific accomplishment. It is charlatanry such as this, and Schelling's philosophy is a prime example of it, that has brought the philosophy of nature into disrepute" (Introduction, p. 191-192). Despite these disagreements, however, there are important similarities between the philosophical systems of Hegel and Schelling. For instance, despite Hegel's implicit disagreement with Schelling about the nature of the absolute, Hegel sides with Schelling and against Fichte in the *Differenzschrift*. Hegel sees Schelling's philosophy of nature as the antidote to Fichte's excessively subjective idealism. In terms of that essay, while Fichte recognizes the subject as the subject-object, only Schelling recognizes both the subject and the object as the subject-object (*Werke 2*, p. 94). The phrase subject-object refers to the activity of apperception as that which first distinguishes the subject from the object, and that therefore includes both subject and object within itself. Fichte recognizes the role of apperception in the subject, but he fails to recognize the same structures as they exist in the object. Although Hegel criticizes the particular way that Schelling develops his philosophy of nature, he continues to see the basic premise of the philosophy of nature as a crucial element in his absolute idealism. Consider, for instance, the following claim: "To speak of thought or objective thought as the heart and soul of the world may seem to be ascribing consciousness to the things of nature. We feel a certain repugnance against making thought the inward function of things, especially as we speak of thought as marking the divergence of man from nature. It would be necessary, therefore, if we use the term thought at all, to speak of nature as the system of unconscious thought, or, to use Schelling's expression, a petrified intelligence. And in order to prevent misconception, 'thought-form' or 'thought-type' should be substituted for the ambiguous term thought" (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 24Z). So Hegel continues to endorse the basic claim behind Schelling's philosophy of nature, the claim that nature itself (or the objects in nature) are structured in terms of the categories of thought. Given this, it seems that Hegel would agree with the following claims from Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift*, claims that endorse the basic line of interpretation developed in this dissertation. In his *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling makes a number of claims that closely follow the line of interpretation presented here. Thus he says: "with regards to the system of fully formed idealism it is not sufficient to say 'that activity, life and freedom are all that is truly real,' a claim that can also lead to the subjective idealism of Fichte, an idealism that misunderstands itself. Instead, this fully formed idealism also demands the demonstration of the converse, that all reality (nature and the world of things) has activity, life, and freedom as its basis, or in Fichtean terms, not only that the 'I' is everything, but also conversely that everything is the 'I'" (pp. 23-24). Schelling claims that this



constituted in terms of the same basic categories of purposive action, though he recognizes that genuine entities instantiate these categories to differing degrees depending upon (a) the manner of their unity, (b) the degree of their unity, (c) the degree of complexity contained within their unity, (d) their degree of awareness of the self and its other, (e) the degree of awareness of the rules that determine the unity of the entity in opposition to its environment, and (f) the degree to which the manner of their unity is self-determined. All of these components play into Hegel's conception of freedom, and thus different kinds of notions vary in the degree to which they achieve or exhibit freedom. The "I," or the self, presents the highest manifestation of the notion, the notion which "is itself free." In other words, the "I" presents the structures of the notion in their most unified, complex, self-aware, and self-determined form.

### **3.4) Historical Origins of the Notion: The Spinozistic Substance, the Leibnizian Monad, and the Kantian Doctrine of Apperception**

In the beginning of volume two of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel discusses the notion at great length in a section entitled, "The Notion in General." In addition to describing the basic structures of the notion, Hegel makes three crucial points. First, as noted in section 3.2, he claims that the notion presents the dialectical development of the Spinozistic conception of substance. Hegel's conception of the notion emerges from an immanent critique of Spinoza's doctrine of substance. Second, he claims that Kant's

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conception of the objects in nature in terms of the "I" leads to a conception of idealism as a kind of realism. It allows us to conceive the thing-in-itself, for as Schelling says, freedom or the "I" presents "the only possible positive conception of the thing-in-itself" (p. 24).

discussion of apperception, in the “Transcendental Deduction,” presents the first accurate account of the structure of the notion.<sup>50</sup> Hegel praises Kant for this discovery. He says:

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 of the *Notion* is recognized as the *original synthetic* unity of *apperception*, as unity of the *I think*, or of self-consciousness.<sup>51</sup>

In this passage Hegel claims that **unity** constitutes the notion. He identifies this unity with “the original synthetic unity of apperception,” with the “I think,” and with “self-consciousness.” Moreover, he claims that Kant was the first philosopher to conceive apperception or self-consciousness in its true form, thus opening up the way for the proper conception of the unity of the notion.

In paragraphs five through seven of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel describes the structure of the will, which presents the most developed form of the notion, in terms of (a) the **unity** of the universal and the particular, (b) the **unity** of the infinite and the finite, and (c) the **unity** of the indeterminate and the determinate. In all three cases, the structure of the will or the notion consists in the unity of apparently oppositional terms. In this passage, Hegel claims that this unity, the unity of the notion, must be conceived in terms of the “original synthetic unity of apperception.” The unity of apperception thus

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<sup>50</sup> Kant makes a crucial distinction between transcendental and empirical apperception. Hegel accepts this distinction, though he believes that the two can only be understood in relation to one another. For the moment I will use the term “apperception” in a general sense that includes both transcendental and empirical apperception.

<sup>51</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 584. For two different interpretations of this passage, see Horstmann’s *Wahrheit aus dem Begriff: Eine Einführung in Hegel* (pp. 62 – 73), and Pippin’s *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* (pp. 16 – 41). Both authors focus on the centrality of Kantian apperception for the development of Hegel’s thought. On Horstmann’s view, Hegel transforms Kant’s epistemic or logical conception of apperception into a specifically ontological thesis about the basic structure of reality. By contrast, Pippin construes Kantian apperception as a doctrine about the self-reflexivity that constitutes rule following, and he argues that Hegel develops this doctrine even further within an explicitly epistemological and pragmatist framework.

provides the basic categories in terms of which we must grasp the structure of the notion. It also presents, along with the will, the highest instantiation of the notion.<sup>52</sup>

Hegel makes a third important claim in “The Notion in General.” He claims that Kant fails to recognize the import of his own discovery. Kant assumes that the structures or activities of apperception are unique to thought. In contrast to this, Hegel argues that the structures of apperception occur in all genuine objects, though most objects present these structures in less developed forms. A few pages after the previous passage, Hegel presents his conception of the notion as a structure that occurs in all genuine objects. He says:

Similarly, here, too, [in the *Science of Logic*] the Notion is to be regarded not as the act of the self-conscious understanding, not as the subjective understanding, but as the Notion in its own absolute character which constitutes a stage of nature as well as of spirit. Life, or organic nature, is the stage of nature at which the Notion emerges, but as blind, as unaware of itself and unthinking; the Notion that is self-conscious and thinks pertains solely to spirit. But the logical form of the Notion is independent of its non-spiritual, and also of its spiritual, shapes.<sup>53</sup>

The activities and structures presented in apperception present the most developed form of the notion. However, the same basic structures can be found outside of conscious thought, in the structures of organic nature. Despite what Hegel says here, these

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<sup>52</sup> Hegel argues that the same structure characterizes the self in its theoretical and its practical activities. Thought and volition are not two distinct capacities, functions, or faculties. The cognitive and volitional structures of the self are the same. In other words, Hegel’s discussion of the “I,” or transcendental apperception, and his discussion of the will are two discussions of the same basic thing or process, though one occurs in a theoretical context while the other occurs in a practical context. Hegel makes this point about the unity of the cognitive and volitional self in the *Philosophy of Right*. He says: “The following points should be noted about the connexion between the will and thought. Mind is in principle thinking, and man is distinguished from beast in virtue of thinking. But it must not be imagined that man is half thought and half will, and that he keeps thought in one pocket and will in another, for this would be a foolish idea. The distinction between thought and will is only that between the theoretical attitude and the practical. These, however, are surely not two faculties; the will is rather a special way of thinking, thinking translating itself into existence, thinking as the urge to give itself existence” (Paragraph 4A).

<sup>53</sup>*Science of Logic*, p. 586.

structures can also be found, though in a less developed form, in inorganic nature.<sup>54</sup> Thus unlike Kant, Hegel does not limit structures or activities of apperception to the realm of the “self-conscious understanding.” Instead, he takes Kant’s conception of apperception and puts it to use in a rather Leibnizian fashion. Leibniz argues that various mental phenomena – specifically perception and appetition – provide crucial examples that help us to conceive the basic structure of all genuine objects or monads. Similarly, Hegel argues that various mental activities and structures associated with apperception constitute the basic structure of all genuine objects.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> In this passage Hegel argues that the notion emerges at the level of organic life, thus apparently denying the existence of the notion at the inorganic level. However, in the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel consistently speaks of the notion in relation to inorganic phenomena. As we discussed at the end of section 3.3, and as we will discuss at greater length in Chapter Two, genuine things or notions come in degrees. Some things are more real or genuine than others. In things that are more real the structures of the notion are more evident and more highly developed. In things that are less real these structures are less evident and less highly developed. These structures exist in inorganic matter, as evidenced by Hegel’s discussions in the *Philosophy of Nature*. However, presumably because of the relatively undeveloped manner in which the structures of the notion exist in nature, Hegel here says that the notion first emerges at the level of organic life. Another thing should be noted about this passage. Hegel says that the notion, as exhibited in organic life, is “blind...unaware of itself and unthinking.” Organic nature does involve certain representational and conceptual structures, and in this sense, the notion at the level of organic nature should not be characterized as blind. However, these representational and conceptual structures are not fully articulated or developed, they have not reached the degree of development evident in self-consciousness. In these sense, the notion at the level of nature may be characterized as “blind” or “unthinking.”

<sup>55</sup> This particular appropriation of Kantian apperception can already be seen in Hegel’s criticism of Fichte in the *Differenzschrift*. In speaking of the superiority of the Schellingian system over the Fichtian, Hegel says that in Schelling’s system, “both the subject and the object are determined as the subject-object.” By contrast, he argues, Fichte only acknowledges a “subjective subject-object” (*Werke* II, p. 94). Hegel uses the phrase “subjective subject-object” to designate the Kantian (and Fichtian) conception of apperception. In apperception, the self becomes aware of the unity of itself amidst the plurality of its representations. It becomes aware of itself as the bare “I think” that can accompany all of its representations. In this sense it becomes aware of the unity of itself as the I think, the “I = I” or the “A = A,” and it also becomes aware of the unity of the subject and the object, in the sense that every representation of the object is a representation of the object for the subject. At the same time, though, the possibility of the “I think” accompanying all my representations depends upon the categories or forms of judgment and, among other things, on the distinction between the subject and the object. Here we become aware of the difference between the subject and the object, of the fact that the I is always the I in relation to some not I (the representation of the object). Hegel uses the phrase “subjective subject-object” to describe this recognition that subject (I = I) determines both itself and the object by distinguishing itself from the object while also relating itself to it. Hegel praises Schelling for grasping the importance of the objective subject-object – i.e. for grasping the fact that all objects possess the structure of apperception, though in a less developed form than the subjective subject-object. Like the “I think” in Kantian apperception, all

### 3.5) The “I” as Instantiation of the Notion: The Unity of the Notion as the Unity of Identity and Difference

In “The Notion in General” Hegel presents the structure of apperception or the “I.” His account of the moments of the “I” directly parallels his discussion of the moments of the will in the *Philosophy of Right*, thus providing further support for the claim that the structure of the will instantiates the notion. Hegel describes the structure of the “I” as follows:

But the *I* is *first*, this pure self-related unity, and it is so not immediately but only as making abstraction from all determinateness and content and withdrawing into the freedom of unrestricted equality with itself. As such it is *universality*; a unity that is unity with itself only through its *negative* attitude, which appears as a process of abstraction, and that consequently contains all determinedness dissolved in it. *Secondly*, the *I* as self-related negativity is no less immediately *individuality* or is *absolutely determined*, opposing itself to all that is other and excluding it – *individual personality*. This absolute *universality* which is also immediately an absolute *individualization*, and an *absolutely determined* being, which is a pure *positedness* and is this absolutely determined being only through its pure *positedness*, this constitutes the nature of the *I* as well as of the notion; neither the one nor the other can be truly comprehended unless the two indicated moments are grasped at the same time both in their abstraction and also in their perfect unity.<sup>56</sup>

This account of the structure of the “I” presents the structural moments of the notion, structural moments also present in the will. This passage is remarkably dense and filled with peculiar Hegelian terminology. This dissertation develops the resources and the conceptual apparatus that will allow us to interpret this passage. It also presents a sympathetic construction of Hegel’s argument for this conception of “I” and the structure

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objects maintain their own identity through a process by which they distinguish themselves from their other (the object or their environment), while also relating this other to themselves.

<sup>56</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 583.

of the notion more generally. For the moment, though, it is sufficient to note the terminological similarities between Hegel's discussion of the "I" and his discussion of the will in the "Introduction" to the *Philosophy of Right*.

Hegel describes the moments of the "I" in terms of the same dichotomies that characterize the will. The first moment of the "I" consists in an "abstraction from all determinateness and content." Thus like the first moment of the will, the first moment of the "I" is indeterminate and without content. Hegel goes on to describe the second moment of the "I" as "absolutely determined." Like the second moment of the will, this moment of the "I" is determinate. Here we see the structure of the "I," which is also the structure of the notion, described in terms of the distinction between indeterminacy and determinacy. Hegel also describes the "I" in terms of the distinction between the universal and the individual. While the first moment presents the "I" in its universality, the second moment presents the "I" in its individuality.<sup>57</sup>

In the final sentence of this passage Hegel says that the unity of these two moments, "constitutes the nature of the *I* as well as of the notion." The structures of the "I" and the structures of the notion are the same. Stated differently, the "I" presents the highest instantiation of the notion. Hegel also makes a complex point about the unity of the first two moments of the "I." He warns that we cannot comprehend the nature of the "I" unless we grasp its moments "in their abstraction" and "in their perfect unity" at "the same time." This warning highlights a complex problem, one that receives a great deal of attention in the chapters that follow. The problem arises from the fact that the moments

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<sup>57</sup> Here we see a slight difference between Hegel's characterization of the "I" and his characterization of the will. Hegel describes the first and second moment of the will in terms of universality and *particularity*, and he describes the unity of these two moments as *individuality*. Here, Hegel describes the first two moments of the "I" in terms of universality and *individuality*.

of the self are genuine moments rather than parts. As moments, they can only *exist* and *be conceived* in relation to the unity of the whole. In order to grasp the moments of the self properly, we must conceive them in relation to their higher unity. However, we must not lose the distinction between them in this higher or more primordial unity. We must conceive them both in their **identity** (perfect unity) and their **difference** (abstraction). Moreover, we must conceive their identity and their difference “at the same time.” We must, in other words, conceive them in their essential relation. Thus, to employ a phrase that stands at the heart of Hegel’s metaphysics, we must grasp the “I” as the unity of identity and difference.

### **3.6) The Will as Instantiation of the Notion: Action and the Unity of Identity and Difference**

The basic structure of the notion can be found in the will as described in paragraphs five through seven in the *Philosophy of Right*. In paragraph seven of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes this point directly. He specifically describes the unity of the will as the unity of the notion. He says:

Every self-consciousness knows itself (i) as universal, as the potentiality of abstracting from everything determinate, and (ii) as particular, with a determinate object, content, and aim. Still, both of these moments are only abstractions; what is concrete and true...is the universality which has the particular as its opposite, but the particular by which its reflection into itself has been equalized with the universal. This unity is the individual, not individuality in its immediacy as a unit, our first idea of individuality, but individuality in accordance with its concept [i.e. Begriff or notion]; indeed, individuality in this sense is just precisely the concept [Begriff] itself. The first two moments – (i) that the will can abstract from everything, and (ii) that it is also determined in some specific way either by itself or something else – are readily admitted and grasped because, taken independently, they are false and moments of the Understanding. But the third moment, which is true and speculative...is the one into which the Understanding

declines to advance, for it is precisely the concept [Begriff] which it persists in calling the inconceivable.<sup>58</sup>

Hegel describes the will as the unity of the universal and the particular. This unity is the individual. Hegel says this individuality is “just precisely the concept.” The unity of the individual is the “Begriff,” the term translated elsewhere as notion. Hegel makes it clear that the structure of the will is the structure of the notion. Thus the will presents the highest instantiation of the structures Hegel develops in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where he seeks to conceive the substance as subject. It presents the structures that constitute all genuine objects, structures that Hegel employs to characterize various kinds of objects in the *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Mind*. Finally, the will presents the same structures that determine the cognitive activities of the self, structures Hegel associates with Kant’s doctrine of apperception.

This passage also hints at the difficulty involved in grasping the will as the unity of the universal and the particular. We can easily grasp the first two moments of the will or the notion in abstraction from one another. We can easily grasp the will *either* (1) in its abstract universality *or* (2) in its determined particularity. The mode of thought that Hegel describes as the *understanding* allows us to grasp these two moments in abstraction from one another, but it does not allow us to grasp the essential unity of these two moments. Only reason or speculation can grasp the third moment of the will, the moment that unites of the first two.

Hegel explains the difficulties involved in conceiving the unity of these two moments in the previously quoted passage about the unity of the “I.” Speaking of the first two moments of the “I,” Hegel makes a point that applies equally to the first two

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<sup>58</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, Paragraph 7A.



moments of the will. With regard to the first two moments of the “I,” Hegel says: “neither the one nor the other can be truly comprehended unless the two indicated moments are grasped at the same time both in their abstraction and also in their perfect unity.” The third moment of the will does not merely aggregate or combine the first two moments of the will. The will or the self is not an aggregate. It is a genuine unity. Thus we must grasp the first two moments of the will in their “perfect unity.” However, the unity of the will does not efface the distinction between the two moments. Thus we must conceive the will as a genuine unity that contains plurality within it.<sup>59</sup> We must conceive the moments of the will in terms of a unity that doesn’t efface plurality, or in terms of a plurality that exists within a genuine unity. Only reason or speculation can grasp this relation.

After presenting the difficulties involved in grasping the third moment of the will, Hegel goes on to indicate the centrality of these difficulties for his entire philosophy, and he alludes to the manner in which they must be resolved. Immediately after the quote presented above, Hegel says:

It is the task of logic as purely speculative philosophy to prove and explain further this innermost secret of speculation, of infinity as negativity relating to itself, this ultimate spring of all activity, life, and consciousness. Here attention can only be drawn to the fact that if you say, ‘the will is universal, the will determines itself’, the words you use to describe the will presuppose it to be a subject or substratum from the start. But the will is not something complete and universal prior to its determining itself and prior to its superseding and idealizing this determination. The will is not a will until it is this self-mediating activity, this return into itself.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Here we can see the relationship between the structure of the will and the more general structure of all genuine objects. As discussed in Chapter Four, Hegel holds that all genuine objects must contain plurality in a genuine unity. More specifically, he argues that there must be one sense in which an object is one, and another sense in which the object is many. In order to grasp the structure of the object, we must grasp the unity of these two senses.

<sup>60</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 7Z.

The “innermost secret” refers to the third moment of the will as that which unites the first two moments without effacing their difference. It refers to the ability of thought to conceive two moments “at the same time both in their abstraction and also in their perfect unity.” It refers to the capacity of thought to grasp the unity of identity and difference.

Thus the unity of identity and difference presents the “the innermost secret of speculation.” It presents the central riddle or task of speculative philosophy. The *Science of Logic*, and even the entirety of Hegel’s philosophy, can be read as a series of attempts to conceive the unity of identity and difference, the manner of unity exhibited by the third moment of the will. This manner of unity does not merely characterize the will or the self. It characterizes “the ultimate spring of all activity, life, and consciousness.” In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel considers the unity of identity and difference in relation to consciousness in its practical activities, in relation to the third moment of the will as that which encompasses both the identity and difference of the first two moments. However, the same basic structures occur in all living and active objects.

Chapters Two through Five explore the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” at great length. This phrase designates the central riddle, puzzle, or paradox that defines the notion. Genuine objects consist in the unity of identity and difference. They must contain plurality within a genuine unity. The understanding “persists in calling [such unity] inconceivable.” However, according to Hegel, reason or speculation is capable of grasping this unity. It is capable of solving the riddle designated by the phrase, the unity of identity and difference, and thus it is capable of explaining the structure of the notion.

Before examining these issues, we should note Hegel's cursory remarks about the solution to the riddle posed by this form of unity. In order to grasp the will as a unity that contains two moments as genuinely one but also distinct, we must grasp the will as a process that constitutes itself. In this regard, the structure of language misleads us. When we speak of the will, when we say, for instance, "the will determines itself," we treat the will as a substratum or subject that exists prior to the act of determination. Hegel associates language with the understanding, and he associates both with a conception of the world that explains actions in terms of objects or stable states. This tendency of language and the understanding prevents us from grasping the structure of the will and the structure of the notion more generally. It prevents us from grasping the form of genuine unity that contains but does not efface plurality.

In order to grasp the structure of the will and the structure of the notion, we must employ speculation, a mode of thought that explains objects in terms of their own activity. Hegel says, "the will is not something complete and universal prior to its determining itself." Likewise, he says: "the will is not a will until it is this self-mediating activity, this return to itself." The will determines itself. In this sentence, "the will" is the subject and the object of the verb. Hegel argues we can only conceive the will if we grasp its nature as subject and object in relation to the more basic act of determination. In an ontological or explanatory sense, the act of determination precedes the subject that does the determining and the object that is determined. The same order of priority holds for all genuine objects. Here we can see the sense in which Hegel differs from Leibniz and Aristotle. Both philosophers place great emphasis on purposive action as one of the central categories with which we describe substance. However, both philosophers

ultimately ground the purposive action in the nature of the thing that acts. Contrary to this, Hegel claims we must ground the thing that acts in the action itself.<sup>61</sup>

#### 4) Conclusion

In paragraphs five through seven of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel presents the structure of the will in terms of three moments, and he characterizes each of these moments with a number of abstruse terms. He characterizes the first moment of the will in terms of universality, indeterminacy, and infinity. He describes the second moment in terms of particularity, determinacy, and finitude. These terms form three pairs of oppositional categories. The first and second moments present two distinct and oppositional poles of the will. The third moment presents the unity of these apparently oppositional moments. It presents the unity of the universal and the particular, the unity of the indeterminate and the determinate, and the unity of the infinite and the finite. Hegel's description of the will presents our interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right* with two pressing tasks: first, we must determine how Hegel defines these various abstruse terms. Second, we must determine the exact nature of the challenge or task presented by

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<sup>61</sup> In *The Ontology of Social Being*, Georg Lukács recognizes the centrality of becoming, process, and action for Hegel's ontology, and he notes that Leibniz serves as an important precursor in this regard. In his discussion of Hegel, Lukács says: "We begin with a universally known fact, the character of process, as the central category of a new ontology. The great discoveries of the natural sciences, the historical experience of centuries teeming with revolutions, had shaken, even in the concrete, everyday image of the world, the age-old supremacy of an eternal, stationary, unmoved substantiality, the absolute predominance of a primary, think-like objectivity, as against motion conceived as secondary. There were certainly occasional attempts in philosophy to adjust itself in this respect to life (it is particularly Leibniz whom I have in mind), but the basic philosophical categories still remained for all that on the level of a world of things that was in and for itself unchangeable." Shortly thereafter, he concludes: "Hegel was the first major thinker since Heraclitus for whom becoming assumed an objectively greater ontological weight than being (*The Ontology of Social Being*, p. 64)." Lukács notes that the categories of motion have generally been understood as secondary or derivative in relation to the categories of being. Leibniz at least partially challenges the primacy of being over becoming, of object over action, but it is Hegel, according to Lukács, who first genuinely affects this transformation.

the third moment of the will, the moment that unites the oppositional terms presented by the first and second moments of the will.

These tasks become all the more pressing once we realize crucial role that paragraphs five through seven play within the larger argumentative structure of the *Philosophy of Right*. As I argued in Section Two, these paragraphs present the basic structure of the book. The first part of the book, “Abstract Right,” articulates and criticizes a conception of the will (or self) that privileges the first moment, while the second part of the book, “Morality,” develops and critiques a conception of the will that emphasizes the second moment. The third section of the book, the section entitled “*Sittlichkeit*,” develops the third moment of the will, the moment that unites the first two.

In addition to providing the basis for understanding the structure of the *Philosophy of Right* as a whole, paragraphs five through seven also present the fundamental problem that the book addresses – the problem of grasping the will, or the self, as the unity of the universal and the particular, as the unity of the infinite and the finite, and as the unity of the indeterminate and the determinate. In these terms, the *Philosophy of Right* seeks to grasp the, “innermost secret of speculation,” the “ultimate spring of all activity, life, and consciousness,” in terms of its highest manifestation – in terms of the will as it expresses itself in the social and political development that marks human history.

In order to grasp this problem and the basic categories that Hegel uses to describe the moments of the will, we must consider his account of the will within the larger context of his philosophical project. Specifically, we must recognize that the will presents the highest instantiation of the notion. Hegel uses the term “notion” to designate

his conception of the substance as subject. It designates the general structures and activities that constitute all genuine objects, including matter in its most general form, plants, and the self. The problem posed by the opposition between the first and second moment of the will simply present the highest instantiation of a more general problem, one that occurs whenever we try to conceive any genuine object. In one of its most basic forms, we can describe this problem in terms of the “unity of identity and difference.” In order to conceive the structure of the notion, we must grasp the unity that includes, or brings together, both identity and difference. This is the unity, “into which the Understanding declines to advance.” It is a unity that only reason or speculation can conceive. This unity is the “innermost secret of speculation,” the “ultimate spring of all activity, life, and consciousness.” It is the notion, that which the understanding “persists in calling the inconceivable.” It is the unity that must somehow be conceived in terms of the unity of apperception or the “I think.”

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE COMPLETION OF TRUTH AND THE STRUCTURE OF PHILOSOPHY

#### 1.1) Preliminary Remarks

In Chapter One I argued that a careful interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right* must first consider and clarify a host of complex Hegelian terms. In paragraphs five through seven of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel describes the structure of the will in terms of (1) the unity of the universal and the particular, (2) the unity of the infinite and the finite, and (3) the unity of indeterminacy and determinacy. These terms allude to a host of complex metaphysical discussions in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*. They also provide the basic argumentative structure for the *Philosophy of Right* as a whole. Thus a careful interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right* must determine the meaning of these various terms as they emerge from the complex discussions in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*.

The structure of the *Philosophy of Right* reflects the structure of the will as presented in paragraphs five through seven. The first part of the book, the part on abstract right, construes the agent or self in terms of its universality, infinity, and indeterminacy. This part develops the first moment of the will, the moment described in paragraph five. The second part of the book, the part that focuses on morality, construes

the agent or self in terms of its particularity, finitude, and determinacy. This part corresponds to the second moment of the will, the moment described in paragraph six. Finally, in the third section, the section on ethical life, Hegel presents a conception of politics that unites the one-sided abstractions discussed in “Abstract Right” and “Morality.” This section presents the culmination of Hegel’s political philosophy, and it corresponds to the third moment of the will, the moment that unites the structures of the will discussed in paragraphs five and six.

These parallels demonstrate the importance of paragraphs five through seven for our interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right*. In light of these parallels, we face two distinct tasks. The first task involves the clarification of the terms presented in paragraphs five through seven, terms such as universality, particularity, infinity, finitude, indeterminacy, and determinacy. We must determine what Hegel means when he describes the structure of the will, for instance, as the unity of the universal and the particular. The second task is more complex. In addition to determining *how* Hegel conceives the will, we must also determine *why* he conceives the will in the manner that he does. So, for instance, in addition to determining what Hegel means when he describes the will as the unity of the universal and the particular, we must also determine why he thinks the will has this particular structure. We must, in other words, determine and at least begin to evaluate Hegel’s arguments for this particular conception of the will.

Both tasks require an exploration of certain complex metaphysical themes from the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*. The guiding insight for this exploration comes from the recognition that the structure of the will is the structure of the notion. In Chapter One, I argued that the term “notion” or “Begriff” designates Hegel’s alternative to



certain traditional conceptions of substance. It designates the basic structures or conditions that determine what counts as a genuine object. Although the will presents the structure of the notion in one of its most highly developed forms, the same basic structures can be found in all genuine objects, including the objects of biology, chemistry, and physics.

This identification of the structure of the will with the structure of the notion allows us to specify the nature of the tasks before us. First, we must clarify Hegel's doctrine of the notion, his conception of the basic structures that constitute all genuine objects. This more general task should clarify the structure of the will, since the structure of the will presents one example or instantiation of the structures of the notion. Second, we must determine at least the basic outline of Hegel's argument for the notion. We must consider Hegel's argument against more traditional conceptions of substance; we must explore his conception of the substance as subject; and we must flesh out the arguments that affect the transition from the doctrine of substance to the doctrine of the notion.

## **1.2) The British Hegelians: Identity in Difference as the Central Paradox of Philosophy**

In this chapter I begin to articulate the structure of the notion by examining a central *leitmotif* of Hegel's philosophy, one designated by the peculiar Hegelian phrase, *the unity of identity and difference*. In recent years, this phrase has received little attention from Hegel scholars.<sup>62</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century,

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<sup>62</sup> In the last fifty years, few Anglophone scholars have mentioned or addressed this phrase. Here Beiser's *Hegel* provides an exception. Beiser mentions the importance of this phrase for Hegel, and he also points out the relationships between this phrase, Hegel's organic conception of objects, and his doctrine of the notion. Beiser says: "The significance of the organic view is evident in Hegel's central and

however, the British Hegelians employed this phrase – or closely related variants – to present what they, following Hegel, took to be the core problem of metaphysics, a problem intimately related to the structure of genuine objects.<sup>63</sup> In this section, I briefly sketch the role this phrase plays in the philosophical systems developed by two of the British Hegelians – F.H. Bradley and A.E. Taylor. This sketch provides historical precedence for my interpretation of Hegel, an interpretation that places great emphasis on the phrase “the unity of identity and difference.” It also provides a brief summary of what I take to be Hegel’s general line of argument in his development of the notion.

In *Appearance and Reality*, F.H. Bradley presents a number of Hegelian arguments to demonstrate the shortcomings of the traditional conception of substance, a

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characteristic concepts, such as the unity of opposites, dialectic, and the identity-in-difference. All these concepts grew directly out of his organic conception of nature, and presuppose its triadic schema of organic development, according to which organic growth consists in three moments: unity, difference and unity-in-difference” (pp. 80-1). Beiser argues that Hegel’s organic conception of reality (i.e. of genuine objects) leads him to emphasize identity-in-difference. In Chapters Three and Four, I argue for the opposite relation between these crucial features of Hegel’s philosophy. In other words, I argue that Hegel accepts an organic conception of genuine objects because he sees it as the sole means for resolving certain fundamental paradoxes involving the relation between identity and difference. As I argue in Chapters Three and Four, the problem of the relation between identity and difference is a central problem in metaphysics, one that can be seen in the nature of change and the structure of judgment. It can also be seen in the relationship between the universal and the particular. Hegel argues that such phenomena can only be grasped if we construe objects in explicitly teleological terms.

<sup>63</sup> The British Hegelians often speak of *identity in difference* or of *identity that includes differences*. For instance, in his essay, “The Philosophical Importance of a True Theory of Identity,” Bernard Bosanquet describes the unity or relation of identity and difference in the following terms: “Identity, then, cannot exist without difference. In other words, it is always more or less concrete; that is to say, it is the center or unity or continuity in which different aspects, attributes, or relations hold together, or which pervades those aspects, or persists through them” (p. 37). Bosanquet describes identity in terms of what he sees as its essential relation to difference. He describes identity as a “unity” or “continuity” that includes difference. Hegel expresses a similar conception of identity in his phrase, the “unity of identity and difference.” It is important to note Bosanquet’s emphasis on the importance of our theory of identity for our overall conception of philosophy. On Bosanquet’s view, the theory of identity rests at the very center of philosophy. He also claims that the nature of identity presents “the only fundamental question which is or ever has been at issue between distinctively English thinkers [such as Hume, Mill, Spencer] and German idealist thinkers” (p. 34). It should also be noted that Bosanquet sees a proper theory of identity as a means for overcoming the excessive subjectivity as well as the anti-realism about universals that characterizes the philosophical positions of Mill and Hume.

conception that considers a thing as a substantive base for various qualities. Bradley presents the basic problem by considering a lump of sugar:

We make take the familiar instance of a lump of sugar. This is a thing and it has properties, adjectives which qualify it. It is, for example, white, and hard, and sweet. The sugar, we say *is* all that; but what the *is* can really mean seems doubtful.<sup>64</sup>

Bradley's account of the sugar clearly echoes Hegel's discussion of the salt in the "Perception" chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In that section, Hegel says:

The salt is a simple Here, and at the same time manifold; it is white and *also* tart, *also* cubicle in shape, of a specific gravity, etc. All these many properties are in a simple 'Here.'<sup>65</sup>

Hegel attempts to determine how the salt, as a thing, can be both one and many, both "simple" and "at the same time manifold." Bradley asks the same question in terms of the meaning of the copula. The copula represents the relationship between the subject, which presents the thing as one, and the predicates, which present the manifold features of the thing. On the one hand, the object is one. It is a cube of sugar. At the same time, the object is many. It is white, hard, sweet, etc. The copula expresses the relationship between the unity and the plurality of the object, between the cube of sugar and its whiteness, hardness, and sweetness. Bradley says the meaning of the copula "remains doubtful" or uncertain, and he explores various ways we might construe its meaning.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 16.

<sup>65</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 68.

<sup>66</sup> In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel's discussion of judgment raises similar questions about the meaning of the copula. Hegel introduces the discussion of judgment with the following claim: "What the judgment enunciates to start with is that the subject is the predicate; but since the predicate is supposed not to be what the subject is, we are faced with a contradiction which must resolve itself, pass over into a result" (p. 630). Hegel points out that the copula cannot merely express the identity of subject and predicate, for then the judgment would be a mere tautology. At the same time, the copula cannot merely express the difference between the subject and the predicate, for the truth of the judgment depends upon some intimate relation between the subject and the predicate. In some sense, the predicate "belongs to" or

Bradley argues that our conception of the copula must avoid two pitfalls. On the one hand, we should not construe it as an expression of mere identity. This interpretation would either reduce all judgments to tautologies, or else it would lead to contradictions. If the copula expresses identity, then from “Sugar = White,” and “Sugar = Sweet,” it follows that “Sweet = White.” In this case, either “Sweet” and “White” are in fact the same, and our judgments become meaningless tautologies, or else “Sweet” and “White” are different, and thus we must assert two contradictory claims – namely, “Sweet = White” and “Sweet ≠ White.”

On the other hand, we should not construe the subject as a collection of terms and the copula as an expression of the mere togetherness of the features expressed by the subject term and the feature expressed by the predicate term. On this view, “The sugar is white,” would really mean, “Hardness, sweetness, etc. exist together with whiteness.” While this conception of the object avoids contradictions, it destroys the genuine unity that makes a thing a thing. Speaking of this conception of the copula, Bradley says:

The thing [or this conception of the thing] avoids contradiction by its disappearance into relations, and by its admission of the adjectives to a standing of their own. But it avoids contradiction by a kind of suicide. It can give no rational account of the relations and the terms which it adopts, and it cannot recover the real unity, without which it is nothing.<sup>67</sup>

This conception of the copula as an expression of conjunction leads to the “admission of the adjectives to a standing of their own.” It makes each of the properties into a distinct thing or entity. If we admit that each property or adjective has an existence of its own, then we cannot explain the “real unity” of the thing as a whole. Without this unity, the

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“inheres in” the subject. Hegel’s discussion of judgment attempts to determine the various ways in which the predicate is joined to the subject.

<sup>67</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 19.

thing is “nothing.” Thus Bradley argues that we should not construe the copula as an expression of conjunction or mere togetherness, and he concludes that we must search for some third meaning of the copula. This third meaning must (1) explain the genuine unity of the properties in the object, as the second conception of the copula fails to do, and it must (2) do so in a manner that does not simply reduce the properties to identity, as the first conception of the copula does.

Bradley states the basic problem posed by the meaning of the copula and the structure of the object in terms that are closely related to the Hegelian phrase, the unity of identity and difference. Bradley says:

While the diversities are external to each other and to their union, ultimate satisfaction is impossible. There must, as we have seen, be an identity and in that identity a ground of distinction and connection.<sup>68</sup>

Here Bradley speaks of an identity that includes distinction and connection. The copula presents this identity. The copula expresses the relation or unity between the distinctions or various features of the object, on the one hand, and the connection or unity of these features, on the other hand. Moreover, this unity is not some higher relation added to the distinction and the connection, but rather it is the fundamental basis that grounds the distinction and the connection. Thus Bradley designates the structure of the copula and the object with the phrase, “the identity of distinction and connection.” Hegel designates the same structure with the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference.”

Following Hegel and Leibniz, Bradley argues that certain mental phenomena – specifically *action* and *representation* – provide a model for conceiving the structure of

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<sup>68</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 507.

the object.<sup>69</sup> First, Bradley argues that certain categories usually associated with mental activity give us at least a general sense of the identity of distinction and connection. He argues:

The remedy [to the problem of the unity of identity and difference] might lie here. If the diversities were complementary aspects of *a process of connection and distinction*, the process not being external to the elements or again a foreign compulsion of the intellect, but itself the intellect's own *proprius motus*, the case would be altered. Each aspect would of itself be a transition to the other aspect, a transition intrinsic and natural at once to itself and to the intellect. And *the whole would be a self-evident analysis and synthesis* of the intellect itself by itself. Synthesis here has ceased to be mere synthesis and has become self-completion, and analysis, no longer mere analysis, is self-explication. And *the question how or why the many are one and the one is many here loses its meaning*. There is no why or how beside the self-evident process, and towards its own differences this whole is at once, their how and their why, their being, substance, and system, their reason, ground, and *principle of diversity and unity* [emphasis added].<sup>70</sup>

We shouldn't be overly concerned with the specifics of this passage. For one thing, Bradley's ultimate metaphysical picture diverges from that of Hegel in a number of

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<sup>69</sup> Here we should note some important differences between Bradley, on the one hand, and Hegel and Leibniz, on the other hand. Hegel and Leibniz believe that we can understand the structures of the object in terms of various categories associated with action and representation. Moreover, they believe that objects actually possess these structures. Leibniz, for instance, holds that all monads are structured in terms of appetite and perception. Similarly, Hegel believes that action, guided by some form of perception or other analogically related form of awareness, constitutes all genuine objects. Additionally, both Hegel and Leibniz believe that multiple genuine objects exist, though they recognize that these objects may have different degrees of perfection, truth, or reality. By contrast, Bradley believes that only one genuine entity exists – namely the Absolute. Moreover, he holds that action and representation only give us a vague sense of the structure of the Absolute. For a further discussion of the relationship between Bradley and Hegel, see Rolf-Peter Horstmann (1984), pp. 109-113. Among other things, Horstmann mentions the following passage, which comes from the “Preface to First Edition” of Bradley's *The Principles of Logic*. In this passage, Bradley says: “I fear that, to avoid worse understandings, I must say something as to what is called ‘Hegelianism.’ For Hegel himself, assuredly I think him a great philosopher; but I never could have called myself an Hegelian, partly because I can not say that I have mastered his system, and partly because *I could not accept what seems his main principle, or at least part of that principle* [emphasis added]” (x). The exact meaning of the last phrase proves tantalizing but illusive. Bradley mentions a “main principle” of Hegel's philosophy, one that he cannot fully accept. I would suggest that this main principle consists in Hegel's claim that we *can* conceive the unity of identity and difference through speculation.

<sup>70</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 507.

crucial ways.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, we are not yet in a position to unpack all of the jargon employed here. For the moment, we should simply note that Bradley explains the identity of distinction and connection – or, as he also describes it in this passage, *the unity of analysis and synthesis, the relation of the one and the many, and the principle of diversity and unity* – in terms of a process or action that consists in “self-explication” and “self-completion.” Bradley associates this action with the process of thought and the activity of the self. In this solution to the problem, Bradley follows a general solution laid down by Hegel.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> These differences include: (1) On Bradley’s view, we can never completely grasp how unity relates to plurality – or how identity related to difference – and therefore we can never fully grasp the nature of the Absolute. After explaining the general nature of the Absolute in terms of the structures of experience, including cognition and volition, Bradley argues that we cannot conceive the ultimate unity of experience that binds together these various features. Bradley says: “And I would urge next that the unity of these aspects is unknown. By this I certainly do not mean to deny that it essentially is experience, but it is an experience of which, as such, we have no direct knowledge. We never have, or are, a state which is the perfect unity of all aspects; and we must admit that in their special natures they remain inexplicable. An explanation would be the reduction of their plurality to unity, in such a way that the relation between the unity and the variety was understood. And everywhere an explanation of this kind is beyond us” (*Appearance and Reality*, pp. 414 – 415). Bradley argues that we cannot ultimately conceive the relationship between unity and plurality. The structures of experience – and particularly emotion – point us in that direction, but our desire to conceive the Absolute ultimately remains frustrated. By contrast, Hegel believes (a) that we can conceive the relationship between unity and plurality in general, and (b) that more specifically we can conceive the Absolute. (2) There is a second difference between Hegel and Bradley. Bradley takes the claim that reality does not contradict itself as his fundamental principle. Thus Bradley says: “Ultimate reality is such that it does not contradict itself; here is an absolute criterion” (p. 120). By contrast, Hegel argues that contradiction – or at least what appears to be a contradiction from the standpoint of the understanding – constitutes the heart of reality and all genuine things. Hegel says: “contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity” (*Science of Logic*, p. 439). In speaking of the Kantian antinomies, Hegel makes the same point: “That true and positive meaning of the antinomies is this: that every actual thing involves a coexistence of opposed elements” (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 48Z). This difference has enormous implications for the respective philosophical systems of Bradley and Hegel. Among other things, it leads Bradley to emphasize unity and the Absolute at the expense of diversity. Bradley conceives the Absolute as that which overcomes all contradictions. It presents a unity in which “appearances...lose their distinctive natures” (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 403).

<sup>72</sup> For instance, compare the passage above with the following passage from “Preface” to the *Phenomenology*: “The Substance is, as Subject, pure simple negativity, and is for this very reason the bifurcation of the simple; it is the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifferent diversity and of its antithesis” (p. 10). Here Hegel describes the genuine object – the substance that is subject – in terms of a process that involves the “bifurcation of the simple” and the return from the diversification established by the bifurcation back to the simple. In other words, Hegel explains the

Following Leibniz and Hegel, Bradley also argues that the basic structures of representation present an example of the unity of identity and difference. He says:

As a fact and a given we have in feeling *diversity and unity in one whole*, a whole implicit and not yet broken up into terms and relations. This *immediate union of the one and many* is an ‘ultimate fact’ from which we start; and to hold that feeling, because immediate, must be simple and without diversity is, in my view, a doctrine quite untenable [emphasis added].<sup>73</sup>

Here Bradley further describes the basic structure of the copula or the object as *one whole that contains diversity and unity* and as *the immediate unity of one and many*.

Moreover, he argues that feeling presents an example of this structure.

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relationship between plurality and unity in terms of the unity of a process. For a further discussion of this passage, see Section 4 of Chapter Four.

<sup>73</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 508. In a footnote following this discussion, Bradley acknowledges Hegel’s psychology as the source for his conception of emotion as a unity that includes plurality. The footnote reads: “Feeling is certainly not ‘un-differentiated’ if that means that it contains no diverse aspects. I would take the opportunity to state this view as to feeling is so far from being novel that I owe it, certainly in the main, to Hegel’s psychology” (*Appearance and Reality*, 509). In the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel puts the point this way: “Although in practical feeling, will has the form of simple self-identity, none the less, *in this identity there is also difference*; for though practical feeling knows its self-determining to be, on the one hand, objectively valid, to be determined in and for itself, yet, on the other hand, it also knows itself to be determined immediately or from outside, to be subjected to the alien determinateness of external influences (*Affectionen*). The feeling will is, therefore, the comparing of the immediate determinateness coming to it from outside, with the determinateness posited in it by its own nature [emphasis added]” (472Z). Though we may experience feeling as an immediate unity without articulation, this unity nonetheless contains a plurality that can be articulated. Feeling is a kind of non-articulate or implicit representation. It reveals to us the relationship between our self, as constituted by our telos, and the external environment as that which is helpful, harmful, or indifferent in relation to the telos or purpose that constitutes our self. Thus Hegel describes joy as “the feeling of accordance of my whole being with a single event, thing, or person,” and he defines fear as “the feeling of my Self, and at the same time of an evil that threatens to destroy my self-feeling” (*Philosophy of Mind*, 472Z). So feeling contains the difference between self and other in the immediate or non-articulated unity of their relation. Hegel holds that feeling (1) possesses the basic structure of representation, and (2) contains plurality within unity. Leibniz also emphasizes these points in his account of feeling. In a letter to Arnauld, dated 6 October 1687, Leibniz explains what he means when he says that monads “represent” or “express” the whole universe. He says: “Expression is common to all forms, and is a class of which ordinary perception, animal feeling and intellectual knowledge are species. In ordinary perception and in feeling it is enough that what is divisible and material and what is found common to several beings should be expressed or represented in a single indivisible being, or in the substance which is endowed with a true unity. We cannot at all doubt the possibility of such a representation of several things in a single one, since our own souls furnish us examples” (*G.W. Leibniz*, 212). Like Hegel, Leibniz agrees that knowledge, perception, and feeling all have the same basic representational structure. He also agrees that this structure presents an example of plurality contained within unity.



From this brief survey, the following points should be clear: (1) Bradley believes that the structure of the object and the structure of judgment present us with a conceptual problem or riddle. (2) Bradley designates this problem with various phrases, including the identity of difference and connection, the unity of one and many, etc. (3) *Action* and *representation* provide the only models that we have to explain the identity of difference and connection, or the unity of the one and the many. (4) Thus Bradley argues we must conceive the structure of the object and judgment in terms of categories normally associated with the mind or subjectivity.

In his book, *Elements of Metaphysics*, A.E. Taylor makes similar claims in a more perspicuous form. Like Bradley, Taylor raises a number of questions about the nature of substance, about the structure of genuine things. At one point, Taylor says:

We have the variety and multiplicity on the one hand in the states or qualities of the thing, its unity on the other in the form of the law connecting these states, but how the variety belongs to or is possessed by the unity we know no better than before. Thus the old problem of substance returns upon us; the many qualities must somehow be the qualities of a single thing, but precisely how are we to conceive this union of the one and the many?<sup>74</sup>

Here Taylor expresses the problem of the unity of identity and difference as the problem of the “union of the one and the many.” In one sense the object is one, and in another sense the object is many. Somehow we must grasp how the object exists as the unity of these two moments. This is the problem of inherence, a problem that involves, among other things, the meaning of the copula.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 138.

<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere, Taylor states the problem as follows: “What we call one *thing* is said, in spite of its unity, to have many *qualities*. It is, *e.g.*, at once round, white, shiny, and hard, or at once green, soft, and rough. Now, what do we understand by the *it* to which these numerous attributes are alike ascribed, and how does it possess them? To use the technical names, what is the *substance* to which the several qualities belong, that in which they *inhere*, and what is the manner of their inherence” (*Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 128).

Like Bradley, Taylor turns to *action* and *representation* for a solution. In other words, he turns to categories usually associated with the subject. While Bradley employs Hegelian language in his explanation of action and emotion as a form of representation, Taylor explicitly draws upon the example of Leibniz. For instance, he says:

At this point light seems to be thrown on the puzzle [of the unity of identity and difference or, more specifically, of the object as unity of the one and the many] by the doctrine of Leibniz, that the only way in which a unity can, without ceasing to be such, contain an indefinite multiplicity is by “representation.” Experience, in fact, presents us with only one example of a unity which remains indubitably one while embracing an indefinite multiplicity of detail, namely the structure of our experience itself.<sup>76</sup>

Experience presents us with a unity that contains an infinite manifold. The infinite nature of the manifold contained in experience shows that the whole precedes the parts. Since the synthesis of an infinite manifold would be the completion of an infinite process, the synthesis of an infinite manifold is impossible. Therefore, it follows that experience presents us with a unity that is infinitely divisible. So experience is not a unity or whole constructed out of details, and thus a mere aggregate, but rather it must be a genuine unity that contains an infinite wealth of detail. Following Leibniz and Hegel, Taylor goes on to argue that all genuine objects have the same basic structures as those that characterize human experience.

In addition to relying upon representation, Taylor also makes use of purposive action to explain the structure of the object. This might be compared to Leibniz’ reliance upon appetite, in addition to representation, to explain the structure of the monad. Taylor says:

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<sup>76</sup> *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 138.

If we can think of the thing's qualities and the law of their connection as standing to one another in the same way as the detailed series of acts embodying a subjective interest of our own, and the interest itself which by its unity confers a felt unity on the series, we can in principle comprehend how the many qualities belong to the one thing.<sup>77</sup>

The unity of experience, determined by the unity of the purpose that structures consciousness, provides an analogy in terms of which we can understand the structure of all genuine objects. Thus in Hegelian terms, we must construe the substance as a subject. Specifically, we must construe substance in terms of the categories of representation and purposive action.

Both Bradley and Taylor agree (1) that one central problems of metaphysics concerns the relationship between unity and plurality or what Hegel describes as the unity of identity and difference; (2) that our attempt to conceive the nature of genuine objects must resolve this problem by explaining the intimate relation between unity and plurality, the sense in which some non-aggregate or genuine unity can include a kind of plurality; (3) that the mental phenomena of representation and purposive action provide a crucial example of a non-aggregate unity that includes plurality; and (4) therefore that all genuine objects or substances must be conceived in terms of the categories of representation and purposive action. Thus the philosophical systems of Bradley and Taylor present extended arguments about the nature of substance, arguments that recapitulate crucial Hegelian insights. While Bradley acknowledges his debt to Hegel, Taylor singles out Leibniz as his source of inspiration on this matter. The respective intellectual debts of Bradley and Taylor highlight the affinities between the philosophical systems of Leibniz and Hegel, affinities that are too often overlooked.

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<sup>77</sup> *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 138.

### 1.3) Four Points Explored in this Chapter

This chapter clarifies the phrase, the unity of identity and difference, in terms of four related points. Here I present them briefly for the sake of orientation. In Sections Two and Three of this chapter, I develop them at great length.

**First Point:** the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” provides the most *basic* or *abstract* account of the structure of genuine objects. In other words, it provides the most basic or abstract account of the notion. It follows, therefore, that this phrase also provides the most basic or abstract account of the structure of the will. The phrases discussed in Chapter One – (1) the unity of the universal and the particular, (2) the unity of the infinite and the finite, (3) the unity of indeterminate and the determinate – describe the same structural features that are designated by the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” though they present these structures in more *developed* or *concrete* forms.

**Second Point:** the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” presents the most basic or abstract description of the *telos* of all genuine objects. The transition from substance to subject, or from substance to notion, involves the recognition that what Hegel describes as the “categories of necessity” cannot adequately explain the basic structures of genuine objects. Hegel argues that genuine objects must be described in terms of categories normally associated with the subject. More specifically, he argues that genuine objects must be described in terms of the category of purposive action. The object’s action or purposive striving constitutes it as an object. In other words, objects are structured in terms of teleological activity.

In the most basic and abstract terms, the teleological action of the object consists in its striving to unite identity and difference. In terms that are slightly more developed

and concrete, each object strives to integrate (or unite) the greatest possible range of diversity (or difference) in the most highly developed form of unity (or identity) possible. The object does not merely strive for a unity or identity that excludes difference, but rather it strives for a unity or identity that includes the greatest possible degree of difference. It strives, in Hegel's terms, to achieve the unity of identity and difference.

**Third point:** the phrase, "the unity of identity and difference," describes the end or telos of Hegel's philosophy. This point requires a bit of explanation. "The unity of identity and difference" describes the telos of all objects in the most abstract or general terms. As discussed at length in Section 2.4 of the present chapter, different kinds of objects instantiate this telos to different degrees. Thus different kinds of objects can be placed on a scale that measures the degree to which they achieve the general telos that constitutes all genuine objects. Only the highest object – i.e. world history as it transforms and integrates the entirety of natural and social reality into a single unified process – integrates or unites identity and difference completely. In other words, only the highest object fully achieves the general telos that constitutes all genuine objects. All other objects achieve this telos to lesser degrees.

The development of Hegel's philosophy in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia* follows this basic scale of objects from the lowest kind to the highest. The *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic* present the increasingly complex categories that characterize objects from the lowest to the highest kind, while the *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Mind* consider the instantiation of these categories in various specific kinds of objects, beginning with the general determinations of matter that determine the object of mechanics, and ending with various increasingly adequate

conceptions of world history as presented in the history of art, religion, and philosophy. We can thus characterize Hegel's philosophy as a series of increasingly successful attempts to conceptualize the unity of identity and difference. We must also note, however, that these attempts to conceive the unity of identity and difference recapitulate the various ways that objects in the world attempt to instantiate this same structure. There is, in other words, an isomorphism between the categories presented in the development of philosophy and the categories that determine different kinds of objects or levels of reality.

Thus the telos of the object and the telos of Hegel's philosophy coincide. Hegel's philosophy seeks to *conceptualize* the unity of identity and difference. Objects in the world seek to *instantiate* the unity of identity and difference. In both cases, a series of increasingly complex categories marks the increasing success of the endeavor.

**Fourth Point:** the phrase, "the unity of identity and difference," designates what we might take as the *beginning* of Hegel's philosophy.<sup>78</sup> This phrase designates the *end* of Hegel's philosophy, but only *as the end is conceived from the beginning*. In other words, this phrase presents the telos in a form that has not yet been developed or unfolded. As Hegel's philosophy progresses, he employs more complex terminology to express the same telos in more developed and articulated forms.

The phrase, "the unity of identity and difference," presents one of the core problems or paradoxes from which Hegel develops his philosophy. The centrality of this problematic may be obscured by the fact that Hegel states the same basic issues in

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<sup>78</sup> Of course the *Science of Logic* begins with even more basic categories, with being, nothing, and becoming. The unity of being and nothing in the process of becoming presents an even more basic or abstract analog of the structure designated by the phrase, "the unity of identity and difference." In the present context, we will begin with this slightly more developed form of the structure.

different ways as his philosophy progresses. Thus at various points, he describes the same basic issue in terms of the unity of the infinite and the finite, the unity of the universal and the particular, etc. However, each of these phrases presents a more developed or adequate formulation of the same basic problem.

### **2.1) The Completion of Truth and the End of Hegel's Philosophy**

In the *Science of Logic* Hegel proclaims: “the truth is complete only in the unity of identity with difference, and hence consists only in this unity.”<sup>79</sup> This phrase presents a general account of the telos or objective of Hegelian philosophy in terms of the unity of identity and difference. This section presents a careful interpretation of this phrase as an expression of the basic contours of Hegel's philosophy. Section 2.2 presents Hegel's theory of truth. It examines Hegel's distinction between truth and mere correctness. Following this distinction, it argues that Hegel ascribes truth to objects, rather than to sentences, propositions, thoughts, or theories. In ascribing truth to objects, Hegel rejects both the correspondence and the coherence theory of truth. Section 2.3 explains how Hegel's conception of truth admits of degrees. On Hegel's view, an object can be described as more or less true in relation to the norm or telos that determines its specific kind or species. This section also highlights the intimate connection between Hegel's conceptions of truth, goodness, and freedom.

Section 2.4 examines the sense in which various degrees of truth can be ascribed to a particular kind of object in relation to other kinds of objects. It argues that Hegel conceives all objects in terms of a universal scale of truth, one that is in many ways

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<sup>79</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 414.

analogous to earlier conceptions of the universe in terms of a scale of being.<sup>80</sup> It shows how the phrase, the unity of identity and difference, provides the most basic account of the telos of all objects, the telos in terms of which objects may be positioned on the scale. In the most general terms, an object is true to the extent that it unifies identity and difference. The truth is complete when the highest scale of truth is achieved, when identity and difference are fully unified. Finally, section 2.5 argues that the phrase, the unity of identity and difference, explains the telos of all objects, and of Hegel's philosophy, merely *qua* potentiality, not *qua* actuality. This point provides the basis for understanding the relationship between the unity of identity and difference, on the one hand, and a host of other phrases – like the unity of the universal and the particular, the unity of the infinite and the finite, the unity of self-consciousness and consciousness – on the other hand.

## 2.2) Truth Ascribed to Objects

Hegel says “the truth is complete only in the unity of identity and difference.” The phrase “truth is complete,” sounds odd, since it implies that truth comes in degrees. In contemporary Anglo-American philosophy, truth and falsity tend to be construed as properties that attach to propositions, thoughts, or sentences. Moreover, it is generally assumed that propositions, thoughts, or sentences are either true or false. Propositions cannot be partially true. Likewise, they cannot be partially false. In contrast to this view, Hegel believes that truth and falsity describe objects not propositions or thoughts, and he

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<sup>80</sup> For further discussions of this theme, see Houlgate's *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History*, pages 110-120; G.R.G. Mure *An Introduction to Hegel*, chapters III and VII; Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, Chapter XXIV (“Degrees of Truth and Reality”); and Taylor's *Elements of Metaphysics*, Chapter III (“Reality and It's Appearances – The Degrees of Reality”).



insists that truth comes in degrees.<sup>81</sup> Of course Hegel allows for the more traditional sense of truth as the agreement between a proposition, sentence, or thought and some object in the world. However, he ascribes relatively little importance to this conception of truth.

Hegel explains his idiosyncratic conception of truth in the following passage from the *Encyclopedia Logic*:

In common life truth means the agreement of an object with our conception of it. We thus presuppose an object to which our conception must conform. In the philosophical sense of the word, on the other hand, truth may be described, in general abstract terms, as the agreement of a thought-content with itself. This meaning is quite different from the one given above. At the same time the deeper and philosophical meaning of truth can be partially traced even in the ordinary usage of language. Thus we speak of a true friend; by which we mean a friend whose manner of conduct accords with the notion of friendship. In the same way we speak of a true work of Art. Untrue in this sense means the same as bad, or self-discordant. In this sense a bad state is an untrue state; and evil and untruth may be said to consist in the contradiction subsisting between the function or notion and the existence of the object.<sup>82</sup>

Our interpretation of this passage must guard against a potential misunderstanding, one that leads to an unduly subjective interpretation of Hegel's philosophy. This passage may seem to endorse a coherence theory of truth. The first sentence clearly lays out a correspondence view of truth, speaking of truth as the "agreement of an object with our conception of it." Hegel's own view, expressed in the third sentence, might seem to present a coherence theory of truth. In this sentence Hegel speaks of truth as the

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<sup>81</sup> See Chapters XIII and XIV of G.R.G. Mure's *An Introduction to Hegel*. Mure presents a discussion of Hegel's conception of truth that largely follows the interpretation presented here. Mure helpfully summarizes Hegel's position as follows: "Truth in the full sense of the word (a) applies to the object, and (b) is a value, a good" (p. 165).

<sup>82</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 24Z. In *Objektives Denken*, Christoph Halbig presents an interpretation of this passage similar to the one provided here (see specifically pp. 183 – 195). Halbig argues that (a) Hegel ascribes truth to objects, and (b) that truth comes in degrees. He also shows how this conception of truth leads directly to Hegel's appropriation of the traditional notion of the *scala naturae* (p. 193).

“agreement of thought-content with itself.” Moreover, he contrasts this view with the normal correspondence view, which must “presuppose an object.” Thus we might easily conclude that this passage advocates a coherence theory of truth that eliminates all reference to an object that exists beyond thought.

The final sentence at least partially militates against this interpretation. The final sentence speaks of evil or falsity as consisting in the “contradiction subsisting between the function or notion and the existence of the object.” This formulation suggests an account of truth as the agreement of an object with its inherent or immanent notion, function, or norm. The passage above states that a false object is “self-discordant.” Conversely, an object is true when it exists in harmony with itself – i.e. in harmony with its notion or function.

So we have two interpretations of this passage. The first interpretation reads this paragraph as an endorsement of a coherence theory of truth, a theory that jettisons all talk of an object beyond thought. The second interpretation also rejects the existence of an object beyond thought, but it does so for a very different reason. The second interpretation holds that conceptual structures or thoughts exist in the world, and it holds that truth consists in the correspondence between a thing and its immanent normative structure. Thus the second interpretation rejects the existence of an object beyond thought because it holds that thought – or conceptual structure – exists in the object. In a remark just prior to the passage quoted above, Hegel clearly endorses the second interpretation. He says:

To speak of thought or objective thought as the heart and soul of the world, may seem to be ascribing consciousness to the things of nature. We feel a certain repugnance against making thought the inward function of things, especially as we speak of thought as making the divergence of man from nature. It would be

necessary, therefore, if we use the term at all, to speak of nature as the system of unconscious thought, or, to use Schelling's expression, a petrified intelligence. And in order to prevent misconception, 'thought-form' or 'thought-type' should be substituted for the ambiguous term thought.<sup>83</sup>

In this passage Hegel describes thought as the "inward function of things." The basic structures of thought – basic thought-forms or thought-types – exist in nature. In slightly different terms, objects possess conceptual structures that determine their function, norm, or telos.

A second passage, one from the *Philosophy of Nature*, confirms this interpretation. Hegel says:

If subjective truth is the correspondence between sensuous representation and the object, objective truth is the correspondence of the object, of the fact, with itself, so that its reality is in conformity with its Notion.<sup>84</sup>

Like the first passage quoted above, this passage contrasts Hegel's view of truth with the correspondence theory of truth. Hegel refers to the latter as an account of "subjective truth," since it merely examines the relationship between the thoughts or "sensuous representation[s]" of the subject and the objects in the world. Hegel contrasts "subjective truth" with what he calls "objective truth," with the "correspondence of the object...with itself." Hegel's philosophy focuses primarily on the second kind of truth, on what Hegel refers to as "objective truth." Both the correspondence and the coherence theory of truth construe truth and falsity as properties of thoughts, sentences, or propositions. In contrast to both of these theories, Hegel construes truth and falsity as properties of the objects in the world. He designates this kind of truth as "objective truth" – i.e. as the truth of the object.

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<sup>83</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 24Z.

<sup>84</sup> *Philosophy of Nature*, paragraph 246Z.

### **2.3) The Degrees of Truth Ascribed to Objects of a Single Species**

An object is true insofar as it fulfills or fully instantiates its essence, norm, or telos. This conception of truth ascribes truth to objects in the world, and it recognizes truth as something that comes in degrees. An object can achieve its telos or norm with varying degrees of success. Hegel suggests that our ordinary ways of speaking contain hints of this conception of truth. When we speak of someone as a “true friend” or a “true athlete,” or when we describe a particular mineral specimen as “true gold,” we use the term “true” in a sense that approximates Hegel’s more technical sense of the term. In such phrases, truth consists in the degree of correspondence between the actual existence of a thing and the nature, essence, telos, or norm that constitutes the thing. A “true friend,” for instance, is someone who lives up to the notion of friendship. In relation to this notion or principle, we can speak of a friend being more or less true, and we can place friends on a kind of graduated scale in accordance with how genuine they are. So a friend is true to the degree that she reconciles the various particulars of her behavior with the norm or principle that defines friendship.

In the first passage about the nature of truth that is quoted above, Hegel provides further examples. He speaks of “a true work of Art,” and an “untrue state.” With regards to such cases, he makes the further point that the meaning of “true” more or less corresponds to what we normally mean by “good.” Likewise, the meaning of the term “false” corresponds to what we mean by “bad.” Thus Hegel says a bad state is an untrue state – i.e. a state that fails to achieve the immanent norms that constitute it as a state.

Hegel believes that truth and falsity can be ascribed to *all* objects. Moreover, he holds that all genuine objects must be at least partially true. Genuine objects must have some inherent telos or norm, and they must at least partially instantiate that telos or norm. All genuine objects must be at least partially true, though they may be largely false. The failure of an object to instantiate its telos may be more prominent than its minimal degree of success. Similarly, all objects must be at least partially good, though they may be largely bad. Thus objects have an essentially normative structure, one that consists in the relation between their concrete particularity and the inherent norm or telos that determines their kind (the universal).<sup>85</sup>

The examples that Hegel employs in his discussion of truth and falsity – friendship, art, and the state – might lead us to assume that Hegel’s peculiar conceptions of truth and falsity only apply to artifacts and social practices. However, Hegel makes it clear that *all* objects are normatively structured and thus capable of being described in terms of their degree of truth. In paragraphs 178 through 180 in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel discusses notional judgments – i.e. judgments that ascribe properties like, “good” and “true” to objects. Hegel explains how these normative judgments are grounded in the nature of the object itself, and he concludes: “*All things* are a genus (i.e. have a meaning or purpose) in an individual actuality of a particular constitution [emphasis added].”<sup>86</sup> All things have a normative structure that consists in the relationship between their “genus” or “purpose” and their “particular constitution.” Terms like “true” and “good”

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<sup>85</sup> Here we can already begin to see how the phrase, “the unity of the universal and the particular,” develops the more basic structure Hegel describes with the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference.” The universal presents the telos that unites the manifold features that constitute the object’s particularity. Thus the relationship between identity and difference – or between unity and plurality – becomes the relationship between the universal and the particular.

<sup>86</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 179.

describe the degree of correspondence between the particular constitution of the thing and the meaning or purpose of the thing that constitutes its genus.

In the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel makes it clear that this basic structure can be found in natural objects as well. In the Introduction he says, “the notion of purpose is not merely external to nature.” He goes on to say:

To see purpose as inherent within natural objects, is to grasp nature in its simple determinateness, e.g. the seed of a plant, which contains the real potential of everything pertaining to the tree, and which as purposeful activity is therefore orientated solely towards self-preservation. Aristotle had already noticed this notion of purpose in nature, and he called the activity the nature of a thing.<sup>87</sup>

Natural objects exhibit “purposeful activity,” a striving to achieve the purpose that is “inherent” within them. This activity constitutes the “nature of the thing.” It determines the genus or kind to which the thing belongs. Natural objects strive to achieve their inherent purpose, and in this striving they meet with different degrees of success. These different degrees of success determine the truth or goodness of the object. A true plant, for instance, successfully unites the various chemical compounds it receives from the soil and structures them into itself, forming a stem, roots, leaves, flowers, and ultimately new seeds. A plant that is less true – i.e. a plant that only partially instantiates its internal norm – may fail to produce flowers. It may succumb to external forces – to droughts, insect predation, or fungi.

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<sup>87</sup> *Philosophy of Nature*, paragraph 245Z. As evident in this chapter, my interpretation of Hegel strongly emphasizes the similarities between Aristotle and Hegel. For other interpretations of Hegel that focus on his relation to Aristotle, see Allegra de Laurentiis’ “Hegel’s Interpretation of Aristotle’s *Pysche*: A Qualified Defense,” Ferrarin’s *Hegel and Aristotle*, Düsing’s “Ontologie bei Aristoteles und Hegel,” Ilting’s “Hegels Philosophie des Organischen,” Findlay’s *Hegel: A Re-Introduction*, and Mure’s *An Introduction to Hegel*.

Hegel even insists that physical and chemical objects are constituted by their own internal purpose or norm.<sup>88</sup> The totality of matter, interacting merely in terms of gravity and inertia, constitutes the most basic object in the universe, the object studied by the science of mechanics. Hegel describes this basic object in normative and purposive terms. At this most basic level, the forces of repulsion and attraction constitute matter. The force of attraction, or gravity, consists in the striving of all matter for unity with itself. The force of repulsion, the force by which matter occupies space, opposes this striving for unity. Speaking of gravity as the force of attraction, Hegel says:

Gravity is the predicate of matter, which constitutes the substance of the subject. Its unity is a mere should, a yearning; this is the most afflicted of efforts, and matter is damned to it eternally, for the unity does not fulfill itself, and is never reached. If matter reached what it aspires to in gravity, it would fuse together into a single point. It is because repulsion is as essential a moment as attraction, that unity is not attained here. This subdued, crepuscular unity does not become free.<sup>89</sup>

Gravity consists in striving or “yearning” of all matter to be united with itself. Hegel uses language that is both purposive and normative to describe gravity. He describes the

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<sup>88</sup> In “Die Stellung der Nature im Gesamtentwurf der hegelischen Philosophie,” and “Die Kategorien ‚Materie‘ und ‚Licht‘ in der Naturephilosophie Hegels,” Dieter Wandschneider presents an interpretation similar to the one presented in this chapter. He emphasizes the norms immanent in nature and the important role the *difference* between the norm and its instantiation plays in the constitution of individual objects. He says: “Eine weitere Konsequenz des Hegelschen Naturbegriffs betrifft die Deutung des *Naturprozesses*. Entscheidend ist diesbezüglich die *Diskrepanz* von Wesen und Erscheinung naturhaften Seins,” (p. 46). The discrepancy between the inherent norm (Wesen) and the particular manifest constitution (Erscheinung) constitutes the individual object. Wandschneider also argues that these normative structures already play a role in inorganic nature. He says: “Schon im Anorganischen, so Hegel, zeigt dieses Einheitsstreben als Schwerkraft, durch welche die Körper gleichsam zueinanderdrängen” (p. 46). This striving for unity is the striving of the matter for unity in a single point. It is also the striving of matter to overcome the difference between its essence and appearance, between its inherent norm and its particular constitution. Moreover, Wandschneider sees the basic structure of this teleological process as one that relates plurality to unity. Though he doesn’t use exactly the same terms presented in this chapter, he construes the process as a matter of the unity of identity and difference. Again, in relation to gravity, he says: “Realität und Idee der Materie entsprechen einander nicht, und die Schwerkraft wird nun als deren immanente Tendenz gedeutet, diese Diskrepanz zu überwinden: als ein Streben nach Aufhebung der Vereinzelung und Realisierung ihrer wahren Identität” (p. 298). Thus matter strives to overcome its separateness or difference by achieving unity or identity.

<sup>89</sup> *Philosophy of Nature*, Paragraph 262Z.

striving of matter for unity as a “mere should,” thus recognizing the difference between the unity with itself that forms that telos of matter and matter as it exists in its actual state. Here again we see the difference between the “particular constitution” and the “purpose” of a thing. This difference determines the striving of the thing, the striving to make the particular constitution conform to the purpose.

We have already noted that terms like “true” and “good” describe the degree to which the thing instantiates its purpose or telos. In this passage Hegel uses the term “free” in a similar sense. He describes the achievement of the telos – the unity of matter with itself – as freedom. Freedom consists in the achievement of the being’s telos by overcoming the forces or recalcitrant material that oppose the telos. Matter can never be completely free because it cannot overcome its self-externality and achieve the unity that it seeks in the force of gravity. With regards to Hegel’s use of the term “free” in this context, two things should be carefully noted. First, Hegel closely associates truth, goodness, and freedom. In fact, at this point at least, it seems that he uses these terms interchangeably. Second, Hegel uses the term “free” to describe certain basic structures that can already be found in the most basic physical phenomena. The categories that describe human freedom are more complex than those needed to describe the “freedom” of matter. However, these more complex categories simply develop the same basic features that can already be found in matter itself. Any interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right* should carefully attend to these two points.



## 2.4) The Degrees of Truth Ascribed to Different Species

So far we have seen that the term “truth” applies to objects, rather than to propositions, sentences, or thoughts. The term expresses the correspondence between the concrete existence of the thing and its inherent norm or purpose. We have also seen that the term admits of degrees, depending on how fully a particular object fulfills or instantiates its inherent norm or purpose. One additional feature of Hegel’s conception of truth should be noted here. In the same way that we can place *various particulars of a specific kind* on a scale in terms of their degrees of truth, so we can also place *different kinds of things* on a scale in terms of their degrees of truth. In other words, the term “truth” does not simply modify particular kinds of things, as when we speak of a “true athlete” or a “true artist.” More importantly, we can use the term in a sense that applies to all things, in a sense that allows us to conceive all things in terms of a graduated scale of truth.

This claim implies that the norms or purposes of different kinds of things share certain structural features in terms of which they can be compared with one another. The normative function of all things consists in their active striving to unite complex diversity. At the most basic level, gravity seeks to unite the spatial diversity or the manifold externality of matter. Similarly, the plant seeks to transform and integrate chemical compounds into the harmonious unity of a single purpose. At a much higher level, a state seeks to integrate various social tendencies, practices, classes, and modes of production into a harmonious whole. In the most general or abstract terms, the purpose of all genuine things consists in the striving *to unite identity and difference*. Objects seek to unite the highest degree of complexity (difference) in a highly developed form of unity

(identity). In terms of this basic purpose, we can rank different kinds of things in terms of (1) the degree of unity they are able to achieve as well as (2) the degree of complexity they are able to maintain within that unity. The second point is important. Genuine things do not seek a pure unity.<sup>90</sup> Instead, each thing strives to integrate the richest possible complexity within its form of unity.

One kind of thing is *truer* than another kind of thing if it contains a greater degree of complexity within a more developed form of unity. The degree of development in the form of unity depends upon (2a) the degree to which the manifold facets integrated in the unity depend upon one another for their nature, proper function, and persistent existence, and (2b) the degree to which the entity has a unified awareness of itself and its environment, an awareness that allows it to control and transform its environment and to develop itself in accordance with changing conditions. Some examples should help to illustrate these points. Consider, for instance, a specimen of gold, an oak tree, and a chimpanzee.<sup>91</sup>

In Hegelian terms, an oak tree is truer than a specimen of gold. In comparison with a specimen of gold, an oak tree contains a greater degree of complexity within a

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<sup>90</sup> This point distinguishes Hegel's conception of the scale of truth from the scale of being as conceived in the Neo-Platonic tradition. While the Neo-Platonic scale of being ascends towards pure unity, Hegel's scale of truth ascends towards objects that contain the most developed form of unity in the greatest possible degree of complexity. In this regard, Hegel's conception of perfection – of that which is most true – might be compared with the Leibnizian claim that God's perfection entails the creation of the greatest diversity of effects with the simplest of means. (See *Discourse on Metaphysics*, paragraph V) The degree of perfection consists neither in the degree of simplicity nor in the degree of diversity, but rather it consists in the greatest possible distance between the degree of simplicity and the degree of diversity. Of course for Leibniz, God's perfection consists in the creation of the greatest diversity of ends through the fewest possible means. Hegel reverses the order, holding that perfection consists in employing the greatest diversity of means for a single, unified end. On Hegel's view, the truest object – world history – takes the manifold diversity that exists and transforms it into a process directed towards a single end.

<sup>91</sup> These examples and the terms used to describe them are mine, not Hegel's. Nonetheless, I believe they sufficiently illustrate Hegel's general conception of what it means to say that some kinds of things are truer than other kinds of things.

more developed form of unity. A specimen of gold contains a degree of diversity or complexity. It possesses various properties – a certain color, malleability, density, tinsel strength, melting point, capacity to conduct electricity, etc. These properties are not spatially differentiated or diversified. In other words, in a specimen of pure gold, all of the properties exist equally at all points. The unity or identity of the specimen of gold thus consists in its qualitatively identical, contiguous quantity. This means, among other things, that a particular specimen of gold ceases to be that specimen of gold if loses a small part of itself. At the same time, this loss doesn't change the other parts of the specimen, since the nature and function of its parts are not essentially related. This shows the relatively undeveloped nature of the unity of gold according to criterion 2a.

A specimen of gold also has a relatively undeveloped unity when judged according to criterion 2b. A specimen of gold can resist certain external forces. The melting point, malleability, and tinsel strength measure the ability of gold to resist these changes. However, gold can't control its own motion. It can't regenerate and grow. It can't respond to other threats the surrounding environment might pose to its structural integrity – i.e. to its contiguous spatial existence.

An oak tree contains a higher degree of complexity in a more developed form of unity. In Hegel's terminology, an oak tree is truer than a specimen of gold. An oak tree unites a host of different elements such as nitrogen, carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen. It takes these elements in the form of various compounds from the soil and the air, and it transforms them into the compounds it requires. It forms these compounds into its roots, trunk, bark, leaves, etc. Unlike a specimen of gold, an oak tree is spatially differentiated. Different parts of the tree, like the roots or the leaves, have different properties.

Moreover, the parts themselves are spatially differentiated. The roots and leaves have different parts – tissues, vascular structures, cells, and ultimately chemical compounds that carry on different functions and have different properties. Thus we can see that the tree contains a much higher degree of complexity within its unity.

The unity of the tree consists in the harmonious relation of its parts as they contribute to growth and reproduction. This unity is more highly developed than that of a specimen of gold. For instance, the function and nature of each part depends upon the other parts. The roots cannot continue to gather nutrients without the energy they receive from the photosynthesis performed by the leaves, and the leaves cannot continue the process of photosynthesis without the water they receive from the roots. Moreover, the tree has some form of “awareness” or “knowledge” of its environment and itself. For instance, when water is low, the tree directs the limited water it receives to some of its branches, thus protecting some while allowing the others to die. This activity shows a kind of “unified action” – at least in a loose sense – on the part of the tree, a unified action that presupposes a certain degree of “knowledge” or “awareness” of itself and its surrounding environment. Though the tree does not have the capacity for motion, a capacity that requires a much higher degree of awareness of the environment, it does have the ability to grow by transforming the resources provided by the environment into the material it requires for its own composition.

Finally, chimpanzees are truer than oak trees. Chimpanzees contain a greater diversity within their bodies. A tree has a number of different parts that are integral for its purpose. These parts include leaves, flowers, roots, branches, bark, etc. However, the different kinds of parts are relatively limited, and each kind of part is multiply

instantiated. The tree has thousands of leaves, many branches, and many roots. There is a great repetition of parts, which marks a lower level of diversity or degree of differentiation. Moreover, the parts of the tree are relatively uniform or undifferentiated. The cells in the leaves are all more or less the same. Each one performs the same function. The same holds for the cells in the bark or the roots.

By contrast the chimpanzee has a greater number of parts, including a heart, brain, liver, stomach, intestines, ears, eyes, hands, etc. While the tree has thousands of leaves and many roots, the chimpanzee has one stomach, one liver, two ears, and two eyes. The organs of a chimpanzee are thus instantiated only once or twice. In contrast to the tree, the spatial regions that comprise the chimpanzee are more highly differentiated. This greater differentiation leads to a higher degree of unity. In a tree, the different kinds of parts are intimately dependent upon one another, but the specific instantiations of the different kinds of parts are not as intimately connected. The proper functioning of the leaves depends upon the proper functioning of the roots, but the proper function of any particular leaf does not depend upon the proper functioning of any particular root. Because of its lack of differentiation, the tree can lose many of its parts without great damage to the proper functioning of other parts. Thus the parts, not as kinds but as specific instantiations of the basic kinds, possess only a loose unity.

The chimpanzee displays a more highly developed form of unity, since each part, qua instantiation of a particular kind, proves crucial for the proper functioning of the other parts. The chimpanzee possesses some duplicated organs, though the loss of one such organ still places a strain on the proper functioning of the other parts. The loss of one eye, ear, or kidney inhibits the proper functioning of the chimpanzee. Thus in the

chimpanzee, the dependence of parts exists at the level of the kind and at the level of the particular instantiations of kinds. Thus, for instance, *this* liver is dependent upon *this* heart. The same claim cannot be made about the tree, since a particular leaf is never dependent upon any particular root. Thus in terms of criteria 2a, the structure of the chimpanzee presents a more developed form of unity than the structure of the tree.

In terms of claim 2b, the chimpanzee clearly possesses a more developed form of unity than the tree, since the chimpanzee has sentient awareness of its environment. The chimpanzee has the ability to move and the ability to manipulate objects in its environment. Both of these abilities depend upon a developed awareness of its self or its body as distinct from the environment. Complex perceptual awareness, the kind required for navigating in one's environment, depends upon a relatively unified conception of space that incorporates what is before oneself, what is behind oneself, and what is at some distance from oneself. It requires the ability to recognize or re-identify objects, an ability that rests upon memory, which itself rests upon a relatively unified sense of time. Thus sentient awareness presents a highly developed form of unity that includes a great deal of diversity.

Hegel's philosophy conceives the different species or kinds of objects in the world – such as specimens of gold, oak trees, and chimpanzees – in terms of a scale of truth. Objects higher on the scale present a greater degree of differentiation in a more developed form of unity. Hegel expresses this graduated view of objects at various points in the *Philosophy of Nature*. At one point he says: "Nature is to be regarded as a system of stages, the one proceeding of necessity out of the other, and being the

proximate truth of that from which it results.”<sup>92</sup> The different stages of nature correspond to the basic kinds that differentiate objects. Hegel says that a higher stage presents the “proximate truth” of the stage below it. Hegel makes the same claim elsewhere. He says: “The animal world is the truth of the vegetable world, which in turn is the truth of the mineral world.”<sup>93</sup> The meaning of this strange locution, “X is the truth of Y,” can be clarified in terms of three claims. First, “X is the truth of Y,” means that X is truer than Y. Animals are truer than vegetables, which are in turn truer than minerals. Second, “X is the truth of Y,” means that as we move along the scale of truth from lesser to greater degrees of truth, the objects that belong to kind X come immediately after the objects that belong to kind Y. So in this sense, the animal kingdom is truth of the vegetable kingdom, but it is not the truth of the mineral kingdom.

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<sup>92</sup> *Philosophy of Nature*, paragraph 249. Two things must be carefully noted in order to avoid any misinterpretation of this passage. First, the development or process that Hegel speaks of here is not a temporal process. Strangely enough, at least in light of many nineteenth century appropriations of Hegel’s work, Hegel himself does not believe that the natural world evolves or develops. He says: “Thinking consideration must reject such nebulous and basically sensuous conceptions as for example the so-called emergence of plants and animals out of water, and of the more highly developed animal organization out of the lower etc.” (Paragraph 249Z). So the development that Hegel speaks of is merely the increasing degree of complexity in unity as we proceed from lower level organisms to those that are higher. Hegel makes the same point about this series in a different way, stating: “This [the development of the series] is not to be thought of as a natural engendering of one out of the other however, but as an engendering within the inner Idea which constitutes the ground of nature” (Paragraph 249). In other words, the progression refers to a series of conceptual structures, not a process in natural history. Second, in order to avoid any misunderstandings, we need to consider carefully what Hegel means when he speaks of the “necessity” of this progression. No law governs this progression, and there is no algorithm that would allow us to deduce one stage from the next. Hegel makes this clear in the following passage: “This leads on to the concept of a *series* of natural things, and in particular, of living things. The desire to understand the necessity of such a development makes us look for a law governing the series, or a basic determination which, while positing variety, recapitulates itself within it, and so simultaneously engenders a new variety. But to augment a term by the successive addition of uniformly determined elements, and only to see the same relationship between the members of the series, is not the way in which the Notion determines” (Paragraph 249Z). This passage is crucial for understanding Hegel’s more general claims about the “necessity” of the dialectic as well as his claim that the notion unites “necessity” and freedom. In both cases, Hegel does not associate “necessity” with a natural law or logical deduction. I would suggest that for Hegel, “X necessarily leads to Y” if Y provides the solution for some unresolved problem with X. In the natural world, each stage or kind of object presents a striving to integrate complexity in unity. Each stage or kind of object faces some fundamental frustration in achieving this unity. This frustration or failure presents a problem, one that is resolved by the higher stage or kind of object.

<sup>93</sup> *Philosophy of Nature*, paragraph 249Z.

The third claim, expressed by the locution, “X is the truth of Y,” is somewhat more complex. A specific telos or norm constitutes each kind of object. Any specific telos or norm presents one manner or mode of achieving the more general telos of all objects, a telos that consists in the integration of the greatest degree of complexity or diversity in the most developed form of unity. So there is the specific telos that determines the object in relation to its kind, and there is another telos that determines the object more generally as an object.

This claim can be illustrated if we consider the general structure of an object. Consider, again, a chimpanzee. A chimpanzee belongs to a number of different kinds. It is a monkey, a mammal, an animal, and a thing. It thus instantiates a number of different universals. The chimpanzee is not merely a *collection* of different universal structures. These universals are united in terms of their teleological relation to one another. Thus the telos of the chimpanzee qua chimpanzee presents one way of achieving the telos of the chimpanzee qua monkey, which in turn presents one way of achieving the telos of the chimpanzee qua mammal. Stated differently, being a chimpanzee is one way of being a monkey, and being a monkey is one way of being a mammal. Mammals have a particular telos – one that is differentiated from the more general telos of animality in terms of (1) the active regulation of body temperature along with costs, benefits, and adjustments that the regulation of body temperature brings, and (2) a high degree of care devoted to offspring and all of the costs, benefits, and adjustments that go along with this. Monkeys have a telos that consists in a particular manner of achieving the more general telos they share with all mammals. Thus the different universals or kinds to which a thing belongs are teleologically related, with the more specific kinds subserving and specifying the



higher kinds. The most general universal or telos that each object strives to instantiate is the telos or universal that determines it as a thing or object.

Thus we can rank things in a number of different ways. We can rank particular individual chimpanzees in relation to the telos that determines them all as chimpanzees. Similarly, we can rank different kinds of monkeys – including chimpanzees – with regards to how fully they instantiate the telos that determines them all as monkeys. We can rank different kinds of mammals – including monkeys – in terms of how fully they instantiate the telos that makes them all mammals; we can rank different animals – including mammals – in terms of how fully they instantiate the telos that makes them all animals; and finally, we can rank all things – including minerals, plants, animals, humans as social and rational beings, and states – in terms of the general telos that makes them all objects.

Three things should be noted about the universal-particular or genus-species relation that structures this general scheme. First, terms like particular and universal have relative meanings. In relation to the universal that constitutes mammals as mammals, the term “monkey” designates a particular, though in relation to the particular kinds of monkeys, including the chimpanzee, the term “monkey” designates a universal. Second, the relation between the universal and the particular, or between the genus and the species, is always normative or teleological. The particular always strives to instantiate the universal, and different particulars have greater and lesser degrees of success in this endeavor. Third, the universal cannot be adequately characterized without reference to the particular. The particular presents one manner of achieving the universal. This manner of achieving the universal fleshes out or particularizes the universal. From this it

follows that a general statement of the universal, considered in abstraction from the particular, must always be revised in light of the different particulars that instantiate it.

With regards to the telos of an object, there are thus at least two kinds of questions we can ask. First, we can ask about the degree to which a particular object instantiates the telos that determines its kind. Second, we can ask about the degree to which the telos that determines its kind instantiates the more general telos of all objects. The first question considers the degree of truth of the object within its kind, while the second question considers the degree of truth that the kind itself possesses. Even if an individual fully instantiates the telos of its particular kind, there is always some sense in which it fails to achieve its more general telos. In other words, there is always a gap between the telos of a thing qua particular kind of thing – as a fungus, an oak tree, a snail, a chimpanzee, or a state – and the telos of the thing qua thing – i.e. as the striving of the thing to integrate the greatest degree of complexity in the most developed form of unity.<sup>94</sup>

This gap manifests itself in different ways in different kinds of things. When we consider the telos of a particular kind of thing, that telos will always suggest but fail to instantiate some more developed form of unity. Alternatively, it will suggest the manner for incorporating a greater degree of diversity, but it will fail to do so. Thus each particular kind of telos presents a specific kind of failure, a failure that already suggests

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<sup>94</sup> Hegel makes this point in the following passage. He says: “God alone is the thorough harmony of notion and reality. All finite things involve an untruth: they have a notion and an existence, but their existence does not meet the requirement of the notion. For this reason they must perish, and then the incompatibility between their notion and their existence becomes manifest” (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 24Z). Death consists in the triumph of diversity over unity. It consists either in the imposition of the external environment on the organized unity of the thing, or else in the loss of control by the unity over the diversity integrated within it. Among other things, death points to the “untruth” of objects like plants, animals, and states when considered in relation to the scale of truth. God represents the pinnacle of this scale, and only he is immortal. However, here we should remember that the term “God” simply designates the process of history, the collective process by which human work or social activity transforms the natural world through a continuous and unending process.

the solution. The next highest kind of thing overcomes this failure. It provides a solution for the “problem” posed by the kind of object that falls beneath it on the scale of truth. The resolution of the inherent problem in the structure of each kind of thing provides the motion of the dialectic. It also explains the third claim expressed by Hegel’s peculiar phrase that “X is the truth of Y.” According to this claim, X is the truth of Y because objects of kind X resolve or overcome the particular kind of failure inherent in the objects of kind Y.

## **2.5) The Completion of Truth in the Unity of Identity and Difference**

Hegel proclaims that, “truth is complete only in the unity of identity with difference.” Thus far we have examined the meaning of the claim “truth is complete.” We have seen (1) that Hegel ascribes truth to objects; (2) that he uses the terms “true,” “good,” and “free” more or less interchangeably; (3) that truth, goodness, and freedom consist in the correspondence between the concrete object and the inherent norm or telos that determines the kind of the object; (4) that objects of a particular kind can be ranked in terms of their degree of truth, depending on how fully they instantiate their telos; (5) that objects of different kinds can be ranked in terms of their degree of truth, depending on how fully their kinds instantiate the more general telos that determines all things qua things; and that (6) the different degrees of truth ascribed to different kinds of objects allows us to place all of these objects on one scale of truth, the highest point of which consists in an object that unites the greatest degree of diversity (all things and all other kinds) into the highest form of unity. The highest object in scale is the collective transformation of the world that constitutes human history.

As Hegel's philosophy progresses from logic to nature, and from nature to mind, it considers the various ways that objects strive to instantiate the general telos that constitutes them as objects. The *Science of Logic* presents the basic categories that structure the various kinds of objects in the world, while the *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Mind* consider the instantiation of these categories in a progressive manner that follows what I have been describing as the scale of truth. The *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Mind* examine objects that are increasingly true, beginning with the objects of physics and passing on to the objects of chemistry, biology, anthropology, psychology, and politics. The objects further along the scale can be described as truer than those that precede them because they more fully instantiate the general telos that constitutes them as objects. In completely general and abstract terms, this telos consists in the unity of identity and difference. In somewhat more developed terms, it consists in the attempt of the object to integrate (unify) the greatest degree of diversity or plurality (difference) in the most highly developed form of unity (identity). These statements of the telos abstract from the particular ways that different kinds of objects instantiate the telos. They describe the basic structures of the object in terms abstract enough to apply to all objects.

In Section 2.4 we noted that the universal cannot be adequately characterized without considering its relation to the particular that instantiates it. The particular fleshes out the otherwise abstract universal. The relationship between the universal and the particular is the relationship between the telos and that which instantiates it. These two locutions or sets of terms express the same relation. Thus in order to conceive the telos properly, we must consider the abstract statement of telos in relation to its instantiations.

In the most general and abstract terms, the telos of the object consists in the unity of identity and difference. Physical, chemical, biological, anthropological, psychological, and political objects instantiate this telos in different, increasingly complex ways. These different kinds of objects present us with increasingly complex, concrete ways of rearticulating our originally abstract statement of the telos of objects qua objects. Thus Hegel's philosophy progresses, the terms "identity" and "difference," the terms originally used to express the telos of all objects, are replaced by a series of more complex terms.

The phrase, "the unity of identity and difference," states the telos of the object and of Hegel's philosophy as it considers increasingly complex objects. However, this phrase states the telos in its mere potentiality, not in its actuality. It states the end of Hegel's philosophy as that end appears to us from the beginning, not as it will ultimately be expressed in its final development. Hegel uses many different categories to explain the structure of the object. These categories present various ways of articulating and developing the basic structure Hegel describes as the unity of identity and difference. As we shall see, this basic structure can also be expressed (1) as the unity of the one and the many, (2) as the unity of the infinite and the finite, (3) as the unity of the universal and the particular.

### **3) The Systematic and Historical Beginnings of Hegel's Philosophy: The Paradoxical Nature of Unity**

The phrase, "the unity of identity and difference," presents the end or telos of Hegel's philosophy. Hegel's philosophy considers objects in relation to the scale of truth. It examines different kinds of objects as they increasingly realize the telos that

constitutes them as objects. Hegel's philosophy ends with the object that fully instantiates this telos – i.e. with human history as a collective process that continually transforms itself and the natural world, thereby integrating all things into one unified process. Only world history, conceived as a unified entity, fully achieves the unity of identity and difference. World history thus achieves the telos that defines objects as objects. It presents the fully developed articulation of the object (or notion) and the end of Hegel's philosophy. So in one sense, the phrase, "the unity of identity and difference," describes the *end* of Hegel's philosophy.

In another sense, this phrase describes the *beginning* of Hegel's philosophy. The phrase describes the end or goal of Hegel's philosophy as envisioned from the beginning. It describes the seed, the core problem from which Hegel develops his philosophy. The phrase, "the unity of identity and difference," denotes a problem or a challenge, and Hegel's philosophy presents a series of increasingly successful attempts to solve this problem. In his increasingly successful attempts to unite identity and difference, Hegel explains the two moments that must be united in increasingly complex terms. At various points, he employs the terms "one," "infinity," "universality," and "self-consciousness" to describe the first moment, and he employs the terms "many," "finitude," "particularity," and "consciousness," to characterize the second moment. It is important to note that the increasingly complex categories that Hegel employs to unite identity and difference correspond to the increasingly complex ways that objects in the world seek to instantiate their telos.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Hegel's belief in the correspondence between the development of thought and the conceptual, but non-temporal, development of reality stems from the complex arguments of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The *Science of Logic* presupposes this belief. In the Introduction, Hegel says: "In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* I have exhibited consciousness in its movement onwards from the first immediate

The unity of identity and difference also forms the beginning of Hegel's philosophy in terms of its historical development. In his first published work, the *Differenzschrift*, or the *Difference between the Systems of Fichte and Schelling*, Hegel explores various problems that arise from our failure to grasp the unity of identity and difference. In this essay Hegel does not employ the phrase, "unity of identity and difference," though he employs a number of similar phrases that describe the same basic issue or problem. At one point, he speaks of the need to grasp the "absolute Identity" of "identity" and "dichotomy."<sup>96</sup> At another point, he discusses the same problem in terms of the need to conceive the unity of "pure unity" and "opposition."<sup>97</sup> Finally, he speaks of the need to grasp the unity of the infinite and the finite.<sup>98</sup> These various phrases – the unity of identity and difference, the absolute identity of identity and dichotomy, the unity of pure unity and opposition, and the unity of the infinite and the finite – express the same basic conceptual challenge, the challenge that Hegel addresses throughout his philosophy

In the *Differenzschrift* Hegel makes it clear that these structures define the core problem of philosophy, one that reoccurs in various forms. Hegel chastises a mode of

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opposition of itself and the object to absolute knowing. The path of this movement goes through every form of the relation to consciousness to the object and has the Notion of science for its result. This Notion therefore...needs no justification here because it received it in that work" (48). The *Phenomenology of Spirit* dialectically progresses through all possible modes of conceiving thought and reality as oppositional until it achieves the standpoint of "absolute knowing," a standpoint that overcomes this opposition. Hegel describes absolute knowing as the "liberation from the opposition of consciousness" – from the opposition of subject and object, thought and reality. Absolute knowing "contains thought in so far as this is just as much the object in its own self, or the object in its own self in so far as it is equally pure thought" (49). The *Science of Logic* begins with absolute knowing. As thought progresses in the *Science of Logic*, considering ever more adequate categories or means of conceiving the object, this progression corresponds to increasingly true kinds of objects.

<sup>96</sup> Hegel: *Selections*, p. 105.

<sup>97</sup> Hegel: *Selections*, p. 105.

<sup>98</sup> Hegel: *Selections*, p. 95.

thought he describes as the *understanding* or *reflection* for its failure to grasp the unity of identity and difference, for its tendency to see identity and difference as rigidly opposed categories. This failure to grasp the unity of identity and difference leads to a host of philosophical problems, including the problems associated with the distinctions between “spirit and matter, soul and body, faith and intellect, freedom and necessity.”<sup>99</sup> In other words, Hegel claims that the distinction between identity and difference reappears in the traditional distinctions between spirit and matter, soul and body, faith and intellect, freedom and necessity. Categories such as spirit, soul, faith, and freedom rest upon various developments of identity, while categories such as matter, body, intellect, and necessity rest upon the development of difference or plurality. On Hegel’s view, the failure of philosophy to explain the relationship between these various sets of categories stems from the failure of the understanding to grasp the unity of identity and difference.

Even in the earliest stages of Hegel’s development, in the *Differenzschrift*, we can already see the central importance that Hegel accords to the problematic relationship between identity and difference – or between identity and dichotomy, pure unity and opposition, infinity and finitude. Hegel argues that reflection or the understanding fails to grasp the unity of identity and difference. It takes identity and difference as rigidly distinct categories, and it tends to emphasize one to the exclusion of the other. Hegel contrasts the understanding with *reason* or *speculation*, the mode of thought that can correctly grasp the unity of identity and difference. In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel argues that philosophy must overcome its all too common one-sided reliance upon the understanding. It must recognize the essential mode that reason or speculation needs to play in grasping the unity of identity and difference. He argues that in grasping the unity

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<sup>99</sup> Hegel: *Selections*, p. 95.



of identity and difference, reason provides the solution to a host of traditional philosophical problems, problems that rest upon the rigid distinction between identity and difference as expressed in the rigid distinctions between spirit and matter, soul and body, faith and intellect, freedom and necessity.

Two things must be noted about this conception of the task of philosophy. First, Hegel does not reject the understanding in favor of reason. Both the understanding, with its emphasis on distinctions, and reason, with its drive for unity, play an essential role in the progress of thought. The second point is more important but also more difficult to state. In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel discusses the relationship between identity and difference in terms of different modes of thought. He contrasts the ability of reason to grasp the unity of identity and difference with the tendency of the understanding to conceive identity and difference as rigidly distinct categories, and he shows how this tendency of the understanding has led to a host of traditional philosophical problems or impasses. Hegel argues that philosophy too often relies on the understanding while excluding reason, and he proclaims the need for a new direction in philosophy, one that recognizes the importance of reason or speculation. All of this makes it sound as though the problem of uniting identity and difference is merely a problem for thought, as though Hegel is exclusively concerned with questions about how *we* conceptualize the world. However, even in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel makes it clear that the problem of uniting identity and difference is the fundamental problem facing objects in the world.

Hegel makes both of these points in the following passage:

The sole interest of Reason is to suspend such rigid antitheses [between identity and difference]. But this does not mean that Reason is altogether opposed to opposition and limitation [the province of the understanding]. Life eternally forms itself by setting up oppositions, and totality at the highest pitch of living

energy is only possible through its own re-establishment out of the deepest fission.<sup>100</sup>

Reason seeks to overcome or “suspend...rigid antithesis,” but it does not seek to eradicate them. Reason does not oppose opposition or difference – i.e. the distinctions provided by the understanding. Reason does not seek unity at the expense of the differences or distinctions drawn by the understanding, but rather it seeks to incorporate these differences within unity. Here we see the proper conception of the relationship between reason and understanding as both *the key to uniting identity and difference* and, somewhat paradoxically, as *an example of the unity of identity and difference*. Reason presents the moment of identity, the drive for unity. The understanding presents the moment of difference, the drive to establish distinctions. Though even this manner of speaking is misleading, since reason and understanding do not represent two distinct drives or impulses, but rather two aspects of one process. If we conceive reason and the understanding in oppositional terms, and if we favor reason over the understanding, then, somewhat ironically, we favor reason as conceived by the understanding. In other words, we conceive and favor reason only as it is distinct from the understanding. Instead, we must embrace reason as conceived by reason, as a process of thought that includes the differences determined by the understanding.

The final sentence in the previous passage shifts from a discussion of thought to a discussion of life. Hegel supports his claim about the importance of reason and understanding by showing the importance of analogous moments in the process of life. This argumentative strategy assumes that both thought and life have similar structures. It assumes that thought presents a higher development of the same basic structures already

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<sup>100</sup> *Hegel: Selections*, p. 95.

evident in the processes of life. More importantly, it shows how the problem of uniting identity and difference exists in thought *and* in nature. It is a problem facing living objects in their process of self-constitution, not simply a problem facing thought.

In his description of life, Hegel states the telos of life. He speaks of life at its “highest pitch of living energy” – i.e. in its most developed form. The highest development of life consists in a unity or “totality,” that is “only possible through its own re-establishment out of the deepest fission.” Life unites identity (totality as unity) and difference (fission). The greater or deeper the fission and the more developed the unity of the totality, the higher the form of life. Thus in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel already sees the unification of identity and difference as the core problem of philosophy and as the basic telos or process that constitutes objects.

#### **4) Hegel’s Concluding Remarks on the Various Modes of Unity And the General Nature of Philosophy**

In one of the final paragraphs of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel presents an overall picture of his philosophical system as it lies behind him, complete, clear, and explicit for the first time. Hegel’s conceives philosophy as a hermeneutic and presuppositionless enterprise (see Chapter Four, Sections). This means, among other things, that we begin philosophy with a vague and largely implicit sense of what philosophy is actually about, and only with the completion of philosophy do we arrive at a place where we can, for the first time, determine accurately what the central problems of philosophy are (or were). In this light, the following remarks merit careful attention. Hegel says:

The close of philosophy is not the place, even in a general exoteric discussion, to waste a word on what a ‘notion’ means. But as the view taken of this relation is

closely connected with the view taken of philosophy generally and with all imputations against it, we may still add the remark that though philosophy certainly has to do with unity in general, it is not, however, with abstract unity, mere identity, and the empty absolute, but **with concrete unity (the notion), and that in its whole course it has to do with nothing else**; that each step in its advance is a peculiar term or phase of this concrete unity, and that the deepest and last expression of unity is the unity of absolute mind itself. Would-be judges and critics of philosophy might be recommended to familiarize themselves with **these phases of unity** and to take the trouble to get acquainted with them, at least to know so much that of these terms there are a great many, and that amongst them there is great variety. But they show so little acquaintance with them—and still less take trouble about it—that when they hear of unity—and relation *ipso facto* implies unity—they rather stick fast at quite abstract indeterminate unity, and lose sight of the chief point of interest—the special mode in which the unity is qualified. Hence all they can say about philosophy is that dry identity is its principle and result, and that it is the system of identity. Sticking fast to the undigested thought of identity, they have laid hands on, not the concrete unity, the notion and content of philosophy, but rather its reverse. In the philosophical field they proceed, as in the physical field the physicists; who also is well aware that he has before him a variety of sensuous properties and matters—or usually matters alone (for the properties get transformed into matters also for the physicist)—and that these matters (elements) *also* stand in *relation* to one another. But the question is, Of what kind is this relation? **Every peculiarity and the whole difference of natural things, inorganic and living, depends solely on the different modes of this unity.** But instead of ascertaining these different modes, the ordinary physicist (chemist included) takes up only one, the most external and the worst, viz. composition, applies only it in the whole range of natural structures, which he thus renders for ever inexplicable [emphasis added].<sup>101</sup>

This brief summary or “general exoteric discussion,” presented at the “close of philosophy,” confirms the basic lines of interpretation laid down in this chapter. On the one hand, this paragraph presents an exoteric or even external account of philosophy, one that can never be substituted, at least on Hegel’s view, for the process of philosophical thinking itself. On the other hand, this summary has a kind of privileged status, since it occurs at the close of philosophy, at the point where the nature of philosophy first becomes fully explicit.

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<sup>101</sup> *Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 573.

In accordance with the interpretation presented in the last two chapters, Hegel presents the nature of the notion as the central theme of philosophy. Hegel emphasizes the centrality of the notion for philosophy, claiming that one's view of the nature of the notion will determine one's attitude towards philosophy itself. Going further, he says that "in its [philosophy's] whole course it has to do with nothing else," but the notion. Thus philosophy is nothing but a series of considerations about the nature of the notion. As such, philosophy seeks to determine the basic structure of the notion. Hegel characterizes the basic structure of the notion as a "concrete unity," a structure he contrasts with "abstract unity" or "mere identity." Abstract unity excludes all plurality. Similarly, mere identity consists in a conception of identity that excludes difference. In contrast to this, concrete unity includes plurality within it. In terms presented in this chapter, concrete unity, or the notion, consists in the unit of identity and difference, or in the unity of unity and plurality.

Hegel first characterizes concrete unity in opposition to abstract unity or mere identity. He goes on to characterize the concrete unity of the notion in terms of the various "phases" or "modes" of unity that constitute it. He argues that there are "a great many" modes of unity, and "that amongst them there is great variety." The task of philosophy consists in determining these various modes of concrete unity – i.e. the various degrees of unity of unity and plurality. These various kinds of unity can be ranged on a scale, the "deepest and last expression" of which is "the unity of absolute mind." In the terms presented in this chapter, the "absolute mind" is the *truest object*, the highest instantiation of the notion, for it combines the greatest degree of plurality or diversity within the most developed form of unity.

Hegel claims that the differences between various kinds of objects, both “inorganic” and “living,” can be determined with regards to these various “modes of this unity.” Thus the notion, as the concrete unity or as the unity of identity and difference, presents basic structural features common to *all* objects, to those that are organic as well as those that are inorganic. Different kinds of things – such as physical beings, chemical beings, organic beings, humans as anthropological beings, humans as political beings, etc. – present different modes of unity, and it is this difference in the mode of unity that allows us to characterize the distinctions that constitute each kind.

In this passage, Hegel states the basic problem of the unity of identity and difference – or the unity of unity and plurality – in terms of the problem of the constitution of physical and/or chemical objects. He presents the basic problem in terms of the physicist, “who is...aware that he has before him **a variety of sensuous properties and matters**—or usually matters alone (for the properties get transformed into matters also for the physicist)—and that these matters (elements) *also* stand in *relation* to one another.” Here we have three basic moments that present themselves in our conception of a physical and/or chemical object. **First**, we have a “variety” of properties or matters. Hegel says that the properties all too often get transformed into matters. Properties have a *dependent* status. Properties present a plurality of features that all “belong to” or are “grounded in” some unified thing. When we treat properties as matters, we treat them as *independent* things. Rather than treating the thing as a unity (substance) that includes plurality (properties), we treat it as a collection that consists in a plurality of independent things. **Second**, in addition to the variety of properties we have some relation between them. This is the moment of unity, for as Hegel says, “relation *ipso facto* implies unity.”

**Third**, we have the moment that unites the unity of the relation and the plurality of the various properties. Hegel expresses this moment with the word “also.”

These three moments describe moments, not things. If we treat the moments as things, the problem becomes insoluble. So we shouldn't construe the problem as a matter of grounding the properties in a substance, where the properties and the substance are treated as distinct things that must somehow be brought into relation. Instead, we should consider the three moments as moments, as ways that the thing appears or exists, or, in subjective or epistemological terms, as ways we can consider the object. We can consider the object as many (various properties). We can consider it as a single thing (relation). Finally, in the third moment, we must grasp the sense in which it is the *same* thing that is both one (relation) and many (various properties). This is the problem of the unity of identity and difference, the basic problem of philosophy. It is also the basic problem all things must overcome in order to constitute themselves as things.

In this passage Hegel also presents what he sees as the fundamental impediment to philosophy, as the prejudice or presupposition that prevents us from grasping the unity of identity and difference. This presupposition construes all identity as tautological relation of a thing to itself, and it construes all unity as either (a) a characteristic that a thing has as itself – in its self-identical relation to itself, or (b) as the mere togetherness of external aggregation, conjunction, or composition. So for every thing, it is true that  $A = A$ , and for all other things, for all not-As,  $A \neq \text{not-A}$ . A is identical with itself and different from all other things. This is the “mere identity” that excludes difference. With this conception of identity, Hegel argues, only two conceptions of unity are possible. First, we can conceive unity as a defining characteristic of the thing considered merely as

itself. Every particular thing, as the particular thing that it is, is one. This is the “abstract unity” that excludes plurality. Qua tree, the tree is one. It is, in other words, one thing. If we ask about the composition of the tree, then a number of properties, matters, or things emerge, each of which, in relation to itself, is one. If we then try to make sense of the relation between the properties, matters, or things, on the one hand, and the tree qua tree, on the other hand, then, according to Hegel, the only notion of unity available to us, since we only admit abstract identity, is unity via aggregation. This conception of unity, however, “renders for every inexplicable” the “whole range of natural structures.”<sup>102</sup>

In order to overcome this impasse, Hegel argues that we must grasp identity as concrete identity, as identity that includes difference. We must recognize that every thing essentially consists in its relation to what it is not, and thus that there is an important sense in which both “ $A = A$ ,” and “ $A \neq \text{not-}A$ ” present distortions of the true nature of  $A$ . While on the one hand,  $A$  is not not- $A$ , there is another sense in which  $A$  cannot be fully abstracted from not- $A$ , since not- $A$  partially constitutes it as what it is. This might all seem to be nonsense. However, a serious consideration of teleology as the fundamental

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<sup>102</sup> These two options – abstract identity and mere conjunction – present what we might call an Hegelian antinomy. These categories are opposites, and yet both rest upon the same basic assumption, upon the common rejection of concrete identity or the unity of identity and difference. The problem of these oppositional categories can be seen in relation to the Pantheism Controversy. In fact, Paragraph 573, the paragraph quoted above, primarily focuses on this controversy. In our conception of the relationship between God and the world, there seem to be two equally problematic options. On the first option, God and the world present two distinct things that are merely conjoined or externally related. While this avoids pantheism, it makes God finite, since he stands over/against creation. It also runs the risk of making the world genuinely independent of God, and thus itself a kind of God. On the second option, we might say that “ $\text{God} = \text{world in its entirety}$ .” Here we move from external conjunction to abstract identity. Hegel argues that most people move back and forth between these two extremes. In contrast, he argues that we must conceive a conception of God’s relation to the world that unites or preserves both the difference between God and creation as well as their unity. Here there are host of options that partially explain the relation – ground/grounded, reality/appearance, cause/effect, etc. Ultimately, however, Hegel holds that none of them suffice, and he settles for a conception of God as the highest form that emerges in the material world. It should also be noted, that in discussing the Pantheism Controversy and the relation between God and the world, Hegel’s point is primarily illustrative rather than traditionally theological. The relation between God and the world ultimately presents a kind of non-clarified self-conception of the relation between the political sphere and all subordinate aspects of life and the world.



category of ontology helps to make sense of this nonsense. As essentially teleological, a being is only what it is in its directedness towards its future, towards that which it is not yet. A seed both is and is not a tree. As it exists now, it is not a tree. However, its essential structures, the features that make it a seed, only exist in relation to that which it will become, in relation to its future as a tree. Hegel endorses this claim in the strongest possible sense. Not only does he argue that we will mischaracterize a thing if we simply focus on what it is at present, but he also makes the much stronger claim that all characterizations of a thing, as any kind of thing whatsoever, ultimately rely upon some implicit claims or assumptions about the future. In other words, he doesn't merely claim that we fail to conceive the seed as a seed if we fail to consider what it will become. He also makes the stronger claim that any conception of the seed – say a description of the chemicals that comprise it – already makes some implicit reference to what these things will be.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Here there are obvious parallels between Hegel, Heidegger, and Sartre, though while Heidegger and Sartre limit their discussions to human existence, Hegel extends his analysis to all genuine things. In his article, "Predication and Hegel's Metaphysics," Richard E. Aquila nicely emphasizes the similarities between Hegel and Sartre on just this point. He says: "Many philosophers have, to be sure, viewed the self as a kind of 'thing' or substance. But there are others who, like the Existentialists, for example, hold a radically different position. These maintain that the sense in which a thing or a substance is what it is (has a certain property, nature, etc.) is very different from the sense in which a self, or a conscious being qua conscious being, is what it is. A self is something only insofar as it is in the process of becoming, or at least maintaining itself as, that something. Hence, on this view, what a self is (its essential being or nature) is never merely present or 'there' in the way that ordinary things and their natures are. But in the sense in which a thing is not something, insofar as it is merely becoming or being made to be, that something, it follows, on this conception of the self, that 'human reality in its primitive relation to itself is not what it is.' While a thing simply is what it is and not any other thing, human reality is what it is only in the sense that 'it surpasses itself toward the particular being which it would be if it were what it is.' We may compare this characterization of conscious being with Hegel's characterization of the being of reality as a whole." (The quotes embedded in this passage come from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, translated by Hazel Barnes.) As Aquila points out, Existentialists like Sartre distinguish between the self and objects in terms of the category of becoming, a category that introduces a kind of contradiction into basic nature of the self. Hegel doesn't accept this distinction. It isn't that he views the self as a thing, but rather that he views all things in terms of the categories of the self. In the terms of his slogan, he conceives the substance as subject. Aquila holds that this applies only to Hegel's conception of reality as a whole, to the absolute. By contrast, I've argued that it applies to all genuine objects.

All of this talk about teleology as the basis of concrete identity and the notion remains merely suggestive. The details of Hegel's account are actually much more complex. In any case, this passage should demonstrate: (1) the notion presents the central theme of Hegel's philosophy; (2) that the notion is a concrete unity, a unity that includes identity and difference; (3) that there are different modes or degrees that characterize the unity of different notions; (4) that conceiving these various modes presents the core problem of philosophy; and (5) that conceiving these modes requires us to reject abstract identity and to explain the possibility of the unity of identity and difference.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE NATURE OF GENUINE CHANGE, THE STRUCTURE OF THE JUDGMENT, AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE OBJECT: PART ONE

#### 1) The Unity of Identity and Difference: Two Examples of the Problem

In Chapter Two we examined the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” a phrase that, among other things, designates the basic teleological structure of all genuine objects. This phrase presents the basic teleological structure of the notion, a structure that Hegel describes in increasingly complex terms as his philosophy progresses from the *Logic* to the *Philosophy of Nature* and then to the *Philosophy of Mind*. In this progression, Hegel’s philosophy recapitulates the series of increasingly complex structures that constitute the various kinds of objects in the world.

In Chapter Two I also argued that the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” expresses the enfolded telos of Hegel’s philosophy. In other words, it designates the telos in its potentiality. As an expression of the enfolded telos, this phrase presents a basic problem or challenge. The resolution of this problem drives the development of Hegel’s philosophy and leads to the continual reformulation of the problem itself in increasingly complex terms. In Section Three of Chapter Two, we examined Hegel’s claim that many philosophical problems derive from the more basic

problem inherent in the relationship between identity and difference. For instance, Hegel mentions the perplexities that arise in our attempt to explain the relationship between spirit and matter, faith and reason, freedom and necessity. He claims that the problems arising from these dichotomies stem from a more basic confusion about the relationship between identity and difference.

We have seen that the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” designates a central problem of Hegel’s philosophy, and we have observed Hegel’s claims about the various forms this problem can take. At this point, however, we have not yet determined the specific nature of the problem itself. Accordingly, Chapters Three and Four flesh out the problem by considering two phenomena that illustrate it – namely, (a) the nature of change and (b) the structure of judgment.

We can analyze both the nature of change and the structure of judgment in terms of three moments. First, change and judgment both involve a moment of identity. Change presupposes the *identity* of that which persists through the change, while judgment involves the *identity* or *connection* expressed by the copula. Second, both change and judgment involve a moment of difference. The thing that changes must be *different* before and after the change. Likewise, judgment consists in the *difference* reflected by the two terms connected with the copula. The third moment consists in the unity of the first two. In order to conceive change, we must grasp the relationship or unity of that which persists through the change and that which is different before and after the change. In order to conceive the structure of judgment, we must grasp the relationship between the connection (or identity) expressed by the copula and the distinction (or difference) expressed by the two terms that the copula unites.

Our discussion of these phenomena should establish three things. First, this consideration of change and judgment explains the importance of the third moment discussed above, the moment that *unites* identity and difference. It explains how a proper conception of change requires us to grasp the *unity* of (a) the *identity* of that which persists and (b) the *difference* that constitutes the change. Likewise, it explains why a proper conception of the structure of judgment requires us to grasp the *unity* of (a) the *identity* expressed by the copula of the judgment, and (b) the *difference* expressed by the two terms of the judgment. In both cases, the third moment, the moment of unity, proves crucial for our conception of the phenomenon.

Second, this consideration of the nature of change and the structure of judgment illustrates the difference between the understanding and reason, a difference that plays a central role in Hegel's philosophy. A mode of thought that relies upon the understanding admits the first two moments of the analysis of change or judgment, but it cannot grasp the unity presented by the third moment. The understanding passes back and forth between the moment of identity and the moment of difference, considering the first moment *at one time* and the second moment *at another time*. However, it cannot grasp the unity of these two moments *at the same time*. Only reason can grasp the third moment, the moment that unites the first two by grasping them together at the same time. This clarification of the difference between reason and the understanding demonstrates some of the difficulties involved in grasping the unity of identity and difference.

Third, this consideration reveals the intimate connection between the nature of change, the structure of judgment, and the structure of the object.<sup>104</sup> The three structural moments of change and judgment reflect the structural moments of the object, and a

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<sup>104</sup> On this subject, see Robert Stern's *Hegel, Kant and the structure of the object*.

proper conception of change and judgment ultimately rests upon a proper conception of the structure of the object. In order to conceptualize change, we must consider the structure of the object that changes, and in order to conceptualize judgment, we must consider the structure of the object captured by the judgment.

Our consideration of the nature of change and the structure of the judgment thus presents the first step in an extended argument, one intended to show *that all genuine objects must be teleologically structured*. In Chapter Two we simply assumed this point in order to explain the basic contours of Hegel's philosophy. We claimed that the phrase, "the unity of identity and difference," designates the telos of all objects in the most general terms. Chapters Three and Four present the beginning of an argument for this claim. This argument begins with considerations about the nature of change and the structure of judgment. Both phenomena present us with a conceptual challenge – the challenge of explaining or conceiving the unity of identity and difference. Moreover, both phenomena point us towards the structure of the object. In order to conceive the nature of change, we must grasp the structure of the object that changes, and in order to conceive the structure of judgment, we must grasp the structures of the object that the judgment captures or reflects. Like the nature of change and the structure of judgment, the object itself presents us with a riddle or challenge posed by the phrase, "the unity of identity and difference." In order to conceive the object, we must grasp how the identity (or unity) and the difference (or plurality) of the object are united. A brief statement of the problem of the unity of identity and difference with regards to the structure of the object will be presented in Appendix One at the end of this dissertation, and Appendix

Two will briefly consider Hegel's solution to the problem. It will sketch Hegel's account of the object in terms of its teleological and self-constitutive activity.

## 2.1) The Nature of Genuine Change: One Example of a More Basic Problem

Hegel does not specifically discuss the nature of change in terms of the unity of identity and difference.<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, the nature of change presents a conceptual challenge that clearly illustrates the problem of the unity of identity and difference. In fact, the phenomenon of change provides one of the clearest examples of this problem. Before considering the nature of change as an illustration of the unity of identity and difference, it is worth noting that Bradley and Taylor both emphasize the problematic nature of change, and that they both associate the problem of change with the problem of the one and the many, which is itself a form of the problem of identity and difference.<sup>106</sup>

For instance, Bradley says:

It [change] points back to the dilemma of the one and the many, the differences and the identity, the adjectives and the thing [i.e. the relation of inherence between properties and substance], the qualities and the relations. How anything can possibly be anything else was a question which defied our efforts. Change is little beyond an instance of this dilemma in principle.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> The problem of change gets taken up in Post-Kantian German philosophy in terms of the problem of the unity of apperception. In this context, the "I think" presents the unity or identity that accompanies, or at least can accompany, all of my representations. As the representations constantly change through time, they present the difference or manifold plurality. Thus the question of the unity of identity and difference becomes the question about the unity (or essential relation) between the "I think" and the manifold of representations that are thought. In the question about the unity of apperception, the problem of change and the structure of judgment are related, since on Hegel's view, the forms of judgment simply present different ways by which the mind relates the plurality of the manifold to the unity of the "I think." For a further discussion of this problem, see Sections 5 and 6 of Chapter 5, where I discuss Hegel's views on apperception as they are presented in the *Differenzschrift* and *Glauben und Wissen*.

<sup>106</sup> It should be noted that I worked out the details of my discussion of time *before* discovering similar discussions in F.H. Bradley and A.E. Taylor. It should also be noted that John McTaggart, another philosopher heavily influenced by Hegel, also presents similar discussions of time.

<sup>107</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 38.

Bradley refers to change as “an instance of this dilemma in principle.” The “dilemma” here is the problem of the one and the many, or the problem of the relation between identity and difference. Bradley argues that this same problem or dilemma can be found in the structure of the object, in the relation between the unity of a thing and the plurality of its properties. So Bradley holds (a) that change presents an example of a more general problem, the problem of identity and difference, and (b) that the same conceptual problem arises when we consider the structure of the thing.

Taylor makes similar points in the *Elements of Metaphysics*. He says:

Change, then, may be defined as succession within an identity, the identity being as essential to the character of the process as the succession. In what way, then, must we think of this identity or common nature which is present throughout the whole succession of changes? It should be clear that this question – how that which changes can be permanent? – is simply our old problem of quality and substance, how the many states can belong to one thing.<sup>108</sup>

Taylor argues that our conception of change must grasp the relationship between the *identity* that persists through the change and the differences that constitute the “succession.” Like Bradley, Taylor sees this problem as but one example of a much more general problem, one that we also face when we attempt to conceive the structure of the object as the relation between the unity of a substance and the plurality of its properties. Both the nature of change and the structure of the object present the problem of the unity of identity and difference.

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<sup>108</sup> *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 161.



## 2.2) Difference, Identity, and Unity: Three Necessary Conditions for the Distinction between Genuine and Apparent Change

With regards to the phenomena of change, the problem of the unity of identity and difference arises when we seek to distinguish *cases where some thing changes* from *cases where one thing is annihilated and another thing is created*. In the first case, there is some thing that actually undergoes a change. In the second case, one thing ceases to exist and another thing begins to exist. Here there is no *thing* that changes. In order for a thing to change, it must have different properties, or exist in different ways, at different times. In the second case, the thing that ceases to exist does not change, for after it ceases to exist, it does not have any properties or exist in any way. Thus ceasing to exist is not a change that the thing undergoes. Similarly, in an act of creation, the thing created does not undergo a change. Before a thing is created, it does not have any properties or exist in any way. Therefore, in being created, a thing does not undergo a change of properties or states.

Perhaps it would be mere sophistry to insist that where *no thing* changes, *nothing* changes, though I must confess that the claim seems compelling to me. In any case, for my present purposes I will simply stipulate that genuine change only occurs where there is some thing that undergoes the change. I will designate all cases, where there is a thing that undergoes change, with the term “genuine change.” By contrast, I will use the term “apparent change” to designate cases of annihilation followed by creation.<sup>109</sup> Here the

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<sup>109</sup> Leibniz uses the term “natural change” to designate what I am calling genuine change. He distinguishes natural change from annihilation and creation. He says: “natural change is produced by degrees (*Monadology*, paragraph 13). Thus, he says, in natural change, “something changes and something remains.” From this claim, Leibniz concludes that monads must be simple substances that contain plurality within them. The simple substance remains the same, but its properties change. Here Leibniz explains the relationship between *the unity of the thing that remains* and *the plurality of that which changes* in terms of the metaphor of containment. The plurality is contained *within* the unity. He says: “This diversity [the

term “apparent change” does not designate those cases (a) where some thing appears to change but actually remains the same. Instead, it designates those cases where (b) some thing appears to change but is actually annihilated and then replaced by some other newly created thing. For my present purposes, it is irrelevant whether or not annihilation and creation should be considered changes. For my argument it is only important that (1) the distinction I have drawn between genuine change and apparent change captures some real conceptual difference, and that (2) what I have designated as genuine change actually occurs. In light of these assumptions, I will argue that in order to explain the distinction between **genuine change** and **apparent change**, we must explain the structure of change in terms of the unity of identity and difference.

Genuine change requires three moments – moments that respectively emphasize difference, identity, and unity. The first moment of genuine change can be described as **the moment of difference**. All change requires some difference between the state of things before the change and the state of things after the change. Without this difference, there is no change, only a constant or unchanging state. Both genuine and apparent change require this moment. Apparent change consists in annihilation and creation. Annihilation presupposes a difference between the state of things before the annihilation and the state of things after it. The same holds for creation. Thus the moment of difference characterizes both genuine and apparent change.

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diversity that explains change] must involve a multitude in the unity or in the simple” (*Monadology*, paragraph 13). Leibniz goes on to explain the spatial metaphor of containment in terms of perception. He claims: “The passing state which involves and represents a multitude in the unity or in the simple substance is nothing other than what one calls perception” (*Monadology*, paragraph 14). Thus in order to explain natural change, we must grasp the relationship between something that persists and something that changes. This is the relationship between identity and difference, between unity and plurality. Leibniz argues that the plurality involved in the change exists *in* the unity that persists through the change, and he further explains this containment relationship in terms of the structure of perception.

The second and third moments distinguish genuine change from that which is merely apparent. The second moment is **the moment of identity**. In genuine change, something persists through the process. If nothing persisted through the change, then everything prior to the change would cease to exist, and everything after the change would have simply come into existence. If nothing persisted through the change, then everything prior to the change would be annihilated, and everything after the change would be created. So the moment of persistence or identity distinguishes genuine change from annihilation and creation.

Genuine change requires a third moment, **the moment of unity**. Without the third moment, we cannot fully distinguish genuine change from creation and annihilation. In order to grasp the necessity of the third moment, it will be helpful to label the features described in the first two moments. We'll designate that which persists as "P," and the different states that define the change as "S1" and "S2." Thus we can describe the change as a transformation of P-S1 to P-S2. We can illustrate this with a particular example such as the change that occurs when water is heated. In this example, "P" designates the water, which persists through the change. The same (identical) water exists before and after the change. In this example, "S1" designates the coldness of the water before the change, and "S2" designates the warmth of the water after the change. Thus the change consists in the movement from, "the water is cold," to "the water is warm."

On one interpretation, the process that moves from P-S1 to P-S2 does not involve genuine change. On this interpretation, the process involves one thing that remains unchanged (P), one thing that is annihilated (S1), and one thing that is created (S2). Or,

in terms of our example, this interpretation holds that the water stays the same, that the coldness is annihilated, and that the warmth is created. This interpretation treats P, S1, and S2 as fully independent or distinct. In some sense, at least, it treats P, S1, and S2 as three different things. In other words, it treats the water, the coldness, and the warmth as distinct things or entities.<sup>110</sup> We might say that this interpretation fails to recognize that coldness and warmth are “states of” or “properties of” the water. They are not distinct substances, but rather they are features of the water, ways that the water exists. Of course, this doesn’t solve our problem. It merely raises the question of what it means to say that X is state or property of Y. It merely raises the central question of Hegel’s philosophy, the question about the structure of the genuine thing.

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<sup>110</sup> This conception of change presents the *modus operandi* of the mere understanding, a conceptual approach that “sticks to the fixity of characters and their distinctness from one another,” and that also treats “every such limited abstract as having a subsistence and being of its own” (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 80). The understanding grasps identity and difference. In the case of change, it grasps the existence of something that persists (the moment of identity) as well the existence of the features that change (the moment of difference). However, the understanding does not grasp the deeper unity that grounds and unites these moments, the unity from which these moments are abstracted. In his discussion of change, Bradley seems to remain at the standpoint of the understanding. Bradley says: “The relational form in general, and here in particular this form of time, is a natural way of compromise. It is no solution of the discrepancies, and we might call it rather a method of holding them in suspension. It is an artifice by which we become blind on either side, to suit the occasion; and the whole secrete consists in ignoring that aspect which we are unable to use. Thus it is required that A should change; and, for this two characters, not compatible, must be present at once. There must be a successive diversity, and yet the time must be one. The succession, in other words, is not really successive unless it is present. And our compromise consists in regarding the process mainly from whichever of its aspects answers to our need, and in ignoring—that is, in failing or in refusing to perceive—the hostility of the other side” (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 40). Here Bradley presents a perfect picture of the *modus operandi* of the understanding. The understanding grasps the importance of identity and difference, but it fails to grasp the third moment, the moment of their relation. At the same time, Bradley seems to diverge from Hegel in his account of change. Rather than concluding that change seems contradictory from the standpoint of the understanding, Bradley seems to conclude that it is contradictory full stop, and therefore, in some sense, not real. For this reason, Bradley discusses change in the first part of his book, the part on appearance. In this regard, one of Hegel’s remarks about the contradictory nature of change merits consideration. Hegel says: “The ancient dialecticians must be granted the contradictions that they pointed out in motion; but it does not follow that therefore there is no motion, but on the contrary, that motion is existent contradiction itself” (*Science of Logic*, p. 440). Bradley holds that reality does not contain contradictions, and therefore he concludes that change is a mere appearance. By contrast, Hegel recognizes the importance of change. In fact, he makes change – and more specifically action – one of the central categories of his philosophy. In doing so, he admits the existence of contradictions in reality. Or, to state the point more carefully, he admits that reality contains phenomena that appear contradictory to the understanding.

The moments of identity and difference are not sufficient to distinguish genuine change from that which is merely apparent. The *identity* of that which persists and the *difference* of the change do not sufficiently explain the nature of change as distinct from annihilation and creation. Thus our analysis of change requires a third moment, the moment of unity. In order to distinguish genuine change from persistence, annihilation, and creation, we must grasp the essential relation that *unites* P to S1 and S2 respectively. We must grasp the essential relation that prevents us from treating P, S1, and S2 as three distinct things.

In terms of our example, we must grasp the meaning of the copula in the claims, “the water is cold” and the “water is warm.” On the one hand, the copula obviously doesn’t express strict identity, for that would lead to the following contradictory claims 1) water = cold, and (2) water = warm, and (3) warm  $\neq$  cold. On the other hand, the copula doesn’t merely express the “existing togetherness” of two distinct things, as though the phrase, “the water is cold,” simply meant, “there is water, and there is coldness, and they are together.” So in order to grasp change, we must grasp some form of unity that is less than strict identity but greater than a mere “existing togetherness” of two distinct things.<sup>111</sup> We must, in other words, grasp what it means to say that warmth is a property

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<sup>111</sup> In this context, it is important to recall a few of the claims made in Section Four of Chapter Two. In this Appendix we examined Hegel’s claims (1) that philosophy’s sole purpose is to determine the different modes or phases of unity; (2) that every “peculiarity and the whole difference of natural things, inorganic and living, depends solely on the different modes of this unity;” and finally (3) that neither strict identity nor mere aggregation plays an important role in a proper conception of reality. In other words, the task of philosophy is to determine the various modes of unity that are greater – i.e. more genuinely unified – than mere aggregation but less than strict identity. Moreover, as philosophy considers these various forms of unity, it traces the differences between the various kinds of natural objects. In other words, each phase or mode of unity finds expression in some kind of natural (or spiritual) object. With regards to the different modes of unity, see the discussion of the meanings of the copula in Section 4.2 of this chapter.

or state of the water. However, the relation or form of unity designated by these phrases is far from evident.

### **3) Difference and Identity: The Meaning of the Copula and the Contradiction in the Structure of Judgment**

An analysis of genuine change forces us to consider the problematic relationship between identity and difference. Although Hegel never explicitly discusses change in the terms presented here, the process of change nonetheless provides a relatively simple illustration of the central conceptual problem or paradox presented in Hegel's philosophy, the paradox designated by the phrase, "the unity of identity and difference." Change presents a relatively simple example of the unity of identity and difference. The structure of judgment, by contrast, presents an example that is far more complex, one that requires a more careful and lengthy clarification. Hegel frequently employs the structure of judgment as an example of the problematic structure of the unity of identity and difference, and therefore the structure of judgment merits careful consideration.

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel begins a lengthy discussion of judgment with the following claim:

What the judgment enunciates to start with is that *the subject is the predicate*; but since the predicate is supposed *not* to be what the subject is, we are faced with a *contradiction* which must resolve itself, *pass over* into a result.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 630. Hegel conceives the structure of judgment in terms of the unity of identity and difference. Here he argues that the subject and predicate terms express the difference, that the copula expresses the identity or connection, and that the judgment as a whole involves the unity of these two moments. At other times, he argues that the subject presents the unity, that the predicate presents the plurality (since the predicate is always only one of many predicates that applies to the subject), and that the copula presents the unity of the unity expressed by the subject and the difference presented by the predicate. At still other times he presents the judgment in a third way, where the subject presents difference, the predicate presents identity, and the copula presents the unity of identity and difference. In this sense, the predicate presents that which many particulars have in common, for instance that they are all green, while the subject presents the sense in which this particular green thing has other features that make

The structure of judgment presents us with a paradox, problem, or contradiction that stems from the mutual existence of identity and difference within its basic structure. Hegel claims that the subject and the predicate are, in some sense, identical.<sup>113</sup> Thus he says, “the subject *is* the predicate.” In another sense, the subject and the predicate are different. As Hegel says, the subject *is not* the predicate. In order to conceive the structure of judgment properly, we must grasp the relation between these two aspects of the judgment. In other words, we must conceive the judgment as an expression of the unity of identity and difference.

We can see the necessity of these two moments in judgment if we consider the minimal telos or norm that guides all acts of judgment. In all acts of judgment, we strive to express something both *significant* and *true*. If a judgment is false, it is defective. A false judgment fails to achieve the basic norm or guiding intention that governs it.<sup>114</sup>

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it the particular that it is. In this chapter, we will consider judgment in the most basic sense, as a distinction and combination of two elements. In this most general sense, the distinction between the subject and predicate presents the distinction, the copula presents the combination, and the judgment as a whole presents the unity of these two moments.

<sup>113</sup> As I discuss at length in Sections 4.2 and 4.3, Hegel uses both the term “identity” and the symbol “=” in a broad and non-traditional sense to express a range of meanings that include connection, synthesis, unity. Thus when Hegel says, “A = B,” he means that A and B are connected, synthesized, or united.

<sup>114</sup> Of course we can intentionally make false statements. We can lie, and we can act on a stage. In these cases, however, the possibility of our intentions derives from the more basic intention or guiding norm inherent in judgment. If judgments weren’t constructed as vehicles intended to convey truth, lying would not be possible. Likewise, if we didn’t understand how judgments operated in contexts where they were intended to convey truth, we wouldn’t be able to make sense of their use in other contexts – i.e. on a stage or in a joke. Moreover, it seems likely that the possibility of questions and commands derives from more basic declarative judgments. In any case, Hegel’s theory of judgment only focuses on the latter kind of judgments. In fact, Hegel’s theory of judgment ultimately focuses on a subset of declarative judgments – namely, on those judgments that focus on what we might call the essence of the thing. Thus Hegel distinguishes between judgments (*Urteile*) and propositions (*Sätze*). Thus at various points he makes claims like the following: “A judgment is however distinguished from a proposition. The latter contains a statement about the subject, which does not stand to it in any universal relationship, but expresses some single action, or some state, or the like. Thus, ‘Caesar was born at Rome in such and such a year, waged war in Gaul for ten years, crossed the Rubicon, etc.’, are propositions, but not judgments” (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 167).

Similarly, if a judgment is insignificant, it is also defective. In order to be meaningful, a judgment must involve some difference. In order, to be true, it must involve some identity.

The relation between the significance of a judgment and the moment of difference is relatively easy to see. In a **significant judgment**, one that is more than an immediately evident tautology, there must be some difference between the subject and the predicate.<sup>115</sup> As Hegel often repeats, judgments such as “A tree is a tree,” or “Gold is gold,” lack significance.<sup>116</sup> Such judgments are clearly true, but they are insignificant. In order for a judgment to convey significance, there must be at least be some difference between the subject term and the predicate term.<sup>117</sup>

In a **true judgment**, there must be some form of unity, identity, or connection between the subject and the predicate.<sup>118</sup> Consider, for instance, the judgment, “the rose

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<sup>115</sup> It is important to note the very general sense in which Hegel considers judgment, and the very general meaning that he ascribes the terms “subject” and “predicate.” At the outset of his discussion of judgment, Hegel claims that the terms “subject” and “predicate,” in their most general sense, are simply names that designate two distinct features or determinations of the world. He says: “It is therefore appropriate and necessary to have these names, subject and predicate for the determinations of the judgment; as names, they are something indeterminate that still awaits its determination and are, therefore, no more than names” (*Science of Logic*, p. 624). At the most general level, the structure of judgment presents the most basic acts of thought – the act of analysis and the act of synthesis. At this general level, the terms “subject” and “predicate” simply designate the results of analysis, while the copula expresses the relation or synthesis.

<sup>116</sup> See, for instance, the *Science of Logic*, p. 415. One might even go further and claim that, in some important sense, such judgments are meaningless. These judgments do convey meaning, but this meaning is completely parasitic on other judgments. The judgment, “a tree is a tree,” adds no new content or meaning to our concept “tree.” In this sense, the meaning contained in this judgment derives entirely from other judgments in which the concept “tree” is employed.

<sup>117</sup> This is a necessary though not sufficient condition for the significance of a judgment.

<sup>118</sup> This isn’t always the case. In negative judgments, the truth of the judgment stems from the lack of connection between the two terms. The truth of the judgment, “the rose is not blue,” stems from the fact that there is no connection between the two terms. Hegel could admit this and simply claim that the negative judgment is a kind of defective judgment, one that has its telos in the more standard, positive form of judgment. In and of themselves, negative judgments have very little value. Their value comes from (a) demonstrating the falsity of some positive judgment, and/or (b) from helping us to arrive at a positive



is red.” In this judgment, the subject refers to a particular object with a set of properties or features, with a certain smell, a certain shape of petals, etc. The predicate refers to one specific property, the property of being red. The moment of difference is clear in this judgment. There is an obvious difference between the property of being red and the rose, which is also possesses a certain shape, smell, etc. However, insofar as this judgment truthfully ascribes the property of redness to the rose, there must also be a sense in which the judgment expresses the unity, connection, or identity of these properties. This judgment holds that a certain smell, a certain shape of petals, and the color red all *belong to* or *are united in* the *same* object – the rose. The plurality of properties exists in the self-same or *identical* object. Hegel expresses this, perhaps somewhat misleadingly, when he declares that the “subject is the predicate.” Here the copula expresses identity, unity, or connection. It expresses the sense in which the subject and predicate belong together, the sense in which they refer to features of the same object.

At this point, two things remain unclear. First, while the truth of the judgment clearly presupposes some connection between the subject and the predicate terms, it isn’t clear why Hegel sees this connection as an instance of identity. In the standard philosophical usage of these terms, there is a significant difference between the term “connection” and the term “identity.” In fact, as we shall see in Section 3.2, one might argue that the alleged perplexities Hegel raises with regard to the structure of judgment

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judgment. Moreover, Hegel might argue that the meaningfulness of negative judgments depends upon the possibility of connection. Consider the following judgments: (1) “the rose is not blue;” (2) “the rose is not melodic;” (3) “the rose is not four;” and (4) “the rose is not sweetly.” The meaningfulness of the first judgment rests upon the fact that we can conceive a connection between the rose and the color blue. The second judgment is less meaningful, though we can still make some sense of it, since the term “melodic” can be connected with some kinds of objects. So in terms of very general categories, we can still make sense of what the connection might be. The final two judgments are relatively nonsensical, since we can’t make sense of the connection they deny. So in a number of senses, negative judgments are dependent upon positive judgments.

simply stem from his failure to draw a careful distinction between “connection” and “identity.”

Second, the problems involved in conceiving the unity of these two moments remain unclear. The meaningfulness of a judgment requires the difference between the subject and the predicate term, and the truth of a judgment requires the identity or at least connection of these two terms. At the moment, it isn't clear that these two distinct moments of judgment pose any conceptual problem. In other words, it isn't yet clear how the structure of judgment poses the problem designated by the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference.”

We can begin to address both of these issues by considering Hegel's claim that the two moments of judgment present us with a contradiction. The judgment, he says, presupposes that the “subject is the predicate,” and it also presupposes that the “predicate is supposed not to be what the subject is.” As explained above, these two presuppositions stem from the demand that a judgment be both true and meaningful. If we interpret Hegel's claim about the contradiction between these two moments in its most obvious sense, Hegel seems to be saying that the structure of judgment implies both that “S is P” (identity) and that “S is not P” (difference).

#### **4.1) Russell's Objection: The “Is” of Identity and the “Is” of Predication**

At this point we might be tempted to accuse Hegel of mere sophistry. It seems that the “contradiction” in the structure of judgment stems from Hegel's failure to distinguish between the “is” of identity and the “is” of predication. Or, as stated previously, the contradiction seems to come from his failure to distinguish between

“identity” and “connection.” In the claim, “S is P,” the term “is” expresses the relationship of predication. It indicates that P is a predicate of S. In the second claim, “S is not P,” the term “is” expresses identity. Once we disambiguate the two meanings of “is,” the contradiction disappears. The alleged contradiction merely expresses the fact that (a) P is a predicate of S, and (b) that P and S are not identical.<sup>119</sup>

In a brief dismissal of Hegel’s philosophy, Bertrand Russell focuses on this apparent confusion, which he sees as the source of Hegel’s philosophical system. Russell argues that Hegel’s doctrine of the “unity of identity and difference,” stems from his confusion about the difference between the “is” of predication and the “is” of identity.<sup>120</sup>

He says:

Hegel’s argument...depends throughout upon confusing the “is” of predication, as in “Socrates is mortal,” with this “is” of identity, as in “Socrates is the philosopher who drank the hemlock.” Owing to this confusion, he thinks that “Socrates” and “mortal” must be identical. Seeing that they are different, he does

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<sup>119</sup> For further discussions of Russell’s objection see Richard E. Aquila’s “Predication and Hegel’s Metaphysics,” and Robert Pippin’s “Hegel’s Metaphysics and the Problem of Contradiction.” Both philosophers (a) argue that Hegel does in fact construe the “copula” as an expression of the “is” of identity, and both philosophers (b) attempt to defend what they see as Hegel’s intentional and philosophically motivated dismissal of the “is” of predication. In other words, both philosophers argue that Russell is wrong to assume that Hegel simply failed to notice the difference between the two possible meanings of the copula. They argue that Hegel recognizes this “alleged” difference, but dismisses it on various philosophical grounds. Thus, for instance, Pippin says: “His [Hegel’s] whole point is that the “is” in question for an essential determination must always be the “is” of identity, and in that sense the contradiction does arise in just the way described. That is, in investigating some essence, Hegel insists that we can never be satisfied with simply predicating a universal of some particular” (p. 310). Similarly, Aquila spends a number of pages showing the problems that arise if we assume that the “is” of predication is not the “is” of identity (pp. 236 – 238). It should be noted, however, the assumption of the difference only raises problems for someone already committed to what Aquila sees as a central Hegelian thesis – the thesis that there are no bare individuals. While I at least partially agree with the ultimate conclusion of Aquila’s paper, I think both attempts to defend Hegel against Russell move in the wrong direction. Hegel rejects the “is” of predication insofar as it is construed as a merely external connection between two distinct things, between a bare individual and a universal, for instance. However, this is not the only conception of predication. In other words, predication needn’t express a merely external relation. So in this sense, it seems that the position put forward by Pippin and Aquila is somewhat misleading. More importantly, these interpretations do not sufficiently emphasize Hegel’s rejection of the “is” of identity insofar as this identity expresses mere tautology.

<sup>120</sup> *Our Knowledge of the External World*, p. 41-2.

not infer, as others would, that there is a mistake somewhere, but that they exhibit “identity in difference.”<sup>121</sup>

Russell sees this as an example of how “vast and imposing systems of philosophy are built upon stupid and trivial confusions.”<sup>122</sup> Russell’s comments merit consideration. On the one hand, Russell correctly identifies the central theme of Hegel’s philosophy – namely, the unity of identity and difference, or “identity in difference,” as Russell designates it. On the other hand, Russell misconstrues Hegel’s conception of judgment and the copula.

Russell claims that Hegel fails to distinguish between the “is” of predication and the “is” of identity. More specifically, he assumes that Hegel construes the “is” of predication as the “is” of identity. In other words, he assumes that Hegel conceives the judgment, “Socrates is mortal,” as an expression of the identity of “Socrates” and “mortal,” as the claim “Socrates = mortal.” Thus he assumes that Hegel always construes the copula as an expression of strict identity. However, as we shall see, Hegel never uses the copula to express strict identity.

#### **4.2) A Response to Russell’s Objection: The Copula Never Expresses Strict Identity**

The contradiction in the structure of judgment stems from the fact that “the subject is the predicate” and, at the same time, that “predicate is not supposed to be what the subject is.” Hegel might seem to be claiming that “S is P” and “S is not-P,” where “is” expresses the relation of strict identity. Thus he might seem to be claiming that “S = P” and “S = not-P,” from which we can derive the contradiction that “P = not-P.” This

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<sup>121</sup> *Our Knowledge of the Eternal World*, p. 42.

<sup>122</sup> *Our Knowledge of the Eternal World*, p. 42.

interpretation assumes that “is” always expresses the relationship of strict identity, a relationship that can be expressed by the mathematical sign “=.” On this interpretation, the contradiction inherent in judgment stems from the fact that the relations of strict identity both does and does not hold between S and P, between the two terms presented in the judgment.

This interpretation fails to recognize (1) that for Hegel the copula expresses a range of meanings, depending upon the form of judgment in which it appears, and (2) that, moreover, Hegel almost never uses the copula to express the relation of strict identity. On Russell’s interpretation, Hegel holds that the copula expresses strict identity in every judgment. This radically misconstrues Hegel’s conception of judgment.

In his discussion of judgment in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel distinguishes the different forms of judgment in terms of the various possible meanings of the copula. Hegel considers four basic kinds of judgment, including (1) the judgments of existence, (2) the judgments of reflection, (3) the judgments of necessity, and (4) the judgments of the notion. *Hegel characterizes each form of judgment in terms of the conception of the copula that it employs*, and he construes the dialectical progression of this discussion as a progressive determination of the meaning of the copula itself.

Speaking of the immanent development that characterizes his discussion of judgment, Hegel says: “this sublation of the judgment coincides with the advance in the determination of the copula.”<sup>123</sup> The phrase “sublation of judgment” refers to the dialectical progression through the various forms of judgment, a progression that stems from the basic “contradiction” in the structure of judgment. Hegel claims that this progression coincides with the “advance in the determination of the copula.” In other

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<sup>123</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 649.

words, as Hegel's discussion of judgment progresses, it considers various increasingly adequate or true conceptions of the meaning of the copula.

At various points in his discussion of judgment, Hegel makes it clear that the progression of his discussion follows the development of the various possible meanings of the copula. For instance, in his discussion of the categorical judgment – the first of the judgments of necessity – Hegel says: “Here, therefore, the copula has the meaning of necessity, whereas in the others [i.e. preceding kinds of judgment] it merely signifies abstract, immediate being.”<sup>124</sup> Here Hegel mentions two possible meanings of the copula, each of which includes a number of sub-variations. The earlier forms of judgment – including the judgments of existence and the judgments of reflection – employ the copula to express “abstract, immediate being.” In this sense, the copula expresses a mere togetherness that derives from spatial proximity or some subjectively determined external end.<sup>125</sup> This passage makes it clear that Hegel acknowledges various meanings of the copula, meanings that determine his categorization of the kinds of judgment.

Hegel ends his discussion of judgment with an account of the notional judgment, the judgment that presents the “determinate and fulfilled [erfüllte] copula.”<sup>126</sup> Notional

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<sup>124</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 651.

<sup>125</sup> Judgments of existence involve *mere togetherness* in space or experience. Discussing the positive judgment, the first of the judgments of existence, Hegel says the following: “For example, in the proposition: *the rose is fragrant*, the predicate enunciates only one of the many properties of the rose; it singles out this particular one which, in the subject, is a concrescence with the others; just as in the dissolution of the thing, the manifold properties which inhere in it, in acquiring self-subsistence as *matters*, become *individualized*” (*Science of Logic*, p. 633). In the positive judgment, the various properties of the thing have a “self-subsistence” of their own. In other words, they are taken as distinct things that merely exist together. The copula merely expresses this existing togetherness. In judgments of reflection, the copula express the relation of the properties to some externally or subjectively determined end.

<sup>126</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 662.

judgments present the most developed or the truest meaning of the copula. However, this final meaning of the copula does not fully negate the validity of the earlier ones. Hegel's philosophy allows for various meanings of the copula in judgment, and thus it is surely wrong to assume that Hegel always reduces the copula to an expression of strict identity.

While acknowledging that the copula may express a range of meanings, Hegel adamantly maintains that *the copula never expresses the relation of strict identity*, at least in judgments of any cognitive significance. He argues that a judgment expressing the relation of strict identity would be meaningless, and that it would contradict the internal form, telos, or norm of judgment itself. He says:

If for example, to the question "What is a plant?" the answer is given "A plant is—a plant", the truth of such a statement is at once admitted by the entire company on whom it is tested, and at the same time it is equally unanimously declared that the statement says *nothing*. If anyone opens his mouth and promises to state what God is, namely God is—God, expectation is cheated, for what was expected was a *different determination*; and if this statement is absolute truth, such absolute verbiage is very lightly esteemed; nothing will be held to be more boring and tedious than conversation which merely reiterates the same thing, or than such talk which yet is supposed to be truth. Looking more closely at this tedious effect produced by such truth, we see that the beginning, 'The plant is—,' sets out to say *something*, to bring forward a further determination. But since only the same thing is repeated, the opposite has happened, nothing has emerged. Such *identical* talk therefore *contradicts itself*.<sup>127</sup>

A genuine judgment must be both *true* and *meaningful*. When we form a judgment, we intend to convey some meaning or information that is true. Hegel argues that the relation

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<sup>127</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 415. Among other things, this passage presents Hegel's critique of the conception of identity employed by Schelling and Fichte. For a discussion of Hegel's criticism of Schelling's conception of the absolute as perfect identity – i.e. as identity without difference – see Section Two of Chapter Five. It also reflects the basic lie of his criticism of Fichte's conception of the "A = A" or "I = I" as the independent first principle of philosophy. See, for instance, the first part of Fichte's *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*. See also the *Critique of Pure Reason*, B134n. While Kant allows for the meaningfulness of analytic judgments, which express the relation of identity, he also argues that such judgments depend upon a higher level synthesis that takes the identity along with a moment of difference. In a claim that points towards the problem of the unity of identity and difference, Kant says: "A representation that is to be thought of as common to **several** must be regarded as belonging to those that in addition to it also have something **different** in themselves" (B134n).

of strict identity is ill suited for this purpose. On his view, all alleged judgments that express the relation of strict identity lack meaning. Judgments such as, “A = A,” “The plant is a plant,” and “God is God,” are meaningless.<sup>128</sup> Hegel says that such judgments contradict themselves. The contradiction here stems from the difference between the particular judgment and the norm that constitutes the general form of judgment, a norm that requires the judgment to be both meaningful and true.

Since Hegel ascribes a range of meanings to the copula, and since he insists that the copula of a genuine judgment never expresses the relation of strict identity, his account of the contradiction in the structure of judgment clearly does not stem from the failure to distinguish the “is” of predication from the “is” of identity. Contrary to Russell’s suggestion, Hegel does not assume that the judgment, “Socrates is mortal,” implies the strict identity of “Socrates” and “mortal.” Thus the contradiction in the structure of judgment should not be represented in terms of the claims “S = P” and “S ≠ P,” at least insofar as we take the sign “=” as an expression of strict identity. Hegel argues that the structure of judgment presents a contradiction, since the subject of the judgment both is and is not the predicate. The exact meaning of this “contradiction”

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<sup>128</sup> Of course one might argue that certain identity judgments are both meaningful and true. Identity judgments such as “The morning star is the evening star,” “Socrates is the philosopher who drank the hemlock,” and “Oxygen is H<sub>2</sub>O,” for instance, all convey meaning. I believe Hegel would admit the meaningfulness of such judgments, while denying that the copula in such judgments expresses the relation of strict identity. Such judgments claim that two different ways of designating some object designate the same object. So there is an element of difference here – namely the difference between two ways of designating something. Moreover, these two ways of designating something refer to two different ways that the thing may appear, or to two different properties of the thing. So such judgments still express the complex and apparently paradoxical structure of the object as a genuine unity that can appear in multiple ways, or as the genuine unity that has multiple properties. In the case of the first judgment, we must still ask ourselves: “what makes the planet that appears before dawn the same as the planet that appears after dusk?” Here the problem of change becomes evident. The judgment, “Oxygen is H<sub>2</sub>O” presents even more complex relational features. The judgment claims that certain phenomenal and functional properties (the feel of wetness, the capacity to quench thirst) are related to certain complex physical descriptions (of two hydrogen molecules attached to an oxygen molecule).



remains unclear. However, it should be clear that this contradiction does not arise from a conception of the copula as an expression of strict identity.

#### 4.3) The Most General Meaning of Identity

Hegel claims that the copula never expresses strict identity. He holds that the relation of strict identity presents an empty abstraction, one without any cognitive value. However, Hegel often employs the term “identity,” presumably to express something other than the relation of strict identity. In fact, on Hegel’s view, the term “identity” expresses a range of meanings that corresponds to the range of meanings presented by the copula.

In the following passage from the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel presents a general account of the meaning of identity, one that can be further specified in terms of various specific meanings the term may present. Hegel says:

Reflection must separate what is one in the absolute Identity; it must express synthesis and antithesis separately, in two propositions, one containing identity, the other dichotomy. In  $A = A$ , as principle of identity, it is connectedness that is reflected on, and in this connecting, this being one, the equality, is contained in this pure identity; reflection abstracts from all inequality.  $A = A$ , the expression of absolute thought or Reason, has only one meaning for the formal reflection that expresses itself in the propositions of the intellect. This is the meaning of pure unity as conceived by the intellect, or in other words a unity in abstraction from opposition. Reason, however, does not find itself expressed in this oneness of abstract unity. It postulates also the positing of what in the pure equality had been abstracted from, the positing of the opposite, of inequality. One  $A$  is subject, the other object; and the expression of their difference is  $A \neq A$ , or  $A = B$ . This proposition contradicts the first.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Hegel: *Selections*, 105-6. Hegel says something that may seem peculiar in this passage. When speaking of the second proposition, he speaks of the difference between “subject” and “object,” not of the difference between subject and predicate. Judgment consists in the most basic acts of thought. These same basic acts of thought determine the unity and the difference of subject and object. In other words, the structures of judgment are the same as the structures that distinguish and unit the subject and the object. This can be seen in the *Science of Logic* where Hegel proclaims that the unity of apperception is the notion, and that the notion becomes articulate in the structures of judgment. Here Hegel speaks of these acts in relation to the subject and the object, though the same basic points apply to the structure of judgment.

In this passage Hegel uses the term “absolute identity” to express the unity that includes both identity and difference. Thus the term “absolute identity” characterizes the structure of judgment, the structure of the object (Chapter Two), and the structure of genuine change (Chapter Three, Section 2.2). In this passage Hegel speaks of absolute identity as the unity of synthesis and antithesis. Since the phrase “the absolute identity of synthesis and antithesis” expresses the same meaning as the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” it follows that Hegel uses the term “identity” and “synthesis” more or less interchangeably. Thus when Hegel employs the term “identity” to describe the contradiction in the structure of judgment, he uses the term in a broad sense that includes the meaning associated with the term “synthesis.”

Hegel makes this point clear in the final clause of the first sentence, where he equates the distinction between “synthesis and antithesis” with the distinction between “identity and dichotomy.” He then goes on to describe the first moment of the absolute identity – which he has already described in terms of “synthesis” and “identity” – in terms of the proposition “ $A = A$ ,” in terms of “connectedness,” “being one,” and “connecting.” Thus the first moment of absolute identity presents the sense in which two things are one, the sense in which two things are connected. By contrast, the second moment of absolute identity, the moment of antithesis or dichotomy, presents the sense in which the two things are distinct, discrete, or different.

It is also important to note that this passage speaks of “absolute Identity” as conceived by “reflection.” Hegel carefully and repeatedly distinguishes between reflection and speculation. Elsewhere he expresses the same distinction in terms of the opposition between the understanding and reason. Reflection draws distinctions, and

speculation grasps the unity that underlies these distinctions. Additionally, reflection or the understanding construes the world in static terms, while reason or speculation construes the world in dynamic terms.<sup>130</sup> Hegel sees reflection or the understanding as an essential but limited mode of thought that all too often usurps the proper role of speculation.<sup>131</sup> When thought gives priority to the understanding, various distortions and contradictions arise.

*Reflection*, as distinct from speculation, conceives absolute identity in terms of “two propositions, one containing the identity, the other dichotomy.” It construes absolute identity in terms of the propositions: “ $A = A$ ” and “ $A \neq A$ .” Or, in terms of the propositions: “ $A = A$ ” and “ $A = \text{not-}A$ .” As Hegel notes, the second proposition “contradicts the first.” Moreover, the second proposition, considered by itself, states a contradiction. However, in evaluating Hegel’s point, we must carefully note that this contradiction represents the structure of judgment *as conceived by reflection or the understanding*. It represents the means by which reflection grasps absolute identity or the structure of judgment. Thus it does not express the structure of judgment as conceived by

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<sup>130</sup> In paragraph 80 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel describes the understanding as a mode of thought that draws distinctions, one that conceives the world in *discrete* and *static* terms. He says: “Thought, as *Understanding*, sticks to fixity of characters and their distinctness from one another: every such limited abstract it treats as having a subsistence and being of its own.” By contrast, Hegel describes reason or speculation as a mode of thought that grasps the world as a *dynamic unity*. He says: “The Speculative stage, or stage of Positive Reason, apprehends the unity of terms (propositions) in their opposition – the affirmative, which is involved in their disintegration and in their transition” (Paragraph 82). Here the emphasis on unity is clear. Hegel expresses the dynamic nature of reason when he speaks of the “disintegration” and “transition” captured by reason.

<sup>131</sup> In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, after discussing the defects that result from thought’s exclusive reliance upon the understanding or reflection, Hegel goes on to describe the merits of that mode of thought. He says: “It must be added, however, that the merit and rights of the mere Understanding should unhesitatingly be admitted. And that merit lies in the fact that apart from Understanding there is no fixity or accuracy in the region of theory or practice. Thus, in theory, knowledge begins by apprehending existing objects in their specific differences. In the study of nature, for example, we distinguish matters, forces, genera, and the like, and stereotype each in its isolation. Thought is here acting in its analytic capacity” (Paragraph 80A). In regards to Hegel’s defense of the importance of analytic thought, see Section 7.3.1 – 7.3.6 of this chapter.

reason or speculation. Hegel does not claim that absolute identity consists in the contradiction “A = A” and “A = not-A.” He merely claims that reflection grasps the absolute in terms of this contradiction. Or, to state it somewhat differently, the absolute appears as this contradiction to the understanding.

With these points in mind, we can return to Hegel’s claim about judgment in the *Science of Logic*. Hegel claims that the structure of judgment contains a contradiction. The basic form of judgment states: “S is P.” However, it must also be true that “S is not P.” Otherwise, there would not be two *distinct* terms connected by the copula, and the judgment would be meaningless. Here we have a contradiction. However, the contradiction shouldn’t be construed as “S = P” and “S ≠ P,” where “=” designates strict identity. Instead the contradiction arises from the fact that (a) S and P are one or united, and (b) S and P are two or distinct.

### **5.1) A Second Objection: The Need for Further Disambiguation**

Here, again, one might argue that a simple disambiguation resolves the contradiction. It seems clear that *in one sense*, S and P are one, while *in another sense* they are two. Stated differently, the judgment distinguishes S and P in one sense, and it unites them in another sense. Every judgment involves at least two mental actions. In judgment, (a) the mind draws a distinction between two features of the world, and (b) it also unites these features. Thus, for instance, Hegel describes judgment as “a connection that is also a distinguishing.”<sup>132</sup> We might equally describe judgment as a distinguishing

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<sup>132</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 166.

that is also a connecting. Thus judgment involves unity (or identity, in the broad sense) and difference. It involves uniting and differentiating.<sup>133</sup>

It seems that the act of uniting and the act of differentiating follow two distinct principles or rules, two distinct conceptions of how the world may be carved up or combined. According to one rule, S and P designate distinct or separate features of the world, while according to a different rule, S and P designate the same feature of the world. Thus, one might argue, in order to resolve Hegel's "contradiction," we simply need to distinguish between the rule that guides the act of differentiating and the rule that guides the act of uniting. On this conception of the judgment, the difference between the subject and the predicate designates one way of considering the world, while the unity expressed by the copula expresses a different way of considering the world.

## **5.2) Response to the Second Objection: The Impossibility of Disambiguation**

Contrary to this proposed disambiguation, Hegel argues that the sense in which S and P are united and the sense in which they are distinguished cannot be fully disambiguated. The understanding assumes that these two senses can be disambiguated, and accordingly it falls into contradiction. On Hegel's view, we can only conceive the sense in which S and P are united in relation to the sense in which they are distinguished, and we can only conceive the sense in which they are distinguished in relation to the

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<sup>133</sup> Hegel sees the same activities and general problematic in the structure of consciousness. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel describes consciousness as the result of a process that "simultaneously distinguishes itself from something, and at the same time relates itself to it" (p. 52). This conception of the basic action of thought as a uniting that is also a differentiating can already be found in Reinhold's conception of "Der Satz des Bewusstseins." Reinhold says: "In consciousness the subject *distinguishes* the representation from the subject and the object and also *relates* it to both [emphasis added]" (*Beiträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Mißverständnisse der Philosophen*, p. 113). In a way that anticipates both Fichte and Hegel, Reinhold maintains that this sentence expresses the basic act that structures consciousness, and he insists that the meaning of concepts or features involved in this act – representation, subject, object – only receive their meaning in the act as a whole.

sense in which they are united. Thus we can only conceive the unity and the difference of the judgment in relation to the deeper unity that grounds them both. This is the third moment, the moment that consists in the unity of identity and difference. Hegel does not claim that this unity is contradictory. He does, however, claim that it appears contradictory from the standpoint of reflection or the understanding.

We can see the importance and primacy of the third moment by considering judgment in two different ways. First, we can consider judgment simply as a series of mental acts without reference to the object. Second, we can consider it as a series of acts that intend to capture the structure of the object. Both ways of considering judgment reveal the importance of the third moment, the moment that unites identity and difference. The remainder of Chapter Three focuses on judgment as a series of mental acts. It argues that the rule governing an act of synthesis can only be understood in terms of the rule governing an act of analysis, and conversely, that the rule governing an act of analysis can only be conceived in terms of a rule governing an act of synthesis. It argues that neither synthesis nor analysis presents a basic act, one that can be conceived without relation to the other. Thus it ultimately argues that we cannot fully disambiguate the rules governing synthesis and the rules governing analysis. Chapter Four then considers judgment as a series of mental acts that are directed towards, or intentionally related to, an object.

### **5.3) Judgment Considered as a Series of Mental Acts: Two Initial Accounts**

Judgment obviously involves two mental acts – the act of distinguishing and the act of unifying. In the judgment, “S is P,” the difference between S and P presents the result of the act of distinction, while the copula expresses the act of unification. In a meaningful judgment, there must be some sense in which S and P are distinct or separate, and in a true judgment, there must be some sense in which S and P belong together or are one. The acts of distinction and unification proceed according to certain principles or rules. In terms of the first rule, we consider the world (by “carving it up” or “uniting” it) in such a way that S and P refer to *distinct* features of the world, and in terms of the second rule, we consider the world in such a way that S and P refer to the *same* feature or object in the world. Thus the two acts that occur in judgment represent two – most often implicit – rules in terms of which we consider a specific region of the world.

Of course this preliminary account of judgment already involves an element of distortion. It assumes that the world is *immediately given* to us in some way, and that the two principles or rules involved in judgment simply present two different ways of considering that which is immediately given. Here there are two basic options. On one option, the world immediately presents itself to us as a discrete bundle or collection (of spatial-temporal points, of properties, of sensations, etc.), and the two principles that inform the judgment present two different ways of combining what is given to us as a discrete bundle or collection. Here both principles exist independently from one another. In other words, *we can clarify or spell out each principle without referring to the other*. We can spell out each principle in relation to the discrete manner in which the world is immediately given to us. Each principle proscribes a manner for combining or considering that which is immediately given as discrete. One act of synthesis produces

two distinct features from amongst the plurality that is discretely given. This manner of synthesis gives us the *difference* between subject and predicate. The second act of synthesis produces one feature or entity from amongst the plurality, a feature or entity that includes the duality produced by the first synthesis. This second act of synthesis provides the unity or connection expressed by the copula.

The first option for considering judgment considers the world or experience as something presented to us immediately in a discrete or differentiated form, and it explains judgment in terms of two acts of synthesis. The second option for considering judgment assumes that the world is immediately given to us as a unity, and it construes the two rules that constitute the judgment as two different ways of *analyzing* or *dividing* this unity. Each rule proscribes a way for taking what is one and considering it as many. One of the rules guiding the analysis articulates a certain region of the world or experience in terms of two distinct features, the features represented by the subject and the predicate terms. Divided in another way, according to a second rule, these two features belong to the same feature or entity. Thus one act of analysis provides the *difference* that makes the judgment meaningful, while the other act of analysis provides the *unity* or *identity* that makes the judgment true. As with the first option, *the second option allows for the complete distinction or disambiguation between the two principles or acts of analysis that constitute the judgment.* We can spell out or articulate each act of analysis in terms of the unity that is immediately given, and thus we can articulate one principle without referring to the other one.

Two things should be noted about these two conceptions of judgment. First, neither conception presents judgment as the result of synthesis *and* analysis. The first



option presents judgment as the result of two acts of synthesis, while the second option presents it as the result of two acts of analysis. Second, in both cases the rules that determine the judgments are themselves judgments. In other words, the principles themselves involve unity and plurality, identity and difference. On the first option, difference or plurality is simply *given*, and the principles show how to consider this plurality as a unity. On the second option, unity is immediately *given*, and the principles show us how to consider this unity as a plurality. In both cases, we have rules that relate unity and plurality.

At this point it may be helpful to restate the issue under consideration. Judgment involves apparent acts of synthesis and analysis. It involves connecting and differentiating, a moment of identity and a moment difference. The subject and predicate terms present the result of analysis or the act of differentiating. They present the difference in the judgment. The copula presents the act of synthesis or connecting. It presents the identity in the judgment. The question under consideration, at this point, is the following: can the act of synthesis and the act of analysis be fully differentiated or disambiguated? Can we resolve the “contradiction” in the structure of judgment by saying that in *one sense* the subject and predicate are different, and in *another sense* they are one? If these two senses can be fully distinguished, then the structure of judgment consists in nothing more than the recognition of these two senses. In other words, if we can fully distinguish between these two senses, then the structure of judgment consists in two moments – the moment of identity or synthesis and the moment of analysis or difference.<sup>134</sup> Here there is no problem involved in grasping the “unity” of these two

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<sup>134</sup> Of course, in the accounts of judgment presented above, judgment does not truly consist in synthesis and analysis. On the first account, the apparent act of analysis proves to be a less thoroughgoing

moments. There is no third moment of judgment, one that presents a challenge, paradox, or contradiction.

The options considered above present two interpretations of judgment that allow for the complete disambiguation of the two rules that constitute a judgment. In both cases, we can clarify the rules that constitute the judgment in terms of the manner in which the world is *immediately given* to us – i.e. in terms of the immediate unity or the discrete plurality of the world as it is given *priori* to judgment. According to the first conception of judgment, the world presents us with a discrete or differentiated plurality, and the identity and difference of judgment stem from two different ways of *synthesizing* that which is discretely given. According to the second alternative, the world presents itself to us as a unity, and the two principles of judgment present two ways of *analyzing* the world.

On the surface, judgment includes both identity and difference: it consists in an act of synthesis and an act of analysis. The two conceptions of judgment presented so far reduce these two distinct kinds of acts to one fundamental kind. On the first view, all judgment – and thus all mental activity – ultimately consists in synthesis. The world is given as discrete, as fully analyzed, and the mind simply synthesizes. The distinction in judgment, the apparent result of an act of analysis, merely results from a less adequate or lower level synthesis. On the second view, all judgment consists in analysis, and the apparent synthesis involved in judgment stems from a less developed analysis.

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synthesis, while on the second account, the apparent act of synthesis proves to be a less thoroughgoing analysis.

#### 5.4) Judgment Considered as a Series of Mental Acts: The Irreducibility of Synthesis and Analysis

Hegel rejects both of these conceptions of judgment. He argues that the acts of judgment cannot all be reduced to acts of synthesis; nor can they all be reduced to acts of analysis. In other words, the mind does not simply synthesize what is given as discrete, nor does it simply analyze what is given as one. Once we recognize the implications of Hegel's view that both synthesis and analysis present irreducible kinds of mental acts, we will be able to see the importance of the third moment of judgment, the moment that unites or grounds synthesis and analysis, identity and difference.

In his discussion of judgment, Hegel repeatedly criticizes the view that judgment can be explained merely as an act of synthesis, as an act that combines two independent concepts (or impressions, properties, features of the world, etc.). He rejects the claim that the *distinction* between the subject and the predicate precedes the act of unification expressed by the copula. He says: "One's first impression about the Judgment is the independence of the two extremes, the subject and the predicate."<sup>135</sup> On this view, the subject-concept and the predicate-concept are given as fully formed and distinct, prior to the unifying act of judgment. The unifying act of judgment simply takes what is given and unifies it in terms of certain principles. Hegel rejects this view, arguing that the elements synthesized in judgment only exist in relation to the act of synthesis. He says:

It is...false to speak of a combination of the two sides in judgment, if we understand the term 'combination' to imply the independent existence of the combining members apart from the combination.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 166.

<sup>136</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 166Z.

The “two sides” connected in judgment are concepts, the concepts that take the subject and the predicate place in judgment. Hegel argues that concepts do not precede the formation of judgments. Concepts do not have an “independent existence apart from the combination.” In more general terms, this means that the distinctions and abstractions required for judgment do not exist independently from the unity implied in the judgment.

This conception of judgment, as the synthesis of independent features, rests upon a false conception of experience as the presentation to the mind of immediately articulated or differentiated features. Experience, even in the most basic forms of perceptual awareness, always involves implicit conceptual activity. This conceptual activity articulates and distinguishes what would otherwise be a sheer manifold.<sup>137</sup> Here

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<sup>137</sup> There are two distinct claims here. First, there is the claim that even minimal perceptual experience already involves conceptual activity. Second, there is the claim that some analytic cognitive activity always precedes synthetic cognitive activity. What Hegel calls our naïve conception of judgment assumes that perceptual experience presents us with a pre-conceptual stratum of given plurality. This naïve conception rejects both of these claims. However, someone might accept the first claim without accepting the second one. (Though, it should be noted, the second claim implies the first. If all synthesis requires prior analysis, then there is no plurality prior to analysis. Since even the most basic forms of perceptual awareness present us with plurality, such awareness must include, at the very least, the cognitive activity of analysis.) Here Kant provides a good example. Kant clearly admits that apparently immediate perceptual awareness already involves some form of non-conscious, at least quasi-cognitive, synthesis. Though Kant gives less attention to imagination in the B-Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, even there he makes it clear that the pre-conscious synthesis of the imagination precedes the conscious and explicitly cognitive acts whereby we form judgments. Thus at A78/B104, Kant says: “Synthesis in general is, as we shall subsequently see, the mere effect of the imagination, of a blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious.” So Kant clearly recognizes some form of synthesis – and thus mental activity in the broadest sense – in what we might otherwise naively take to be the basic givenness of perceptual awareness. However, for our present purposes, it is more interesting to note that Kant clearly denies the second claim. For instance, at A78/B103, He says: “The synthesis of a manifold, however, (whether it be given empirically or *a priori*) first brings forth a cognition, which to be sure may initially be raw and confused, and thus in need of analysis; yet the synthesis alone is that which properly collects the elements for cognitions and unifies them into a certain content; it is therefore the first thing to which we have to attend if we wish to judge about the first origin of our cognition.” Kant says that synthesis always precedes analysis. More importantly, he claims that synthesis presents the “first origin of our cognition” – that there is no analysis prior to synthesis. Unless Kant allows for some wholly non-cognitive analysis, it follows that Kant assumes that intuition presents us with a discrete plurality that must simply be unified. (The note at B160 complicates the issue somewhat. In this note, Kant speaks of a pre-conceptual “unity” that “belongs to space and time, and not to the concept of the understanding.”) By contrast, Hegel argues that intuition provides us with an undifferentiated manifold that must first be analyzed before it can be unified.

we must carefully distinguish between the term “manifold” and the term “discrete plurality.” If we could abstract from all cognitive activity, experience would present us with a manifold. In the present context, we will use the term “manifold” to designate material given as *continuous* but also *divisible* or *distinguishable*.<sup>138</sup> We can contrast the term “manifold” with the term “discrete plurality,” a term that designates material given as *divided* or *distinguished*. A manifold is *potentially differentiated*. The actual differentiation of the manifold stems from cognitive acts of division or analysis. Thus cognitive activity – i.e. judgment – does not begin with a difference that is simply given. Cognitive activity does not simply synthesize a given plurality. Instead, acts of analysis – the acts that articulate and differentiate the manifold – must precede the act of synthesis.

The articulation of the manifold divides the more immediate unity of experience, and the acts of articulation or analysis rest upon an implicit grasp of the unity of experience. So in some sense, at least, the unity of judgment precedes the act of distinction or differentiation. Our relation to the world does not present us with various distinctions and differences that the mind must then combine or synthesize in judgment. It would be more accurate, though still somewhat misleading, to say that the world presents us with a unity that we must analyze, differentiate, and distinguish. So rather than explaining unity in terms of prior distinctions, we should explain distinction in terms of prior unity.

Hegel claims that the etymology of the German term for judgment – *Urteil* – represents this more accurate conception of the judgment. At various points, he says:

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<sup>138</sup> This is a crucial claim in Hegel’s argument. If experience presents us with a discrete plurality, then his account of judgment falls apart. See the Appendix to Chapter Four for a general defense of this claim.

The etymological meaning of the Judgement (*Urtheil*) in German goes deeper, as it were declaring the *unity* of the notion to be primary, and its *distinction* to be the original partition. And that is what the judgment really is [emphasis added].<sup>139</sup>

It [judgment] is thus the *original division* [*Teilung*] of what is originally one; thus the word *Urteil* refers to what the judgment is in and for itself.<sup>140</sup>

The first passage mentions both the “unity” and the “distinction” involved in judgment. Similarly, the second passage speaks of the “division” of that which is “originally one.” So both passages emphasize the role of *division* and *unity* in judgment. However, in contrast to what Hegel describes as our initial impression of judgment, these passages insist that the unity of judgment precedes the division. Judgment does not consist in the synthesis of a given duality, but rather it consists in the analysis of a given unity.

Here Hegel seems to embrace the second conception of judgment, the conception that (1) construes the world or experience as an immediately given unity, and (2) explains judgment in terms of analysis. To a certain extent, Hegel accepts this conception of judgment, though he modifies it in a number of important ways. There is a sense in which experience presents us with an immediately given unity. However, Hegel argues, we cannot cognize this unity as it is immediately given to us. The conscious mind cannot grasp immediate or pure unity. Hegel expresses this point in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*. In the following passage, Hegel criticizes certain trends in the philosophy of his time, trends that he identifies with Schelling’s philosophy. Hegel says:

Nowadays we see all value ascribed to the universal Idea in this non-actual form, and the undoing of all distinct, determinate entities (or rather the hurling of them

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<sup>139</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 166. In this point, Hegel follows a claim made by Holderlin in the “Judgment and Being” fragment. For further discussion of this fragment, see Dieter Henrich’s “Hölderlin über Urteil und Sein: Eine Studie zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Idealismus,” in *Konstellationen*, Chapter Nineteen of Henrich’s “Between Kant and Hegel,” and Chapter Three in Henrich’s *Der Grund im Bewußtsein*. See also Manfred Frank’s *Unendliche Annäherung*, Chapter 27.

<sup>140</sup> *Science of Logic*, page 625.

all into the abyss of vacuity without further development or any justification) is allowed to pass muster as the speculative mode of treatment. Dealing with something from the perspective of the Absolute consists merely in declaring that, although one has been speaking of it just now as something definite, yet in the Absolute, the  $A=A$ , there is nothing of the kind, for there all is one. To pit this single insight, that in the Absolute everything is the same, against the full body of articulated cognition, which at least seeks and demands such fulfillment, to palm off its Absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black—this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity.<sup>141</sup>

In this passage Hegel criticizes a conception of the Absolute that emphasizes unity or identity at the expense of difference. He criticizes a philosophical tendency that fails to recognize the genuine and irreducible role that both unity and difference play in judgment, knowledge in general, and – as we shall see – reality itself. More importantly, for our present purposes, Hegel argues in this passage that *pure unity* without difference is “vacuous” and “non-actual.”

Hegel makes the same point in his discussion of “Being” in the *Science of Logic*. At the beginning of the *Logic*, Hegel considers pure being as an “indeterminate immediacy” that has no “diversity within itself.”<sup>142</sup> Pure being is immediate unity without differentiation. With regards to pure being, Hegel concludes: “Being, the indeterminate immediate, is in fact *nothing*, and neither more nor less than *nothing*.”<sup>143</sup> Pure being without differentiation is nothing. With regards to judgment and the process of cognition, this means the mind cannot grasp the pure or immediate unity that is given to it. Or, to state the point more accurately, pure or immediate unity is not given to the mind at all. Even in the lowest possible levels of sentience, the presentation to the mind

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<sup>141</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 9.

<sup>142</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 82.

<sup>143</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 82.

of a relatively undifferentiated manifold already involves certain minimal, implicit principles of differentiation.

We have already seen that the rules governing synthesis cannot be defined in terms of divisions, articulations, or particular entities that are simply given to the mind. It should now be equally clear that we cannot define the rules governing analysis or division in terms of some immediately given unity. The mind cannot conceive immediate or undifferentiated unity. Moreover, pure undifferentiated unity does not exist. Such a pure unity would be nothing.<sup>144</sup> Among other things, this means that the relatively undifferentiated manifold presented to the mind already involves a certain degree of implicitly rule-governed analysis.

In order to cognitively grasp unity, the mind must first analyze or differentiate it, and then it must synthesize it. This means that we can explain the cognitive process of judgment in terms of the following three moments, none of which can be fully abstracted or distinguished from the others. **First Moment:** in some sense, pure unity, as an undifferentiated or non-determinate manifold, is given to us as the implicit basis of experience. In another sense, pure unity is not given to us, since as pure unity, we do not have any cognitive awareness of it. Moreover, pure unity is never given without some relation to the second moment, the moment of analysis. **Second Moment:** the mind

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<sup>144</sup> This point about the non-existence of pure, wholly undifferentiated unity has a number of implications for Hegel's philosophy, implications that can be spelled out in terms of various positions in the history of philosophy. Hegel's logic and natural philosophy borrow many themes from the metaphysics and natural philosophy of Aristotle. In Aristotelian terms, Hegel's arguments about undifferentiated unity or pure being express his rejection of prime matter – i.e. of some meaningful conception of matter as wholly distinct from form. In the natural world, Hegel holds that matter is always informed by some implicit principle of development, one that involves the differentiation and the distinction of the otherwise undifferentiated matter. In this context it may be more helpful to express Hegel's point in Kantian terms, since Hegel's discussion of judgment clearly draws upon Kantian language. In Kantian terms, Hegel's arguments signify his dismissal of pure intuition as wholly distinct or abstracted from the conceptual activity of the understanding.



divides and articulates that which, in a sense, is given as undifferentiated unity. **Third Moment:** the mind synthesizes the plurality presented by step two, thereby arriving at some conception of the whole, or of unity, as both articulated and united.<sup>145</sup>

As we have already seen, Hegel says that, “One’s first impression about the Judgment is the independence of the two extremes, the subject and the predicate.” In other words, our first impression of judgment recognizes the *results* presented by the second moment of judgment and the *activity* presented in the third moment of judgment. So in addition to the mind’s inability to grasp pure unity as immediately given to it, the mind also proves incapable of grasping – at least immediately or directly – the acts of analysis that produce the divisions presented in the second moment of judgment. We are “immediately” or “naively” aware of the results produced by the acts of analysis, not of the acts themselves. We only become aware of the acts of analysis by articulating the rules that govern them, an articulation that already requires the articulation of the acts of synthesis.

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<sup>145</sup> Compare these three steps with those presented by Kant. At A78/B104 Kant describes the three steps of cognition as follows: “Prior to all analysis of our representations these [acts of synthesis] must first be given, and no concepts can arise analytically as far as the content is concerned. The first thing that must be given to us a priori for the cognition of all objects is the manifold of pure intuition; the synthesis of this manifold by means of the imagination is the second thing, but it still does not yield cognition. The concepts that give this pure synthesis unity, and that consist solely in the representation of this necessary synthetic unity, are the third thing necessary for cognition of an object that comes before us, and they depend on the understanding.” This comes close to what Hegel describes as the naïve view of judgment, since it begins with the plurality of the manifold as given and moves immediately to discuss various acts of synthesis. At the same time, it should be noted that in his discussion of space and time, Kant often speaks as though the act of differentiation or analysis precedes the act of synthesis. The pure unity of space and time must first be differentiated or articulated before it can be synthesized. Kant occasionally refers to this prior act of analysis or differentiation. For instance, in the A Deduction, he says: “Every intuition contains a manifold in itself, which however would not be represented as such if the mind did not distinguish the time in the succession of impressions on one another; for as contained in one moment no representation can ever be anything other than absolute unity.” The first sentence makes it clear that in order for a manifold to be represented by the mind, the succession of the manifold in time (and sometimes space) must first be determined by an act of distinction. Kant is clear that it is the “mind” that must “distinguish the time in the succession of impressions.” So there seem to be places, at least, where Kant recognizes the analysis that must precede synthesis.

The acts of analysis follow certain rules or principles in their division of the whole. These rules can only be articulated in relation to the whole, since the rules present ways of considering the whole in terms of various divisions. Thus the mind can only grasp the rules that govern analysis once it has reconstituted the whole through the acts of synthesis. At the same time, the rules governing the acts of synthesis can only be articulated in relation to the divisions given by the act of analysis, and, to complete the circle, the divisions given by the act of analysis can only be fully articulated in relation to the rules that govern the acts of analysis.<sup>146</sup> In schematic terms, the circle can be represented as follows: (a) apparently given divisions or distinctions → (b) acts of synthesis defined in relation to the given divisions or distinctions → (c) conception of the whole produced by acts of synthesis → (d) definition of the rules of analysis in terms of the conception of the whole → (e) further articulation of the divisions or distinctions given by the acts of analysis.

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<sup>146</sup> This final step may seem less obvious than the others. In what we might describe as our naïve conception of experience, we are immediately presented with an articulated diversity of particulars, with tables, chairs, trees, rocks, clouds, etc. Two things remain unclear from this naïve standpoint: first, it isn't clear that this apparently "immediate" experience of the world rests upon analytical cognitive acts. Second, assuming that our awareness of particulars in the world does require implicit cognitive rules, it isn't clear that our explicit cognition or articulation of these "given" particulars depends upon an explicit cognition or articulation of the rules by which the mind focuses upon them. I will address the first point in Sections 5.1 through 5.8 of Chapter Four. For the moment, the second point is more important. We can be aware of particular entities in the world without being conscious of the cognitive rules or acts of analysis that determine these particulars. However, this mere awareness of the particulars is not sufficient for articulating the rules of synthesis by which we construct the whole. The rules of synthesis cannot be defined in terms of a mere awareness or an apparently ostensive relation to the particulars. In order to define the rules of synthesis, we must have an explicitly cognitive relation to the particulars. We must, in other words, articulate the principles by which we individuate and identify the particulars. The principles by which we individuate and identify the particulars are the rules of analysis. Therefore a definition or account of the rules of synthesis must rest upon an explicit account of the rules of analysis. This final step completes the circle.

## **5.5) Judgment Considered as a Series of Mental Acts: Thought as a Hermeneutic Process**

Judgment presents us with circle, with a hermeneutic process.<sup>147</sup> It begins with a set of wholly implicit guiding assumptions about the whole. These implicit guiding assumptions allow us to articulate and focus on the parts. This is where “immediate” awareness starts: it starts with as an awareness of the parts as given. This starting point for “immediate” awareness explains what Hegel describes as our naïve conception of judgment, a conception that construes judgment as the synthesis of given distinctions.

The mind actively unifies or synthesizes the parts, which first appear as “immediately” given, to arrive at some preliminary conception of the whole. This preliminary conception of the whole allows the mind to begin to articulate the basic assumptions or principles in terms of which it originally considered the parts. Sometimes this leads to a rejection of the basic assumptions (principles or rules of division) and the adoption of new assumptions.<sup>148</sup> At other times, it simply leads to the clarification of the

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<sup>147</sup> Hegel’s dialectical method presents a kind of hermeneutics that develops out of his conception of judgment and his consideration of the nature of the relation between identity and difference. For a further discussion of the hermeneutic nature of the Hegelian dialectic, see Section 5.7 of the Appendix to Chapter Four as well as Section Four of Chapter Six. See also Paul Redding’s *Hegel’s Hermeneutics*, particularly Chapter Two.

<sup>148</sup> The adoption of new assumptions does not begin as an explicit or fully conscious process. These new principles constitute break in the circle, since they imply a departure from (a) the prior rules of synthesis which itself implies (b) a revision of the rules of synthesis and the conception of the whole. Since these new rules of analysis depend upon a new and not yet articulated conception of the whole, these new rules of analysis are themselves implicit. They are grasped, at first, by intuition or feeling. In the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel describes this radical process as follows: “While the initial appearance of the new world is, to begin with, only the whole veiled in its simplicity, or the general foundation of the whole, the wealth of previous existence is still present to consciousness in memory. Consciousness misses in the newly emerging shape its former range and specificity of content, and even

assumptions, a clarification that itself modifies the way that we employ these assumptions in our articulation of the manifold.<sup>149</sup> This moderate (or radical) transformation of the parts leads to a reformulation of the rules of synthesis and our conception of the whole, which in turn leads to further transformations in the rules of analysis and our conception of the parts.

Thus we can see that (a) the rules governing analysis, or the sense in which the judgment contains duality, can only be defined in relation to the rules that govern synthesis, and that (b) the rules governing synthesis, or the sense in which the judgment presents us with a unity, can only be defined in relation to the rules that govern analysis. In direct relation to our discussion of judgment, this means that *the sense in which A and B are connected* and *the sense in which A and B are distinguished* cannot be fully disambiguated. This means that we can only grasp the structure or process of judgment in terms of the unity or the essential relation between identity and difference.

The essential relation between identity and difference poses various problems or challenges that we must face as we try to conceive the nature judgment and the nature of thought more generally. As we have seen, our naïve or common conception of judgment construes thought either as (a) a process that *starts* with plurality and produces unity, or

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more the articulation of form whereby distinctions are securely defined, and sand arrayed in their fixed relations. Without such articulation, Science lacks universal intelligibility, and gives the appearance of being the esoteric possession of a few individuals: an esoteric possession, since it is as yet present only in its Notion or in its inwardness; of a few individuals, since its undiffused manifestation makes its existence something singular. Only what is completely determined is at once exoteric, comprehensible, and capable of being learned and appropriated by all” (p. 7). Hegel describes the initial appearance of this new conception of the world as the “whole veiled in its simplicity,” as a whole that is “without specificity and content.” This new conception begins as an esoteric intuition, as an inward sense that is not yet communicable. This new conception of the world only becomes communicable through differentiation and division. This differentiation and division provides the basis for the syntheses that yield the determinate conception of the whole.

<sup>149</sup> This is an important point. The process by which we become conscious of the original rules of division changes the way that we employ them. As we become increasingly conscious of the rules we employ in analysis, our application of these rules becomes increasingly precise, consistent, and accurate.

as (b) a process that *starts* with unity and produces plurality. Hegel rejects both conceptions. Among other things, this means that nothing is given prior to thought, and that thought therefore has no beginning or starting point.

Philosophy is the process of thinking thought. We think prior to philosophy. In philosophy, we try to rationally articulate what we do when we think. One obvious way to think thought is to find the starting point of thought, and then to retrace the steps through which thought proceeds. However, if our discussion of judgment is correct, there is no place where thought begins. Or, to put the point differently, thought does not find its own starting point until it has reached its end point. This means we must figure out how to conceive thought as a process without a foundation or beginning. Hegel frequently discusses the foundationless or beginning-less nature of philosophy. For instance, at the beginning of the *Science of Logic*, in a section entitled, “With What Must the Science Begin,” Hegel considers two possible beginning points for thought. Thought, he argues, must either begin with something *mediated* or with something *immediate*. He says:

Here we have only to consider how the logical beginning appears; the two sides from which it can be taken have already been named, to wit, either as a mediated result or as a beginning proper, as immediacy.<sup>150</sup>

As Hegel uses the terms here, “immediacy” expresses undifferentiated continuity, unity without division. By contrast, mediation differentiates or articulates immediacy. It analyzes and then synthesizes the continuum or the manifold that would otherwise be immediate. That which is mediated presents the “result” of mediation. The process of mediation is thought itself, thought characterized as an activity that analyzes and synthesizes. From these basic definitions, it follows that thought can’t begin with

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<sup>150</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 68.

anything mediated, since that which is mediated already presupposes thought. So if thought has a beginning, that beginning must be immediate. As Hegel, says, only “immediacy” can serve as a “beginning proper.”

Shortly after this passage, Hegel goes on to argue that nothing is free of mediation. He says:

There is nothing, nothing in heaven or in nature or in mind or anywhere else which does not equally contain both immediacy and mediation, so that these two determinations reveal themselves to be unseparated and inseparable and the opposition between them to be a nullity. But as regards the philosophical discussion of this, it is to be found in every logical proposition in which occur the determinations of immediacy and mediation and consequently also the discussion of their opposition and their truth.<sup>151</sup>

Hegel claims there is nothing immediate. Or to put the point somewhat differently, as it is stated in the discussion of pure being, the wholly immediate or undifferentiated proves to be indistinguishable from nothing. It is, in other words, nothing. In the discussion of pure being, Hegel demonstrates that there is nothing without determination. Hegel also says that the nature of the essential relation between immediacy and mediation can be seen in the structure of the “logical proposition” – i.e. the judgment. As our discussion of judgment demonstrated, every judgment presupposes (a) an implicit conception of the whole as immediate; as well as (b) the dual process of mediation that occurs in analysis and synthesis.

So Hegel argues that there is nothing immediate, nothing outside of thought with which thought might begin. From this he argues that thought has an explicitly hermeneutic or circular structure. Hegel says:

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<sup>151</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 68.

The essential requirement for the science of logic is not so much that the beginning be a pure immediacy [which we have seen to be impossible], but rather that the whole of the science be within itself a circle in which the first is also the last and the last is also the first.<sup>152</sup>

In this manner philosophy exhibits the appearance of a circle which closes with itself, and has no beginning in the same way as the other sciences. To speak of a beginning of philosophy has a meaning only in relation to the person who proposes to commence the study, and not in relation to the science as a science.<sup>153</sup>

Thought does not have a beginning because there is nothing outside of thought. In some sense, this means that we, as individuals who are trying to think thought, can begin anywhere. However, whatever we take as our beginning – i.e. whatever we take as given or immediate – will ultimately show itself to be the result of thought, to be mediated.

Here again the basic hermeneutic process involved in interpretation helps to illustrate this rather abstract discussion. From the standpoint of our conscious awareness, interpretation begins with the awareness of certain parts. We take these parts as given and we start adding or relating them to other parts in our attempt to attain a sense of the whole. As an example, we might consider the process of meeting a new person. As the person says and does various things, we start synthesizing these utterances and actions into a comprehensive picture. As we continue to build a more comprehensive picture of who the person is, we often go back to revise, clarify, or simply reaffirm our interpretation of certain things they said or did. In this process of going back to the details, we realize the implicit guiding assumptions – preconceptions about the person as a whole – that first determined our original, and apparently immediate, experience of these details. We recognize the mediation in what we first took as immediate.

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<sup>152</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 71.

<sup>153</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 17.

Getting to know someone is a hermeneutic process, one that involves the following circular relation: (a) implicit conception of person → (b) experience of the things the person says or does → (c) tentative but explicit conception of who the person is → (d) modified, clarified, or affirmed conception of the things the person said or did, not seen in light of a tentative, but rather in the light of an explicit, conception of who the person is.<sup>154</sup> This circular process bears a strong resemblance to the process of judgment as described in Section 5.4, though of course the basic hermeneutic process described here is far more basic than the overall process that occurs in philosophy.<sup>155</sup>

Philosophy is not a positive process that deductively proceeds from premise to conclusion. This is not to say that Hegel rejects traditional philosophical arguments. Such arguments have an important role to play in philosophy. However, they do not express the overall shape of philosophy. As Hegel construes it, philosophy is as much about regress as progress. Thus he says:

Progress in philosophy is rather a regression and a grounding or establishing by means of which we first obtain the result that what we began with is not something merely arbitrarily assumed but is in fact the *truth*, and also the *primary truth*.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Of course there is one important difference between the interpretive process we go through when meeting a person and the process we go through in philosophy – namely, there are many people, but there is only one reality. When we first meet a new person, we may have a relatively explicit sense of the principles or conception of the whole that guide our interpretation of them. These explicit principles about the whole stem from our experience with other people. In the case of our cognition of reality, however, we cannot begin with a set of explicit principles about the whole, since we do not have prior experience of another reality.

<sup>155</sup> Compare with the account of hermeneutics presented in Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutik und Kritik*. See specifically paragraph two of the second part. Here, Schleiermacher presents an account of the hermeneutic process of interpretation that closely parallels Hegel's conception of the overall structure of thought. He says: "Das letzte Ziel der psychologischen (technischen) Auslegung ist auch nichts anders als der entwickelte Anfang, nämlich, das Ganze der Tat in seinen Teilen und in jedem Teil wieder den Stoff als das Bewegende und die Form als die durch den Stoff bewegete Natur anzuschauen" (p. 167). Here Schleiermacher presents the "developed beginning" as the goal of interpretation. We must grasp the entirety of the action that animates the works in its parts, and we must grasp the parts as they are determined in the action. Here the action is the overall goal or principle that animates and guides the text.



Through this progress [which is also a kind of regress], then, the beginning loses the one-sidedness which attaches to it as something simply immediate and abstract; it becomes something mediate, and hence the line of the scientific advance becomes a circle. It also follows that because that which forms the beginning is [at the beginning] still undeveloped, devoid of content, it is not truly known in the beginning; it is the science of logic in its whole compass which first constitutes the completed knowledge of it with its developed content and first truly grounds that knowledge.<sup>157</sup>

The first quote may be a bit optimistic, since it speaks of returning to the starting point and coming to see it as “the truth.” It seems just as likely that we might return to the starting point and discover it to be largely false, though false in a sense that still allows us to move forward towards the truth. In any case, both passages describe philosophy as a process where we come to recognize the ground of what we initially took as ungrounded. The recognition of this ground allows us to conceive the original beginning as determined or mediated, and thus it allows us to properly conceive the ground for the first time.

## 6) Conclusion

The nature of genuine change and the structure of judgment present us with closely related paradoxes. Both involve a moment of identity and a moment of difference. The paradox arises from the necessity of grasping the unity of these two moments. From the standpoint of the *understanding* or *reflection*, a standpoint that construes reality in terms of either abstract identity or mere aggregation, the nature of change and the structure of judgment appear contradictory. If we construe change as the movement of “P-S1” to “P-S2,” then reflection must construe the relation between P and S1 or S2 either in terms of (a) aggregation or (b) abstract identity. In other words, it must

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<sup>156</sup> *Science of Logic*, p.p. 70-1.

<sup>157</sup> *Science of Logic*, pp. 71-2.

construe the “-” either as “and” or as “=.” If reflection construes the relation in terms of aggregation, then change becomes: “P and S1” to “P and S2.” This interpretation of change reduces it to the categories of persistence, annihilation, and creation. P persists; S1 is annihilated; and S2 is created. Here there is no genuine change because there is no essential or grounding relation between identity (P) and difference (S1 and S2).

However, if reflection tries to grasp the relation between P and S1 or S2 in terms of identity, then changes presents an outright contradiction. It consists in “P = S1” to “P = S2.” If “S1 = S2,” then we have persistence without change, creation, or annihilation. If “S1 ≠ S2,” then we must affirm the contradiction: “S1 = S2” and “S1 ≠ S2.” This fact has led some philosophers, including F.H. Bradley to deny the reality of change.<sup>158</sup> The resolution of this paradox requires a conception of the unity that is distinct from aggregation and identity. Hegel’s philosophy explores various modes of unity in an attempt to resolve this paradox. There is a direct relation between the paradox of change and the structure of the object. The relation between P and S1 or S2 is the relationship between the substance, as a unity that persists in its self-identity, and the properties that

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<sup>158</sup> See Footnote Five in Chapter Three. For reasons quite similar to those of Bradley, John McTaggart also denies the existence of time (and therefore change), and he ascribes this position to Hegel. He claims, “Hegel regarded the order of the time-series as a reflection, though a distorted reflection, of something in the real nature of the timeless reality” (*The Nature of Existence*, Vol. 2. P. 31.). And: “reality is not, in its truest nature, a process but a stable and timeless state” (*Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, p. 7). Both Bradley and McTaggart argue: (1) time involves contradictions; (2) reality is not contradictory; (3) therefore time is not real. Contrary to claim 2, Hegel asserts again and again that contradiction provides the basis of all reality. Thus Hegel says: “contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only in so far as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity” (*Science of Logic*, p. 439). Hegel goes on to identify the urge or activity of contradiction with the basic teleological structure of all genuine entities: “Similarly, internal self-movement proper, instinctive urge in general, (the appetite or nisus of the monad, the entelechy of absolutely simple essence), is nothing else but the fact that something is, in one and the same respect, self-contained and deficient, the negative of itself” (*Science of Logic*, p. 440). Rather than being an aspect of thought or mere appearance, contradiction is the principle of reality itself. Bradley and McTaggart fail to draw this conclusion because they fail to distinguish between the contradiction as conceived by the understanding and the contradiction as conceived by reason. They are right to claim that contradictions, as conceived by the understanding, do not exist in reality. However, they failed to recognize or develop the categories of reason or speculation, categories that express the specifically dynamic nature of reality itself.

*inhere in* this substance. Thus we can also describe Hegel's philosophy as an exploration of various models for explaining this "inherence" relation, different models for explaining the unity (inherence) of identity (substance) and difference (properties).

The structure of judgment presents a similar problem. Every judgment has – or at least is derivative from – the basic form "S is P." This form results from two distinct mental acts, one that is represented by the copula and expresses the synthesis or connection of S and P, and one that expresses the analysis or distinction represented by the difference between S and P. Hegel argues that *the sense in which S and P are connected* (identity) cannot be fully disambiguated from *the sense in which S and P are distinct* (difference). The impossibility of disambiguation stems from the equiprimordial and essentially relational nature of the rule that governs synthesis and the rule that governs analysis.

The understanding takes one of these moments as basic. Either it takes distinction as basic and then explains synthesis as an act that unities this immediately given plurality, or it takes unity as basic and explains analysis as the division of this immediate unity. Hegel argues that both conceptions lead to contradictions. When the understanding begins with unity as basic, it comes to realize the implicit (or suppressed) priority of plurality, and when it takes plurality as basic, it comes to realize the implicit priority of unity. This apparent impasse points towards the hermeneutic nature of thought as a dynamic process without an absolute beginning, a process that we must conceptualize in terms of the categories of reason or speculation.

The basic structures of the hermeneutic process of thought follow from the contradiction in the structure of judgment, from our attempt to conceptualize judgment as

the unity of synthesis and analysis. Hegel argues that this same development follows from a consideration of the contradiction in the structure of the object, a contradiction that arises from the relation between the plurality and the unity in the object. In the same way that our consideration of the structure of judgment led to the development of the structures of thought as a hermeneutic process, so a consideration of the structure of the object should, on Hegel's view, lead us to a conception of the object as a notion, as a dynamic process that unfolds in terms directly analogous to the structural moments of thought itself. Thought consists in a dynamic process that moves from (1) wholly implicit, undeveloped, and as such non-cognizable unity, to (2) the articulation and division based upon an implicit awareness of this unity, and then to (3) the formation of an explicit conception of the whole through the synthesis of this articulation and division. Step three leads back to step two in a prolonged process of articulation, modification, and – at times – radical reformulation.

Here we can see, among other things, the difference between the static orientation of the understanding and the dynamic orientation of reason. Hegel characterizes the understanding or reflection as a mode of thought that, “sticks to fixity of characters and their distinctness from one another,” and that treats each abstracted character as though it had “a subsistence and being of its own.”<sup>159</sup> The understanding fails to recognize the dependence of the part upon the whole, and it fails to see the dependence of static or fixed features on the essentially dynamic process from which they are abstracted. With regards to the nature of thought, the understanding construes the dynamic process of thought in terms of stable states. Thus the understanding construes thought in terms of the *given* plurality with which thought begins and the unity that it produces. Or,

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<sup>159</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 80.

conversely, the understanding construes thought in terms of the given unity with which it begins and the plurality it produces. In both cases, the understanding defines the action of thought in terms of stable beginning- and end-points, in terms of input and output.

Reason, on the other hand, recognizes that these *apparently* stable beginning and end points are merely abstractions from a more basic process that produces them, and it conceptualizes these apparently stable points in relation to the more basic process from which they arise. The understanding attempts to stabilize various conceptions of unity or plurality, and in doing so it becomes entangled in contradiction. Reason, by contrast, “apprehends the unity of terms...in their opposition – the affirmation which is involved in their disintegration and in their transition.” Reason grasps the unity of oppositional terms. In this case it grasps the unity of antithesis and synthesis as inter-related aspects of a single process. Reason or speculation conceives thought as a process that produces various conceptions of unity and plurality in its development. Reason recognizes that these conceptions are continually being revised and reformulated in the process. More importantly, since there is no basic unity or plurality with which the process of thought begins, there is an important sense in which the *process* or *activity* of thought is the most basic feature of thought.

These features of thought reflect certain analogical structures in the object. Like thought, the object consists in the development from (1) implicit unity, to (2) developed articulation, to (3) synthesized whole. The implicit unity presents the telos of the object qua potentiality, the object in itself prior to the act of differentiation. Similarly, the synthesized whole presents the telos in its realized form. In a passage that should be

familiar from Chapter One, Hegel explicitly compares this developmental structure of the object to the structure of judgment. He says:

The germ of a plant contains its particular, such as root, branches, leaves, etc.: but these details are at first present only potentially, and are not realized till the germ uncloses. This unclosing is, as it were, the judgment of the plant.<sup>160</sup>

Like the general process of thought in judgment, the development of the plant moves from implicit unity to plurality. The plurality arises from out of the unity through an act of division, analysis, or articulation. Through an act of synthesis, the plant relates these divisions to one another in terms of the original conception of the whole, or the telos implicit in its immediate unity. As with judgment, this synthesis leads to an articulated conception or presentation of the whole.

There is a second important similarity between the structure of thought and the structure of the object. We can only resolve the contradiction in the structure of thought if we come to grasp thought as a *process*. This means that we must construe the various conceptions of unity (that result from synthesis) and plurality (that result from analysis) as the products of, or the abstractions from, the more basic process or activity of thought. The same holds true for objects. Objects constitute themselves through their own activity, and the implicit and explicit telos of this process, as the implicit and the developed unity, only exist as moments abstracted from the process itself.

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<sup>160</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 166Z.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE NATURE OF GENUINE CHANGE, THE STRUCTURE OF THE JUDGMENT, AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE OBJECT: PART TWO

#### 1) Introduction

In Chapter Three, I argued that if we consider judgment as a series of mental acts, we cannot fully disambiguate the rule that governs the act of analysis and the rule that governs the act of synthesis. In terms of our original problematic, this means we cannot fully distinguish between (a) *the sense in which the subject and predicate are connected*, and (b) *the sense in which they are distinct*. In order to conceive judgment properly, we must grasp the essential unity of the hermeneutic process that underlies these two related moments. We must grasp the unity of synthesis and analysis, or, in the central terms of this dissertation, we must grasp the unity of identity and difference. In Section 5.5, we considered the implications of this unity for Hegel's conception of thought and philosophy. Among other things, this conception of thought as a hermeneutic process implies that thought lacks an absolute beginning.

The unity of identity and difference – considered with regards to judgment as a series of mental acts – poses a challenge to our natural or naïve conception of thought. The account of thought as a hermeneutic process, sketched in Section 5.5, provides a

basic outline of the solution to this challenge, though some of the details remain vague. For the moment, it is simply important to note that the problem of the unity of identity and difference requires us to conceive thought as a teleological process that begins with an enfolded unity, that develops the parts out of this unity, and that finally synthesizes the parts into an articulated unity. As I suggested in the Conclusion to Chapter Three, this developmental process provides the basic outline for Hegel's solution to the problem of identity and difference as it occurs throughout his philosophy. In other words, Hegel ultimately explains the structure of all objects in terms of a similar teleological and developmental process.

This chapter continues the discussion begun in Chapter Three. In this chapter we will consider judgment in relation to the structure of the object. Specifically, we will consider judgment as a series of mental activities *directed or animated by the intention to grasp the structures of genuine objects*. Here, as throughout this dissertation, I use the term "genuine object" to designate an object that exists independently from the way that we conceive it. A genuine object doesn't simply exist because we – or any other mind external to the object – happen to carve up or synthesize the world in some particular way. In other words, it doesn't derive its existence from *our* principles of individuation. Ultimately, Hegel argues that a genuine object differentiates itself from the rest of the world. For the moment, however, we will state this point in purely negative terms, and simply claim that the principle that individuates a genuine object does not depend upon mental activity outside the object.

In Sections 5.3 through 5.5 of the previous chapter, we considered judgment as a series of activities that analyze and synthesize the world. In this chapter, we will



consider judgment as a series of acts that attempts to analyze and synthesize the world *in such a way as to grasp the genuine objects that exist in the world*.<sup>161</sup> In this context, we will take it for granted that genuine objects exist in the world.<sup>162</sup>

Sections 2.1 through 2.3 explain the problem of the unity of identity and difference with regards to the structure of the object. These sections present general or systematic considerations, and they do not draw directly on Hegel's texts. Section 2.1 derives the unity and the plurality of the object from the structure of judgment, and section 2.2 derives the unity and the plurality of the object from the assumption that

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<sup>161</sup> On Hegel's view, genuine objects exist in the world, though they are not immediately given to us as genuine objects. In order to cognize objects, we must analyze and synthesize what is given to us. This does not mean, however, that the objects cognized are simply the result of our analysis and synthesis. Instead, in cognition our mental acts recapitulate, and thereby uncover, the principles that exist in the object itself. This point becomes clear in Hegel's discussion of space in the "Psychology" section of the *Philosophy of Mind*. Hegel says: "But when we said that what is sensed receives from the intuiting mind the form of the spatial and temporal, this statement must not be understood to mean that space and time are only subjective forms. This is what Kant wanted to make them. But things are in truth themselves spatial and temporal" (*Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 448Z). Our subjective mental activity structures our experience in terms of space and time. In doing so, however, it simply recapitulates the structures of space and time as they exist independently of these acts. In other words, the developed structure of space and time are not simply given to the mind. Instead, the mind must actively work to recognize these structures. This active recognition consists in the determination of the structures as they are in themselves.

<sup>162</sup> We might simply take this as the sort of claim with which philosophy should begin. Certainly philosophers like Leibniz and Aristotle begin with these sorts of assumptions. In the *Physics*, for instance, Aristotle simply begins with the assumption that the nature of change can be conceived by thought. If we don't assume it can be conceived by thought, at least until some very good arguments to the contrary turn up, there would be no reason to philosophize about physics – i.e. about the domain of change. In more general terms, if we are going to reason about the world at all, then we have to assume that the world has a kind of rational structure that is more or less accessible to our mind. A minimal requirement for such a rational structure seems to be that it includes features or things that are distinct from other features or things, and that such distinctions are based on the nature of the features or things themselves. Even relatively skeptical philosophers must assume that some aspect of the world is open to rational inquiry, even if they limit the part of the world we can rationally conceive to the "mind," "language," "our paradigms of explanation" or even mere "appearance." Once we realize that such things are a part of the world, that they are beings of some kind (for even appearance, in a certain sense, is), then we must admit that some part of the world is open to reason. Moreover, we must give some principled reason why only these parts of the world are open to reason. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel undermines a number of traditional reasons for being suspicious about the accessibility of the world to reason. His arguments in this book seek to undermine certain accounts that radically divide the subject from the object. Hegel argues that the subject is itself a part of reality, that it is a kind of object. Moreover, he attempts to undermine various accounts that privilege our access to our own mind or subject in such a way that throws into question our access to the object.

multiple (at least two) genuine objects exist. Section 2.3 then presents the problems that arise when we try to conceive the structure of the object in terms of the relation between unity and plurality. Section 3.1 considers various ways that the understanding tries to resolve this paradox, drawing specifically on Hegel's discussion of perception in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Finally, Section 4 sketches Hegel's solution to the problem. It shows how he presents the teleological structure of the object as the only possible – or, at least as far as he can see, the only available – means of explaining the relation between unity and plurality.

### **2.1) The Unity and the Plurality of the Object Derived from the Structure of Judgment**

In forming a judgment, we seek to reflect or capture the structure of the object in the structure of the judgment itself. Ideally, the structures of the judgment should recapitulate the structures inherent in the object. In Hegelian terms, the activities that structure the judgment should recapitulate the activities that structure the object.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> One might object that many forms of judgment do not seek to reflect the structure of the object. In the basic judgment, “the rose is red,” the subject-predicate structure of judgment reflects the traditional substance-property analysis of the object. However, the relationship between a disjunctive or universal judgment and the structure of the object is more difficult to see. Nonetheless, Hegel holds that these judgments ultimately relate to the structure of the object. Thus, for instance, he holds that the universal judgment expresses something about the structure of each individual object included in the judgment. In other words, the universal judgment does not simply rest upon, or refer to, a class of objects as a collection or set. Thus the judgment, “all dogs are mammals,” makes a claim about the structure of each dog taken individually, not merely about the collection of things we refer to as dogs. With regards to disjunctive judgments, the case for the relation between the structure of the judgment and the structure of the object is somewhat more difficult to make. In this regard, it may be worth remembering our earlier remarks about the nature of negative judgments. We said that negative judgments have a relationship to positive judgments that can be defined as both parasitic and instrumental. Negative judgments are *parasitic* on positive ones, for their meaning and possibility depends upon the meaning of the positive judgment. The relationship is also *instrumental*, since negative judgments are only important insofar as they (a) negate a debated positive judgment, or (b) bring us closer to forming a true positive judgment. At the very least, Hegel would argue that disjunctive judgments have an instrumental relationship to apodictic notional judgments, the highest form of judgment he discusses.

Each judgment contains two obvious moments – the moment of difference and the moment of connection. In judgment, the mind distinguishes two features of reality. The difference between the subject and the predicate reflects the distinction between these two features. The subject term refers to one feature of the world, and the predicate term refers to a second feature of the world. In the structure of judgment, the *difference* between the subject and the predicate term expresses the mental act of *analysis* or *distinction*. Assuming that this structural moment of judgment corresponds to some genuine structural feature of the object, it follows that the *difference* between the subject and the predicate also expresses some *duality* or *plurality* in the object.

The structure of judgment also involves a moment of identity. In judgment, the mind connects, synthesizes, or unites two distinct moments. The copula expresses the cognitive act of *connection*, *synthesis*, or *unification*. Again, if we assume that the structure of judgment corresponds to the structure of the object, then the copula also expresses some *unity* in the object. Thus the copula expresses the sense in which the features referred to by the subject and the predicate terms both belong to, or are *united* in, the same object, the sense in which these features are both aspects of the *same* object.

Thus, considered as a cognitive process capable of reflecting the structure of genuine objects, judgment implies (a) the duality or plurality of the object, as well as (b) the unity of the object. Stated differently, the structure of judgment implies that there is one sense in which the object presents a plurality, and another sense in which the object presents a unity. In order to reflect the difference between the subject and the predicate, there must be some sense in which the object presents a plurality, and in order to reflect

the unity expressed by the copula, there must be another sense in which the object presents a unity.

Here we see the moment of difference and the moment of identity. Or, stated in terms more appropriate for dealing with the structure of the object, we see the moment of plurality and the moment of unity. Before considering the necessity of the third moment, the moment that unities unity and plurality, it is worth noting that we can also establish the necessity of these two moments if we assume the existence of multiple (at least two) genuine objects. In other words, we can establish the necessity of these two moments without considering the relation between the object and the structure of judgment, and without assuming that each moment of the judgment reflects some genuine aspect of the object.

## **2.2) The Unity and the Plurality of the Object Derived from the Assumption of Multiple Genuine Objects**

Assume that there are multiple (at least two) genuine objects in the universe. Insofar as an object is *genuine*, it must have some principle of unity. There must be some sense in which it is one.<sup>164</sup> If there were not some sense in which the object was one,

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<sup>164</sup> This is a common enough claim, one that is often emphasized in the philosophical traditions that are important for Hegel. For instance, Plotinus says: “It is in virtue of unity that beings are beings” (*The Enneads*, 535). Like Hegel, Plotinus focuses on the manner in which the relationship between unity and plurality constitutes the object. Plotinus says: “Deprived of unity, a thing ceases to be what it is called: no army unless as a unity: a chorus, a flock, must be one thing” (Ibid, 535). Here we see things constituted by unity that somehow integrates or draws together a plurality. Further, Plotinus agrees with Hegel that being (or truth) has many degrees, and that these degrees are determined by the nature of unity. Thus Plotinus says: “the less or more the degree of the being, the less or more the unity” (Ibid, 536). Leibniz also claims that a genuine thing must be constituted by an inherent principle of unity. He says: “I don’t see how one can have real entities and substances without having true unities. Arbitrary unities, which mathematicians use, are not relevant here; they are applicable even to apparent entities, such as all entities by aggregation are, for example, a flock or an army, whose unity derives from thought. The same holds for any aggregate, since you will find nothing that is truly one if you take away the entelechy” (“From the Letters to De Volder. In *G.W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, 175.) Like Hegel, Leibniz argues (1) that

then there would be no basis for distinguishing the features that comprise the object from the rest of the world, and by definition these features would not constitute a genuine object.

If we assume that there is more than one genuine object, then there must also be a sense in which each genuine object is many.<sup>165</sup> In other words, there must be a sense in which all objects include a manifold of parts, properties, or features. This claim may seem less obvious than the first. However, if objects in the world did not contain a manifold of parts, properties, or features, then these objects would be *simple* unities – i.e. unities without any internal distinction or differentiation. If the objects in the world were pure or simple unities, then there would be *no difference* between the various objects in the world.<sup>166</sup> This, however, is a contradiction. If there is more than one object in the

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this unity must be inherent in the object, and (2) that this unity derives from an entelechy – i.e. from an active principle.

<sup>165</sup> The claim “the object is many” sounds awkward, given the disagreement between the verb and the predicate. At this point, the suspicion might arise that Hegel’s “contradictions” simply arise from such awkward and ultimately incorrect ways of speaking. Thus, for instance, one might argue that he should say that the object *includes* a plurality of features, or that the *object possesses* many properties, or, finally, that the object *contains* a manifold. Hegel would argue, however, that until we have a very clear sense of what it means to say that an object includes, possesses, or contains, a plurality, this manner of speaking simply covers up the problem with common phrases and loose metaphors. The verbs “contain” and “include” both have an obvious spatial sense. However, Hegel would argue that spatial containment or inclusion is not sufficient to determine the unity of genuine objects, since spatial relations are infinitely divisible and allow for an infinite variety of different possible divisions. In other words, space, as such, does not contain any inherent individuating principles.

<sup>166</sup> Leibniz presents a similar argument in *Monadology*. In paragraphs one through seven of the *Monadology*, Leibniz argues for the simplicity of the monad, and he considers the implications that follow from this simplicity. In paragraphs eight through thirteen, he argues that plurality must exist in the monad. Here Leibniz presents two basic kinds of arguments to show that plurality must be contained in the monad. First, he presents two arguments from change. Second, he presents an argument from the assumption that multiple monads exist and from the principle of the identity of indiscernibles. In paragraph eight, Leibniz begins the argument by stating: “monads must have some qualities.” In other words, monads must have properties or some plurality within them. He argues: “if monads had no qualities, they would be indiscernible from one another.” However, he continues, it is impossible for two objects to be indiscernible. In paragraph nine, he says: “It is also necessary that each monad be different from each other. For there are never two beings in nature that are perfectly alike, two beings in which it is not possible to discover an internal difference.” So if there are multiple genuine objects, these objects must each possess various properties. If they did not, they would be simple; if they were simple, they would be

universe, then there are *different* objects in the universe, and if there are *different* objects, then there must be some *difference* that distinguishes them. So it is not possible to have a universe with multiple identical objects. Therefore it is not possible to have a universe with multiple objects that are merely simple. There must be some sense in which these objects contain a plurality.

### **2.3) The Paradoxical Unity of Unity and Plurality**

Thus far our account of the object includes two moments – the moment of unity and the moment of plurality. Now we need to establish the necessity of the third moment, the moment that unites unity and plurality. Moreover, we need to show how this third moment presents a paradox or contradiction. So far there doesn't seem to be any contradiction or paradox in the claim that *in one sense* the object is many, and *in another sense* the object is one. It would of course be contradictory to claim both (a) that the object is one, and (b) that the object is many, since this would imply that the object is one and not-one. However, as soon as we distinguish between *the sense in which the object is one* and *the sense in which it is many*, the contradiction disappears. There is nothing contradictory about a thing being P in one sense and not-P in another sense. As in our discussion of judgment, the contradiction or paradox arises from the fact that these two senses cannot be fully disambiguated.

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indistinguishable; and if they were indistinguishable, they would not be distinct. In that case, there would not be multiple objects. After presenting another argument for the multiplicity of the monad from the existence of change, Leibniz concludes: “there must be a plurality of properties and relations in the simple substance, although it has no parts” (paragraph 13). Here Leibniz uses a spatial metaphor to explain the relation between the simplicity and the plurality of the monad. He says the plurality exists *in* the unity of the monad. In the next paragraph, he goes on to cash out this metaphor in terms of the example of perception. He says: “The passing state which involves and represents a multitude in the unity or in the simple substance is nothing other than what one calls perception” (paragraph 14). Here we see Leibniz employing the category of “perception” or “representation” to explain how genuine entities consist in the unity of unity and plurality.

In order to grasp the structure of the object, we must be able to recognize the *same* object as in one sense one and in another sense many. Assume that in one sense an object presents itself to us as one, and that in another sense it presents itself to us as many. There must be *some sense in which it is the same object* that presents itself to us both as one and as many. Moreover, this sense cannot simply be a third sense that is added on to the first two, for then we will need some fourth sense by which we recognize that each of these first three senses relates to the same object. If this fourth sense is simply a further sense, then an infinite regress ensues. To prevent this infinite regress, the third sense must already be presupposed by the first two senses. It must be prior to, and constitutive of, the first two senses.

We can make the same point in a slightly different way. Consider again the statement of the first two moments: there is one sense in which *the object* is one, and another sense in which *the object* is many. The phrase “the object” occurs in both claims. If we were not able to recognize the *same* object as both one and many, then the first two claims would simply state: there is one and there is many. It might seem that, without the identity of the object in both senses, the proper reformulation of the first two moments would be the following: in one sense there is one, and in another sense there is many. However, we can only make sense of “two senses” if they are two senses of the *same* thing.

The third moment, the moment of unity, is not simply added on to the first two moments. If this were the case, then the first two moments could be fully disambiguated or differentiated. However, the unity of the first two moments, expressed by the third

moment, actually precedes and structures the first two moments. The meaning of the first two moments thus rests upon the third moment, the moment that expresses their unity.

On the surface, there is nothing mysterious about the claim that in one sense the object is many, and that in another sense it is one. This claim presents – to return to a previous quote from Taylor – “simply our old problem of quality and substance, [of] how the many states can belong to one thing.”<sup>167</sup> The object is a substance (unity) that *has* many different properties (plurality). This seems familiar, relatively straightforward, and unproblematic. However, the term “has” remains unclear. Its meaning remains undetermined. In other words, the relation between the substance and its properties remains unclear. The sense in which these properties “inhere in” or are “grounded in” the substance remains vague.<sup>168</sup>

Not only does the course of our previous argument suggest that that this relation remains vague, it also suggests that this vague or indeterminate relation serves as the basis for determining the meaning of both “substance” and “property.” In order to grasp the sense in which the thing is one and the sense in which it is many, we must grasp the sense in which these two senses are senses of the same thing. This third sense – the sense that expresses the unity of unity and plurality – grounds or structures the first two senses. In the claim that *the object is a substance that has many different properties*, the word “has” expresses this third sense, the sense that provides the ultimate but largely implicit basis upon which we understand the terms “substance,” and “property.”

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<sup>167</sup> *Elements of Metaphysics*, p. 161.

<sup>168</sup> Of course it is to solve this very problem that Leibniz explains the inclusion of the plurality in the monad in terms of perception. Perception provides a model of how plurality may be contained *in* unity, and thus it provides an account of what it means to say that various properties ‘inhere in’ or are “grounded in” the substance. As we will see, Hegel proposes a similar solution.



In order to grasp the structure of the object, we must grasp the unity of the sense in which the object is one and the sense in which it is many. Stated differently, we must grasp the way in which these two senses relate to the same object. In order to do this, we must first clarify what we mean when speak about different *senses* of the object. Here there are two basic options that must be carefully distinguished. First, in speaking about the sense in which the object is one and the sense in which it is many, we might be speaking about two different ways in which the object may be considered or conceived. Thus, we might mean that, *considered in one way*, the object is one, but *considered in another way*, the object is many. In this case, the object remains the *same*, even though it is considered in two *different* ways. Here we must determine how the two different ways of considering the object relate to the object as it is itself.

Alternatively, in speaking about the two different senses of the object, we might be speaking about two different ways that the object is or about two different modes of the object's being. Thus we can state our previous claim about the two senses of the object as follows: *as it exists in one way*, the object is one, but *as it exists in another way*, the object is many. Here the problem consists in determining the unity of two different ways in which the object exists, in determining the unity that grounds two different modes of the object's being.

### **3.1) Two Ways of Considering the Object**

In *one sense* the object is one, and in *another sense* it is many. In order to make sense of the meaning of these claims, we must further specify what we mean when we speak about *two different senses of the same thing*. We must somehow grasp the unity of

identity (same thing) and difference (different senses). First, we might try to make sense of this language in terms of different ways the object may be considered. Thus we might say that, considered in one way, the object is one. Considered in another way, the object is many. This statement of the situation relies upon the difference between the subject and the object, the mind and the world, or the way we cognize something and the way it is in itself. Thus, for instance, we might claim that considered or cognized in one way, the object is many. Considered or cognized in another way, the object is one. Here the unity or relation of identity and difference is the unity or relation between *ways we cognize the object* and *the object itself*. We cognize the object as one and as many (in different ways), but the object itself remains the same regardless of how we cognize it. In general terms, we should note that this solution remains vague so long as we do not have an account of how the ways we cognize the object relate to the object in itself.

As we attempt to specify the nature of this relationship, further problems arise. To begin with, we must answer the basic question: *Can we cognize or consider the object as it is in itself?* If the answer is no, then we cannot explain the relationship between the ways we consider the object and the way it is in itself. Thus the relationship remains mysterious. If we *can* cognize the object as it is itself, the question about the relationship between the ways we cognize the object and the way it is in itself simply gets rephrased as a question about the relationship between the way we cognize the object, when we cognize it as it is not in itself, and the way we cognize it, when we cognize it as it is in itself.

So, assume that we can cognize the object as it is in itself. Then it becomes natural to ask: which of the two ways we cognize the object – as one or as many –

corresponds to the way the object is in itself. Any answer we give to this question presents problems. Assume, for instance, that the object in itself is one, and that we sometimes conceive it as one and sometimes as many. This leads to a host of problems. First, if the object is one and we can conceive it as one, what is the purpose of conceiving it as many? Doesn't this way of conceiving it simply represent an error? Moreover, if the object in itself is one, then only one of the two features of the judgment (the identity expressed by the copula) actually reflects the structure of the object. This, however, contradicts our original assumption that judgment, in all three of its moments, reflects the structure of the object. More importantly, if the object in itself is merely one, then there can only be one genuine object, since as we saw above, objects that are merely simple cannot be differentiated from one another, and thus they are not different.

Assume, alternatively, that the object in itself is many, and that we consider it as one and as many. Here again a number of problems arise. First, on this option, our conception of the object as one appears as a mistake or falsification. Again, this contradicts our assumption that all three moments of the structure of judgment reflect the structure of the object. More importantly, this conception of the object also contradicts the assumption that genuine objects exist in the world, for it claims that the "object," in itself is really many, and that whatever unity it has simply comes from our cognitive activity.

Thus if we try to make sense of the relation between the various senses of the object and the object itself in terms of the relation between the ways that we cognize the object and the way that the object is in itself, various problems arise. If we cannot cognize the object as it is itself, then we cannot explain the relationship between the

object and the different ways we cognize it. If we can cognize the object as it is in itself, then the object itself must either (1) exist as unity and plurality, or (2) as unity, or (3) as plurality. Here we will consider each option in further detail

**The object in itself exists as unity and plurality.** If the object exists as unity and plurality, then both ways that we cognize the object correspond to some genuine way that the object is. However, this introduces various modes or ways of existing into the object itself. Thus, on this option, the relationship between the ways we consider the object and the object as it is in itself does not explain the relationship between (a) the sense in which the object is one, (b) the sense in which it is many, and (c) the object of these two senses. Ultimately, this view collapses into the second option – the option that considers the “two senses” of the object as two ways in which the object exists.

**The object in itself exists as unity.** If we assume that the object in itself is a unity, then only one aspect of the judgment and only one way of considering the object actually correspond to the object in itself. Since judgment does contain plurality, however, we must explain this plurality, this sense in which the object is many, in terms of some feature of our mind. One obvious possibility is the following: (1) the object itself is one; (2) as the object appears to us in perception, the object is many; (3) the purpose of judgment or cognition is to restore the original unity of the object, to move from the plurality of perception to the unity found in cognition, a unity that corresponds to the object in itself.

Hegel considers a closely related conception in the “Perception” chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He says:

At first, then, I become aware of the Thing as a One, and have to hold fast to it in this its true character; if, in the course of perceiving it, something turns up which

contradicts it, this is to be recognized as a reflection of mine. Now, there also occurs in the perception various properties which seem to be properties of the Thing; but the Thing is a One, and we are conscious that this diversity by which it would cease to be a One falls in us. So in point of fact, the Thing is white only to *our eyes*, also tart to *our tongue*, also cubical to *our touch*, and so on. We get the entire diversity of these aspects, not from the thing, but from ourselves; and they fall asunder in this way for us, because the eye is quite distinct from the tongue, and so on. We are thus the *universal medium* in which such moments are kept apart and exist each on its own. Through the fact, then, that we regard the characteristics of being a universal medium as our reflection, we preserve the self-identity and truth of the Thing, its being One.<sup>169</sup>

Hegel begins by saying, “I become aware of the thing as a One.” It would be more accurate to say that I begin by assuming that the thing is a one. This is an assumption that I make, one that appears to contradict my immediate perceptual awareness of the thing as a plurality. In terms of the example that Hegel provides, we experience or perceive the sugar as “white,” “tart,” “cubical,” etc. Since we assume that the object is one, or “a one,” as Hegel puts it, we must conclude that this plurality derives from our manner of perceiving it. On this view, judgment or cognition restores the unity that the object has lost through the process of perception. Judgment combines the plurality of perception in an attempt to restore the unity of the object.

Of course, as we have already said, this conception of the object contradicts our original assumption that the moments of the judgment reflect or capture the moments of the object. Here we can begin to see the justification for this assumption. If, as we have assumed here, only the unity of the judgment captures the true nature of the object, then we only cognize the object when we have left the plurality of perception behind. However, as we have seen in the last chapter, pure unity devoid of all difference is the same as nothing. Unity devoid of all difference is, as Hegel puts it, the night in which all

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<sup>169</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 72. As we saw in Section 1.2 of Chapter Two, the issues presented in this passage play a crucial role in Bradley’s philosophy. See also *Appearance and Reality*, p. 16, and Essay IV in Volume Two *The Principles of Logic*.

cows are black. It is the being that is indistinguishable from nothing. Thus in synthesizing all plurality, cognition would lead to a state that would ultimately transcend itself. Cognition would lead to a state that it could not cognize. Stated somewhat differently, if the object is one and only one, perception becomes irrelevant for grasping its nature. Perception, with its plurality, simply misleads us, and instead of synthesizing this plurality we simply need to ignore it, to abstract from it completely. Ultimately, this plurality has nothing to do with the pure unity that is the object.

Here we have shown what we might call the epistemic problem with the conception of the object as a pure unity. We have shown that if we assume that the object is a pure unity, cognition becomes impossible. In the “Perception” section of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel focuses on the ontological problems that arise from the conception of the object as a pure or mere unity. He says:

But it is not as One that it [the object] excludes others from itself, for to be a One is the universal relating of self to self, and the fact that it is a One rather makes it like all the others; it is through its *determinateness* that the thing excludes others. Things are therefore in and for themselves determinate; they have properties by which they distinguish themselves from others.<sup>170</sup>

As pure unities, all objects would be the same in the strong sense that they would be without any differentiating characteristics. Without any differentiating characteristics, the objects would be identical. Since there cannot be multiple identical objects, there would only be one object.

While a universe with only one simple object is not logically impossible, we have a kind of quasi-empirical but indubitable proof that our universe contains plurality or genuine difference. We could of course be wrong about all of the *distinctions* that we

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<sup>170</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 73.

make between *different* features of the world. In other words, it is possible that all perceived or conceived diversity is mere appearance, and that all perceived plurality is actually one. In order to state this possibility, however, we must draw a *distinction* between appearance and reality. In other words, any account of how we might be mistaken in our belief that diversity exists must itself presuppose, at the very least, the *distinction* between appearance and reality. Appearance may not be reality, but it is not nothing. So in some sense, at least, appearance must be real. At the same time, it must also be distinct from reality. So our universe must contain some plurality, and therefore it cannot consist in one simple object.<sup>171</sup>

So if our universe consists in only one object, that object must contain plurality within it. Similarly, if our universe contains multiple objects, these objects must also contain plurality within them in order to be distinguishable or different from one another. So in either case, the claim that the object is merely a unity must be false.

**The object in itself exists as a plurality.** In one sense we conceive the object as one, and in another sense we conceive it as many. On this third option, the object itself exists as a plurality, and its apparent unity comes from the mind. Thus all unity that we ascribe to the object presents a kind of distortion. This may seem to undermine the basic

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<sup>171</sup> The relation between appearance and reality presents another instantiation of the paradox of the unity of identity and difference. On the one hand, appearance and reality cannot be *completely different*, for then appearance would have no reality and it would not exist. Appearance would then be the same as nothing or non-being. On the other hand, appearance and reality cannot be *exactly the same*, for then the distinction disappears. It might seem that these two options exclude a host of positions that fall between them. Appearance and reality are neither (a) completely different, nor (b) exactly the same. At first there doesn't seem to be a problem here. It seems that appearance and reality must be *partly different* and *partly the same*. Or, in language now familiar to us, it seems that they must be different in one sense and the same in another sense. This is correct. However, these two senses or parts cannot be fully distinguished. In order to see this, consider the following. Assume that we could fully distinguish between the sense in which reality and appearance are the same, and the sense in which they are different. In this case, appearance would have two distinct features or parts – the part that is identical with reality and the part that is different from reality. If these two parts are fully distinguishable or divisible, then appearance collapses back into reality (the part that is identical with reality) and non-being (the part that is fully distinguishable from reality). So appearance must consist in the essential unity of these two senses.

motive behind cognition (or judgment), since it implies that cognition, which apparently seeks the truth, actually creates distortion. However, we might assume that the unification of the plurality in the world serves a pragmatic function, allowing us to navigate in the world and to communicate with one another. While the previous conception of the object in itself lead to a strong distinction between perception and cognition, where perception presents a false plurality and cognition strives to restore unity, this conception of the object in itself leads to a view of perception as already infused with cognition. Perception already presents us with some unity. This unity cannot stem from the object or from the world, which is sheer plurality. Therefore this unity must stem from us. Since cognition presents us with an active process of unification, it is natural to assume a similar, though non-conscious, function of synthesis in perception. While there may, in principle at least, be some primal layer of perception that takes in the fullness of the diversity or plurality of the world, our normal adult consciousness presents us with a degree of unity already imposed upon plurality.

Hegel also considers this conception in the “Perception” section of the *Phenomenology*. He says

Accordingly, it is this unity [what was once assumed to be the unity of the thing] which consciousness has to take upon itself; for the Thing itself is the *subsistence of the many diverse and independent properties*.<sup>172</sup>

Quite rightly, consciousness makes itself responsible for the oneness, at first in such a way that what was called a property is represented as ‘free matter’. The Thing is in this way raised to the level of a genuine Also, since it becomes a collection of ‘matters’ and, instead of being a One, becomes merely an enclosed surface.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 73

<sup>173</sup> *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 73-74.



Here Hegel considers a conception of the thing as a plurality of properties or matters. On this conception, the apparent unity of the thing stems from consciousness, from the way we synthesize the world in perception and cognition. Hegel says that this conception makes the thing an “also,” “a collection of matters” that are merely contained in an “enclosed surface.” In other words, this conception makes the thing into a mere aggregate. As an aggregate, the thing has no inherent principle of unity and therefore is not a genuine thing. This contradicts our original assumption that there are genuine things.

This conception presents at least two further problems, which, due to their complexity, I can only gesture at here. First, there is the problem of explaining the unity of the unifying consciousness. This conception of the object ascribes all unity to the activity of the mind. However, unless the mind were already a kind of unity, it is difficult to see how it could unify the plurality given to it. If, however, the mind is a kind of unity, then there is at least one thing in the world that possesses an inherent principle of unity. Of course this is merely a suggestion, the most basic of sketches, since the issues involved are immensely complex.

Second, it isn't clear that the world could consist merely in plurality.<sup>174</sup> When we speak of the object as a mere collection, we tend to think of the members of this collection as themselves objects, as entities that have a kind of unity. Here we must conceive these entities either (a) as mere unities, or as (b) unities that include plurality within them. If they are mere unities, then they are indistinguishable from one another, which contradicts their assumed plurality. If, however, these unities include plurality

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<sup>174</sup> For an argument on this point, see Bradley's essay on uniqueness in *The Principles of Logic*, Volume Two.

within themselves, then they are objects that in one sense are one and in another sense are many. In this case, the distinction between ways of cognizing the object and the object in itself does not fully explain the relationship between the unity and the plurality of the object, since the unity and the plurality exist in the object itself.

This raises the question: must we conceive a collection as a collection of entities? Is it possible to conceive a collection as itself comprised of collections, which in turn are also comprised of collections? If cognition proceeds merely by way of synthesis, from part to whole, then any collection we have a cognitive relation to must ultimately be composed of things that themselves have a kind of unity.<sup>175</sup> If there were no such things, then any conception of a collection would require an infinite synthesis. However, if cognition begins with an act of analysis, one that explains or articulates the parts in terms of the whole, then it may be possible to conceive the world as consisting in collections of collections. Of course, one might argue that this conception of cognition presupposes at least one objective unity – namely the unity of the whole with which we begin.

### **3.2) Two Ways the Object Exists**

When we speak of *the sense in which the object is one* and *the sense in which it is many*, it is natural to assume that we are speaking of two different ways in which the object may be conceived or considered. In addition to the problems raised in Section 3.1, however, there is another complex but fundamental problem with this approach. In

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<sup>175</sup> Of course this claim raises the possibility of a difference between objects as we conceive them and the world as it is in itself. Our failure to synthesize an infinite sequence doesn't establish the impossibility of such a synthesis. In fact, philosophers like Leibniz and Kant argue that it is just this difference that distinguishes our finite intellect from God's infinite intellect. However, it seems the argument might be stated without relation to our epistemic capacities. It seems there might be something genuinely impossible about a universe in which (a) everything was infinitely divisible (divided?) and (b) the reality of the whole always rested on the reality of the part. On related issues, see Robert Stern's *Hegel, Kant and the structure of the object*.

determining the exact nature of the two senses of the object, we are ultimately trying to grasp the unity of *the object as one* and *the object as many*. We want, in other words, to grasp the unity of unity and plurality, or the unity of identity and difference. Rather than explain the unity of *the object as one* and *the object as many*, however, the approach considered in Section 3.1 merely divides the object further, thus creating more entities and further problems. It creates further division, rather than providing a basis for unity. The approach considered in Section 3.1 introduces a new entity – namely, the object that is conceived in different ways. This entity is distinct from the first two moments already considered, from the two ways that the object itself may be conceived. Thus instead of having two elements that need to be united – the object as one and the object as many, we now have three elements that must be united – the object conceived as one, the object conceived as many, and the object in itself. We set out to explain the relationship between unity and plurality. Instead of explaining the relationship, however, we set up a third entity between them. Thus instead of having one mysterious relationship to explain, we now have two. We must now explain (a) the relationship *between the thing conceived as many* and *the thing*, and (b) the relationship between *the thing conceived as one* and *the thing*.

This failed approach presents the *modus operandi* of the understanding, a mode of thought that (1) treats facets or moments of a thing as distinct entities, and that (2) construes the world in static rather than dynamic terms. As we shall in Section 4, Hegel argues that we can only conceive the relation between the unity and the plurality of the thing if we take self-determined activity as the basic category that constitutes the thing, and if we construe both *the sense in which the object is one* and *the sense in which the*

*object is many* as two abstractions from the unified action that constitutes the thing. If, however, we take *the sense in which the object is one* and *the sense in which the object is many* as two different ways of conceiving the thing, then we end up treating the thing as three distinct entities. On this analysis, we have (a) our concept or idea of the thing as many, (b) our concept or idea of the thing as one, and (c) the thing itself. Each of these moments, on this analysis, is distinct from the others. Moreover, in their respective independence, each of these moments becomes a distinct thing.

From the preceding considerations two points become clear. First, we should not construe *the sense in which the thing is one* and *the sense in which the thing is many* as two different ways that the object may be considered. Instead, we must construe these two different senses as two ways in which the object exists, as two modes of the object's being. Second, it should now be clear that we should not explain the essential relation between these two modes or ways of existing in terms of some third thing or entity, for as we have seen, this merely adds further complications. We must explain the relationship between *the object as it is one* and *the object as it is many*. We must explain how it is the *same* object that is both one and many. However, our explanation should not sharply distinguish the object from its oneness and its manyness, for this would merely create a third or entity. It would merely create further distinctions that must ultimately be resolved.

#### **4) The Unity of the Object's Modes of Being: A Sketch of Hegel's Solution**

In Chapter Three we considered the unity of identity and difference in relation to the structure of judgment. We saw that judgment consists in a moment of synthesis and a

moment of analysis. Moreover, we saw that a proper conception of judgment requires a third moment, a moment that unites synthesis and analysis. The unity demanded by the third moment arises from the impossibility of disambiguating the rules governing synthesis and analysis. Both rules are inter-defined, and thus we cannot define either in isolation from the other. Instead, we must grasp these rules as aspects of a single, unified process. In order to conceive the unity of synthesis and analysis, we must grasp thought as a unified hermeneutic process, as a process that moves from (a) an implicit unity (b) to an explicit plurality, and (c) then to an explicit, articulate totality.

Among other things, this conception of thought led us to the conclusion that thought cannot begin with anything outside of itself. In this sense, the process of thought must be *self-determining*. Moreover, this conception of thought led us to the conclusion that *the process of thought* must be more basic than *the products of thought*. More specifically, we must recognize the various conceptions of plurality and unity as abstractions from the more basic action that constitutes thought. Rather than conceiving the action that constitutes thought in terms of the plurality with which it begins and the results that it produces, or in terms of the unity with which it begins and the plurality it produces, we must take the action itself as basic. Rather than conceiving the action of thought in terms of its beginning and endpoint, this conception of thought conceives the beginning and end point as abstractions from the action. So thought is a self-determining activity.

In this chapter, we examined the problem of the unity of identity and difference with regards to the structure of the object. We saw that there must be one *sense in which the object is one* and another *sense in which the object is many*. Moreover, we saw that

there must be some sense in which it is *the same object* that is both one and many. Hegel develops his account of the notion as a solution to this problem. In his account of the notion, Hegel shows how the object exists as the essential unity of its unity and plurality. As we will see, Hegel's account of the notion closely follows the account of thought presented in Sections 5.4 and 5.5 of Chapter Three. Like thought, the object itself consists in a kind of circular or hermeneutic action, and like thought, the object consists in action that is *self-determined*.

Hegel presents his resolution to this problem in the following passage, where he describes the structure of the notion. He says:

Further, the living Substance is being which is in truth *Subject*, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself. This Substance is, as Subject, pure, simple negativity, and is for this very reason the bifurcation of the simple; it is the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifferent diversity and of its anti-thesis [the immediate simplicity]. Only this self-restoring sameness, or this reflection in otherness within itself – not an original or immediate unity as such – is the True. It is the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning; and only by being worked out to its end, is it actual.<sup>176</sup>

The relation between this passage and our current problem may not be immediately obvious. Before examining the specific terms of this passage in an attempt to unpack its meaning and demonstrate its relation to our present concerns, there are two relatively obvious points we should note. First, this passage describes the structure of the “living Substance...which is in truth Subject,” or the “Substance...as Subject.” It presents an account of substance in terms of categories normally associated with human subjectivity. In Chapter One we saw that Hegel also uses the term “notion” to designate this

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<sup>176</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 10.

conception of the substance as subject. Thus this passage presents the structure of the notion, the structure that constitutes all genuine objects.

Second, we should also note the discussion of the circular nature of the structure of the notion, the discussion presented in the final sentence. The terms of this discussion highlight the similarities between the structure of the object and the structure of the hermeneutic process that characterizes thought. Hegel describes the object as “the process of its own becoming,” and as a “circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end as its beginning.” Finally, he notes that, “only by being worked out to its end, is it actual.” Here we can see: (1) that the object consists in a kind of developmental process; (2) that this process is purposive – i.e. directed towards a goal or end; and (3) that this goal or end already exists in the beginning, though it only exists as *actual* in the end.

In order to express this relationship between the beginning and end of the process, Hegel describes the development of the object as a kind of circle. I think we can further describe the relation between the beginning and the end (a) in terms of the relationship between *the goal in its potentiality* and *the goal in its actuality*, and (b) in terms of the relationship between *the goal as implicit* and *the goal as explicit*. The end of the development returns to the beginning, but it presents this beginning in a new form. In the end, the beginning has become explicit and actual. Here again we can see strong parallels with the structure of thought. In Section 5.5 of Chapter Three, we saw that thought begins with a wholly *implicit* (un- or pre-conscious) conception of the whole as *potentially* determinate or as that which has the *potential* to be articulated. This presents the pre-conscious beginning point of thought, the point that precedes all awareness. Thought only comes to an awareness of this beginning point at the end, once it has made

the whole explicit through the process of determination and articulation. Insofar as it has any awareness of itself, thought begins with articulations and determinations that have been made in light of its implicit conception of the whole. It is on the basis of these articulations and determinations that thought first comes to an explicit conception of the whole.

Thus thought moves in a kind of circle from (1) implicit conception of the whole as potentially determinate, to (2) the variety of particulars determined in light of the implicit conception of the whole, to (3) the explicit and articulated whole as it is determined in light of the particulars that comprise it. The third moment presents the *potential* articulation in the first moment as *actual*. Or, it presents the *implicit* unity of the first moment as *explicit*. As we will see, the developmental process of the object passes through a similar circle. It moves from (1) the implicit or potential existence of the whole as constituted by its telos, to (2) the explicit or actual parts determined in light of the still largely implicit telos, to (3) the explicit or actual telos now seen as the unity of the articulated and developed parts.

So far we have seen that this passage describes the structure of object – of the notion or the substance as subject – in terms of a goal directed process that moves in a kind of circle from potentiality to actuality. Now we need to determine how this particular conception of the object accounts for the unity of *the sense in which the object is one* and *the sense in which the object is many*. In other words, we need to explain how this account of the object explains the unity of identity and difference. In order to do this, we must first make it clear that this passage actually addresses this problematic. The clearest reference to this problematic comes in the second to last sentence, where Hegel



says: “Only this self-restoring sameness, or this reflection in otherness with itself—not an original or immediate unity as such—is the True.” Here Hegel contrasts two different kinds of identity or unity. First, there is the unity or identity that is immediate, that does not include difference or otherness within itself. Second, there is the “self-restoring” identity or unity that includes “otherness” within itself. Hegel says that only the second kind of identity is “the True.” In other words, only the second conception of identity accurately reflects the structure of reality and, more specifically, the structure of real objects. Objects consist in a kind of identity or unity that includes difference.

This sentence directly refers to the problem of the unity of identity and difference. In this sentence, “otherness” refers to the moment of difference; “original or immediate unity” refers to identity; and “self-restoring sameness” refers to unity. This sentence claims that in order to grasp the structure of the True, we must recognize the distinction between “self-restoring sameness” and “original or immediate unity.” Then, as second step, we must also grasp “the self-restoring sameness” as a process that unites the “original or immediate unity” with “otherness.”

Elsewhere in this passage, Hegel uses the terms “bifurcation,” “opposition,” and “indifferent diversity” to describe the moment of difference or otherness. In relation to the problem presented in this chapter, all of these terms refer to the sense in which the object is many. Hegel also speaks of the “simple” that is bifurcated. This simple represents identity as opposed to difference. It represents the “original or immediate unity” that does not include otherness. The “simple” presents the sense in which the object is one. Finally, Hegel speaks of the unity of these two moments or senses as the movement that is the “mediation of its self-othering with itself,” as “simple

negativity” and as “the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifferent diversity and of its anti-thesis [the immediate simplicity].” This third moment grounds and unites the first two. The third moment presents the basic action that constitutes the object, while the first and second moment – the simple and the bifurcation – exist as abstractions from this more basic action.

As presented in this passage, Hegel’s proposed solution remains highly abstract, and we need to flesh it out a bit more to see what he is actually saying. First, we should explain Hegel’s construal of the first moment, the moment of “original or immediate unity,” the moment that is the simple. In terms of this chapter, this moment represents the sense in which the object is one. On Hegel’s view, the sense in which the object is one derives from the unity of its telos. The object is one because all of its facets contribute to some unified function that defines and constitutes the thing. Here we have at least part of the solution to our problem.<sup>177</sup> The object consists in a plurality of features that are all directed towards some unified function. Here it is “the directedness” – or a kind of functional relation – that explains the unity of the sense in which the object is many (the diverse functions of the plurality) and the sense in which the object is one (the unified telos or function that constitutes the object). Moreover, this account explains the essential nature of the relation – i.e. the sense in which the plurality and the unity cannot exist or be conceived in isolation from one another.

The telos can only exist and be conceived in relation to the plurality. The telos is simply a particular way of uniting the plurality. The relationship between the plurality and the unity is somewhat more complex. The plurality can be described without direct

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<sup>177</sup> Compare with F.H. Bradley and A.E. Taylor’s remarks about purposiveness as the ground of unity, remarks discussed in Section 1.2 of Chapter Two.

relation to the unity that constitutes the function of the object. The heart and the kidney, for instance, can be described without making reference to their integrated function within the body as a whole. Of course, if we describe them without relation to the whole, we will not grasp the true function of the heart as a heart or of the kidneys as kidneys. In failing to grasp the true function of the heart as a heart and the true function of the kidneys as kidneys, we may well fail to grasp the unity that makes the heart and the kidneys into unified parts. At the very least, we will not grasp the parts in their specific nature as the parts that constitute the whole.

On Hegel's view, this failure to grasp the heart as a heart (i.e. in relation to its larger function in the body) is not merely a failure to recognize some further description or account of the heart. In other words, the difference between the heart as a mere collection of tissues, cells, and chemical compounds, on the one hand, and the heart as an organ of the body, on the other hand, does not merely consist in the difference between two descriptions of the same phenomena. Hegel holds that the organizing principles or tendencies that govern the body often transform or subvert the organizing principles or tendencies that would otherwise govern the parts in isolation. Higher levels of organization reach down into the lower levels of organization and transform them. Social and political forces can transform and override biological forces; biological forces can transform and override chemical ones; and finally, chemical forces can transform and override physical ones.<sup>178</sup> As a simple illustration of the point, we might simply note that when the parts of the body are separated from the body, they die. In the death of the part,

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<sup>178</sup> In order to make sense of this last claim, we must distinguish between chemical and physical forces in the way that Hegel would. On Hegel's view, physics describes the forces of matter qua matter. Physics describes the basic forces that are universal to matter – gravity, resistance, etc. Chemistry describes the forces that determine the different kinds of matter, forces such as magnetism. When a magnet picks up a metal object, a chemical force overrides a physical one.

the original tendencies of the parts (ultimately chemical compounds) that comprise this body part reassert themselves. Thus if we fail to consider the heart in relation to the body as a whole, Hegel holds that we will be unable to explain what the heart does. We will be unable to explain the ways that the organizing principles of the body determine the heart – its tissues, cells, and chemicals – in relation to its own ends.<sup>179</sup>

So far we have explained the object as a plurality that is directed towards some unified telos. This explanation begins to account for the relationship between the sense in which the object is one and the sense in which it is many. However, as it stands, this explanation of the object remains incomplete. This account explains the object in terms of the relation between a plurality that *fully* instantiates a telos and the telos they instantiate. At the very least, this account of the object in terms of a fully instantiated telos does not apply to many (if any) objects in the world.<sup>180</sup> Most objects fail to

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<sup>179</sup> Of course we can conceive the matter that comprises the heart without relation to the functions carried out by the heart. We can conceive the heart as a mass of tissues, cells, chemical reactions, or simply as lump of matter. However, Hegel insists that such conceptions will fail to explain all of the things that happen in the heart. This isn't simply a matter of failing to see certain higher-level descriptions of various functional capacities. If we simply grasp the heart as a lump of matter, for instance, we will not be able to explain why it beats. This kind of repetitive self-movement violates the laws of matter qua matter. Similarly, Hegel would claim that the laws of chemistry will not explain everything that the various kinds of matter in the heart do. In the heart, the laws of chemistry are "violated" when higher level biological functions transform them for their own ends. Moreover, Hegel would also point out that these lower level accounts of the "matter" that comprise the heart will always, when taken on their own terms, involve a form/matter distinction. In other words, these lower levels of descriptions are still functional. Thus we can never ultimately escape functional and holistic accounts of the world. There is no basic pre-teleological stratum of the world.

<sup>180</sup> It isn't entirely clear that we can even make sense of a fully instantiated telos, particularly if we accept Hegel's overall metaphysical picture. The telos is not simply a state of an object. Instead, the telos is the endpoint of some action that the object strives to complete. Moreover, on Hegel's view at least, the telos only exists as an abstraction from this action. It is fundamentally dependent upon the action. Action, however, depends upon some opposition to the action. Action only continues as long as there is some matter or feature of the world that is not yet conformed to the telos. When the telos is achieved, the action ceases. However, if the telos is parasitic upon the action, it seems that the telos must cease with action. There are times when Hegel seems to admit this point. Consider, for instance, the following passage from the *Science of Nature*, which we discussed in Chapter Two: "Gravity is the predicate of matter, which constitutes the substance of the subject. Its unity is a mere should, a yearning; this is the most afflicted of efforts, and matter is damned to it eternally, for the unity does not fulfill itself, and is never reached. If matter reached what it aspires to in gravity, it would fuse together into a single point. It is because

instantiate their telos fully. Or, to state a slightly different point with the same implications, there is some point in the history of each object when it fails to instantiate its telos fully. Objects develop by striving to instantiate their telos. Even if they do fully instantiate their telos, much of their history consists in the time when they have not yet fully instantiated their telos. This means that our conception of the object must allow us to make sense of the object as an incomplete instantiation of the telos. As we will see, this forces us to revise our original conception of the object as the functional unity of plurality.

If an object fails to instantiate its telos fully, then there must be some features of the object that do not have the proper functional relation to the telos that constitutes the object. However, if the object has some features that do not have the proper functional relation to the telos that constitutes its unity as an object, then it cannot be the proper functional relation to the telos alone that constitutes the unity of the object. If the object only consisted in those features that had a functional relation to its telos, then, by

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repulsion is as essential a moment as attraction, that unity is not attained here. This subdued, crepuscular unity does not become free” (paragraph 262Z). Hegel describes gravity as the striving of matter for unity with itself. In one sense, unity is the telos of matter. However, Hegel also admits that the achievement of this telos would be the end of matter. In its telos, matter would fuse into a single point. Thus, Hegel concludes, “repulsion is as essential a moment as attraction.” In other words, the striving of gravity depends upon both (a) its telos and (b) that which opposes its telos. Hegel’s final comment seems to oppose gravity to other, higher kinds of objects. He says, “unity is not attained here,” and he concludes that “matter is not free.” Since mind ultimately can become free, this might seem to imply that mind can achieve its telos. It’s not clear, however, that Hegel’s metaphysics allow for this. Moreover, in various places throughout his philosophy, he associates the achievement of the telos with old age and death. He seems to imply that the achievement of the telos ultimately undermines the activity that constitutes the object. In speaking of the individual’s telos as constituted by a particular sphere of work, Hegel says the following: “The very fact, however, that his activity has become so conformed to his work, that his activity no longer meets with any resistance from its objects, this complete facility of execution, brings in its train the extinction of its vitality; for with the disappearance of the opposition between subject and object there also disappears the interest of the former in the latter. Thus the habit of mental life, equally with the dulling of the functions of his physical organism, changes the man into an old man” (*Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 397Z). Here the individual’s action consists in her attempt to conform herself to some pre-determined sphere of work, to some trade or task. The successful achievement of this task consists in overcoming the difference between the individual as she is (here the subject) and the demands of the task (the object). However, in achieving this telos, the vitality of the individual ceases. At the very least, passages like this illustrate Hegel’s ambivalence about the notion of a fully instantiated telos.

definition, there could not be any aspects of the object that did not have a functional relation to the telos. If there are not any features of the object that do not have the proper functional relation to the telos that determines the object, however, then there aren't any objects that fail to instantiate their telos fully. There clearly are such objects. Therefore a proper functional relation to the object's telos cannot be the sole factor that determines the object's unity or constitution.

Here we come to the most central feature of the object, according to Hegel, a feature that Hegel describes as the "contradiction" in the object, as the object's "pure negativity," as the sense in which the object determines, excludes, and includes its other.<sup>181</sup> The telos constitutes the pure unity of the object, the sense in which the object is one. In light of the unity of this telos, the object, to cite phrases from the passage under discussion, becomes "bifurcated." The object sets itself up as an "opposition." It determines itself in relation to its "other." This is the original "doubling" that leads to the "duality" and ultimately the plurality of the object. It is in light of the telos that the object determines what counts as itself and what counts as its other. The object takes as itself those aspects that already accord with its telos, and it takes as its other those aspects that impede, or at least do not accord, with its telos.

However, the object is not simply itself. It is not simply those aspects that accord with – or are already functionally related to – the telos. The object is intimately and

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<sup>181</sup> For a different account of Hegel's conception of the contradiction in the object, see Paul Guyer's "Hegel, Leibniz and the Contradiction in the Finite." In contrast to this dissertation, Guyer places greater emphasis on Hegel's monism. Guyer argues that finite objects contain contradictions, though on his interpretation of Hegel, this presents the fundamental shortcoming of finite objects. The absolute, on Guyer's reading, reconciles these contradictions, and thus the absolute is the only true entity.

inextricably entwined with its other.<sup>182</sup> This intimate relation stems from a number of factors. First, the self is related to the other because it is the self, in the form of the telos, that first determines what counts as the other. The other consists in those features that impede the proper function of the telos, those features that must ultimately be assimilated by the self. Second, the intimate relation between the self and its other arises from the fact that the self can only fully become what it is by assimilating its other. The “other” consists in the tendencies that exist in the lower levels of organization that comprise the self, as well as in the environment that must be assimilated to, or controlled by, the self. The self develops by taking those features that inhibit its proper function and organizing them in relation to its telos. Thus the self both determines the other by distinguishing the other from itself in light of its telos, and it then assimilates the other by transforming it.

Thus, to return to the passage from the “Introduction,” to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we must grasp the self or the “Substance as subject,” not “as an original unity,” but rather as “the self-restoring sameness, or this reflection in otherness within itself.” The unity of the object does not consist in the telos, but rather it consists in the entire process by which the object (1) determines itself and its other in light of the telos, and (2) then assimilates the other to itself by subordinating the other to its telos. In the passage under consideration, Hegel describes the first step as the “bifurcation of the simple,” and as the “doubling which sets up opposition.” He describes the second step as the “negation of this indifferent diversity and of its antithesis [the immediate simplicity].”

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<sup>182</sup> The object consists both in what it is (as a self still entangled with its other) and what it ought to be (as the telos). Hegel describes the object as the contradiction of the object as it is and as it ought to be. He says: “Similarly, internal self-movement proper, instinctive urge in general, (the appetite or *nisus* of the monad, the entelechy of absolutely simple essence), is nothing else but the fact that something is, in and the same respect, self-contained and deficient, the negative of itself. Abstract self-identity is not as yet a livingness, but the positive, being in its own self a negativity, goes outside of itself and undergoes alteration” (*Science of Logic*, p. 440). In other words, it is only because the object is not yet its telos, that it is alive.

This account of the structure of the object allows us to make further comparisons between the nature of the substance as subject and the nature of thought as a hermeneutic process. Here the first moment in the development of the object consists in the determination of itself and its other in light of its telos. This has a clear analog in the activity of thought. Thought begins with an act of analysis that divides the whole. A similar act of division or analysis occurs when the self – or rather the object in its selfhood – divides itself from its other in light of the telos.<sup>183</sup> In the same way that the whole that precedes the act of analysis is implicit and merely potential, so also the telos that determines the first distinction between the object and its other is also implicit and merely potential. This has a number of implications. First, the telos only becomes actual and explicit in the process of its actualization. Second, in the same way that the first act of division may be wrong, given the fact that thought begins with a vague and implicit sense of the whole, so also the first act of division between the self and its other may be wrong. It may also involve distortions.

Before further considering the similarities between the object and thought, I must first introduce one more element of complexity into our account of the object. In Chapter One, I claimed that Hegel's conception of the notion presents the object in terms normally associated with consciousness or subjectivity. Our account of the object in this chapter makes it clear that one such set of categories – namely those associated with *self-determined purposive action* – play a central role in the constitution of the object. However, in the same way that Leibniz ascribes a form of appetite and a form of representation to all monads, so Hegel ascribes self-determined activity and

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<sup>183</sup> Here I use the term “self” to describe a structure that is most explicit in fully self-conscious human selves, although it also exists in less developed and self-aware forms in all objects.



representation to all objects. Moreover, for Hegel, representation and self-determined action are essentially interrelated. Representation, on Hegel's view, consists in various levels of awareness of the self and the other. The original distinction between the self and the other arises from the telos that constitutes the self, and therefore the action of the self determines the basic structure of representation. At the same time, representation necessarily guides the action of the self as it seeks to instantiate its telos by assimilating the other. The action of the self is always guided by a degree of awareness of the distinction between the self and its other, the distinction that explicates, or begins to unfold, the telos.

The first moment in the development of the object consists, as we have seen, in the distinction between the self and the other in light of the telos. In relation to thought, this act is analogous to the original act of analysis that divides the whole in light of some implicit conception of it. In the same way that the awareness of thought begins with the plurality produced by this division or act of analysis, so also the awareness or representation of the object begins with the distinction between the self and its other, the distinction produced by a prior, implicit act of distinction. The second moment in the activity of the object consists in the attempt to overcome the other by transforming it in light of the telos and thus assimilating it to the self. This can be compared with the second moment of thought, the moment of synthesis that seeks to reconstitute the whole from out of the parts.

This comparison, between the second moment in the development of the object and moment of synthesis in thought, allows us to make three further points about the activity by which the object develops. (1) In the process of thought, the whole only

becomes explicit through the act of synthesis. Similarly, in the development of the object, the telos only becomes explicit and actual in the process by which the self assimilates its other. (2) The conception of the whole that emerges from synthesis causes thought to develop a more explicit conception of the principles of division. This often leads to revisions or reformulations with regards to the parts. In other words, thought does not move in a straight line from (a) implicit conception of the whole, to (b) plurality produced by synthesis, to (c) explicit conception of the whole produced by synthesis of the parts. The third step leads back to a revised version of first one. Thus thought moves in a circle, or as Hegel sometimes says, in a circle of circles. In the same way, the object also develops in a kind of circle. It does not consist in a linear movement from the telos in its potentiality to the telos in its actuality. As the object becomes increasingly “aware” of its telos, it becomes increasingly aware of the true nature of the distinction between itself and its other. As it becomes increasingly aware of the distinction between itself and its other, it moves more directly towards its telos, thus arriving at a more explicit awareness or embodiment of its telos. Of course, as with thought, this process may involve radical upheavals and transformations in the conception of the whole/telos. The development of the object may not merely consist in the gradual increase in clarity, or in the gradual increase in the degree to which the telos is embodied and thus actual.

Third, and most importantly, in the same way that the rule governing synthesis and the rule governing analysis cannot be presented or defined in isolation from one another, so also the act that divides the self and its other and the act that assimilates the self to the other can neither exist nor be conceived in isolation from one another. The distinction between the self and its other always occurs in light of some implicit conception of the

telos, and the telos can only be conceived as it emerges in terms of the division between the self and its other. Thus we must conceive the development of the object as a unified process that unites or grounds unity (the telos) and difference (the distinction between the self and its other). We must, in other words, grasp the moment of unity and the moment of difference as abstractions from a more basic, unified activity. The object is this activity, and thus the object is the unity of identity and difference.

### **5.1) No Discrete Plurality Given Prior to Judgment**

The extended argument that runs from Section 5.3 to Section 5.5 of Chapter Three rests upon one premise that may seem questionable – namely, on the premise that the world presents us with a manifold, not a discrete plurality.<sup>184</sup> In this context, we have defined a “manifold” as that which is *continuous* and *undifferentiated*, and we contrasted it with a discrete plurality, with that which is differentiated in itself. Although a manifold is undifferentiated, it nonetheless has the potential to be differentiated.

The truth of this premise may not seem evident. After all, as Hegel himself admits, this premise goes against our common or initial conception of judgment, a conception that conceives judgment as a synthesis of *given* differences or *given* particulars. This conception of judgment assumes that differentiation, difference, and plurality precede the acts of judgment, and thus that our “immediate” or pre-cognitive experience presents us with a discrete plurality.<sup>185</sup> This common conception of judgment,

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<sup>184</sup> Or, to state the point more accurately, insofar as we try to conceive what is presented to the mind prior to all our conceptual activity, we must conceive this givenness as an undifferentiated continuum, not as a differentiated plurality.

<sup>185</sup> At first glance, this naïve conception of judgment might seem to be closely related to what Wilfrid Sellars, in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, designates as the “Myth of the Given.” In a

along with its attendant conception of immediate experience, often rests upon a sharp distinction between perceptual awareness and cognition. Our perceptual awareness of the world presents us with discrete objects. If perceptual awareness precedes cognition, if, in other words, it presents us with that which is pre-cognitive and thus “immediate,” then that which is immediately given to us is a discrete plurality and not a manifold. Initially, this conception seems highly plausible. Perceptual awareness seems to be a *passive*

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recent essay, “Hegel and the Myth of the Given,” John McDowell sums up the point of Sellars essay in manner that has direct relevance for the present context. He says: “Sellars sets up [or defends] a position according to which even the most basic perceptual knowledge requires conceptual capacities” (*Das Interesse des Denkens: Hegel aus heutiger Sicht*, 76). In other words, Sellars rejects the claim that immediate or perceptual knowledge precedes judgment or discursive cognition. Following Sellars – who somewhat playfully describes his arguments in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* as a “Meditations Hegeliennes,” – McDowell ascribes this insight to Hegel. McDowell develops and modifies this Sellarsian insight in *Mind and World*, which he describes as a “prolegomena to reading Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism and Tales of the Mighty Dead*, Robert Brandom attempts to follow a similar rout back to Hegel through Sellars. If the general line of Hegel interpretation presented in this dissertation is correct, then this approach to Hegel is highly problematic. Any approach to Hegel through Sellars must construe Hegel largely in epistemological and semantic terms, rather than ontological ones. This can already be seen in the brief quote from McDowell’s essay. McDowell doesn’t claim that “all *perception* presupposes conceptual capacities or structure,” but rather he claims that “all *perceptual knowledge* requires conceptual capacity.” Sellars argues that perceptual awareness cannot be both (a) immediate while at the same time (b) serving as the basis for knowledge (see particularly sections I and VII of EPM). Sellars isn’t making a point about *perception per se*, but rather he is making a point about *perception insofar as it is fit to serve as the basis of justified propositional claims*. In fact, Sellars insists that there is another story to tell about perception, one that treats perception as a natural – and therefore non-conceptual – process. Sellars merely argues that this scientific account cannot play a role in our account of how beliefs are justified. Thus for any Sellarsian reading of Hegel, it seems there will always be two distinct levels of explanation – the causal and the rational/normative. In his essay, “Naturalness and Mindedness: Hegel’s Compatibilism,” Pippin states the basis of the Sellarsian approach as follows: “That is, to use again a vaguely Sellarsian formulation: (i) the question at the heart of the basic spirit-nature dualism at issue is eventually treated as one between the applicability of normative notions and assessments versus natural or law-like explanations, all within a radically constructivist account of norms; and (ii) the Hegelian approach does not involve treating the possibility of such a distinction as being based on any ontological fact of the matter, as, say, between immaterial, causally exempt, and materially, causally determined beings. The distinction is itself a normative and historical one, not an ontological one” (*European Journal of Philosophy*, 7, 1999. Pp. 203-4). In these terms, we can say that nothing captured in law-like explanations can serve as an epistemic basis for claims about the things as they stand under “normative notions.” In other words, perception, insofar as it is merely a natural phenomena described under law-like explanations, cannot serve as a justification for normative epistemic or practical claims. By contrast to all this, the argument presented in this section attempts to show that perception *per se* is conceptually structured. (For an application of the Sellarsian interpretation to practical issues, see Brandom’s “Freedom and Constraint by Norms.” For a further discussion of the relationship between McDowell’s *Mind and World* and Hegel, see Michael Quante’s “Reconciling Mind and World: Some Initial Considerations for Opening a Dialogue between Hegel and McDowell.”

experience in which certain things are presented to us. By contrast, judgment is an *active* process, one that we must initiate.

In perception we seem to be immediately aware of various objects, of tables, chairs, rocks, birds, and trees. This visual experience of the world, and of the objects in the world, does not seem to rest upon our own cognitive activity. On this initial impression, perceptual or sensory awareness presents us with various discrete objects. It seems that awareness of these discrete objects precedes the acts of judgment, which then synthesize or analyze that which is given to the mind as discrete. On this initial impression, it seems that experience of the world presents us with a discrete plurality, not with an undifferentiated manifold.

In contrast to this initial impression, Hegel's account of judgment rests upon the crucial claim that judgment does not begin with anything discretely given to it. In this Appendix, I will not exhaustively defend this claim, for the issues involved are complex. However, I will consider Hegel's claim that even the most basic forms of perceptual awareness involve conceptual content. I will examine this claim within the context of Hegel's more general view that all mental phenomena – including emotions and instinctive urges – already have conceptual structure. I will also consider some of Hegel's reasons for these claims. In Section 5.2 I will examine various passages where Hegel insists that even the most basic levels of perceptual or sensory awareness contain conceptual structure, and in Sections 5.4 through 5.9 I will examine a kind of argument for accepting this account of basic perceptual or sensory awareness.

## **5.2) Textual Support**

Throughout his philosophy, Hegel insists that implicit conceptual structure, and thus also implicit conceptual activity, permeates all aspects or modes of our mental life. Conceptual activity structures our most basic sentient awareness and emotional affectedness. The following passages from various texts present Hegel's commitment to

the claim that sentient awareness and emotional affection contain implicit conceptual structure.

**Quote 1:** If nature as such, as the physical world, is contrasted with the spiritual sphere, then logic must certainly be said to be the supernatural element which permeates every relationship of man to nature, his sensation, intuition, desire, need, instinct, and simply by so doing transforms it into something human, even though only formally human, into ideas and purposes.<sup>186</sup>

**Quote 2:** If thought is the constitutive substance of external things, it is also the universal substance of what is spiritual. *In all human perception thought is present*; so too thought is universal in all the acts of conception and recollection; in short, in every mental activity, in willing, wishing, and the like. When it is presented in this light, thought has a different part to play from what it has if we speak of a faculty of thought, one among a crowd of other faculties, such as perception, conception, and will, with which it stands on the same level [emphasis added].<sup>187</sup>

These passages raise a number of different issues, though both of them clearly present Hegel's insistence that perception and feeling possess conceptual structure, a structure that arises from the implicit cognitive activity of judgment. In the first passage, Hegel speaks from a standpoint that distinguishes nature and mind in terms of the presence of conceptual structure. Hegel argues that conceptual structure "permeates" all human relationships to the world of nature, relationships that include "sensation, intuition, desire, need," and "instinct." All human sensations, intuitions, desires, needs, and instincts, as distinctly human or mental, possess logical or conceptual structure. This manner of stating the point proves somewhat misleading, since it speaks of logic or thought as something that "transforms" what would otherwise be our merely animal or biological sensations – as well as intuitions, desires, needs, and instincts – into something human.

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<sup>186</sup> *Science of Logic*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>187</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 24Z.

In this passage, Hegel speaks of the distinction between mind and nature in terms of logical structure. He seems to claim that the presence of logical or conceptual structure distinguishes mind from nature – i.e. that mental phenomena possess conceptual structure, and that natural phenomena do not possess such structure. It is this manner of expressing the distinction that leads to the distortions mentioned in the previous paragraph. More often in his philosophy, Hegel states the distinction somewhat differently. More often he claims that *it is not the presence of conceptual structure that differentiates nature from mind, but rather it is (a) the degree to which these conceptual structures are developed, (b) the degree to which they are unified, and most importantly (c) the degree to which they are explicitly conscious that distinguishes mind from nature.* Conceptual structures – the structures of judgment – exist in nature and in mind.<sup>188</sup> In mind, however, these structures attain a consciousness, and through consciousness they become more developed and also more united.

In the following passage, Hegel emphasizes all three of these criteria in his distinction between instinctive acts and intelligent (or free) acts, a distinction that I take to be the same as the distinction between nature and spirit. In other words, I take this passage to describe the process, referred to in Quote 1, by which thought “permeates” and “transforms” the merely natural into the distinctly human.

**Quote 3:** The broad distinction between the instinctive act and the intelligent and free act is that the latter is performed with an awareness of what is being done; when the content of the interest in which one is absorbed is drawn out of its immediate unity with oneself and becomes an independent object of one’s thinking, then it is that spirit begins to be free [i.e. begins to be itself, to be spirit rather than nature], whereas when thinking is an instinctive activity, spirit is enmeshed in the bonds of its categories and is broken up into an infinitely varied

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<sup>188</sup> For a further discussion of the existence of the structures or activities of judgment in nature, see Section 3.3 of Chapter One.

material. Here and there in this mesh there are firm knots which give stability and direction to the life and consciousness of spirit; these knots owe their fixity and power to the simple fact that having been brought before consciousness, they are independent, self-existent Notions of its own essential nature. The most important point for spirit is not only the relation of what it is in itself to what it is actually, but the relation of what it knows itself to be to what it actually is; because spirit is essentially consciousness, this self-knowing is a fundamental determination of its actuality. As impulses the categories are only instinctively active. At first they enter consciousness separately and so are variable and mutually confusing; consequently they afford to mind only a fragmentary and uncertain actuality; the loftier business of logic therefore is to clarify these categories and in them to raise mind to freedom and truth.<sup>189</sup>

This passage explains how mind or spirit raises itself out of nature, how it becomes what it truly is by achieving freedom and truth. In this sense, it provides an excellent sketch of Hegel's theoretical philosophy, which deals with the mind's attainment of truth. It also provides an good sketch of his practical philosophy, which addresses the mind's attainment of freedom. The emphasis of the passage, however, remains on the practical side, since it focuses on the distinction between an "instinctive act" and one that is "intelligent and free."

Both the instinctive act and the act that is free have the same (or at least similar) conceptual structure. The difference does not depend upon the presence of conceptual structure, but rather it depends upon our conscious awareness of what the conceptual structure is. Thus the transformation of an instinctive act into an intelligent and free act consists in the articulation of the implicit rules already imbedded in the act itself. In order to emphasize this, Hegel says that the instinctive act and the intelligent act have the same "content." The content, which is the conceptual structure or the rule that governs the act, becomes conscious when we divest it of its "immediate unity" with our self and

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<sup>189</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 37.



make it “an independent object” of our thinking.<sup>190</sup> This process does not impose conceptual form on the non-conceptual, but rather it makes the *implicit* conceptual structure of the act *explicit*. Hegel further emphasizes the presence of thought or conceptual structure in both acts when he speaks of instinctual action as a state “when thinking is an instinctive activity.” Thus it is not the existence of thought or conceptual structure that distinguishes instinctive acts from free acts, nature from spirit, but rather it is the *mode* in which thought is present that marks the relevant distinction.

Hegel emphasizes this point again in the middle of Quote 3. He says:

**Quote 4:** The most important point for spirit is not only the relation of what it is in itself to what it is actually, but the relation of what it knows itself to be to what it actually is; because spirit is essentially consciousness, this self-knowing is a fundamental determination of its actuality.

Hegel describes two different structures or relations in this passage: first, the relation between *what a thing is in itself* and *what it actually is*; and second, the relation between *what a thing knows itself to be* and *what it actually is*.<sup>191</sup> The first relation characterizes the structure of all genuine things. We have already discussed this relation at great length in Chapters One and Two (see particularly Chapter One, Section 3.3; and Chapter Two, Section 2.3). This relation expresses the basic teleological structure of all objects. This relation is crucial for grasping the structure of all genuine entities. All genuine entities must be grasped both in terms of *what they are* and in terms of *what they strive to be*.

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<sup>190</sup> With regards to perception, rather than instinctual action, Hegel describes the first act by which we distinguish the object from our self as the act of attention. See discussion in Sections 5.3 through 5.9.

<sup>191</sup> In these two relations, the phrase “what it actually is” has two different meanings. In the first phrase, it denotes the thing as it exists in opposition to its telos. In the second phrase, as discussed below, it designates the thing, as it both expresses and fails to express the telos, in opposition to the thing’s conception or representation of itself. Only in the second sense does “what it actually is” correspond to Hegel’s conception of actuality as *Wirklichkeit*. When Hegel says that the actual is rational, and that the rational is actual, he uses the term actual, or *Wirklichkeit*, in the second sense. For a further discussion of this remark and the meaning of reality for Hegel, see Robert Stern’s “Hegel’s Doppelsatz: A Neutral Reading.”

Here Hegel uses the term “in itself” to describe the telos a thing strives to instantiate, and he contrasts this term with what the thing “actually is.” The telos is the conceptual structure of the thing. It is the form the object seeks to instantiate, the rule it seeks to follow. In the present context, the claim about the conceptual structure of instinctive acts simply expresses the claim that instinctive acts already have an inherent telos, an implicit rule they seek to instantiate.

While the first relation states the existence of conceptual structure or teleological norms in all objects or acts, both natural and mental, the second relation provides the feature that distinguishes free acts from instinctive ones – i.e. the feature that distinguishes the mental from the natural. This relation consists in the relationship between *what the thing takes itself to be* and *what the thing actually is*. In one sense, this relation has the same structure as the first, a structure in which both sides of the relation are equally essential. In terms of the first relation, a thing isn’t simply what it is, nor is it simply what it seeks to be. In order to conceive the thing, we must grasp the difference and the convergence between these two related features. Similarly, a mental entity isn’t simply “what it is.” Here I take “what it is” to refer to the entire first relation, not simply to the second member of that relation. So in other words, a mental thing isn’t simply the relation between what it is and what it seeks to be; instead, it is the relation between what it understands itself to be, on the one hand, and the relation between what it is and what it seeks to be, on the other hand.<sup>192</sup> This second relation arises from consciousness, from our ability to make our actions – as well as our emotions, our more immediate sensations, etc. – into an object for our self. Our conscious actions are not simply what they were

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<sup>192</sup> Søren Kierkegaard presents a similar account of mind in *Sickness unto Death*, where he describes the mind or the self as a relation that relates to itself. Of course Kierkegaard’s emphasis on radical freedom and interiority dramatically transform Hegel’s conception.

prior to our cognitive awareness of them, nor are they simply what we cognize them to be. Our actions generally consist in the relation between (1) the relation of their embedded norm and their actuality as it fulfills or fails to fulfill that norm, and (2) our explicit conception or conscious awareness of (a) the general normative principle we take to be guiding the action and (b) the various particulars in which this general normative principle is embedded.

Consciousness – i.e. the ability to make our own actions, intentions, feelings, or sensations an object distinct from our immediate life – presents the fundamental distinction between nature and mind. It is the ability to reflect on conceptual structures and make them explicit that distinguishes us as humans from the merely natural world. It is not, in other words, the existence of conceptual structure itself that distinguishes the mental from the natural, despite what Quote 1 seems to imply.

Before returning to our basic line of argument about the presence of conceptual activity in the most basic forms of sentient awareness and emotional affection, we should note two more things about Hegel's distinction between the natural and the mental. We have already argued that the distinction between the mental and the natural does not rest upon the presence or absence of logical structure. Instead, it rests upon the degree of articulation or consciousness of the conceptual structures present in both the natural and the mental. Consciousness, along with its varying degrees of conceptual articulation, distinguishes the mental from the natural. However, it should be noted that consciousness does not simply present the possibility for the articulation of otherwise implicit conceptual structures. Or rather, articulation is never mere articulation. Instead, articulation always involves transformation, clarification, or distortion. These

possibilities involved in articulation stem, at least in part, from the relational nature of consciousness phenomena, from the fact that such phenomena exist as a complex relation between what they are and what they (consciously) take themselves to be.

Specifically, the conscious articulation of conceptual structures leads to greater diversification or complexity, on the one hand, and also to a higher degree of unity, on the other hand. In the terms discussed in Section 2.4 of Chapter Two, consciousness makes mental entities *trueer* than natural entities. In comparison with natural entities, consciousness allows mental entities to combine a higher degree of complexity in a more developed form of unity. In Quote 3, Hegel makes the synthesizing capacity of consciousness clear. The process of conscious articulation leads to greater unity. In terms of action – i.e. in the specifically practical sphere – consciousness leads to a greater unity and coherence of our desires, instincts, emotions, etc. Prior to the development of conscious articulation, Hegel describes spirit – i.e. mental life – as “enmeshed in the bonds of its categories and broken up into an infinitely varied material.” Later on in Quote 3, he continues this theme: “As impulses the categories are only instinctively active. At first they enter consciousness separately and so are variable and mutually confusing.” In both of these passages, the term “categories” simply refers to the conceptual structures or rules imbedded in instinctive actions, impulses, desires, etc. Hegel makes two points about the relation of mind to these categories in their instinctual form. First, at this level, mind is captive to these conceptual structures. It does not employ and shape the various implicit rules of its affective and active life towards its own ultimate considered ends, but rather it is blindly torn in different directions by these

inarticulate norms or categories. At the instinctual and not yet fully conscious level, the mind is “enmeshed in the bonds of its categories.”

Second, Hegel describes the presentation of these various instinctual categories to the mind as the chaos of “infinitely varied material,” as the conflict of “variable and mutually confusing” instinctual impulses. The mind must become explicitly aware of the implicit norms in its various instinctual acts, urges, desires, and emotions, for only through such awareness does the mind become capable of ordering and harmonizing its practical life. In Quote 3, Hegel describes this process of articulation, harmonization, and increasing stability in the following terms: “Here and there in this mesh there are firm knots which give stability and direction to the life and consciousness of spirit; these knots and nods owe their fixity and power to the simple fact that having been brought before consciousness, they are independent, self-existent Notions of its own essential nature.” The conscious articulation of certain implicit rules and norms lends stability to our mental life. It allows us to recognize which urges and instincts can be harmonized, and which stand in inevitable conflict. It allows us to make decisions between different ways of harmonizing this plurality. It allows us to achieve a greater degree of unity in our practical life, a degree of unity that facilitates diversity through its harmony.

In the theoretical side of mental existence, consciousness facilitates a similar process. At more immediate or less explicit levels of experience, the world presents us with a vast array of sensations, all of which already contain some minimal level of conceptual structure. As we consciously articulate the structures and relations involved in these sensations, our experience becomes more orderly and unified. Ultimately, this ordering and unifying of the world makes us aware of more, not less, detail and diversity.

So the unifying function of consciousness doesn't replace diversity with unity. Instead, it increases diversity and unity. To draw on terms from Chapter Two again, consciousness makes mental life truer.<sup>193</sup>

Our discussion of Quote 1 makes it clear that all mental phenomena – including sensations, intuitions, desires, needs, and instincts – already contain logical or conceptual structure. Stated differently, they already involve the structure and the activity of judgment. While Quote 1 makes it seem as though only mental phenomena possess conceptual structure, our careful examination of Quote 3 should make it clear that both natural and mental phenomena possess logical structure. It is the conscious articulation of conceptual structure, or at least the potential for conscious articulation of such structure, that distinguishes mind from nature.

If the discussion of Quote 3 does not sufficiently establish the existence of conceptual structures in the natural world, Quote 2 makes the point abundantly clear.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> In the following passage, which will be discussed further in section 5.6, Hegel emphasizes the relationship between unifying conceptual activity and the presence of diversity to the mind. Hegel says: “This state of indifference is, to a certain extent, a relapse into a state of barbarism. The savage attends to practically nothing; he lets everything pass him by without fixing his attention on it. Only by training the mind does attention acquire strength and fulfill its function. The botanist, for example, observes incomparably more in a plant than one ignorant of botany does in the same thing” (*Philosophy of Mind*, 448Z). In this passage, Hegel claims that an increase in the conceptual unity of experience is, at the same time, a development and an enrichment of the diversity of experience. Thus Hegel rejects the common Romantic opposition between the richness or diversity of immediate experience and the arid or empty abstractions of thought. In response to such views, Hegel argues again and again that thought needn't be abstract. This Romantic dichotomy rests upon the mistaken notion that articulation or difference is immediately given to us, that the mind simply unifies what is given as an articulated plurality. Contrary to this, Hegel argues that prior to the basic conceptual activities involved in the act of attention, nothing is given to us. Such minimal experience approximates a blur. Hegel contrasts this relatively “immediate” experience of the world with the experience of the botanist. The conceptual activities of the botanist actually allow her to perceive more diversity or detail. Conceptual articulation produces greater unity and greater diversity, because it always consists in both articulation and unification. There can't be unification without articulation. Nor can there be articulation without unification.

<sup>194</sup> Consider also the following passage from the *Science of Logic*. Speaking of “the Notion,” or conceptual structure, Hegel says: “the Notion is to be regarded not as the act of the self-conscious understanding, not as the subjective understanding, but as the Notion in its own absolute character which constitutes a stage of nature as well as of spirit. Life, or organic nature, is the stage of nature at which the

In Quote 2 Hegel argues from the existence of thought or conceptual structure in the natural world to the existence of such structures in even the lowest levels of mental life. The first sentence of the quote reads: “If thought is the constitutive substance of external things, it is also the universal substance of what is spiritual.” Just prior to this passage, Hegel argued – or perhaps just suggested – that thought is in fact the substance of external things. In the paragraphs preceding this passage, he describes nature “as the system of unconscious thought,” thus further supporting the claim that *consciousness*, not *thought* or *conceptual structure*, differentiates the mental from the natural. In these paragraphs, Hegel also expresses his approval for the “ancient saying” that “*νοῦς* governs the world.” Given the nature of these preceding paragraphs, the “if” in the first sentence of Quote 2 might more accurately be replaced with the word “since.” Since nature itself contains conceptual structure, it follows that even the lowest levels of mental life contain some conceptual structure.

Our common conception of judgment assumes that the acts of judgment work upon differentiated material presented prior to judgment, material presented to cognition by perceptual awareness. Contrary to this assumption, Hegel argues that there is nothing in the mind, or even in all of nature, that exists prior to judgment. Judgment – or basic conceptual structure – permeates everything that exists, and without such conceptual structure there is nothing. Moreover, insofar as we try to conceive matter as it would exist prior to judgment or conceptual articulation, we should conceive it as a manifold

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Notion emerges, but as blind, as unaware of itself and unthinking; the Notion that is self-conscious and thinks pertains solely to spirit. But the logical form of the Notion is independent of its non-spiritual, and also of its spiritual, shapes” (p. 586). “The logical form of the Notion” – i.e. conceptual structure – exists in nature and in the mind. Conscious awareness of this conceptual structure, not its mere existence, provides the main differentiating feature between nature, which lacks such awareness, and the mind, which possesses it.

rather than as a discrete plurality. We should, in other words, conceive it as a undifferentiated unity that requires differentiation, not as an aggregate plurality that requires unification.

### **5.3) No Discrete Plurality Given Prior to Judgment: A Defense**

In the “Psychology” section of the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel argues that the most minimal level of perceptual awareness already involves implicit conceptual activity, and that, therefore, nothing is given prior to the act of judgment. Moreover, he argues that the most basic cognitive activity, the activity that structures even the most minimal perceptual awareness, includes analysis.<sup>195</sup> The cognitive activities that structure perception include both synthesis and analysis. On Hegel’s view, these two acts are essentially related. Synthesis always presupposes analysis, and analysis already includes an implicit conception of the whole as it will be reconstructed by synthesis. While synthesis and analysis are essentially related, there is a certain sense in which analysis has priority over synthesis. Insofar as we can think or speak of that which is prior to judgment, we should conceive it as an undifferentiated unity that must be analyzed, not as a plurality that must be synthesized.

So Hegel holds that (1) even the most basic levels of perceptual awareness involve implicit cognitive activity, and that (2) insofar as we try to conceive or speak of that which precedes this basic level of perceptual awareness, we must conceive it as a

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<sup>195</sup> For a discussion of the differences between “perception” and “sensation,” see Section 5.5. Sensation exists prior to perception and independently from the judgmental activity of the conscious mind. As such, however, it is nothing for the mind. Awareness only begins with perception.



unity to be analyzed, not as a plurality to be synthesized. Thus judgment does not rest upon a given, articulated plurality. Basic perceptual awareness does not present us with a given (pre-judgmental) articulated plurality. Moreover, if we try to conceive what is given pre-consciously to the mind prior to the acts of judgment that make perceptual awareness possible, even this pre-conscious given cannot be construed as an articulated plurality.

Hegel defines the most basic act that produces awareness as the act of attention (*Aufmerksamkeit*), and he claims that apart “from such attention there is nothing for the mind.”<sup>196</sup> Hegel describes the act of attention in three different ways. On the surface, these different accounts of the process may not seem related. Our first task, therefore, is to clarify the relation between these three different accounts. This clarification should help us to see (a) that even the most minimal levels of perceptual awareness require an explicitly cognitive act of attention, and (b) that attention ultimately rests upon an act of division.

#### **5.4) The First Description of Attention**

Hegel first describes attention as the process whereby we *distinguish* the object from our self, and, at the same time, relate it to our self. In this first account of attention, we see the basic structure of judgment. This should not be surprising, since the structures of judgment simply present the basic structures of thought. Here the basic structure of judgment does not reflect the structure of an object, but rather it grounds the more basic

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<sup>196</sup> *Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 448.

distinction (and relation) between the subject and the object. Hegel describes the basic acts of attention as follows:

**Quote Five:** The unity of mind with the object, which in sensation and feeling is immediate and therefore undeveloped, is still mindless. Therefore, intelligence puts an end to the simplicity of sensation, determines the sensed object as negative towards it, and thus separates itself from the object, yet at the same time posits it in its separateness as its own. Only by this dual activity of removing and restoring the unity between myself and the object do I come to apprehend the content of sensation. This takes place, to begin with, in attention.<sup>197</sup>

In the first sentence, Hegel describes the state prior to the acts of attention as the “immediate” and “undeveloped” unity of mind with the object. This is a state of “sensation” or “feeling,” a state that Hegel describes as “mindless.” In order to properly understand this first sentence, we must distinguish between how things are *for the mind* and how things are *in themselves*. Prior to the act of attention, the states of sensation or feeling are nothing *for the mind*. The most minimal awareness of the feeling or sensation requires attention. However, sensation and feeling exist prior to the act of attention.

Prior to the act of attention, sensation and feeling would exist *for the mind* as pure simplicities, and as pure simplicities, they are *nothing for the mind*. However, even at this point, they are not simple in themselves. In themselves, feeling and sensation contain a relatively developed structure that includes an articulated plurality within unity. However, the mind cannot recognize them as such until it has articulated them for itself, until it has performed the acts of attention. Similarly, the acts of attention are the acts whereby the mind distinguishes the objective from the subjective. Prior to these acts, the object is distinct from the subject, though mind does not recognize this distinction.

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<sup>197</sup> *Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 448Z. Shortly after this passage, Hegel expresses the same point again. He says: “Therefore, in attention there necessarily occurs a division and a unity of subjectivity and objectivity.” Here we see, once again, the problem of the unity of identity and difference. In order to grasp either subjectivity or objectivity, we must grasp them both in their “difference” *and* in their “unity.”

In Hegel's description of the acts of attention, we see the recapitulation of the moments of judgment as previously described in Sections 5.3 through 5.5 of Chapter Three. Speaking from the standpoint of how things are *for the mind*, we begin with the "immediate" or "undifferentiated" unity of subject and object. This pure or immediate unity is nothing for the mind. It is, as Hegel says, mindless. As this pure unity, it precedes even the most basic forms of awareness. Second, we have the act of division, the act that distinguishes the object from the subject. Third, and as Hegel says, "at the same time," we have the act that relates or unites the subject and the object. This phrase, "at the same time," expresses the essential relatedness of the process, the fact that the analysis always presupposes some implicit principle of connectedness.

### **5.5) The Second Description of Attention**

Hegel also describes the acts of attention as the process by which the mind "defines the content of sensation as something that is out of itself, projects it into time and space."<sup>198</sup> Or, as he states the point shortly thereafter, in the act of attention "sensations are made spatial and temporal."<sup>199</sup> In addition to distinguishing and relating the subject and the object, the acts of attention also present the process whereby sensation receives a spatial and temporal structure. In interpreting this description of attention, we must once again observe the distinction between *how things are in themselves* and *how they are for the mind*. This passage does not describe how space and time are in

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<sup>198</sup> *Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 448.

<sup>199</sup> *Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 448Z.

themselves. In other words, it does not describe some process by which the mind first “creates” space, time, and the external world by “projecting” its sensations out of itself. Here Hegel’s language seems somewhat misleading, particularly his use of the word “hinauswerfen” – or as it is translated here, “projection” – to describe the process by which sensations receive a spatial and temporal structure. However, Hegel is not describing the creation of space and time from out of the subject, but rather he is describing the acts by which the mind first becomes aware of the structure of space and time, the acts through which space and time first come to exist *for the mind*.

In its relation to the world, the mind is always active. It does not passively receive anything from the world. More dramatically, Hegel claims that it is not causally affected by the world.<sup>200</sup> In awareness, perception, and cognition, the mind “reaches out”

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<sup>200</sup> Hegel makes this point repeatedly throughout his discussion of psychology. For instance, he says: “Only soul [the object of anthropology] is passive, but free mind is essentially active, productive” (*Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 444Z). And: “A host of other phrases used of intelligence, e.g. that it receives and accepts impressions from outside, that ideas arise through the causal operations of external things upon it, etc., belong to a point of view utterly alien to the mental level or the position of philosophical study” (*Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 445). These passages raise two absolutely crucial questions. First, what does it mean to say that the mind is essentially active and productive, that it is never passive? Here there are two options. First, we might interpret this as the claim that the mind or subject creates the world, and that the apparently external world is just a projection of the mind. Second, we might interpret this claim as an expression of the way that the mind is intentionally directed at the world, as an attempt to take seriously the claim that the mind “reaches out to the world.” Hegel says that the mind does not receive “impressions from outside, and that ideas do not arise “from the causal operations of external things upon it.” We might interpret these claims in the tradition of Berkeleyan Idealism, as (1) the acceptance of “ideas” in the mind, but as (2) the rejection of the claim that these ideas are caused by external objects. Alternatively, we might interpret these claims as a more wholesale rejection of the so-called way of ideas, as a rejection of an account of perception and knowledge in terms of the possession of ideas that come from, and ideally correspond to, external objects. The general line of interpretation presented in this dissertation clearly endorses the second interpretation of these remarks. On this view, perception and cognition consist in the *activities* by which the mind reaches out and grasps the world. Thus the mind is always active in its relation to the world. The second major interpretive question about this passage involves Hegel’s distinction between the soul and the mind, between anthropology and psychology. Hegel clearly denies that the category of causality applies to the mind. Reasons, not causes, present the principle relational terms that unite mental phenomena. For instance, one belief does not *cause* another belief, but rather it provides a *reason* for it. Similarly, my memory of seeing beer in the fridge does not *cause* my belief that there is beer in the fridge, but rather it provides a *reason* for that belief. In these terms, the question about the relationship between the soul and the mind, between anthropology and psychology, becomes a question about the relationship between explanations in terms of causality and

to the world. This means that the mind does not become aware of the structure of objects through mere passive affectedness. Instead, the mind actively grasps the structure of objects when it recapitulates the same structure through the acts of judgment. In terms more directly relevant to the present discussion, this means that the mind does not passively perceive the structures of space and time. The mind must grasp or recapitulate these structures through its own activity. In one sense, the mind must construct space and time. In order to think space and time, and in order to conceive of objects as spatial and temporal, the mind must articulate the structures of space and time. However, this constructive activity does not *create* space and time. More generally, Hegel's remarks about the fundamentally active nature of mind do not express his commitment to some process whereby the mind creates the world of its experience. Instead, such language expresses his commitment to the view that awareness and knowledge involve the active self-directedness of the mind towards the world.

Hegel makes this point clearly when he warns against a subjective interpretation of his remarks about space and time. He says:

**Quote Six:** But when we said that what is sensed receives from the intuiting mind the form of the spatial and temporal, this statement must not be understood to mean that space and time are only subjective forms.<sup>201</sup>

Space and time exist prior to the acts of attention. These mental acts do not create space and time, though they do articulate these structures, thereby making the structures evident

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explanations in terms of reasons. Are these two kinds of explanations simply different kinds of explanations of the same domain, or are they descriptions of domains or partial regions that are different?

<sup>201</sup> *Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 448Z.

*for the mind.*<sup>202</sup> In other words, prior to the acts of attention, space and time are nothing *for the mind.*

### **5.6) The Third Description of Attention**

Hegel's third description of attention focuses on a more obvious or intuitive sense of the word. In this more intuitive sense, attention is the process whereby the mind focuses on something by abstracting from the fullness of what is more immediately given. Here again we have an act of distinction or analysis, an act whereby the mind isolates something from everything else that is given. Our description of this act of analysis makes it sound as though the act abstracts from an already richly articulated plurality. In other words, rather than taking us from an immediate, united, givenness to the plurality produced by distinction, it seems that this act takes us away from plurality. As we naturally describe the act of attention, it seems to involve a turning away from the richness of experience, a turning towards some isolated, abstract feature.

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<sup>202</sup> Shortly after proclaiming the objective reality of space and time, Hegel makes a further point, one that illustrates the basic line of argument developed in Chapter Two. He says: "However, the answer to those who stupidly attach quite extraordinary importance to the question as to the reality of space and time, is that space and time are extremely meager and superficial determinations, consequently, that things obtain very little from these forms and the loss of them, were this in some way possible, would therefore amount to very little. Cognitive thinking does not halt at these forms; it apprehends things in their Notion in which space and time are contained as ideal moments. Just as in external Nature space and time, by the dialectic of the Notion immanent in them, raise themselves into matter as their truth, so free intelligence is the self-existent dialect of these forms of immediate asunderness" (*Philosophy of Mind*, paragraph 448Z). Space and time have a relatively low degree of reality. In terms drawn from Chapter Two, they present a relatively low level of truth, since in space and time the unity of identity and difference presents itself in a very low level of development. Both space and time present the lowest possible degree of difference in the lowest possible kind of unity. For instance, the unity of space consists in the existing togetherness of the spaces. Of course, this isn't simply the conjunction of all spaces, but the unity of space as a whole that makes all particular spaces possible. Similarly, the differences in space simply consist in the potential for differentiation or divisibility. In this passage Hegel also employs the locution, "X is the truth of Y," when he claims that matter is the truth of space and time. Here he claims that matter contains a slightly more developed form of the unity of identity and difference.

Ultimately, the misleading nature of this description simply points to the difficulty of cognizing the original acts that divide the immediate unity. In Section 5.5 of Chapter Three, we saw that our awareness begins with the distinctions produced by the act of division, not with the act itself. We are “immediately” aware of the plurality the act produces, but we are not “immediately” aware of the act of analysis that originally produces this plurality. We can only cognize the act once we have synthesized the given distinctions. We cannot describe or cognize the original acts of division as they exist in their immediacy, for in their immediacy they depend upon an implicit grasp of the whole. By contrast, our articulation of the division rests upon an articulated (divided and synthesized) conception of the whole.

In various places, Hegel sees this inevitable distortion as a common source of animosity against abstract and analytical thought. As we cognize it, analysis or abstraction (an act that derives from distinction) take us away from the richness of the whole to the relative poverty of some abstracted part. Again, this distorted conception of analysis arises from the fact that we cannot cognize the act of analysis without cognizing the unity it divides, and we cannot cognize the unity it divides without construing it as already synthesized. Finally, we cannot construe the unity as synthesized unless we also construe it as already analyzed. Thus our cognition of analysis fails to capture the original conditions under which the act occurred.

If analysis really did consist in an isolation that moved the mind away from the rich plurality of an immediately given experience, then thought would in fact impoverish our experience. However, Hegel argues that this view rests upon a fundamental distortion. In order to illustrate this distortion, he compares a “savage” with a botanist:

**Quote Seven:** This state of indifference [i.e. a state prior to the analytical acts of attention] is, to a certain extent, a relapse into a state of barbarism. The savage attends to practically nothing; he lets everything pass him by without fixing his attention on it. Only by training the mind does attention acquire strength and fulfill its function. The botanist, for example, observes incomparable more in a plant than one ignorant of botany does in the same time. The same thing is naturally true in regard to all other things. A man of great intelligence and education has at once a complete intuition of the matter in hand; with him sensation bears throughout the character of recollection.

In this passage, Hegel criticizes the primitivism inherent in certain critiques of analytical thought, critiques that construe analysis as a process that impoverishes the immediate richness of experience. The sentence about botany provides an illustration that supports Hegel's conception of the relation between analysis and the content of experience. As she walks in the woods, the trained botanist sees more than does the person not trained in botany. The botanist learns to analyze, break down, and identify the various kinds of plants and the various parts that distinguish these different kinds. These analytical capacities inform or enrich her "immediate" experience, providing it with a greater fullness of detail. When someone who does not possess knowledge of botany walks through the woods, she merely sees a lot of trees. Perhaps she notices the difference between the deciduous trees and the evergreens. Or maybe she sees the difference between the trees that form the upper canopy and those that form the lower story. These are relatively basic distinctions, however.

Hegel says the conclusions drawn from the example of botany apply to all other objects. Thus he argues that we must generalize this lesson. The non-botanist still has a rich experience as she walks through the woods. Maybe she listens to various birdcalls. Or maybe she remembers an earlier conversation. In both cases, however, it is only her analytical skills – her ability to distinguish between bird sounds or the phonetics of the



English language – that provide her experience with content.<sup>203</sup> Without any such analytical skills, Hegel plausibly argues that her experience would be an undifferentiated blur. She would be like the “savage” who attends to practically nothing, who therefore experiences practically nothing. This example forcefully illustrates the role of cognitive – particularly analytical – capacities in even our most basic levels of awareness.

### 5.7) Synthesis of the Three Descriptions

Hegel describes the act of attention as (1) an act that distinguishes the object from the subject, while also relating them, as (2) an act that first articulates or constitutes the structure of space and time *for the mind*, and as (3) an awareness of some object (in the loosest sense) or feature of reality in distinction from other objects or features.<sup>204</sup> Ultimately, our ability to focus our attention on something consists in a complex series of largely implicit and interrelated acts. These three different descriptions of attention describe various sub-acts that constitute the unified act of attention. The term “sub-act” expresses the sense in which these various acts are essentially interrelated and interdependent.

We can present the relation between these three sub-acts in terms of a modified transcendental argument, one that includes certain hermeneutic elements. The third

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<sup>203</sup> Language presents another apt example of Hegel’s point. When we listen to a completely foreign language, we are not able to pick out distinct words. It even proves difficult to pick out distinct or repeated sounds. As a result, the sounds flow by us without distinction, and if we do not carefully focus on them, they simply slide into the background of our consciousness. Here the analytical ability to pick out distinct sounds and words enriches – rather than impoverishes – our experience.

<sup>204</sup> In what follows, I will use the term “thing” in the loosest possible sense. As such, the term simply refers to anything – to any facet of reality – that can become the focal point of our attention. Here we can contrast this general sense with the previously given definition of a genuine thing. The existence of a genuine thing, as unified and distinct entity, does not depend upon the cognitive activity of the mind. In other words, the principle of individuation and unity that constitute the thing do not derive from our mental activities. Taken in the loosest sense possible, as it is here, the term “thing” refers to anything that can be considered *by us* as one or distinct.

description, or the third sub-act, presents the most intuitive or basic meaning of attention. In order for some thing or facet of reality to exist *for the mind*, the mind must focus its attention on the thing or the facet. This act of attention involves the *distinction* of this thing from its background or environment. The second and third sub-acts present the necessary conditions for this more basic act. In order to focus our mind on something as distinct from its environment, we must have a basic sense of the spatial and temporal continuity of the thing. In distinguishing the thing from its environment, we must distinguish it from the space it does not occupy. This act also implicitly involves determining the space it does occupy. Thus we must be able to conceive the thing in relation to the structure of space. Moreover, since we cannot become aware of something that lacks temporal persistence, we must be able to identify the temporal boundaries of the thing. In order to be able to focus on a thing, we must be able to place it in a spatial and temporal network.<sup>205</sup>

In order to place something in a spatial and temporal network, we must distinguish between the subject and the object, a distinction that, in this context, relates to the difference between two kinds of transformations. There are two distinct kinds of transformation that occur in our experience. First, there are transformations in the object

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<sup>205</sup> Of course we can focus on things that have a temporal but not a spatial existence. In such cases, Hegel might follow Kant's argument in the Refutation of Idealism. Kant argues that our "consciousness" of our selves as "determined in time" ultimately depends upon the existence of external objects in a spatial framework (B275). Now the starting point for this argument can be construed either as (a) the mere awareness or consciousness of mental states as they pass in time, or (b) as the objective determinations of the temporal existence and the mental states in it – i.e. as a kind of knowledge. Regardless of Kant's argumentative strategy, Hegel might claim that the mere awareness of the passing of mental states in time already presupposes the implicit objective determinations of the temporal sequence. These, in turn, rest upon the existence and persistence of objects in a spatial framework. If this basic outline of an argument works, then Hegel could argue that the possibility of acts of attention focused on merely temporal entities ultimately rest upon other acts of attention that are directed towards spatial entities. In other words, merely temporal forms of awareness are ultimately dependent upon forms of awareness that are both spatial and temporal.

of experience. These are changes in the object or in the world. Second, there are transformations in our relation to the objects in the world.<sup>206</sup> Our experience of even a minimally unified spatial framework depends upon our ability to distinguish between these two kinds of transformations.

A relatively stable spatial framework requires relatively stable objects. We don't directly perceive or conceive space. Instead, we perceive and conceive spatial frameworks in terms of relatively stable objects that we take as fixed points of reference. Thus if we cannot pick out relatively stable objects, we cannot determine spatial relations. If we fail to distinguish between transformations in the objects and transformations in our relation to the objects, we will be unable to identify any stable objects. As we move through the world, our relation to objects changes constantly. Things appear bigger as we approach them. They appear smaller as we move away from them. Moreover, they change their shape as we move around them, as we view them from different angles. Prior to the distinction between *transformations in the object* and *transformation in our relation to the object*, there are no stable objects for the mind. Prior to this distinction, the "object" changes every time we change our relation to it. Or, conversely, the object is immutable, and only our relation to it changes. However, once

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<sup>206</sup> Kant presents this distinction in the Second Analogy. For instance, he says: "The apprehension of the manifold of appearances is always successive. The representations of the parts succeed one another. Whether they also succeed one another is a second point for reflection, which is not contained in the first" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A189/B235). In the form of a slogan, a *change in awareness* is not always an *awareness of change*. Here Kant presents this distinction as a necessary condition for the determination of an objective temporal sequence. However, as the example of the house makes clear, this distinction also provides the basis for becoming aware of objective determinations in space. Speaking of the house, Kant says: "the apprehension of the manifold in the appearances of a house that stands before me is successive. Now the question is whether the manifold of this house itself is also successive, which certainly no one will concede" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A191/B236). In this case, the changes in awareness do not constitute an awareness of change. This recognition provides the basis for determining the house as an object with a stable existence in space.

we make the distinction between transformations in the object and transformations in our relation to the object, we have the basis for identifying stable objects that serve as the basis for determining a stable spatial framework.<sup>207</sup> This distinction between transformations in the object and transformations in our relationship to the object requires (or simply is) one kind of awareness of the difference between the subject and the object, of the distinction between how the object appears to me and how it is itself.<sup>208</sup>

This transcendental argument has a hermeneutic element. Among other things, this means that the direction of dependence runs both ways. In other words, our ability to distinguish between subject and object depends upon our ability to articulate the basic structures of space and time. Similarly, our ability to articulate the structures of space and time depends upon our ability to focus our attention on distinct objects. The hermeneutic element also stems from the nature of these various acts as sub-acts. These acts are essentially inter-dependent. This interdependence displays the basic structure we observed in the two primary moments of judgment. Our discussion of judgment showed that the act of synthesis depends upon the act of analysis, and that the act of analysis depends upon the act of synthesis. In regards to these three sub-acts that constitute attention, we see a similar kind of inter-dependence. None of these sub-acts can be considered basic or fundamental. We cannot cognize the structure of any of these sub-acts in isolation from the others.

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<sup>207</sup> This argument doesn't prove that there *must* be stable objects. In other words, this argument doesn't rule out the possibility of a world without stable objects, a world in which we could not focus our attention on anything.

<sup>208</sup> The difference between the subject and the object can be specified in many different ways. As Hegel often points out, the meaning of these terms is highly dependent upon context. However, the basic difference here presents one example of the distinction between subject and object.

## 5.8) No Discrete Plurality Given Prior to Judgment: Summary of the Defense

Hegel's account of attention highlights the various complex cognitive activities implicitly involved in even the most basic forms of awareness.<sup>209</sup> It demonstrates that we cannot draw a sharp distinction between perception as process of passive reception and judgment as a process in which we actively engage. In the most explicit judgments, we are consciously aware of engaging in an activity. However, the activities of judgment also occur at more implicit levels, where they occur without our awareness that we are engaging in any activity. This shows that we are not conscious or aware of any discrete plurality prior to the act of judgment.

Hegel's account of attention also shows that we cannot even *conceive* the mind's first approach to some pre-judgmental and preconscious strata as the application of judgment to a discrete plurality. Insofar as it makes sense to speak of reconstructing the preconscious level where the first acts of judgment occur, we must conceive the first cognitive act as the division of an undifferentiated unity. Since we can't conceive an undifferentiated unity, we can't truly cognize the first act of division as it is in itself. Instead, we cognize the first division in relation to a more highly articulated conception of the unity it divides. In other words, our inability to cognize undifferentiated unity forces us to misconstrue the first act of analysis as an act that abstracts from an already

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<sup>209</sup> One might argue that there are still more basic forms of awareness that Hegel has not addressed – loud bangs, flashes of light, etc. One might insist that basic awareness of such things does not involve the kind of conceptual activity that Hegel attributes to acts of attention. We don't focus our attention on these things, but rather they force themselves upon us. This is tricky issue, though two lines of response remain open to Hegel. First, he might argue that our awareness of such momentary events is parasitic on the more robust kinds of awareness he describes in his account of attention. An awareness of such momentary events depends upon our ability to distinguish them from what came before and what came after. This, in turn, requires a sense of the structure of time, which in turn requires a sense of persistent objects in space. Even if this line of argument proves unhelpful, Hegel might also suggest that such fleeting experiences are not the sort of thing that could ground knowledge (or judgments), and thus it is irrelevant for our discussion of the basis of judgment.

given differentiated plurality. However, as Hegel's discussion of the botanist aptly illustrates, our cognitive acts must first differentiate an undifferentiated unity.

Thus Hegel's discussion of attention shows that we can neither perceive nor conceive a discrete plurality that exists for the mind prior to judgment.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> This statement requires a number of careful clarifications. A discrete plurality exists prior to the mental acts of human minds. We *can* conceive this possibility. However, there are two things we can't conceive. First, we can't conceive a discrete plurality without any judgment or conceptual activity. However, the conceptual activities of judgment exist in the world. They are the active forms through which things determine themselves. So there is no discrete plurality prior to judgment, but there is discrete plurality prior to human judgment. Second, we can't conceive the approach of our mind to the discrete plurality in the world except as the approach to an undifferentiated unity. Even though there is a discrete plurality in the world prior to human judgment, human judgment can only approach this discrete plurality as an undifferentiated unity. There is only differentiated or discrete plurality *for the mind* insofar as the mind has determined these distinctions for itself.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE UNITY OF IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE:

#### HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL SOURCES

##### 1) Introduction

In Chapter One I examined Hegel's presentation of the structure of the will in paragraphs five through seven of the *Philosophy of Right*, a presentation that describes the will as (1) the unity of the universal and the particular, as (2) the unity of the infinite and the finite, and as (3) the unity of indeterminacy and determinacy. I argued that these formulations present the will as one of the highest instantiations of the "notion," a term Hegel uses to designate the structure of genuine objects or, as he puts it in the "Preface" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the substance conceived as subject.<sup>211</sup> In Chapter Two I further characterized the notion in terms of the phrase, "the unity of identity and difference." Carefully examining Hegel's claim that the "truth is complete only in the unity of identity and difference," I argued that the phrase, "the unity of identity and difference," presents the enfolded telos of all objects and of Hegel's philosophy.

The phrase, "the unity of identity and difference," presents the most basic teleological structure of all objects. Hegel describes these structures in increasingly complex ways as his philosophy progresses from objects that are less true to those that are more so. Ultimately, the terms "universal," "infinite," and "indeterminacy" present

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<sup>211</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 10.

more developed forms of the original term “identity,” while the terms “particular,” “finite,” and “determinate” present more developed forms of the term “difference.” Thus Hegel’s characterization of the structure of the will presents a highly articulated form of the enfolded telos that defines his philosophy and the structure of all genuine objects.

As the enfolded telos of Hegel’s philosophy and all genuine objects, the phrase “the unity of identity and difference,” presents a problem or paradox. Hegel’s philosophy consists in a series of increasingly successful attempts to resolve this paradox. Each attempt leads to a more complex reformulation of the problem. Similarly, the objects in the world itself present increasingly successful attempts to resolve this paradox. In Chapters Three and Four I provided two examples of this paradox – namely, (1) the nature of genuine change, and (2) the structure of judgment. In order to conceive the nature of genuine change and the structure of judgment, we must grasp the *unity* that grounds or essentially relates the moments of identity and difference that characterize these phenomena. Both of these phenomena point towards the structure of the object as itself a kind of unity that includes identity and difference.

My interpretation assumes that the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” plays an absolutely central role in Hegel’s philosophy. It also assumes that this phrase describes a wide range of apparently unrelated philosophical problems. To state these assumptions in the strongest possible form, one that goes beyond the claims made in the preceding chapters, we might say that, on Hegel’s view, *all philosophical problems present various manifestations of one central problem – the problem of the unity of*



*identity and difference*. In other words, the problematic relationship between identity and difference presents *the* problem of philosophy.<sup>212</sup>

In the first four chapters of this dissertation, I have not provided much *direct* textual evidence to demonstrate the centrality of the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” within Hegel’s philosophy. I have provided a fair amount of indirect evidence. I have, for instance, cited the precedent of the British Hegelians, who placed variations of this phrase at the center of their philosophical systems. F.H. Bradley and A.E. Taylor developed interpretations and sympathetic reconstructions of Hegel’s philosophy that demonstrate how a number of Hegelian themes can very usefully be organized in terms of the problem of the unity of identity and difference, or in terms of what they describe as the problem of “identity in difference.”

Chapter Two constructs a basic framework for interpreting Hegel’s philosophy in terms of the unity of identity and difference, and Chapters Three and Four show how this framework and this phrase help us to make sense of Hegel’s discussion of judgment. The plausibility of this overall interpretation provides further *indirect* evidence for the centrality of the problematic of the unity of identity and difference in Hegel’s philosophy.

The preceding chapters also provide some *direct* evidence for the importance of this problem. In Chapter Two, for instance, I examined what I take to be a central claim in Hegel’s philosophy – namely, the claim that “the truth is complete only in the unity of identity and difference.” Additionally, the examination of the “contradiction” in the

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<sup>212</sup> The centrality of the problem of the unity of identity and difference can be seen in Hegel’s claim, in the *Differenzschrift*, that the basic opposition between identity and difference underlies (or expresses itself) in the oppositions between “spirit and matter, soul and body, faith and reason, freedom and necessity, etc.” as well as “reason and sensibility, intelligence and nature” (*Werke* 2, p. 21). Hegel makes a similar claim in *Glauben und Wissen*, where he says that this opposition presents itself in oppositions between “spirit and world, soul and body, I and nature, etc.” (*Werke* 2, p. 302). It is worth noting the “etc.” that Hegel adds at the end of each list of oppositional terms.

structure of judgment, in Chapters Three and Four, showed how the structure of judgment rests upon the unity of the sense in which the subject *is* the predicate (identity), and the sense in which the subject *is not* the predicate (difference). In the context of the structure of judgment, I showed how the problem of the unity of identity and difference can be restated as (a) the problem of the unity of connection and distinction and as (b) the problem of the unity of synthesis and analysis. These reformulations of the phrase helped to forge further connections between Hegel's text and the central phrase of my interpretation, "the unity of identity and difference."

Chapters One through Four presented a systematic reconstruction, an explanation, and at least a partial defense of Hegel's ontology in terms of the phrase, "the unity of identity and difference." In contrast to the explanatory and justificatory function of these chapters, this chapter has a more straightforwardly exegetical function. It will demonstrate (1) the central role that the unity of identity and difference plays in Hegel's philosophy, particularly in his earlier essays from the Jena period.<sup>213</sup> It will also illustrate (2) the way that Hegel formulates a vast range of problems in terms of this phrase.<sup>214</sup>

Section Two will briefly examine Hegel and Schelling's conception of the absolute in relation to identity and difference. In the essays discussed in this chapter, Hegel's emphases on certain phrases, such as "identity," "difference," "unity," and

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<sup>213</sup> The essays examined in this chapter were all published between 1801 and 1803.

<sup>214</sup> In contrast to the previous chapters, this chapter will leave many of Hegel's terms more or less "untranslated." This is not to say that I will leave the terms in German, but rather that I will not seek to clarify each term before proceeding. The chapters in the body of the dissertation attempted to express Hegel's theses and his various arguments with the highest possible degree of clarity and precision. While this procedure has many advantages, it often at least partially obscures the relation to the text. By contrast, this chapter seeks to connect a number of hypothesis and themes from the previous chapters with a host of terminological variations in Hegel's texts. Often this has required me to write a bit like Hegel, to introduce a host of terms without specifying their exact meaning, and to present claims without providing the otherwise requisite justification.

“plurality,” clearly demonstrates the influence of Schelling upon Hegel. At the same time, as I argue in Section Two, there are a number of important differences between the positions of Schelling and Hegel, differences that can be seen as early as 1801. Section Three will examine a few key passages from Jacobi’s work, *Über das Unternehmen des Kritizismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen*.<sup>215</sup> In these passages, Jacobi identifies the relationship between unity and plurality – or synthesis and analysis – as *the* central problem or mystery of philosophy.<sup>216</sup> In *Glauben und Wissen*, Hegel discusses Jacobi’s essay, and he specifically focuses on the passages that address the relationship between unity and plurality. This brief examination of selected passages from Jacobi’s essay thus provides historical precedent for Hegel’s emphasis on the problem of identity and difference. In Sections Four through Seven, I will examine crucial variations of the phrase, “the unity of identity and difference,” as they appear in the “Systemfragment von 1800” (Section 4), the *Differenzschrift* (Section 5), *Glauben und Wissen* (Section 6), and Hegel’s essay on natural right (Section 7). Various passages from these earlier essays should demonstrate the centrality and the flexibility of the problematic of the unity of identity and difference.

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<sup>215</sup> In this work, Jacobi criticizes what he sees as Kant’s attempt to explain reason in terms of the understanding, to explain the unconditioned in terms of the conditioned. Jacobi holds that we can only grasp the conditioned in light of the unconditioned, the understanding in terms of reason. Moreover, he argues that the converse is not possible. In other words, we cannot conceive the unconditioned in terms of the conditioned, nor can we conceive reason in terms of the understanding. This point also proves central in Hegel’s philosophy, though Hegel does not agree with the conclusion that Jacobi draws from it. Jacobi concludes that since we cannot conceive the unconditioned in terms of the conditioned, we cannot conceive the unconditioned. It remains, on his view, a mystery. Hegel, by contrast, believes that speculation or reason allows us to grasp the unconditioned.

<sup>216</sup> We’ve already seen how Hegel sometimes states the problem of the unity of identity and difference in terms of (a) the problem of the unity of connection and distinction, and (b) the problem of the unity of synthesis and analysis. In this chapter, we will also see how he states the problem in terms of the unity of the one and the many, or the unity of unity and plurality. These particular statements of the problem help to connect Hegel’s discussion with the terms employed by Jacobi.

## 2) The Difference between the Systems of Hegel and Schelling

The essays examined in this chapter were written between 1800 and 1803. In this period, when Hegel worked together with Schelling, phrases such as “identity and difference,” and “unity and plurality,” played a central role in his philosophy. The prevalence of these phrases probably indicates the influence of Schelling on Hegel. Even at this time, however, there were crucial differences between the two philosophers, differences that first came to the fore in Hegel’s criticism of Schelling in the “Preface” to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the “Preface,” Hegel criticizes Schelling for defending a conception of the absolute that emphasizes identity and unity at the expense of difference.<sup>217</sup> It should be noted, however, that Hegel’s disagreement with Schelling on this point can already be seen in 1801, in the year that Hegel published the *Differenzschrift* and that Schelling published the essay, *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 9. In the “Preface,” Hegel specifically criticizes a conception of the Absolute as the “A = A.” This is a direct reference to Schelling’s description of the Absolute in *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*. Although Hegel does not directly criticize Schelling in the *Differenzschrift*, he clearly intends his account of the absolute, as the unity of “A = A” and “A ≠ A,” as a criticism of Schelling’s account of the absolute merely in terms of “A = A.”

<sup>218</sup> The *Differenzschrift* is a complex and – I would argue – ironic text. In this essay, Hegel argues for the superiority of Schelling’s philosophy over the philosophy of Fichte. In order to do this, he must establish the difference between these two systems, and in order to do this, he must, in some sense at least, free Schelling’s philosophical system from Schelling’s conception of it. In the first paragraph of the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel laments the various attempts that have been made to cover up the differences between the systems of Fichte and Schelling. Though Hegel doesn’t mention Schelling by name as a perpetrator and/or victim of this obfuscation, and though Hegel quickly moves on to chastise Reinhold for his complete identification of the two systems, it nonetheless seems clear that this opening passage presents an implicit challenge to Schelling’s conception of his own philosophical position vis-à-vis that of Fichte. Georg Biedermann emphasizes this point in his article, “Schelling und Hegel in Jena.” On the basis of his examination of various letters and essays written by Schelling, Biedermann concludes: “Er [Hegel] war es, der in der „Differenzschrift“ seinem Jugendfreunde überhaupt erst zum Bewußtsein gebracht hat, daß es sich bei seiner Philosophie um einen ganz anderen transzendentalen Idealismus handele, als ihn Fichte in seinen Werken entwickelt hatte” (*Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 23;1975, p. 741). This might put the point too strongly. One might plausibly argue that, in the same way that Hegel downplayed or hid his philosophical differences with Schelling from Schelling, so also Schelling downplayed or hid his philosophical differences with Fichte from Fichte. This complex relationship, between Hegel’s

In the *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*, Schelling expresses absolute identity with the sentence “A = A.” Schelling says: “The absolute identity is without determination and as certain as the sentence A = A is.”<sup>219</sup> And: “The absolute identity cannot be thought except through the sentence A = A.”<sup>220</sup> Here we see the complete identification of absolute identity with the sentence “A = A.” Schelling also describes the “A = A” as an “immediate” truth that is not determined by anything, and he sees it as the basic principle of reason. Thus he says: “Reason is one with the absolute identity. The sentence, A = A, is the law of the being of reason.”<sup>221</sup>

These passages present Schelling’s conception of the absolute in a remarkably condensed and abstract form, and without a great deal of contextualization, it is difficult to make much sense of it. We can glean a basic sense of these passages once we recognize that for Schelling, as for Hegel, the symbol “=” represents unity, connection, or synthesis. In terms of the nature of reality, and within the context of the pantheism

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interpretation – or appropriation – of Schelling’s philosophy and that philosophy as understood by Schelling himself, continues throughout the essay. For instance, although Hegel describes Schelling’s conception of the absolute in terms of the “unity of identity and difference,” Schelling himself, at least up to that point, described the absolute as “absolute identity.” It is only after the publication of Hegel’s *Differenzschrift* that Schelling comes to describe the absolute as the “unity of identity and difference.” For a discussion of this point, see Klaus Düsing’s “Spekulation und Reflexion: Zur Zusammenarbeit Schellings und Hegel’s in Jena” in *Hegel-Studien* 5;1969, specifically page 112.

<sup>219</sup> *Ausgewählte Schriften*. Band 2. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp. P. 50.

<sup>220</sup> *Ausgewählte Schriften*. Band 2, p. 50.

<sup>221</sup> *Ausgewählte Schriften*. Band 2, p. 50. For further discussions of this essay that emphasize the problem of the relation between identity and difference in Schelling’s notion of absolute identity, see Jochem Henningfeld’s “Einheit und Veilheit als grundlegendes Problem in Schellings Systemwürfen” and Sven Jürgensen’s “Schellings logische Prinzip: Der Unterschied in der Identität.” Both authors argue that, at least in this essay, Schelling fails to solve the problem of the relation between identity and difference. While my interpretation suggests that Schelling ends up by denying difference or plurality, Henningfeld and Jürgensen argue that he simply leaves identity and difference as distinct and disconnected realities. Jürgensen, for instance, argues that Schelling fails to answer the question: “Wie ist Alles in Einem und Eines in Allem?” (“Schellings logische Prinzip, 119). He argues, that for Schelling: “Das Erkennen ist schlechthin getrennt von der absoluten Identität. Identität und Unterschied sind *absolute unterschieden*” (“Schellings logische Prinzip, 121).

controversy raised by Jacobi, Schelling's expression of the absolute, as the "A = A," represents his commitment to a strong monism, to a conception of reality that focuses on unity or oneness at the expense of plurality.<sup>222</sup> On Schelling's view, plurality or difference only exists at the level of mere appearance, while reality in itself consists in a unity without plurality. In terms of the nature of reason, this expression of the absolute represents Schelling's emphasis on synthesis as the exclusive proper function of reason. Reason, as the process of thought, moves from the plurality and difference of appearance to the unity of reality, by means of synthesis. On this view, analysis does not serve a legitimate cognitive function. Given this conception of reality and reason, one can readily appreciate Hegel's criticism of Schelling's conception of the absolute as the night in which all cows are black.

In contrast to Schelling's conception of the absolute, Hegel argues, already in the *Differenzschrift*, that absolute identity consists in the "identity of identity and difference."<sup>223</sup> Hegel also says: "to the degree that identity is accepted, to that degree

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<sup>222</sup> It should be noted, however, that Schelling did not emphasize unity over plurality, identity over difference. For instance, in *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*, Schelling explains and defends the existence of plurality as the basis of genuine freedom and his positive conception of evil. In this work, Schelling argues that difference is essential for identity. Speaking of God and the genuine otherness of his creation as the possibility for evil, Schelling says: "Denn jedes Wesen kann nur in seinem Gegenteil offenbar werden, Liebe nur in Haß, Einheit in Streit. Wäre keine Zertrennung der Prinzipien, so könnte die Einheit ihre Allmacht nicht erweisen; wäre nicht Zweifelt, so könnte die Liebe nicht wirklich werden" (pp. 45-6). Here we see the central of "opposites" and "division." Thus it should be clear that Hegel's criticism of Schelling only applies to a particular period of Schelling's thought.

<sup>223</sup> *Werke 2*, p. 96. The difference between Schelling's "absolute identity" and Hegel's "identity of identity and difference" has been noted by various scholars. Thus, for instance, Biedermann says: "Im Widerspruch zu dieser [i.e. Schelling's] regressiven, auf den Offenbarungsglauben hinauslaufenden Definition der absoluten Identität, bestimmt Hegel das Absolute in der „Differenzschrift“ als „die Identität der Identität und der Nichtidentität.“ In diesem Begriff tritt bereits der fundamentale Abstand zutage, der den Denker schon zu einer Zeit von Schelling trennt" ("Schelling und Hegel in Jena," 742). And then: "Nur gedankenlose Leser konnten diese Differenz zwischen Hegel und Schelling in der oben genannten Schrift übersehen und glauben, daß der erstere nur die Grundlagen der Identitätsphilosophie des letzteren expliziere" ("*Schelling und Hegel in Jena*," 742).

difference must also be accepted.”<sup>224</sup> On Hegel’s view, plurality and difference are just as real as unity. Similarly, Hegel holds that both analysis and synthesis both play an irreducible role in the process of rational cognition. In contrast to Schelling, who sees identity as “immediate,” Hegel sees it as the mediated result of an act of abstraction, and in contrast to Schelling, who sees identity or “A = A,” as the principle of reason, Hegel claims that reason does not “find itself expressed” in the sentence “A = A.” Both of these points come out in a passage already quoted in Chapter Three. In this passage, Hegel says: “In A = A, as the sentence of identity, the relation is reflected on, and this relation, this unity, this equality is presented in this identity, while all inequality is abstracted.”<sup>225</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Hegel continues:

But reason does not find itself expressed in this one-sidedness of abstract unity. Reason also postulates the existence [das Setzen] of the oppositional moment, of inequality, of that which was abstracted from in the pure identity. The one A is subject, the other is object, and the expression of their difference is  $A \neq A$ .<sup>226</sup>

The function of reason cannot merely be construed in terms of identity or unity. Reason also includes differentiation. Moreover, as we have seen in Chapter Three, all acts of identity, unity, or synthesis presuppose an act of differentiation or analysis, and most importantly, the rule governing synthesis cannot be fully disambiguated from the rule governing analysis. So while Schelling sees identity or synthesis as the fundamental principle of reason, Hegel counters that (a) there is a second principle that involves analysis or difference, and (b) that the principle of synthesis or identity cannot be

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<sup>224</sup> *Werke 2*, p. 96.

<sup>225</sup> *Werke 2*, p. 37.

<sup>226</sup> *Werke 2*, p. 38.

properly construed in isolation from the principle of difference. This means that the two principles are essentially related and only definable in relation to one another.

Schelling expresses absolute identity with the sentence “ $A = A$ .” Hegel, by contrast, construes absolute identity as *the unity of “ $A = A$ ” and “ $A \neq A$ .”* In terms of thought, this means that the sense in which two things are united, synthesized, or connected always presupposes an equally essential and essentially related sense in which they are different, distinct, or analyzed. In terms of objects, this means that a thing is only what it *is* in its essential relation to what it *is not*. In terms of the nature of reality as a whole, it means that plurality or difference prove essential and ineliminable.

In order to fully grasp the difference between Hegel and Schelling, it is important to note Hegel’s insistence that identity and difference are equiprimordial. Neither can exist without the other. Each determines the other. Thus Hegel says:

This second sentence [ $A \neq A$ ] is just as unconditioned as the first and in this sense a condition of the first, just as the first is a condition of the second sentence. The first is conditioned [or determined] through the second, insofar as it exists through the abstraction from the inequality contained in the second sentence. The second is conditioned by the first, insofar as it requires the connection of the first to be a sentence.<sup>227</sup>

For Hegel, connection and distinction, self-identity and self-difference have equal priority. Each explains or conditions the other. Neither can be reduced to the other. In fact, as Hegel goes on to argue, we can only grasp each in their essential relation to one another – i.e. in the identity of identity and difference or the connection of connection and distinction.

Schelling’s philosophy admits difference, which he designates with the phrase “ $A = B$ ,” and which he refers to as the principle of *finitude* and *temporality*. However,

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<sup>227</sup> *Werke* 2, p. 38.



Schelling construes difference as mere appearance. He holds that identity can exist and be conceived without difference. In other words, he holds that identity is not determined by or dependent upon difference. However, he holds that difference can only exist and be conceived insofar as it is fully reducible to identity. Schelling expresses the nature of difference as mere appearance in the following passage:

Since the absolute identity – i.e. that which is unconditioned and in everything – cannot be affected in the least by the opposition of subject and object, it follows that the quantitative difference between the two does not exist in itself, or in relation to absolute identity. Thus the things or appearances, which appear to us as different, are not truly different, but in reality one.<sup>228</sup>

Schelling argues that identity is not affected by opposition or difference. The nature of identity does not include difference, and difference does not partially determine its nature. Therefore, Schelling argues, difference does not truly exist. Or stated differently, difference does not express a genuine feature of reality in itself. This follows because of Schelling's previous claim that, "everything is only in itself, insofar as it is absolute identity itself, and insofar as it is not absolute identity itself, it is not anything in itself."<sup>229</sup>

So difference is mere appearance. It is either nothing, or it is completely reducible to identity, both of which amount to the same thing. In the previous passage, Schelling argues that difference does not truly exist, since it is not identity. Elsewhere, he puts the point the other way around: difference must really be identity, since it exists. He says:

Every  $A = B$  is in relation to itself or considered in itself is an  $A = A$ , and therefore something absolutely identical with itself. Without this [self-identity]

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<sup>228</sup> *Ausgewählte Schriften*. Band 2, p. 59.

<sup>229</sup> *Ausgewählte Schriften*. Band 2, p. 51.

nothing would be real, for everything, that is, is only insofar as it expresses the absolute identity under a particular form of being.<sup>230</sup>

So insofar as difference exists, difference is really an identity. Thus Schelling denies the reality of difference, and reduces all difference to identity. In the language of the *Phenomenology*, Schelling conceives identity as a unity in which all difference disappears, as a night in which all cows are black.<sup>231</sup> As early as the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel objects to this one-sided conception of the absolute, arguing for the irreducible role played by difference in both *reality* and *the process of thought*.

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<sup>230</sup> *Ausgewählte Schriften*. Band 2, p. 65.

<sup>231</sup> In a short but complex essay, “Andersheit und Absolutheit des Geistes: Sieben Schritte auf dem Wege von Schelling zu Hegel,” Dieter Henrich presents Schelling’s problematic conception of the relation between identity and difference, or unity and plurality, as the starting point for Hegel’s development of Geist. Henrich says: “Auf solche Weise ist auch schon Schellings Begriffsbildung vom monistisch gefaßten Absoluten zustande gekommen. Da sie den Ausgangspunkt für Hegel’s selbständige Entwicklung markiert, muß sie vorab in ihren Grundzügen entfaltet werden. – In der Programmformel des Ein-Allen ist die Einheit als Einzigkeit dominant. Denn sie verlangt zu denken, daß die Differenz zwischen einzelnen Endlichen nicht etwa der unerschütterliche, sondern vielmehr ein unhaltbarer Ausgangspunkt unserer Objektbeziehung sei. Das Absolute ist zunächst dadurch in seiner Selbstgenügsamkeit zu denken, daß alle ontische Differenz nicht nur von ihm ferngehalten, sondern in strikten Sinne geleugnet wird. Es ist absolut, insofern neben ihm nichts eigenständigen Bestand hat und somit alles Wirkliche zuletzt an oder ‘in’ einem und demselben Wirklichen und in diesem Sinne dasselbe ist. Insofern läßt sich das Absolute als absolute Identität beschreiben. Damit ist der Dominanz des Einen in der Formel von All-Einen genüge getan. Sie verlangt aber nicht, daß Viele gar nicht mehr erwähnt werde. Sie verlangt vielmehr umgekehrt, es im Einen als seiner letzten Wirklichkeit nach identisch zu begreifen” (*Selbstverhältnisse*, pp. 146 – 147). This passage from Henrich shows the close connection between the problem of identity and difference and the problem of the one and the many. This passage also makes the discussion of identity and difference more concrete by presenting it in context of the monism that Schelling (and to a lesser degree Hegel) adopts from Spinoza via Jacobi. Henrich does an excellent job painting Schelling’s basic line of thought, his basic attempt to reduce all plurality to unity. In the last couple of sentences, Henrich at least hints at the problem that Schelling still faces. Even if there is a sense in which unity is ultimate, this unity must not completely preclude plurality. The plurality should not simply be negated, but rather it should be grounded in the unity. Here again we see the basic problem of the structure of the substance – in this case in terms of the doctrine that there is only one substance – namely, how does a plurality exist in the unity of substance? Or: how do the properties relate to the substance? Ultimately, I would argue that Henrich doesn’t grasp the depth of this problem for Schelling’s philosophy, and therefore he develops an account of Hegel that also emphasizes unity or monism at the expense of plurality.

### 3) Jacobi: The Mysterious Unity of Unity and Plurality

In his 1801 essay, *Über das Unternehmen des Kritizismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen*, Jacobi examines the relationship between the understanding and sensibility as presented in Kant's philosophy. Jacobi attempts to highlight what he sees as the problematic and ultimately mysterious nature of this relationship. As the essay progresses, Jacobi often replaces the term "understanding" with the term "unity." He likewise replaces the term "sensibility" with "plurality" (*Mannigfaltige*). Thus he often discusses the problem about the relation between understanding and sensibility in terms of a more general problem about the relationship between unity and plurality. In proto-Hegelian fashion, he argues that if we begin by conceiving unity and plurality as fully distinct, then we will not be able to explain their relation. Therefore, he argues, we must begin with the attempt to grasp their essential unity. However, as we shall see, Jacobi ultimately draws the very un-Hegelian conclusion that this deeper unity is mysterious and beyond the grasp of human reason.

In the following passage, Jacobi speaks of the problematic relation between unity and plurality, a problematic relation that has troubled him for eighteen long years, presumably since he first read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. He says:

For eighteen long years I have sought to comprehend how you conceive (vorstellen) a plurality, to which unity comes, and a unity, to which plurality comes, or even how you think this pure givenness (Begebenheit) in any way. Each year it becomes more incomprehensible to me. If you are not capable of this, but rather you assume (setzen) that both plurality and unity presuppose one another in the same manner, that both determine one another in the same manner, and that they can only be thought in one another and at the same time (zugleich), as the substantial forms of all thought and being: what will then become of your whole apriori?<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. *Werke*, Dritter Band. Edited by Friedrich Roth and Friedrich Köppen. Berlin, Berliner Buchdienst. (2001). Pp. 112-3.

Within the context of an extended discussion of the relationship between the understanding and the manifolds of space and time, this passage points out the centrality of the terms “unity” and “plurality” for Jacobi’s reception and interpretation of Kantian philosophy. This passage also anticipates Hegel’s philosophy, presenting a host of proto-Hegelian expressions and insights.

This passage anticipates one of the central claims of Hegelian philosophy – namely, the claim that if we begin with a conception of two things as fully separate or distinct, we will be incapable of grasping their relation or unity. It also presents the equally important Hegelian claim that in order to grasp the unity of two apparently oppositional terms, we must grasp them “in one another,” and “at the same time.” Here Jacobi uses the term “zugleich.” As we will see, Hegel uses this term again and again to describe the way that reason or speculation grasp two oppositional moments, moments such as identity and difference or synthesis and antithesis.<sup>233</sup> We should also note how Jacobi links up a host of different issues in terms of the opposition between unity and plurality. Specifically, he uses this opposition to express the relation between (a) understanding and sensibility as well as (b) thought and being.

Bracketing questions about the plausibility of Jacobi’s criticism of Kant, questions that lie outside the scope of the merely exegetical analysis presented in this chapter, we can turn to another passage where Jacobi explains *the ultimately mysterious union of the one and the many* in terms of the “individual.” He says:

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<sup>233</sup> This chapter presents many examples of Hegel’s use of the term “zugleich” to describe the manner in which we must grasp apparently oppositional concepts. Another significant example can be found in the *Science of Logic*, in the passage where Hegel describes the structure of the “I” as the structure of the Notion. After describing the first two moments, which he expresses in terms of the opposition between the indeterminate and the determinate, as well as that between the universal and the particular, Hegel goes on to say: “neither the one nor the other can be truly comprehended unless the two indicated moments are grasped at the same time [zugleich]” (p. 583).

Only a determinate can determine an indeterminate; sensibility does not determine, nor does the understanding, for the principle of individuality lies outside of them. In this principle lies the mystery of the many and the one in an indivisible connection (*Verbindung*), which is being, reality, and substance. Our concepts of this indivisible connection are merely reciprocal concepts (*Wechselbegriffe*); unity presupposes universality; universality presupposes plurality; and plurality presupposes unity. Unity is therefore the beginning and end of this eternal circle, and is called – individuality, organism, and object = subjectivity.<sup>234</sup>

Here again we can see a host of Hegelian insights, all of which are connected with the problem of the relation between unity and plurality. Jacobi argues that only a determinate can determine the indeterminate, and he then goes on to say that neither the understanding nor sensibility can determine. Presumably, he means that taken in isolation or as basic, both sensibility and understanding are indeterminate. In isolation from the articulating activity of the understanding, sensibility presents a pure undifferentiated manifold, a manifold without distinction. Such an undifferentiated manifold lacks determination. It is indeterminate. Similarly, pure understanding, in isolation from the manifold presented in intuition, is a pure unity that doesn't contain plurality. As such, it is a simple or pure unity without differentiation or determination.<sup>235</sup>

Jacobi argues that only the individual – as the mysterious “indivisible connection” of the one and the many, as the substance, as the real – only this individual, which is already determinate, can determine. If there is any determinate reality, Jacobi argues, this determinate reality must already include the relation, or the indivisible connection, between unity and plurality (understanding and sensibility, or form and matter). In some

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<sup>234</sup> Werke, Dritter Band. P. 176. Hegel quotes this passage in *Glauben und Wissen*. See Hegel's Werke 2, pp. 355-6. Hegel largely accepts the statement of the problem, but rejects Jacobi's mystical and anti-rationalist solution (or non-solution.)

<sup>235</sup> We can state Jacobi's point in Aristotelian terms as follows: both formless matter and matterless form are equally inconceivable, since both lack determination. There can be no prime matter, nor can there be an unmoved mover.

sense, unity and plurality – understanding and sensibility, form and matter, being and thought – are distinct moments of the individual, but we cannot construe these terms as distinct parts that exist prior to their union in the individual.

In terms that echo the hermeneutic discussion of judgment presented in Chapter Three, Jacobi goes on to describe unity as the “beginning and the end” of an “eternal circle.” He argues that we can only conceive unity in terms of universality. Stated differently, we can only conceive unity as the unity that combines or brings together a plurality – i.e. in terms of a concept or the universal. However, as this definition of the universal indicates, we can only conceive the universal in terms of the plurality united in or under it. Finally, we can only conceive this plurality in terms of unity. The plurality must include *distinct* particulars, which as particulars, must be unified in themselves. Although in some sense they constitute distinct moments, unity, plurality, and universality always exist in an essential relation. Jacobi describes this essential relation as “the individual, the organism, the object-subjectivity.”

In relation to the parallels between the previous passage and Hegel’s discussion of judgment, we should note that Jacobi, like Hegel, believes that analysis must precede synthesis. Part of his argument against Kant rests on the claim that “synthesis necessarily presupposes analysis,” that every “conjunction” presupposes a “disjunction.”<sup>236</sup> Moreover, like Hegel, he holds that although analysis precedes synthesis, it does not have ultimate priority. Thus he says:

A person has the capacity for antithesis, synthesis, and analysis because he is an individual by the grace of God. For this reason there is neither a primitive antithesis, nor synthesis, nor analysis, but all are present with one another. If this

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<sup>236</sup> Werke, Dritter Band. P. 134.

original unity (Urgemeinschaft) is taken away [aufgehoben] and the logical moments are isolated, then all life, existence, and being disappear.<sup>237</sup>

We have already seen that, for Jacobi, unity and plurality exist together in an “indivisible connection.” Here we see a similar claim that we cannot fully distinguish between synthesis and analysis. Moreover, Jacobi says that if we abstract these moments from their original unity, then all “life” is destroyed.

Jacobi, like Hegel, focuses on a certain paradox, problem, or mystery that arises when we try to unify unity and plurality, synthesis and analysis, connection and distinction. Like Hegel, Jacobi identifies the unity of these oppositional moments with the individual, the substance, the organism, and with life. Like Hegel, he sees at least the beginning of the solution to this mystery in a conception of substance that focuses on organic categories. Ultimately, however, Jacobi sees this as a mystery for which we must praise God, who formed this mystery, without grasping its inexplicable nature. In fact, Jacobi claims that if we could grasp this mystery of our own self as an organic individual substance, we would cease to live.<sup>238</sup>

Speaking of the mystery of the individual as the “indivisible connection” of unity and plurality, Jacobi says:

We live, think, and feel as individuals. We do not understand or comprehend ourselves, for then we would cease to be individuals. It is only as individuals in our individuality that we can comprehend. In this individuality lies the deep mystery of the indissoluble togetherness [unauflöslichen Zusammenhanges] of unity and plurality, of form and matter.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Werke, Dritter Band. P. 177.

<sup>238</sup> Presumably, he means that in grasping this secret, we would become infinite and complete, no longer a creature who strives (i.e. lives).

<sup>239</sup> Werke, Dritter Band. P. 176.

Here again Jacobi speaks of the “deep mystery” of the essential relation between unity and plurality. Presumably the “depth” of this mystery stems both from its centrality or significance as well as from its incomprehensibility. As the basis of all thought or comprehension, the mystery of the unity of unity and plurality presents the central problem of philosophy, one that must remain unsolved.

This brief examination of Jacobi’s work emphasizes a number of important points. First, we should note that Jacobi sees the problematic relation between unity and plurality as *the* central problem of philosophy. In this sense, our inevitable failure to grasp this problem presents the ultimate failure of philosophy itself. Jacobi insists that our capacity to think ultimately rests upon a foundation that cannot itself be grasped by thought. Secondly, it is important to note how Jacobi employs the categories of “unity” and “plurality” in his interpretation of Kant’s philosophy. Thirdly, we should note that Jacobi equates the mysterious relation between unity and plurality with *the relation between synthesis and analysis* as well as *the relation between form and matter*. Finally, we should note how Jacobi identifies the mystery of the relation between unity and plurality with the nature of (a) life, (b) substance, (c) individuality, (d) the organism, and (e) the object-subjectivity.

As we shall see, Hegel follows Jacobi in many ways. Like Jacobi, he sees the problem of unity and plurality (or identity and difference) as the central problem of philosophy. These categories also play a central role in Hegel’s interpretation of Kant. Moreover, following Jacobi, Hegel identifies this problematic relation with life, substance (or the notion), individuality, the organism, and what he calls the subject-



object. In contrast to Jacobi, however, Hegel believes that we can rationally grasp the structure of this relation.

#### **4) The *Systemfragment*: The Structure of Life and Mind**

In the *Systemfragment* Hegel defines life in terms of the relation between connection and distinction, and he defines mind (Geist) in terms of the relation between unity and plurality.<sup>240</sup> Speaking of the structure or nature of life, he warns: “Life cannot be viewed as unification or relation alone, but rather it must also be viewed, at the same time [zugleich], as opposition.”<sup>241</sup> He goes on to express the nature of life, more succinctly, as the “connection of connection and disconnection,” and as the “connection of synthesis and analysis.”<sup>242</sup> Thus, on Hegel’s view, life consists in *unification and opposition, connection and disconnection, synthesis and analysis*.

All of these terms should be familiar from the discussion of the structure of judgment in Chapters Three and Four. In those chapters, I argued that judgment consists in the unity of (a) an act of connection or synthesis and (b) an act of disconnection or

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<sup>240</sup> In this work, Hegel provides some guidance about how mind and life are distinct but also related. On the one hand, mind and life have the same basic structure in the sense that both consist in the unity of unity and plurality or the unity of connection and disconnection. However, as we discussed in Chapter Two, they are also different insofar as mind is *truer* than life. This means that mind involves a higher form of unity in a greater degree of plurality. Moreover, it should be noted that mind presupposes life in the way that form presupposes matter. Life presents the plurality that is articulated and unified by mind. Thus mind is a relation that includes life as one of its moments. It is a relation that includes, and emerges out of, the relation that constitutes life. Finally, mind has a higher degree of awareness or reflexivity (in the sense of relation to itself). Mind is more aware of life than life is of itself. Moreover mind is more aware of itself than life is of itself. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, life does involve a degree of self-awareness or reflexivity.

<sup>241</sup> *Werke* 1. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp. 1986. P. 422.

<sup>242</sup> *Werke* 1, p. 422. Similarly, in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel says: “the necessary division (Entzweiung) is a factor of life, that determines itself as an eternal opposition to this division, and in the highest degree of life the totality is only possible through the reconstitution out of the highest division” (*Werke* 2, pp. 22).

analysis. In judgment, the copula presents the act of connection or synthesis, while the difference between the subject and the predicate terms presents the disconnection or analysis. In Sections 5.4 and 5.5 of Chapter Three, I argued that these two moments are essentially related – i.e. that we cannot grasp or define either act in isolation from the other. In the *Systemfragment*, Hegel defines life in similar terms as the unity of distinction and connection, synthesis and analysis, unification and opposition.<sup>243</sup> As with the case of judgment, he warns that we should not reduce life to the act or process of unification alone. In the same way that judgment does not simply unify distinctions that are given to it prior to all judgment, so life does not simply unify the distinctions presented to it prior to the process of life. Like judgment, life involves both the act of distinction and the act of unification. More importantly, it involves the essential relation of these two acts. As Hegel states the point here, we must grasp both distinction and connection *at the same time*.

In this early work Hegel also describes life as the “infinite finite,” as the “indeterminate determinate,” and as the “unity of the finite and the infinite.”<sup>244</sup> These particular characterizations of life provide significant support for some of the basic lines of argument presented in Chapters One and Two. In these chapters, I examined Hegel’s account of the structure of will as (a) the unity of the infinite and the finite, (b) the unity of the indeterminate and the determinate, and (c) the unity of the universal and the

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<sup>243</sup> In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel emphasizes the isomorphism between the structure of the judgment and the structure of life. In a passage already quoted in Chapter One, Hegel says: “the germ of a plant contains its particular, such as root, branch, leaves, etc.: but these details are at first present only potentially, and are not realized till the germ uncloses. This unclosing is, as it were, the judgment of the plant” (paragraph 166Z). Life, here exemplified by a plant, presents the same basic paradoxical structures that we already observed in the structure of judgment.

<sup>244</sup> *Werke* 1, p. 420.

particular. I argued that the structure of the will presents a highly developed form of certain basic structures common to all genuine objects, and I argued that in the most basic terms, these structures might be described in terms of the unity or relation between identity and difference. In the *Systemfragment* Hegel construes life as (a) the unity of connection and disconnection, (b) as the unity of synthesis and analysis, (c) as the unity of unification and opposition, (d) as the unity of the infinite and the finite, and (e) as the unity of the indeterminate and the determinate. This demonstrates certain crucial similarities between the structure of life and the more highly developed structure of the will (or the mind). It also suggests that the problem of explaining the structure of the will – as *the unity of the infinite and the finite* and as *the unity of the indeterminate and the determinate* – is closely related to the more basic problem of explaining *the unity of identity and difference*.

In another passage from the *Systemfragment*, Hegel describes the “individual” in terms highly reminiscent of Jacobi.<sup>245</sup> He says:

The concept of individuality includes the opposition to an infinite manifold and the connection to the same in itself; a human is an individual life insofar as it is different from the elements that comprise it and the infinity of individual life outside of it; it is only an individual life insofar as it is one with all the elements that comprise it as well as the infinity of life outside of it.<sup>246</sup>

Here Hegel states the paradox of identity and difference in terms of what appears to be an outright or unmitigated contradiction.<sup>247</sup> Hegel claims that (1) the individual *is different*

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<sup>245</sup> Of course Hegel wrote the *Systemfragment* a year before Jacobi published his essay, *Über Unternehmen des Kritizismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen*, so these similarities aren't a matter of direct influence.

<sup>246</sup> *Werke* 1, p. 419-420.

<sup>247</sup> An unmitigated contradiction takes the form: “A is B” and “A is not B.” This should be carefully distinguished from the kind of “contradiction” crucial for Hegel's philosophy, a kind of

*from* the elements that comprise it and the manifold life outside it, *and* that (2) the individual *is one with* the elements that comprise it and the manifold life outside it. This account of the individual presents the same basic “contradiction” or paradox that we have already seen in the structure of judgment. In his discussion of judgment, Hegel says both that the *subject is the predicate* and that the *subject is not the predicate*. While on the one hand, the sense in which the subject *is* the predicate and the sense in which it *is not* the predicate are different, on the other hand these two senses cannot be fully disambiguated.

In his mature philosophy, Hegel argues that reason or speculation can resolve the nature of this apparent contradiction, that it can grasp the essential relation between the two moments presented in judgment or the individual. In the *Systemfragment*, however, he presents religion as the sole means by which this contradiction or paradox can be resolved.<sup>248</sup> In this early work, Hegel’s position thus proves to be quite similar to that of Jacobi. Like Jacobi, he sees the *individual* and the *organic process of life* as a paradoxical or inexplicable conjunction of two disparate elements – of unity and plurality, of synthesis and analysis, of connection and distinction, etc. And, like Jacobi, he sees the resolution of this problem as something that transcends the power of human reason – i.e. the power of philosophy.

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contradiction that consist in the following claims: (a) in one sense A is B; (b) in another sense, A is not B; and (c) the sense in which A is B and the sense in which as is not B cannot be fully disambiguated.

<sup>248</sup> In the *Systemfragment*, Hegel says: “Philosophy must end with [or in] religion.” He goes on to describe the merely negative task of philosophy in the following terms: “it [philosophy] has the task of indicating the finitude in all that is finite and through reason to demand the full explanation of the finite.” Through this, “philosophy establishes the true infinite as outside of its domain.” Hegel continues: “the raising of the finite to the infinite can be characterized as the raising of finite life to the infinite, as religion” (*Werke* 1, pp. 422-3).

In the *Systemfragment* Hegel also describes mind in terms that point back towards Jacobi and forward towards his own conception of the central problem of philosophy, towards the unity of identity and difference. In a rather complex passage, Hegel makes the following claim about the nature of mind:

Mind is the living unity of plurality in opposition to the same plurality in the shape which forms the plurality found in the concept of life, not in opposition to the plurality as divided from life, as dead, as mere plurality.<sup>249</sup>

Among other things, this passage explains the relationship between mind and life. The terms of this explanation closely resemble the form/matter relation in Aristotle. Form unites matter. So in this sense, form and matter can be characterized in terms of the relation between unity and plurality, as Jacobi points out. Moreover, for Aristotle, the *form* of one level serves as the *matter* for a higher level. So form and matter are relative terms.

In this passage, Hegel explains the relationship between life and mind in a similar way. He describes life as the unity of “dead” or “mere” plurality.<sup>250</sup> So relative to that which is lifeless, life presents a unity.<sup>251</sup> Relative to mind, however, life presents a plurality. Mind takes the plurality provided by life and synthesizes it into higher forms of unity. As with the development of life, we can only assume that mind presents a force of division as well as of unity – i.e. that it both articulates through an act of differentiation and unites through an essentially related act of synthesis.

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<sup>249</sup> *Werke* 1, p. 421.

<sup>250</sup> In fact, at least in his later work, life unites pluralities that are already themselves unities. Various forces constitute the unity of matter qua matter as well as the unity of various kinds of matter. Life then takes these various kinds of matter and forms them into a higher unity. See Section 2.4 of Chapter Two.

<sup>251</sup> Of course life doesn't just present a force of unification. As Hegel specifically insists in this essay, it also presents a force of distinction. So life doesn't simply unite lifeless matter. It also articulates or distinguishes such matter.

Thus we can see: (1) that mind and life have similar structures; (2) that mind presents a more highly developed form of this structure; (3) that the structures of mind and life involve unity and plurality, connection and distinction, synthesis and analysis; (4) that in this combination of these oppositional moments, both mind and life present paradoxes that closely resemble the paradox in the structure of judgment; and finally (5) that at the time of the *Systemfragment*, Hegel believed these paradoxes presented insoluble problems for philosophy. All of these points support the basic line of interpretation presented in Chapters One through Four of this dissertation. Specifically, they illustrate the central importance of the problem of the unity of identity and difference for Hegel's philosophy.

##### **5) Differenzschrift: Apperception and the Absolute**

In *Differenzschrift*, more than any other text, Hegel focuses on the relationship between identity and difference as *the* central problem of philosophy. For instance, he characterizes both the structure of self-consciousness and the structure of the absolute in terms of the unity of identity and difference. He also equates the dichotomy of identity and difference with (a) the dichotomy of the infinite and the finite and (b) the dichotomy of the indeterminate and the determinate.

At various points throughout this essay, Hegel describes self-consciousness or apperception in terms of the unity of unity and duality. For instance, at one point he says: "If reflection grasps "I = I" as a unity, it must also, at the same time (zugleich), grasp it as a duality. "I = I" is identity and duality at the same time (zugleich)."<sup>252</sup> Here, as in so many other passages, Hegel presents the problem of grasping the unity of unity and

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<sup>252</sup> *Werke 2*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp. 1986. P. 55.

plurality as the problem of grasping unity and plurality “at the same time,” (zugleich). This phrase, “at the same time,” expresses the essential unity or constitutive relation between the two moments that must be grasped in this manner. In this passage, Hegel addresses the Kantian and the Fichtean conceptions of apperception in terms of the problem of the unity of identity and difference. In these terms, apperception presents three structural moments that are closely analogous to those presented in our analysis of change and judgment.

The first moment consists in the “I = I,” as the expression of the persistent *identity* of the “I.” More specifically, this phrase denotes the “I think” that can accompany all of our representations. The “I” can become aware of its persistent identity amidst the differences presented in its plurality of representations. Thus, for instance, the “I” can become aware of its identity in *the act of seeing that the cup is on the table* and in *the act of seeing that the cup is half-full*. In other words, the “I” can become aware that it is the same “I” that sees both of these things. This is the “I = I,” the moment of identity.

The second moment stems from the fact that the “I’s” recognition of its own identity requires difference. Without the difference of its various representations, the “I” couldn’t re-identify itself. Without some *difference*, we wouldn’t have “I = I,” but rather simply “I.” So the identity of the “I = I” requires a moment of difference.<sup>253</sup>

Thus far our discussion of the “I = I” has followed the basic pattern set down in the discussions of change and judgment as presented in Chapters Three and Four. “I = I” presupposes a moment of identity and a moment of difference. As with the previous discussions of change and judgment, we now need to demonstrate the necessity of the

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<sup>253</sup> Here, as elsewhere in Hegel’s philosophy, there is only a conditional necessity. Hegel merely argues that if there is an “I” that can re-identify itself, then there must also be some difference, something distinct from the I.

third moment, the moment that grasps the unity of identity and difference, or, as Hegel puts it here, the moment that grasps identity and difference *at the same time*.

Before establishing the necessity of this third moment, we should note the many similarities between the previous discussions of time and judgement and the present discussion of the “I = I.” The discussion of the “I = I” presents one example of the more general phenomena of change. As my representations change, I also have an awareness of my self as that which persists or remains the *same* through these changes. Thus, as with genuine change, we have the identity of that which persists and the difference of that which changes. As I’ve suggested throughout this dissertation, Hegel ultimately argues that all genuine objects – and thus all genuine change – must be understood in terms of the model of the “I = I.” Or: apperception provides the basic model for conceiving the substance as subject (Chapter One, Section 3.4, and Chapter Two Section 1.2).

Similarly, there is an intimate relationship between the previous discussion of judgment and the present discussion of the “I = I.” The “I = I” or the “I is I” presents the most basic form of judgment, a form that involves both the *connection* and the *distinction* between the subject and the predicate terms.<sup>254</sup> Moreover, the “I = I” presents the telos of all judgments. In this matter, Hegel follows Kant, claiming that the forms of judgment

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<sup>254</sup> Robert Brandom makes a similar claim in his discussion of Hegel in *Tales of the Mighty Dead*. Brandom presents what he calls “the idealist thesis” as the claim “that the structure and unity of the concept is the same as the structure and unity of the self” (p. 210). There are, however, two significant differences between Brandom’s view and the one presented here. First, Brandom emphasizes recognition as the key feature of the unity of the self, and he sees these recognitive, inter-subjective acts of constitution as the key to understanding Hegel’s theory of concepts. Brandom sees this kind of inter-subjectivity as means for determining the normativity and semantic content of various concepts. However, Brandom does not focus on the particular forms of judgment as various ways of conceiving the concept (or the notion) as the unity of identity and difference. In other words, he does not focus on the problem of the unity of identity and difference as it occurs in judgment and in the self. Second, Brandom construes concepts in terms of the *processes* by which we grasp the world. I agree with him on this point. However, in this dissertation I’ve also defended the further claim that concepts (or notions) present the processes by which objects constitute themselves. For a further discussion of Brandom’s understanding of “concept,” one that specifically emphasizes the nature of concepts as processes, see “Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel. Comparing Empirical and Logical Concepts,” in *International Yearbook of German Idealism*, vol. 3.



present various ways of unifying the manifold in relation to the “I.”<sup>255</sup> Stated differently, the forms of judgment present the various processes by which the “I” unifies the manifold so as to become aware of its identity with itself as empirically actual.<sup>256</sup>

So far we have seen that apperception – the awareness that “I = I” – requires both identity and difference. In the awareness that, “I see the cup on the table,” and that “I see the cup is half-full,” we have the *identity* of the “I” and the *difference* presented by the content, the difference between the “cup’s being on the table” and the “cup’s being half-full.” Hegel argues that we must grasp the essential unity of this identity and these differences. In order to grasp the nature of the “I,” we must recognize both the sense in which the “I = I,” and, *at the same time*, the sense in which the “I ≠ I” or “I = not-I.” The phrase, “at the same time,” indicates that we must grasp the essential and reciprocal relation between these two senses or moments.

In one sense, “I = I.” The “I” that sees the cup on the table can recognize itself as the same “I” that sees that the cup is half full. However, Hegel argues that we cannot fully abstract the “I” that sees the cup on the table from the representation that the cup is on the table. Likewise, we cannot fully abstract the “I” that sees that the cup is half full from the representation that the cup is half full. This is the thought expressed by the claim “I = not-I.” Here the symbol “=” expresses the fact that the “I” is essentially

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<sup>255</sup> On Hegel’s interpretation of Kant, the categories or forms of judgment present “the modes” in which the “I” becomes aware of its own identity amidst the plurality of representations. Speaking of Kant, Hegel says: “The specific modes by which the Ego refers to itself the multiplicity of sense are the pure concepts of the understanding, the Categories” (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 42). Hegel follows Kant in this regard.

<sup>256</sup> Hegel sees the relationship between the transcendental unity of apperception and the empirical unity of apperception in terms of the relation between potentiality and actuality, or, metaphorically speaking, in terms of the relation between the seed and the fully developed plant. The transcendental unity of apperception presents the implicit basis for the possibility of an empirically developed apperception. If the “I” were not already implicitly aware of its identity in all of its representations, all of its representations would not exist *for it*, and it would therefore not have the ability to explicitly recognize them as its own.

constituted by its particular relation to the not-I – i.e. to the various representations of the “I.” So while, on the one hand, the “I” that has these representations remains the same “I,” there is another sense in which it is always a different “I,” since at each moment it exists in an essential relation to the specific representation it has at that moment.

We must grasp the “I” as the unity of its persistent identity and its continual self-difference. This peculiar structure of the “I” derives from the fact that we cannot fully abstract the “I” from its particular representations. There are two possible ways we might try to abstract the “I” as a simple identity distinct from both the representation that the cup is on the table and the representation that the cup is half-full. First, we might construe the “I” as *part* of the content of our representations. On this view, the “I” would be some constant representation that was always lurking around in addition to the representations that “the cup is on the table,” and that “the cup is half-full.” This view must be false for two reasons. First of all, inspection (or introspection) of our experience doesn’t reveal such a representation. Of course we have various representations of the states of our self – of *our* hunger, *our* beliefs, *our* memories, etc. However, these representations are not constant and unvarying in the sense required by the possibility of the “I = I.” As philosophers such as Hume and Kant have argued, careful introspection of our consciousness does not reveal any *persistent* or *constant* representation of the “I.”<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Hume speaks directly and clearly on this point. In *A Treatise on Human Nature*, he says: “But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are suppos’d to have a reference. If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, thro, the whole course of our lives; since self is suppos’d to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable” (p. 164). Kant makes a similar point about the referent of the “I” in his discussion of the paralogisms. He says: “For in that which we call the soul, everything is in continual flux, and it has nothing abiding, except perhaps (if one insists) the I, which is simple only because this representation has not content, and hence no manifold, on account of which it seems to represent a simple object, or better put, it seems to designate one. This I would have to be an

There is a second, more important reason why the “I” cannot simply be one of our many representations. If the “I” were simply one of our representations, then we would have no way of ascribing the other representations to this particular representation. If, at one given moment, we had the representations “the cup is on the table,” and “I,” then we would simply have a bundle of representations, and there would be no basis for ascribing the representation “the cup is on the table” to the other representation “I.” Insofar as both were merely representations, we might as well ascribe the “I” to “the cup is on the table.”

So the “I” is not some separate representation that could be abstracted from the other representations. Likewise, Hegel argues that the “I” cannot be some distinct thing or substance that lies *behind* or *beyond* or *under* all of our representations. We can state Hegel’s objection to this conception of the “I” on a number of different levels. At the most general level, he objects to this conception of the “I” because of the conception of the relation between the infinite and the finite that it presupposes. As we have already seen, the “I” is not a part of our experience. It is not, in other words, one of our representations. This means that any conception of the “I” as substance must construe the “I” as something that transcends experience. Hegel rejects the transcendent, in this sense, because, he argues, we cannot grasp the relationship between the transcendent and the immanent. Stated differently, and in more general terms, if we construe the infinite as transcendent, we cannot grasp the relationship between the infinite and the finite. Thus, as Hegel argues throughout his philosophy, we must grasp the finite as contained in the infinite, or to put the point somewhat differently, we must grasp that which is often conceived as transcendent as a process or activity that exists within immanence.

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intuition...Yet this I is no more an intuition than it is a concept of any object: rather, it is the mere form of consciousness” (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A381—2).

Hegel uses the categories “infinite” and “finite” to express a host of relations, including the (a) the relation between ground and grounded, (b) the relation between simplicity and plurality, and (c) the relationship between things traditionally construed as transcendent (God, freedom, immortal soul) and things traditionally construed as immanent (nature, body). On traditional conceptions of the “I” as a substance, the “I” is the simple, transcendent, unity that grounds the immanent plurality of the self as experienced. Hegel also associates the relation between the indeterminate and the determinate with the relation between the infinite and the finite. The infinite is that which is indeterminate – i.e. not determined – but rather determining. By contrast, the finite is that which is determinate because it is determined.

If we abstract the identity of the “I” from its different representations, we conceive the “I” as the simple, transcendent, non-determinate ground in sharp contrast to the plurality of immanent, determinate, grounded representations. In terms that Hegel uses to sum up all of these various categories, this conception of the “I” presents an absolute distinction between the infinite and the finite. Hegel sees this conception of the “I” as a result of reflection or the understanding, a mode of thought that *abstracts*, a mode of thought that *fails to grasp the dynamic nature of reality*. Hegel argues that this mode of thought, which posits a rigid distinction between identity and difference, the infinite and the finite, the “I” and its representations, cannot explain the relation between these divisions. Here Hegel repeats the criticism we have already seen in Jacobi.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Of course what has been said so far doesn’t present Hegel’s argument against a conception of the “I” as a transcendent, simple substance. What I have said thus far simply states the result of that argument – namely, that if we conceive the “I” as a simple, transcendent substance, we cannot explain the relation between it, as simple and transcendent, and our experience, as manifold and immanent. Hegel’s arguments for this point come primarily in his critique of the rationalist doctrine of substance. Furthermore, even if we accept Hegel’s claim that we cannot conceive the relation between a simple

The following passages summarizes many of the points made thus far about the parallel structures in the distinctions between the infinite and the finite, between the indeterminate and the determinate, and between identity and difference. It states Hegel's claim that reflection fails to grasp the relation or unity of these moments, his claim that reflection leads to contradiction or antinomy, and his claim that only a proper conception of the relation between identity and difference can resolve these contradictions or antinomies. Hegel says:

Such products of reflection include infinity and finitude, indeterminacy and determinacy, etc. From infinity there is no transition to the finite, and from indeterminacy there is no transition to the determinate. The transition, as a synthesis, becomes an antinomy.<sup>259</sup>

Shortly thereafter, he continues:

If an ideal opposition is the work of reflection, which completely abstracts from absolute identity, it is equally true in contrast to this that a real opposition is the work of reason, which determines [setzt] identity and difference [Nicht-Identität] as identical, not only in the form of knowledge, but also in the form of being.<sup>260</sup>

Reason grasps the identity of identity and difference as the basic structure of knowledge and of being. In doing so, it grasps the ultimate means of overcoming the contradictions, paradoxes, or antinomies that arise from the distinctions between infinity and finitude, between indeterminacy and determinacy.

If the "I" can be fully abstracted from its different representations, then either (a) the "I" must itself be a representation or a part of a representation, or (b) it must be a substance that exists beyond our experience – i.e. a substance that cannot be represented.

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transcendent substance and the immanent plurality of experience, this doesn't necessarily show that such a relation is impossible in itself.

<sup>259</sup> Werke 2, p. 98.

<sup>260</sup> Werke 2, p. 98.

Hegel rejects both alternatives, and thus he concludes that the “I” cannot be fully abstracted from its different representations. This means that the “I” itself presents the unity of identity and difference. In order to grasp the “I” we must grasp the sense in which the “I” is the same “I” in all of its representations, and we must, at the same time, grasp the sense in which the “I” is different in its essential relation to each of the particular representations it has.<sup>261</sup>

In this sense, the “I” has the same structure as the absolute, a structure that Hegel describes as follows: “But the absolute itself is therefore the identity of identity and difference; opposition and unity are, at the same time, in it.”<sup>262</sup> Yet again we see the key words, “at the same time” or “zugleich.” The absolute includes both opposition and unity, both identity and difference. In order to avoid contradictions, we must grasp these

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<sup>261</sup> This basic point about the structure of the “I” can be seen in Hegel’s discussion of “Sense-Certainty,” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel says: “Among the countless differences cropping up here we find in every case that the crucial one is that, in sense-certainty, pure being at once splits up into what we have called the two ‘Thises’, one ‘This’ as ‘I’, and the other ‘This’ as object. When *we* reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only immediately present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated*: I have this certainty through something else, viz. the thing; and it similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the ‘I’” (p. 59). Hegel goes on to explain this complex point in terms of the structure of the “here” and the “now.” Both the here and the now have a complex structure. On the one hand, the terms “here” and “now” always refer to something that is the same. Qua now, or in its nowness, each now is the same. However, the content of each now is different. Moreover, as Hegel argues here, the relation between the identity and the difference in the now is mediated, which is to say these two aspects are essentially related, and this essential relation constitutes the two aspects related. In other words, we can’t make sense of a now without some content. Now it must be night or day. Or, here there must be a tree or a house. At the same time, we can’t make sense of the content without thinking of its relation to the now. We can’t think day or night without thinking of the possibility of their existing – i.e. of their being now. Similarly, we can’t conceive the tree or the house without the possibility of their being here. Hegel demonstrates these two essentially related aspects by showing how the meaning of the terms “now” and “here” vacillate between expressing that which is always the same – the now in its nowness and the here in its hereness – and expressing that which is always different – night and day, tree and house. In order to grasp the basic structure of the “here” or the “now,” we must grasp it as the unity or mediation of these two aspects. As expressed in the passage quoted above, the structure of the here and the now present simple examples of the relation between the “I” and its object. The “I” is the form of the now and the here. The “I” is basic nowness of the now and the hereness of the here. However, in the same way that the here and the now only exist in relation to the specific and changing content that exists here and now, so also the “I” only exists in relation to the object that provides the content for its form.

<sup>262</sup> Werke, 2. P. 97.

apparently contradictory moments in their essential relation to one another. We must grasp them at the same time.

## **6) *Glauben und Wissen*: Apperception as Essentially Active, Rule-Governed, and Relational**

In *Glauben und Wissen* Hegel criticizes Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi for what he sees as their common failure to overcome the opposition between faith and knowledge.<sup>263</sup> This epistemic statement of the problem points towards a more fundamental ontological problem, towards the paradox inherent in the relationship between the infinite and the finite, and ultimately towards the problem of the unity of identity and difference.<sup>264</sup> It is in this essay that Hegel specifically discusses Jacobi's work, *Über das Unternehmen des Kritizismus, die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen*. In this essay Hegel also presents an interpretation of Kant that appears to borrow heavily from the categories developed by Jacobi. Thus, for instance, Hegel presents the relation between the pure identity of the "I think" and the manifold of intuition in terms that directly follow Jacobi's critique of Kant. Hegel says:

This manner of formal identity has a non-mediated [unmittelbar] infinite difference against or next to it, and it is supposed to coalesce with this difference in some incomprehensible way. From this situation we have on one side the "I"

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<sup>263</sup> In light of the strong differences between Jacobi's criticism of reason, on the one hand, and Kant and Fichte's programmatic endorsement of reason, on the other hand, this comparison of the three philosophers is clearly intended as a sharp rebuke of the latter two. Hegel claims that despite Kant and Fichte's stated allegiance to reason and Enlightenment, their philosophical systems ultimately remain on the same level of that as Jacobi. In this vein Hegel makes the highly polemical claim that the philosophies of Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi make reason "once again into the maid of faith" (*Werke* 2, p. 288). While Jacobi would accept this characterization of his work, Kant and Fichte would find it deeply insulting.

<sup>264</sup> In this light it is worth remembering Hegel's remark, in the *Differenzschrift*, that the opposition between identity and difference expresses itself in the opposition between faith and knowledge (see footnote 2). In other words, the misconception of the relation between identity and difference leads to the misconception of the relation between faith and reason.

with its productive imagination or even more with its synthetic unity – which, construed in this fashion, is a formal unity of plurality – next to this we have an infinity of impressions, and, if one will, a thing in itself, which domain, insofar as it is left without the categories, can be nothing but a formless heap.<sup>265</sup>

Jacobi claims to have struggled for eighteen years to conceive how unity comes to plurality or how plurality comes to unity. This, on Jacobi's view, is the central question raised by the Kantian distinction between intuition (plurality) and understanding (unity). In this passage, Hegel states a similar problem in similar terms. He asks how "formal identity" can "coalesce" with the "infinite difference" that exists "against or next to it." He implies that if we begin with formal identity and difference as two distinct, separate, or "non-mediated," features, we cannot explain their relation or unity. Like Jacobi, Hegel argues that we must begin with the unity or essential relatedness of identity and difference, of unity and plurality, of the "I" and the manifold in which the "I" reveals or constitutes itself through its acts of synthesis. Hegel argues that we cannot fully abstract the "I" from the manifold of intuition. We cannot abstract the source of unity, presented in the "I," from the manifold material that is synthesized by the "I."

Despite these terminological similarities between Jacobi's critique of Kant and the critical discussion of Kant presented by Hegel, it is important to note a crucial difference between them. Jacobi holds that Kant fails to explain the relation between unity and plurality – i.e. the relationship between understanding and intuition. Moreover, Jacobi sees this failure as inevitable, since, on his view, this relation transcends the grasp of reason. Hegel, by contrast, argues that we can conceive this relation through speculation or reason. Moreover, he argues that Kant, in his conception of transcendental

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<sup>265</sup> *Werke 2*, p. 312. Note the use of the term "non-mediated" here in relation to the claim from the discussion of the "Sense-Certainty," that both the "I" and the "object" always exist as mediated (footnote 47). Here "mediated" means "in their essential relation," while "unmediated" means "conceived as distinct."



apperception, actually provides the basic model for conceiving this relation. Thus Hegel does not criticize Kant for his failure to provide an account of the relationship between understanding and intuition, but rather he criticizes Kant for his failure to realize the radical implications of this account.

In *Glauben und Wissen* and throughout his mature philosophical corpus, Hegel repeatedly praises Kant for his conception of the “I” as an essentially active, rule governed process, a process that includes both identity and difference, both unity and plurality, within its original synthetic unity. For instance, Hegel says:

This original unity of apperception is called synthetic because of its double-sidedness, because in it the oppositional [Entgegengesetzte] is an absolute unity. This absolute synthesis is absolute insofar as it is not an aggregate formed from plurality [Mannigfaltigkeit], and insofar as it does not come after the manifold as a later addition to it. If this absolute synthesis is divided and its oppositional terms reflected upon, then the one term is the empty “I,” the concept [Begriff – in the Kantian, not the Hegelian sense], and the other is plurality, body [Leib], material, or whatever you will.<sup>266</sup>

Transcendental apperception includes opposition within its “absolute unity.” In the first sentence, Hegel describes the unity of apperception as both “absolute” and “original.” The meaning of these terms becomes apparent in the second sentence, where Hegel distinguishes the unity of apperception, as original and absolute, from a form of unity that is secondary and derivative. In a secondary or derivative unity, plurality or the aggregate ontologically precedes the unity. Hegel distinguishes the “absolute synthesis” from this secondary or derivative form of unity, claiming that the unity of apperception does not “come after the manifold as a latter addition to it.” Absolute unity precedes but also includes the division contained within it. In terms drawn from the discussion of

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<sup>266</sup> *Werke* 2, p. 306.

judgment in Chapters Three and Four, we can say that all plurality or division must be explained and in terms of some prior unity that includes and grounds the plurality.

In the following passage, Hegel further clarifies his characterization of Kantian apperception as the solution to the problem of the unity of identity and difference. He says:

The true synthetic unity or the rational identity is the **relation** of the manifold to the empty identity. It is the “I,” from which, as the original synthesis, the “I” as thinking subject and the manifold as body and world first become differentiated. In this manner Kant distinguishes the abstract “I” or the identity of the understanding from the true “I” as the absolute, original synthetic identity, as the principle [emphasis added].<sup>267</sup>

In this passage Hegel praises Kant’s account of apperception for providing the resolution to the problem of the unity of identity and difference. He describes Kantian apperception as the “true synthetic unity” that consists in the “relation” of the “manifold” to “empty identity.” Here, in the opposition between “empty identity” and the “manifold,” we have another statement of the opposition between identity and difference, or the opposition between unity and plurality. The unity of these two moments consists in the “original synthetic unity” that relates them. As *original*, this unity precedes the two moments. As *synthetic*, this unity is the *activity* of synthesis. As an original synthetic unity or relation, Kantian apperception, at least on Hegel’s view, presents (a) an activity that constitutes the thing acting (the oppositional terms that can be abstracted from the process – here the “I as thinking subject” and “the manifold as body and world”), and (b) a relation that precedes (in an ontological sense) the terms related (again, the oppositional terms that can be abstracted from the process).

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<sup>267</sup> *Werke* 2, pp. 306-7.

As he also states elsewhere in his philosophy, Hegel sees Kantian apperception as the model for resolving the paradox of the unity of identity and difference. He sees it as the basis of his doctrine of the notion, the basis of his conception of the substance as subject.<sup>268</sup> However, Hegel also argues that Kant fails to recognize the full implications of his discovery.<sup>269</sup> Speaking of Kant's discussion of reason in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, Hegel says:

Instead of taking the rational idea, which first appears in the deduction of the categories as the original identity of the one and the many, and raising it out of its appearance as understanding, this idea as appearance is grasped in terms of one of

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<sup>268</sup> In his discussion of "The Notion in General," Hegel credits Kant with discovering the true nature of the notion. After presenting the notion as the category that resolves the inherent tensions in various traditional accounts of substance, Hegel goes on to say: "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 of the Notion is recognized as the *original synthetic* unity of *apperception*, as unity of the *I think*, or self-consciousness" (*Science of Logic*, p. 584). The unity of the notion, as the unity of identity and difference, or as the concrete unity that includes difference, must be conceived in terms of the "original synthetic unity of apperception."

<sup>269</sup> Again, Hegel makes the same point in his discussion of the notion in the *Science of Logic*. He says: "If the superficial conception of what the Notion is, leaves all manifoldness outside the Notion and attributes the latter only the form of abstract universality or the empty identity of reflection, we can at once appeal to the fact that quite apart from the view here propounded, the statement of the definition of the a notion expressly includes not only the genus, which itself is, properly speaking, more than a purely abstract universality, but also the specific determinations. If one would but reflect attentively on the meaning of this fact, one would see that differentiation must be regarded as an equally essential moment of the Notion. Kant has introduced this consideration by the extremely important thought that there are synthetic judgments a priori. This original synthesis of apperception is one of the most profound principles for speculative development; it contains the beginning of a true apprehension of the nature of the Notion and is completely opposed to that empty identity or abstract universality which is not in itself a synthesis. The further development [of Kant's philosophy], however, does not fulfill the promise of the beginning. The very expression synthesis easily recalls the conception of an external unity and a mere combination of entities that are intrinsically separate" (pp. 588-9). The continuity between this passage, from the *Science of Logic*, and Hegel's early interpretation of Kant in *Glauben und Wissen*, is remarkable. This passage begins by emphasizing the problems that arise when we begin with a distinction between the "empty identity of abstraction" and "manifoldness." Here, again, we see the problem of the unity of identity and difference, or the unity of unity and plurality. When we begin with distinction between the two, we cannot explain their relation or unity. Therefore we must begin with their relation, with the "original synthesis," with a conception of unity that already includes "differentiation" within it. Hegel says that Kant's conception of the "original synthesis of apperception" provides the resolution to this problem. It provides "one of the most profound principles for speculative development." However, as in *Glauben und Wissen*, he argues that Kant ultimately fails to "fulfill the promise of the beginning," of the original insight contained in the doctrine of apperception.

its members, the moment of unity, and thereby the other moment as well as finitude are made absolute.<sup>270</sup>

Although the exact nature of this criticism remains somewhat opaque, Hegel's general point should be clear. In the transcendental deduction, Kant grasped the nature of the unity of unity and plurality, or the unity of identity and difference, but at this point he still grasped it, at least in a certain sense, as appearance. While Kant grasped the original synthetic unity of identity and difference, Hegel seems to be suggesting that, in the transcendental analytic, Kant nonetheless focuses primarily on the difference between identity and difference, a difference that can be seen in his basic division between concepts and intuitions, and in his division between understanding and sensibility. Instead of moving to focus on the unity of these two moments, as Hegel thinks Kant should have done in his discussion of reason, Kant instead goes on to further emphasize their difference in the doctrine of transcendental idealism. This doctrine, with its reliance on the thing-in-itself, reintroduces the possibility of another kind of unity – a pure unity without difference, a unity that precedes activities and relations.

Instead of taking the structures of apperception as the basic model for the genuine self, for freedom, and for God – i.e. instead of taking apperception as a model for explaining how the infinite relates to the finite, or how the non-determined relates to the determined – Kant reintroduces the possibility of a conception of the self, freedom, and God as pure unities, as the infinite over/against the finite, as the non-determined in isolation from the determined. Or, in the terms Hegel employs in this passage, Kant focuses on the first moment of the division, on unity, and he thereby makes finitude absolute. He makes division or difference inexplicable and permanent. Thus, on Hegel's

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<sup>270</sup> *Werke* 2, p. 318.

view, Kant fails to recognize the full meaning of the resources provided by his doctrine of apperception. He fails to generalize the insights that he discovered.

Without Hegelian jargon, we might state the point as follows: in the doctrine of the synthetic unity of apperception, Hegel sees a model of subjectivity as a kind of activity. Rather than construing the “I” as a substance or thing, Kant conceives the “I” – or at least the phenomenal “I” – as an activity and as essentially relational. Hegel sees this non-substantial conception of the “I” as the basis for conceiving all genuine objects.<sup>271</sup> He sees it as the basis for an ontology that construes the substance as subject, or, more accurately stated, as the basis for an ontology that construes genuine objects in terms drawn from the structures of subjectivity rather than in terms drawn from more traditional ontological accounts of substance.

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<sup>271</sup> Hegel’s comments on the Paralogisms help to clarify the fundamentally new direction in which Hegel seeks to take Kant’s doctrine of the synthetic unity of apperception. In the Paralogisms section of the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant emphasizes the epistemic limits on our ability to grasp the “I” as a thing-in-itself. While holding open the possibility that the “I” is an immaterial, simple substance, Kant argues that we cannot cognize the “I” as such. He goes on to show how various misconceptions of the merely formal “I think” might lead us to the false conclusion that we can cognize the “I” as simple substance. Hegel transforms this epistemological discussion into one that has ontological import. He sees the Kantian doctrine of apperception as the liberation of the “I” from the false categories of the understanding – i.e. from the categories that make the “I” into a mere thing. Thus he says: “Unquestionably one good result of the Kantian criticism was that it emancipated mental philosophy from the ‘soul-thing’, from the categories, and consequently, from the questions about the simplicity, complexity, materiality, etc., of the soul” (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 47). Sometimes this remark has been taken as Hegel’s rejection of ultimate metaphysics in favor of a pragmatic or merely existential conception of the self or the “I.” By contrast, I would argue that, in this passage, Hegel presents what he sees as the correct ontological picture of the “I,” not a non-ontological conception of the “I.” Elsewhere, Hegel makes a similar point in a way that supports my ontological interpretation. He says: “In the first place, he [Kant] is perfectly correct when he maintains that the ego is not a soul-thing, a dead permanency which as a sensuous present existence; indeed, were it an ordinary thing, it would be necessary that it should be capable of being experienced” (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 3. P. 447). Shortly thereafter, Hegel continues: “The form which Kant accordingly bestows on Being, thing, substance, would seem to indicate that these categories of the understanding where too high for the subject, too high to be capable of being predicated of it. But really such determinations are too poor and too mean, for what possesses life is not a thing, nor can the soul, the spirit, the ego, be called a thing” (*Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 3. Pp. 447-8). So Hegel sees Kant’s conception of the “I” in terms of the synthetic unity of apperception as the true conception of the “I.” It is true both in the sense that (a) it presents the “I” as the “I” truly is, and in the sense that (b) it fully captures the nobility of the “I,” a nobility that the traditional conception of substance obscures. Hegel ultimately argues that the model presented by the “I” applies to all other genuine things as well.

## 7) Essay on Natural Right: The Unity of Identity and Difference and the Structure of Practical Philosophy

In his essay on natural right, entitled *Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts, seine Stelle in der praktischen Philosophie und seine Verhältnis zu den positiven Rechtswissenschaften*, Hegel often phrases the central problem of practical philosophy in terms of the unity of identity and difference, or in terms of the unity of the one and the many. In this essay, Hegel also uses the relationship between unity and plurality to contrast empiricism with Kant's philosophical system. In schematic terms, empiricism begins with plurality and moves towards unity, while Kant's system, at least in its practical dimensions, begin with unity move towards plurality.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Kant presents a complex case for this Hegelian schema. Hegel generally holds that, in theoretical philosophy, Kant follows the Empiricists in moving from plurality to unity. Experience, for Kant, derives from the way that the synthetic operations of the understanding create unity out of the plurality given in intuition. For this reason, Hegel groups Kant's philosophy with Hume's empiricism in the *Encyclopedia Logic*. He says: "The Critical theory starts originally from the distinction of elements presented in the analysis of experience, viz. the matter of sense, and its universal relations" (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 40). In other words, experience derives from two sources, from the manifold provided by intuition and the unity provided by the concepts of the understanding. Here Hegel refers to the unity of concepts as "universal relations." Elsewhere in this same discussion, he characterizes them in terms of "universality" or "necessity." Hegel continues his introduction of the Critical philosophy as follows: "Taking into account Hume's criticism on this distinction as given in the preceding section, viz. that sensation does not explicitly apprehend more than an individual or more than a mere event, it [Kant's philosophy] insists at the same time on the fact that universality and necessity are seen to perform a function equally essential in constituting what is called experience" (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 40). So Kant accepts that we are immediately presented with a plurality of different singulars, but he holds that the mind provides the universality or necessity that unites this plurality. Hegel sees this as a more or less Humean project. Thus he continues: "Even Hume's skepticism does not deny that the characteristics of universality and necessity are found in cognition. And even in Kant this fact remains a presupposition after all; it may be said, to use the ordinary phraseology of the sciences, that Kant did no more than offer another explanation of the fact" (*Encyclopaedia Logic*, paragraph 40). Hume explains the apparent connection, unity, universality, or necessity in our experience in terms of the principles of association. Kant explains connection, unity, universality, or necessity in terms of the categories. Both recognize unity as something that the mind adds to the plurality immediately given to it. Although Kant provides a different explanation of this unity, one that focuses on the rational activity of the mind via the categories, rather than the non-rational operation of a basically associative mechanism, his theoretical philosophy of the phenomenal realm remains within the contours of Humean empiricism, at least according to Hegel. However, in his conception of the noumenal realm, Kant posits an explanation that moves from unified ground (self as

Here we see the basic structure of Hegel's dialectic.<sup>273</sup> We have a set of oppositional terms, in this case, unity and plurality. Empiricism takes plurality as basic, and it attempts to explain unity in terms of plurality. Or, we might say, empiricism attempts to create unity out of plurality. Conversely, Kant's philosophical system, at least in its practical dimension, takes unity as basic, and it attempts to explain plurality in terms of it. As the essay progresses, Hegel argues that we must begin with the relation between unity and plurality. He argues that this relation itself precedes or grounds both plurality and unity.

In the first section of the essay on natural right, Hegel discusses the empirical approach to dealing with natural right, an approach that moves from plurality to unity.

He says:

Insofar as this empirical science deals with the plurality of principles, laws, purposes, duties and rights, none of which are absolute, there must at the same time arise the conception and the need for an absolute unity and an original simple necessity for all these disconnected determinations.<sup>274</sup>

The empirical science of positive right begins with the plurality of laws, rights, duties, principles etc. Hegel argues that this plurality suggests the need for unity. Among other things, he argues that the need for unity arises from the possibility for conflict, from the possibility of applying multiple principles, laws, duties, rights, or purposes to the same

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substance, God, etc.) to plurality. This conception comes to the fore in Kant's practical philosophy, where he moves from the pure unity of the "I" to the determination of the empirical self. In its account of how the "I," abstracts from all particularity and determines the maxims upon which self acts, Kant's philosophy moves from unity to plurality, from universal to particular, etc.

<sup>273</sup> Compare this with the account of the dialectic in Section Three of Chapter Six. The remarkable similarities between the basic dialectical strategy of the natural right essay and the *Philosophy of Right* (see Sections Four and Five of Chapter Six) point to the deep continuities in Hegel's philosophy from the earliest essays of the Jena period through the final works written in Berlin.

<sup>274</sup> *Werke* 2, p. 442.

situation. A central purpose of the state may conflict with the rights of some citizens. Or, to cite another example, the rights that some people claim may conflict with the established laws of the state. In such cases, we need to have some way of determining which rights, duties, laws, principles or purposes trump the others. For this we need some sense of the *relation* between them. The full determination of this relation requires an account of the unity of these manifold rights, duties, laws, principles, and purposes.

So empiricism begins with plurality and attempts to establish some principle of unity. However, for various reasons, Hegel argues that this empirical approach must fail. Thus he speaks of the “opposition of the many and the one” that is “unresolvable for this empirical knowledge.”<sup>275</sup> Similarly, he claims that the “principle of empiricism precludes the absolute unity of the one and the many.”<sup>276</sup> Thus we can see that the problem of the unity of identity and difference, or the problem of the unity of the one and the many, plays a central role in Hegel’s characterization and criticism of empiricism.

In the second section of the essay, Hegel goes on to discuss the practical philosophy of Kant. At the beginning of this section, he says: “It is the side of the infinite, which constitutes the *a priori* opposed to the principle of empiricism, to which we now turn.”<sup>277</sup> Here we have two sides or principles – *the principle of empiricism* and *the principle of the philosophical a priori* (or simply the principle of non-empirical philosophy). Previously, we described the principle of empiricism as plurality. In other words, we claimed that it begins with plurality. By contrast, the principle of Kant’s practical philosophy is unity, or as Hegel describes it in this passage, infinity. Here we

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<sup>275</sup> *Werke* 2, p. 442.

<sup>276</sup> *Werke* 2, p. 448.

<sup>277</sup> *Werke* 2, p. 453.



see further a connection between the dichotomy between unity and plurality and the dichotomy between the infinite and the finite.

The following passage further emphasizes the parallels between these dichotomies, and it identifies pure reason, as conceived by Kant, with one side of these dichotomies, with unity and infinity. Hegel says:

This real opposition is, on the side, the plurality of being or the finite, and opposite to it the infinite as negation of plurality and, in positive terms, as pure unity. This absolute concept [Begriff], construed in this way, presents in this unity, that which is called pure reason.<sup>278</sup>

Here we see three sets of oppositions: plurality vs. unity, the finite vs. the infinite, and being vs. pure reason. The practical philosophy that characterizes empiricism begins with being, with plurality, and with finitude. By contrast, the principle of Kant's practical philosophy is the infinite – i.e. unity or pure reason itself.

While Hegel argues that empiricism proves incapable of explaining unity in terms of plurality, he argues that Kant's philosophy proves incapable of explaining plurality in terms of unity. Beginning with a plurality of rights, duties, and goals, empiricism fails to determine the ultimate right, duty, or goal. It thus also fails to determine the complex relation between our various *prima facie* practical commitments. By contrast, Hegel argues that Kant's practical philosophy fails to explain the plurality of our rights and duties on the basis of pure reason alone.

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<sup>278</sup> *Werke* 2, pp. 454-5.

This criticism simply presents the empty formalism objection – i.e. the objection that the categorical imperative proves insufficient to ground the full range (i.e. plurality) of our ethical commitments.<sup>279</sup> Thus Hegel says:

It immediately becomes clear, that, since the pure unity constitutes the essence of practical reason, that we can't speak of a system of values [Systeme der Sittlichkeit], that not even a plurality of laws is possible, for that which goes beyond the pure concept or...that which goes beyond the pure concept of duty and the abstraction of a law, no longer belongs to pure reason.<sup>280</sup>

Bracketing questions about the merit of this line of criticism, we can see how Hegel presents the problem with Kant's practical philosophy in terms of the relation between unity and difference. This allows him to directly contrast what he sees as the failure of Kantian ethics with what he sees as the failure of an empirical approach to practical philosophy. It allows him to set up the resolution to this impasse in terms of his basic dialectical schema, and it allows him to place the problem of the unity of identity and difference, or the unity of the one and the many, at the very center of philosophy.

## **8) Conclusion**

Variations on phrase “the unity of identity and difference” play an absolutely central role in the early essays Hegel wrote in Jena. In these essays, Hegel speaks of “the connection of connection and disconnection,” of “the unity of unification and relation” of “the unity of identity and duality,” and of “the unity of the one and the many.” The works of Schelling and Jacobi seem to have influenced Hegel's discussions of these themes, though there are many significant differences between Hegel's views on these

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<sup>279</sup> Hegel returns to this criticism in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (pp. 256 – 260) and the *Philosophy of Right* (paragraphs 133 – 135).

<sup>280</sup> *Werke* 2, pp. 459-460.

issues and the views of his two predecessors. While Schelling addresses the relation between plurality and unity and the relation between difference and identity, he ultimately reduces plurality to unity and difference to identity. Thus Schelling posits the absolute unity or the “ $A = A$ ” as the fundamental and unconditioned principle of reason and nature of reality. By contrast, Hegel emphasizes the fundamentally irreducible and equiprimordial nature of identity and difference. Accordingly, Hegel sees *the unity of identity and difference*, or *the unity of “ $A = A$ ” and “ $A \neq A$ ”* as the fundamental principle of reality.

Jacobi recognizes the problem of the relation of the one and the many, and he uses these terms to address what he sees as the fatal flaw of Kantian philosophy. Moreover, in terms that anticipate Hegel, he describes the original connection between the one and the many as the “substance,” “organism,” and the “individual.” Jacobi argues that this mysterious relation transcends reason. Hegel endorses a similar position in the *Systemfragment*. Starting with the *Differenzschrift*, however, he claims that reason or speculation is capable of grasping the essential unity of identity and difference.

In the *Differenzschrift* and in *Glauben und Wissen*, Hegel discusses the problem of the unity of identity and difference in terms of the nature of apperception. The problem of apperception presents the problem of the unity of identity and difference, and, according to Hegel, it provides the basic model for the solution to this problem. In the essay on natural right, Hegel discusses empiricism and the central problems of practical philosophy in terms of the nature of the relation between the one and the many. This essay thus provides further examples of the wide range of issues that Hegel considers in terms of this basic problem.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **BEYOND LIBERALISM: HEGEL'S DIALECTICAL CRITIQUE OF MORALITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

#### **1) Bridge**

In this dissertation, I have presented the beginning of an extended argument regarding the ontological basis of Hegel's social and political philosophy.

In formulating this argument, I have shown how the phrase "the unity of identity and difference" presents the core ontological problem of Hegel's philosophy (Chapter Five); I have examined various paradoxes that arise from the relation of identity and difference as exemplified in (a) the process of change, (b) the structure of judgment, and (c) the structure of the object (Chapters Three and Four); I have argued that Hegel develops his hermeneutic conception of philosophy as a response to the paradoxical relation of identity and difference, or synthesis and analysis, as it presents itself in the structure of judgment (Chapter Three); and I have argued that Hegel develops his account of the notion as a response to this paradox as it arises in the structure of the object (Chapter Four).

Hegel's doctrine of the notion presents his conception of substance as subject, his attempt to conceive all genuine objects in terms of the categories of purposive action and representation. I have shown how the paradoxes arising from the relation of identity and

difference illuminate, explain, and justify this conception of genuine objects (Chapter Four). Additionally, I have shown how the various kinds of objects can be ranked in terms of their degree of truth. The degree of truth attained by a type of object depends upon the (a) amount of diversity or difference that it is capable of synthesizing and (b) the form or manner of unity that it achieves in this synthesis (Chapter Two). Finally, I have argued that the will presents one of the highest instantiations of the notion, and that the structure of the will, as an instantiation of notion, provides the basis for understanding the ultimate goal and the argumentative structure of the *Philosophy of Right*.

In its current form, the extended argument presented in this dissertation remains incomplete. The completion of this argument requires two further steps. In Chapters Two and Four, I presented the basic structures of the notion in terms of (a) the unity of identity in difference, (b) the telos that defines the notion's purposive action (identity) (c) the basic representational structures that arise from, and also guide, the purposive action of the notion, and finally (difference) (d) the distinction between the self and the other as it arises from the telos and structures the action (also difference). In order to complete my argument, however, I would still need to show how the will instantiates these general structures in a highly developed form. Specifically, I would need to show how the phrases "the unity of the universal and the particular," "the unity of the infinite and the finite," and "the unity of the indeterminate and the determinate," present more developed forms of the basic structures already discussed with regards to the phrase "the unity of identity and difference."<sup>281</sup> Second, I would need to show how these characterizations of

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<sup>281</sup> In Chapter Four, I argued that the term "identity" stands for the telos in its implicit form, and that the term "difference" represents the distinction between the self and its other, a distinction that arises in light of the implicit telos, while at the same time facilitating the further articulation of the telos. With regards to the will, the terms "universal," "infinite," and "indeterminate" all explain the nature of the telos

the will define the basic objectives of the *Philosophy of Right*, and how they determine the dialectical structure of the book's main argument.

This chapter presents one of the final steps in this as yet uncompleted argument. It presents an interpretation of the nature of the dialectic in the *Philosophy of Right*, and it examines the basic structure of Hegel's argument in his criticism of morality and civil society. These issues, which bear a direct relation to the central themes presented thus far in the dissertation, arise within the context of a discussion about the relationship between Hegel's political philosophy and the values that define the tradition of political liberalism. This chapter argues that a failure to grasp the overall argumentative strategy of the *Philosophy of Right* has led much recent scholarship to misconstrue Hegel's relationship to core values of liberalism. Specifically, this failure has led much scholarship to overlook Hegel's relatively severe criticisms of morality and of civil society. While these discussions of the dialectic and the structure of the *Philosophy of Right* do not employ the terminology developed thus far in the dissertation, they raise issues that are clearly related to those addressed in the preceding chapters. More importantly, perhaps, it should be relatively clear how the claims made in the previous

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specific to the will, while the terms "particular," "finite," and "determinate" describe the difference between the self and the other as instantiated by the will. One of the main distinctions between the will and various lower level instantiations of the notion consists in the degree of cognitive clarity that the will can achieve with regards to its telos and the distinction between its self and its other. Moreover, this higher degree of clarity about itself also leads to the greater role that the will's self-understanding plays in determining what it actually is. This is where "indeterminacy" and something like the traditional notion of freedom come in. As we discussed in the Appendix to Chapter Four, the will (or mind) is the synthesis of (a) what it is in itself and (b) what it takes itself to be. The second moment here relates to the degree of clarity achieved in representation or self-awareness. The higher the degree of self-awareness – i.e. of the awareness of the self in opposition to its other – the less the self is simply what it is. Thus it is the degree of self-knowledge that determines the high degree of (negative) freedom expressed in the first moment of the will.

chapters could enrich and further substantiate some of the central assertions of this chapter.<sup>282</sup>

## 2) Introduction

While past generations of scholars, including Karl Popper, F.H. Bradley, Isaiah Berlin, and Georg Lukács, have emphasized the anti-individualist and proto-Marxist features of Hegel's political philosophy, more recent Anglophone scholarship has tended to downplay these features.<sup>283</sup> In the past fifteen years, for instance, philosophers such as

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<sup>282</sup> Here I will offer one example. Hegel's discussion of morality develops a particular conception of the self as subject, a conception that develops the second moment of the will. This conception of the subject (a) draws a rigid distinction between the subject and the object, (b) identifies the self merely with the subject, and (c) determines the nature of an action solely in terms of its relation to the subjective intention that causes it. This distinction between subject and object presents the self/other distinction that appears in light of the telos. It presents the moment of difference, as discussed in Chapter Four. However, as we argued in Chapter Four, the self is inextricably entwined with its other. Among other things, the intimate relation between the self and its other stems from the fact that the self/other distinction is not fixed. This distinction arises in light of the largely implicit telos. It is only in attempting to overcome the distinction between the self and the other that we come to a clearer conception of the telos. This clearer conception of the telos then transforms our conception of the self/other distinction. Morality holds that the subject, as fully independent from and opposed to the object, determines the nature of the action. By contrast, Hegel's account of the notion implies that action first determines the nature of the self, since it is only through action that the telos becomes clear, and it is only in light of an explicit or clarified telos that the distinction between the self (or subject) and the other (or object) becomes clear. (We might be tempted here to say that action simply reveals the subject to itself. However, the subject or self is both what it is and what it takes itself to be. Thus in revealing the true nature of the self/other distinction to the self, action transforms the self.) Here we can see how Hegel's basic account of the notion illuminates his fundamental criticism of morality. We can also see how morality provides a partial truth. "Abstract Right," the first section of the book, focuses on the self as person, as a fully indeterminate being capable of setting goals. It focuses on the moment of unity, on the goal (or the capacity to determine goals) in isolation from the way that the goal first constitutes the empirical self in terms of the self/other distinction. Morality brings this second moment into the equation, though it commits an error in absolutizing the self or subject in its opposition to the object. It fails to see how the self must constantly reformulate and reevaluate the distinction that determines it in relation to the object.

<sup>283</sup> See Isaiah Berlin's "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Liberty*; F. H. Bradley's "My Station and Its Duties," in *Ethical Studies*; Georg Lukács' *Der Junge Hegel*; and Chapters Eleven and Twelve of Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. While Berlin and Popper criticize Hegel as a precursor of Twentieth Century totalitarianism in both its Marxist and non-Marxist forms, Bradley and Lukács present more positive portrayals of Hegel's anti-liberalism. Bradley draws on Hegel as a resource in developing his own communitarian, quietist, and in some sense conservative political philosophy. By contrast, Lukács presents a Marxist interpretation of Hegel's intellectual development in light of the economic and class conditions of late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Century Germany. He focuses specifically on the proto-Marxist insights contained in Hegel's early accounts of alienation and the dialectic.

Kenneth Westphal, Robert Pippin, and Frederick Neuhouser have presented Hegel's political philosophy as an attempt to *augment* and *ground* the core values of the liberal tradition.<sup>284</sup> Although Hegel may disagree with liberals on certain points, such philosophers argue, his politics should not be characterized as anti-liberal. More specifically, they argue that Hegel's objections to liberalism do not focus on the coherence or importance of traditional liberal values, but rather such objections focus on the *sufficiency* or *completeness* of these values. In opposition to this recent line of interpretation, I argue that the *Philosophy of Right* directly challenges the basic conceptual underpinnings of the liberal tradition.

In Part Two of this Chapter, I briefly examine recent work by Westphal, Pippin, and Neuhouser. I show how the central arguments presented in these works depend upon a construal of the Hegelian dialectic as a kind of transcendental argument. In Part Three, I examine Hegel's remarks about the nature of the dialectic, remarks presented in the *Science of Logic* and in paragraphs 79 through 82 of the *Encyclopedia*. On this basis of these passages, I argue that the dialectic should not be construed as a kind of transcendental argument, and I suggest an alternative conception of the dialectic that draws upon the language of hermeneutics. This alternative conception of the dialectic presents a challenge to the line of interpretation presented by Westphal, Pippin, and Neuhouser. In Section Four, I examine one of the crucial transitions in the *Philosophy of Right* – the transition from “Morality” to “*Sittlichkeit*,” and I argue that this transition

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<sup>284</sup> For contemporary and relatively sympathetic presentations of Hegel's political philosophy that emphasize the divergence between this philosophy and the liberal tradition, see Charles Taylor's *Hegel* (Chapters Fourteen and Sixteen) as well as his essay, “Hegel's Ambiguous Legacy for Modern Liberalism.” For a particularly interesting discussion of Hegel's political philosophy as a form of distinctly “progressive” anti-liberalism, see Domenico Losurdo's *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns*.



illustrates the alternative conception of the dialectic presented in Section Three. Finally, in Section Five, I discuss the transition from “Civil Society” to “The State.” This discussion further substantiates my alternative account of the dialectic, and it briefly sketches a few of Hegel’s more trenchant criticisms of political liberalism.

### **3) The Dialectical Structure of the *Philosophy of Right: Sittlichkeit*, the State, and the Status of Liberalism**

In the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel addresses various themes and concepts that play a central role in the tradition of political liberalism. In the first section of the book, Hegel presents an account of the individual *as a person*, as a being with “a capacity for rights.” Hegel formulates the basic principle of “Abstract Right” in emphatically Kantian terms – namely, “Be a person and respect others as persons.”<sup>285</sup> In the second part of the book, the part on morality, Hegel discusses the individual *as a subject*. He emphasizes the central role that the subject’s self-interpretation plays in determining what counts as *her* action, and he points out the role that intentions play in determining the nature of action and the relationship between action and the subject’s identity.<sup>286</sup> This discussion of moral subjectivity has often been read as an endorsement of certain liberal conceptions of self-determination and autonomy.<sup>287</sup> Finally, in his discussion of civil society, Hegel

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<sup>285</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford, 1962). Paragraph 36.

<sup>286</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 110.

<sup>287</sup> In *Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory*, Neuhausser sees Hegel’s concern for protecting “moral subjectivity” as a concern that Hegel shares with Rawls and the liberal tradition more generally. Neuhausser says: “Nevertheless, the undeniable differences between Hegel and Rawls (and other liberals) on this score should not blind us to the important fact that both positions are motivated by a concern to ensure that the social order give adequate expression to an ideal of moral subjectivity that, in essence, the two theories share” (p. 229). *Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom* (Harvard, 2000).

describes a social sphere of “private persons whose end is their own interest.”<sup>288</sup> Such individuals pursue freely chosen interests, and they enter into mutually beneficial associations to further these interests.

Thus Hegel’s discussions of abstract right, morality, and civil society explore and at least apparently endorse various central themes from the liberal tradition. However, two dialectical transitions in the *Philosophy of Right* have long troubled proponents of liberalism. After discussing abstract right and morality, spheres that emphasize self-determination and basic rights, Hegel moves on to discuss *Sittlichkeit* – or ethical life, as it is often translated – as an objective realm of social, economic, and political forces to which “individuals are related as accidents to substance.”<sup>289</sup> Additionally, defenders of liberalism have often objected to the final transition within the sphere of *Sittlichkeit*, the transition from “Civil Society” to “The State.” With the exception of a few remarks about world history, the *Philosophy of Right* ends with a discussion of the state as “the actuality of the ethical Idea,” as the “ethical mind *qua* the substantial will manifest and revealed to itself,” and as that which is “absolutely rational.”<sup>290</sup> In such pronouncements, Hegel seems to emphasize the primacy of the state at the expense of the individual.

These dialectical transitions pose an important question for our interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right* – namely, how should we reconcile the liberal themes discussed in “Abstract Right,” “Morality,” and “Civil Society” with the apparent anti-individualism manifested in Hegel’s discussion of *Sittlichkeit* and the state? The answer to this question depends upon our more general conception of the nature of dialectical progression in the

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<sup>288</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 187.

<sup>289</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 145.

<sup>290</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraphs 257-8.

*Philosophy of Right*. Here we can imagine two extremes. At one extreme, we might conceive the progression of the dialectic as a movement that negates the norms and institutions of earlier stages in favor of the norms and institutions that emerge in the later ones. On this on wholly *negative* conception of the dialectic, Hegel rejects the values and categories presented in “Abstract Right,” “Morality,” “The Family,” and “Civil Society” as *contradictory* and *incoherent*, and he presents his conception of the state as a social and political alternative to the flawed visions of social reality presented in these earlier discussions. This wholly negative conception of the dialectic, one that emphasizes the role of contradiction, leads to an explicitly anti-liberal interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right*.

At the other extreme, we might construe the progression of the dialectic as an *additive* or *positive* process in which later dialectical stages augment or complete the earlier ones. On this view, Hegel’s discussions of *Sittlichkeit* and the state compliment or enrich the core values of liberalism, the values that Hegel articulates and embraces in his discussions of abstract right, morality, and civil society. This interpretation greatly downplays or wholly ignores the role of contradiction in dialectical progression, and it emphasizes the agreement between Hegel’s political philosophy and the liberal tradition.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Many scholars who (a) recognize the role of contradictions in the *Philosophy of Right*, and (b) largely eschew the transcendental argumentative strategy outlined in this paper, nonetheless present interpretations of Hegel’s philosophy that approximate the second extreme. These scholars all emphasize the importance of morality and downplay the significance of *Sittlichkeit*. Stated somewhat differently, they insist upon the relative prominence of morality within Hegel’s final vision of politics. Thus, for instance, Terry Pinkard makes the following claim about the ends presented by *Sittlichkeit*: “these ends must be consistent with the dictates of “Abstract Right,” and “Morality,” and must be seen to *complete* the dictates of “Abstract Right” and “Morality” in the sense that only in willing those ends can the agents be said to be genuinely free” (*Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, p. 296). For Pinkard, the dictates of “Abstract Right” and “Morality” remain integral parts of Hegel’s social and political vision, dictates that cannot be negated by the demands of *Sittlichkeit*. Moreover, like Pippin, Westphal, and Neuhausser,

Westphal, Pippin, and Neuhouser endorse conceptions of the dialectic that resemble or approximate the second extreme. All three philosophers explain the progression of the dialectic in terms drawn from a Kantian repertoire, terms that emphasize the similarities between the Hegelian dialectic and Kantian transcendental arguments. On this view, the latter stages of the dialectic present *necessary conditions* for the achievement or coherent realization of the earlier ones. Thus Hegel introduces *Sittlichkeit* and his conception of the state as the essential grounds or conditions for the rights and freedoms discussed in “Abstract Right,” “Morality,” and “Civil Society.” Since, on this interpretation of the dialectic, the support for these rights and freedoms constitutes Hegel’s primary or sole reason for introducing his conception of *Sittlichkeit* and the state, it clearly follows that the earlier rights and freedoms must be preserved within these later dialectic stages.

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Pinkard speaks of “*Sittlichkeit*” as the *completion* of “Abstract Right” and “Morality.” In this same vein, Neuhouser also says: “Hegel sees ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) as completing the modern moral project – not as *replacing* it” (*Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, p. 302). The emphasis is in the original and is worth noting. Pinkard emphasizes completion rather than replacement as the model for conceiving the dialectical relation between “Morality” and “*Sittlichkeit*.” In *Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, Allen Wood comes closer to the hermeneutic conception of the dialectic suggested in this chapter. Thus, he says: Hegel tells us that of the three principal parts of the *Philosophy of Right*, only the third deals with human beings in their concreteness; Abstract Right and Morality are ‘abstract moments’. Their images of the individual are one-sided, and the truth contained in these images is best appreciated when we see how they are actualized in social institutions belonging to ethical life” (pp. 21-22). Here we seem to have a hermeneutic conception of the dialectic, one that allows for the reinterpretation of the earlier dialectical moments from the standpoint of the later ones. As I argue below, the act of reinterpretation presents the negative aspect of dialectical sublation, the aspect that forces a – perhaps radical – revision of the discussions in “Abstract Right” and “Morality.” Ultimately, though, Wood’s account allows little room for this negative side of sublation. Thus, for instance, he argues that the *Philosophy of Right* presents “an account of the moral standpoint which, within its proper sphere, Hegel is prepared fully to endorse” (p. 134). In this passage he seems to indicate that, at least “within its proper sphere,” Hegel completely endorses the account of morality presented in the *Philosophy of Right*. Thus the transition to “*Sittlichkeit*” doesn’t involve a reevaluation or negation of “Morality,” though it may place certain restrictions on morality. For further discussion of the relationship between “Morality” and “*Sittlichkeit*” see Ludwig Siep’s “The ‘Aufhebung’ of Morality in Ethical Life.” Siep accepts both conceptions of the dialectic. With regards to the three subsections of “Morality,” he argues that Hegel accepts the claims of the first two sections – “Purpose and Responsibility” and “Intention and Welfare” as non-contradictory and legitimate, but ultimately limited. However, he argues that the claims in “Good and Conscience” are contradictory and thus ultimately rejected.

In an article entitled, “The basic context and structure of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*,” Kenneth Westphal presents Hegel as “a reform minded liberal who based his political philosophy on the analysis and fulfillment of individual freedom.”<sup>292</sup> He argues that Hegel’s political philosophy presents the necessary conditions for the possibility of individual freedom. In order to defuse worries about the apparently anti-liberal tendencies of *Sittlichkeit*, Westphal employs the language of transcendental arguments to explain the relationship between this section and the earlier, more explicitly liberal discussions in the *Philosophy of Right*. Speaking of Hegel, he says:

His justification of ethical life [i.e. *Sittlichkeit*] is that the conditions for the possibility of abstract right and morality are not given within the accounts of abstract right or of morality. The conditions for their possibility – their grounds – are provided only by ethical life.<sup>293</sup>

*Sittlichkeit* supports and grounds the basic rights and freedoms discussed in “Abstract Right” and “Morality.” It does not challenge or negate them. Thus, on Westphal’s view, the *Philosophy of Right* does not reject the core commitments of liberalism, but rather it augments or completes them.

In numerous articles, Robert Pippin presents a similar account of the dialectical development and general political orientation of the *Philosophy of Right*. In one article, entitled “Hegel on the Rationality and Priority of Ethical Life,” Pippin provides assurance against worries about “what might appear to be a kind of anti-individualism” in Hegel’s commitment to ethical life.<sup>294</sup> In response to such worries, Pippin emphasizes Hegel’s commitment to basic human rights (“Abstract Right”) and the centrality of an agent’s

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<sup>292</sup> In *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1993. P. 234.

<sup>293</sup> *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, p. 255.

<sup>294</sup> In *Neue Hefte für Philosophie*, 1995, 35. P. 96

self-understanding in determining her responsibility for an action (“Morality”). On Pippin’s view, the institutions and commitments presented in *Sittlichkeit* do not supercede Hegel’s resolute commitment to basic rights and moral agency. Pippin justifies this claim in terms of his interpretation of the dialectical structure of the *Philosophy of Right*. He says:

The general purpose of Hegel’s practical philosophy is to describe the conditions for the possibility of being a free subject, or of “agency,” and the results of that account are: (i) be a “person” and respect others as “persons” (don’t violate another’s rights; respect legitimate claims of non-interference, above all with respect to property); (ii) be a “subject”; or be morally responsible for what you do and regard others, all other human beings, as morally responsible beings; (iii) be an ethical being, affirm and sustain certain ethical institutions. Or in conventional language: act legally, act morally, act ethically; respect rights, do what is morally obligatory and what is ethically good.<sup>295</sup>

Like Westphal, Pippin sees “being a free subject” or “agency” as the central theme of Hegel’s political philosophy. On his view, the three main sections of the *Philosophy of Right* present three distinct but equally essential “conditions for the possibility” of self-determination or agency. Pippin’s presentation of the dialectic, as a kind of transcendental argument, emphasizes the complete legitimacy of the earlier dialectical stages, the stages in which Hegel discusses themes and concepts central to liberalism. This conception of the dialectic thereby provides the basis for his defense of Hegel’s political philosophy against charges of anti-individualism.

Fredrick Neuhauser agrees with Westphal and Pippin about the basic argumentative structure of the *Philosophy of Right*, though his account is more complex and nuanced. Although Neuhauser does not specifically classify Hegel as a liberal, he does claim that Hegel’s political philosophy seeks to “integrate liberalism’s concerns for

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<sup>295</sup> *Neue Heft für Philosophie*, p. 97

the fundamental rights and interests of individuals.”<sup>296</sup> He also draws attention to significant ways in which Hegel’s political philosophy differs from that of most communitarians, emphasizing what he sees as Hegel’s “unequivocal endorsement of universal individual rights,” – i.e. the “rights of personhood outlined in ‘Abstract Right.’”<sup>297</sup> Neuhausser believes that Hegel’s conception of *Sittlichkeit* and the state fully acknowledge and protect the liberal commitments presented in “Abstract Right” and “Morality.”

Neuhausser also presents the dialectic in terms that draw upon the language of transcendental arguments. He says:

...it is possible to arrive at a full account of the configurations of practical freedom through a series of (“dialectical”) arguments that, beginning with the lowest form of practical freedom and proceeding to the highest, investigates the

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<sup>296</sup> *Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory*, p. 15.

<sup>297</sup> *Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory*, p. 15. In paragraph thirty, Hegel makes it absolutely clear that he does not “unequivocally” endorse “universal individual rights.” Hegel recognizes that various rights – i.e. the various spheres presented in the *Philosophy of Right* – may conflict with one another. He says: “if two rights collide one is subordinated to the other. It is only the right of the world-mind [Recht des Weltgeistes] that is absolute without qualification.” World history presents the highest sphere discussed in the *Philosophy of Right*. Hegel makes it clear that the rationality of world history trumps the rights presented in the discussions of abstract right, morality, and civil society. In paragraph 323-328 Hegel discusses certain situations – particularly international conflict and war – where the rights of the state trump all lower rights. He says: “It is the moment [i.e. international conflict] wherein the substance of the state – i.e. its absolute power against everything individual and particular, against life, property, and their rights, even against societies and associations – makes the nullity of these things an accomplished fact and brings it home to consciousness” (paragraph 324). In paragraph 340, Hegel describes the supremacy of world history over individual states. Speaking of individual states, he says: “Their deeds and destinies in their reciprocal relations to one another are the dialectic of the finitude of these minds, and out of it arises the universal mind, the mind of the world, free from all restrictions, producing itself as that which exercises its rights—and its right is the highest right of all—over these finite minds in the history of the world which is the world’s court of judgment.” Finally, Hegel makes it clear that this “court of judgment” does not necessarily respect the values of “Abstract Right,” “Morality,” and “Civil Society.” He says: “Justice and virtue, wrongdoing, power and vice, talents and their achievements, passions strong and weak, guilt and innocence, grandeur in individual and national life, autonomy, fortune and misfortune of states and individuals, all these have their specific significance and worth in the field of known actuality; therein they are judged and therein they have their partial, though only partial justification. World-history, however, is above the point of view from which these things matter” (paragraph 345). Although we may wish to part company from Hegel on such matters, it is worth noting that various “progressive” ideologies, including most variants of Marxism, share Hegel’s evaluation of the relationship between world-history and the values of “Abstract Right,” “Morality,” “Civil Society,” etc.

conditions required for each to be adequately realized (realized in a manner fully consistent with the essential character of a self-determined will). In each instance a consideration of those conditions will reveal how a lower form falls short of being completely adequate to the concept of self-determination and thus points out the necessity of the configuration immediately above it in the hierarchy.<sup>298</sup>

Neuhouser sees “self-determination” as the central concept and starting point for Hegel’s political philosophy. The dialectical movement of the *Philosophy of Right* progresses by uncovering the necessary conditions for the adequate realization of self-determination. The transition from one dialectical stage to the next occurs either because (a) the earlier stage is not sufficient to ensure the realization of self-determination, or (b) because the full realization of the earlier stage itself presupposes some further condition or stage.<sup>299</sup>

Since the justification for the later stages derives from their essential role in the realization of the earlier ones, it obviously follows that these later stages retain the values and institutions presented in the earlier ones. Neuhouser makes this point in his discussion of the transition from “Morality” to “*Sittlichkeit*.” In order to understand this transition, Neuhouser argues, we must grasp how the institutions of *Sittlichkeit* “help to

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<sup>298</sup> *Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory*, p. 27. On Neuhouser’s view, “X is a higher dialectical stage than Y” means (1) that X is richer or more concrete than Y, and (2) that Y depends upon X for its actualization. Stating the second criterion in a different form, we can say that X is higher than Y means that X presents the necessary conditions for Y.

<sup>299</sup> Neuhouser distinguishes between the transcendental and the teleological aspects of Hegel’s dialectical procedure (pp. 290-291). At some points, Hegel shows how some stage X presents the necessary conditions for another stage Y. In such cases he follows a transcendental strategy. At other times, Neuhouser argues, Hegel shows how the consistent instantiation of Y *and* self-determination, the ultimate goal of Hegel’s practical philosophy, requires some further stage X. Neuhouser calls this second strategy a “teleological strategy.” However, it seems more accurate to see this second option as a variant on the transcendental strategy. Neuhouser’s “teleological arguments” simply ask for the necessary conditions for the coherent instantiation of some stage Y *and* self-determination. Consider, for instance, Neuhouser’s account of the transition from “Abstract Right” to “Morality” as a teleological argument. He says: “The transition from ‘Abstract Right’ to ‘Morality’ is of a teleological type, since moral subjectivity is deduced not, strictly speaking, as a condition of the possibility of its predecessor but as a configuration of the will that must supplement personhood in order for personal freedom to be actualized in a manner consistent with the initially posited ideal (telos) of the will’s complete self-determination” (p. 291). In other words, “Abstract Right” provides necessary but not sufficient conditions for the realization of “personal freedom,” and “morality” presents further necessary conditions.



realize the kind of self-determination appropriate to moral subjects.”<sup>300</sup> In other words, we must see how *Sittlichkeit* provides the necessary conditions for the realization of moral subjectivity. Neuhausser explains the relationship between morality and *Sittlichkeit* as follows:

Hegel’s claim is that the institutions of *Sittlichkeit*—most important, civil society and the modern family—play a crucial role in forming individuals into subjects who regard themselves as both able and entitled to discern for themselves what the good consists in.<sup>301</sup>

The institutions of *Sittlichkeit* form individuals into “subjects” or moral agents who can determine for themselves what the good is. The term “subject” here refers specifically to the moral subject, to the subject who can provide her own reasons for the actions in which she engages. So Neuhausser argues that “*Sittlichkeit*” presents a necessary condition for the achievement of moral subjectivity, which itself presents a necessary condition for self-determination.

Westphal, Pippin, and Neuhausser interpret the dialectical development of the *Philosophy of Right* as a kind of transcendental argument. They argue that the later stages of the book provide the necessary conditions for the fulfillment or achievement of the earlier ones. This interpretive strategy emphasizes the importance of the earlier stages, such as “Abstract Right,” “Morality,” and “Civil Society.” It also emphasizes the affinities between Hegel’s political philosophy and the liberal tradition.

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<sup>300</sup> *Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory*, p. 226.

<sup>301</sup> *Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory*, p. 226.

#### 4) Hegel's Methodological Reflections on the Nature of the Dialectic

In the *Science of Logic* and the first volume of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel presents important remarks about the nature of the dialectic, remarks that raise serious textual challenges for an interpretation of the dialectic as a transcendental argument. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel explains the progression of the dialectic in terms of the process of sublation or “Aufhebung.” He says that the later stages of the dialectic *sublate* the earlier ones. The German term “Aufhebung,” the term translated into English as sublation, has two distinct meanings. It means both “to preserve, to maintain, and equally it also means to cause to cease, to put an end to.”<sup>302</sup> The process of sublation involves both of these meanings. In one sense, the earlier dialectical stages are negated or rejected as the dialectic progresses, but in another sense they are retained or preserved.

I would suggest that in order to make sense of the twofold nature of sublation, we must grasp the progression of the dialectic as a kind of *hermeneutic process*, as a process closely akin to the movement of thought from part to whole that occurs in interpretation.<sup>303</sup> Because of the finite and discursive nature of the human mind, interpretation always moves from part to whole. Before we can grasp a situation, theory, or work of art in its entirety, we must first carefully consider each of its parts in light of certain minimal guiding assumptions about the whole. As we consider the parts, our once vague and tentative guiding assumptions about the whole become richer and more concrete. As our interpretation progresses, we retain the parts within our conception of the whole, though their nature, significance, and import often changes radically.

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<sup>302</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 97.

<sup>303</sup> For a detailed discussion of Hegel's philosophical method as a hermeneutic procedure, see Sections 5.4 and 5.5 of Chapter Three as well as Section 5.7 of the Appendix to Chapter Four. Also, see Paul Redding's book, *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, particularly Chapter Two.

The hermeneutic process illustrates both the positive and the negative aspects of sublation within the dialectic. The parts comprise the whole and are therefore retained within it. In this sense, the progression from part to whole *preserves* the parts, which in this case are the earlier dialectical stages. However, the process transforms the meaning of the parts as they are placed in their proper context in relation to the whole. More specifically, the hermeneutic process requires that we *reinterpret* the parts once we have arrived at a conception of the whole. In this reinterpretation, we reject or negate our original conception of the part in favor of a new, more appropriate interpretation.<sup>304</sup>

In the following passage, Hegel explains sublation and the progression of the dialectic in terms that suggest this hermeneutic account. He describes sublation as a process in which we come to recognize apparently distinct concepts as *moments* of a more fundamental unity or whole. Hegel says:

Something is sublated only in so far as it has entered into unity with its opposite; in this more particular signification as something reflected, it may fittingly be called a *moment*.<sup>305</sup>

The process of sublation transforms something into a *moment* of some larger whole. The term “moment” is significant, for it indicates that the sublated concept or dialectical stage

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<sup>304</sup> In this context, I’m merely presenting the dialectic as a process that thought undergoes as it attempts to conceive the world. For a proper understanding of Hegel’s social, political, and historical philosophy, however, it is absolutely crucial to recognize another closely related sense of the term dialectic, a sense that describes the nature of individual and collective human action as a materially embedded process. In the actions of individuals and the development of entire civilizations, we see the following hermeneutic pattern: (1) the process begins with a vague or implicit conception of some goal to be realized in the structure of the material world; (2) the process continues with the more or less successful realization of the goal in a host of particulars that comprise the material world; (3) finally, the process concludes with a re-conception or reinterpretation of the original goal in richer and more concrete terms that are informed by the particulars in which it is instantiated. Here we have a hermeneutic movement from an implicit whole to the parts determined and conceived in terms of the whole. In turn, this conception of the parts leads to a richer, more concrete conception of the whole. Finally, this richer conception of the whole then leads to the clarification or sometimes even radical reformulation of the goal. For a careful and insightful account of this aspect of the dialectic, see Chapters 3.6 and 4.4 of Lukács’s *Der Junge Hegel*.

<sup>305</sup> *Science of Logic*, p. 107.

can only be understood properly in relation the whole of which it is a moment.<sup>306</sup> In another related passage, Hegel makes this point clear with regards to the concepts “being” and “nothing.” He says:

The more precise meaning and expression which being and nothing receive, now that they are *moments*, is to be ascertained from the consideration of determinate being as the unity in which they are preserved.<sup>307</sup>

Once we grasp concepts of being and nothing as moments of a larger whole, their meaning must be determined or re-determined in relation to the whole. In relation to this whole, the terms “being” and “nothing” receive a “more precise meaning.” This process of reinterpretation comprises the negative sense of sublation, the sense in which the original meaning or conception must be negated or rejected.

It is difficult to reconcile the moment of negation or reinterpretation with a construal of the dialectic as a transcendental argument. In traditional – i.e. Kantian – transcendental arguments, we seek to discover the necessary conditions for some branch of knowledge, like geometry, for some cognitive activity, like determining an objective temporal sequence for the data of inner sense, or for some practical activity, like acting for the sake of the moral law. Geometry provides a simple and well-known example. Kant starts with the assumption that claims of geometry present synthetic *a priori* truths, and he goes on to show that such truths are only possible if we assume that space is a form of human intuition. Thus the status of space as a form of human intuition presents a

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<sup>306</sup> In a number of places, Hegel carefully distinguishes between “parts” and “moments.” He holds that while parts can be properly conceived in isolation from one another, moments cannot. Hegel makes this distinction in the first volume of the *Encyclopedia* when he speaks about the three *moments* that constitute his dialectical method. He says: “These three sides do not make three **parts** of logic, but are stages or ‘**moments**’ in every logical entity, that is, of every notion and truth whatever. They may all be put under the first stage, that of understanding, and so kept isolated from each other [i.e. they may be treated as parts]; but this would give an inadequate conception of them” (*Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 79).

<sup>307</sup> *Science of Logic*, pp. 107-8.

necessary condition for the possibility of geometry as a synthetic *a priori* branch of knowledge.

It should be noted that this transcendental argument does not alter our understanding of geometry, nor does it transform our understanding of terms such as “synthetic” and “*a priori*.” So while this transcendental argument provides the necessary conditions for the synthetic *a priori* truths of geometry, it does not transform our understanding of these truths. Transcendental arguments, at least as Kant employs them, do not involve the hermeneutic moment of reinterpretation, the moment that Hegel identifies with the negative meaning of sublation. Thus an account of the dialectic as a transcendental argument emphasizes the additive or positive meaning of sublation at the expense of the negative meaning. Of course it might be possible to develop some non-Kantian form of transcendental argument that does include a hermeneutic moment of reinterpretation. However, such a conception of the dialectic would weaken the claim that Hegel merely seeks to complete the liberal tradition, since it would force us to admit that, as they stand, the discussions of abstract right and morality are not merely incomplete but also involve some element of distortion.

Our conception of the dialectic as a hermeneutic process explains the dual meaning of the term sublation. The dialectic proceeds from part to whole. In this process the parts are maintained, but their meaning is transformed, sometimes radically. The two previously cited passages present another peculiar aspect of the process of sublation. In the first passage, Hegel says that something is “sublated only in so far as it has entered into unity with its opposite.” The dialectic uncovers the deeper or more foundational unities that structure the basic dichotomies of our thought. Each stage of the dialectic

explores some basic distinction or set of oppositional concepts. From the standpoint of this stage, the oppositional concepts are taken as basic and fully distinct. However, this rigid distinction leads our thought into various contradictions, which can only be overcome when we recognize the deeper unity that grounds or unites the difference.

Hegel describes this process in the *Encyclopedia*, where he presents the second of his rare reflections on the nature and methodology of the dialectic. In paragraphs 79-82 he explains the dialectic in terms of three moments.<sup>308</sup> The first moment, which he identifies with the understanding, “sticks to fixity of characters and their distinctness from one another: every such limited abstract it treats as having a subsistence and being of its own.”<sup>309</sup> The first moment construes various concepts as wholly and rigidly distinct. Next he describes the “dialectical stage,” the moment in which “these finite characterizations or formulae supersede themselves, and pass into their opposites.”<sup>310</sup> The rigid distinctions of the first stage lead to various contradictions. The final stage resolves these contradictions. This final stage, the “speculative” one, “apprehends the unity of terms (propositions) in their opposition.”<sup>311</sup> In this final stage, thought grasps the deeper unity that structures and underlies the original dichotomy. This process does not replace difference with unity. In other words, it does not completely reject the terms of the original distinction. The distinction and the concepts that define it remain, but these distinctions must be *reinterpreted* in light of the unity that grounds them.

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<sup>308</sup> Hegel warns that we must treat these moments as moments – as aspects of a unified process that can only be fully conceived in relation the unity of the process.

<sup>309</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 80.

<sup>310</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 81.

<sup>311</sup> *Encyclopedia Logic*, paragraph 82.

So each stage of the dialectic includes three moments. The first moment articulates some fundamental distinction; the second moment uncovers the contradictions that arise from the original and rigidly oppositional conception of the distinction; and the third moment indicates some resolution of these contradictions, a resolution that requires us to grasp the deeper unity that underlies the original distinction. Most interpreters who construe the dialectic as a transcendental argument more or less ignore the role played by contradictions in the development of the *Philosophy of Right*. Of course nothing precludes us from coming up with some non-standard conception of transcendental arguments, one that somehow uncovers contradictions in the process of determining necessary conditions. However, at this point, the language of transcendental arguments becomes more misleading than helpful. Moreover, once we admit the role of contradictions in the dialectic, the claim that the *Philosophy of Right* merely augments or grounds the values of traditional liberalism becomes less tenable.

##### **5) The Transition from “Morality” to “*Sittlichkeit*.” A Concrete Example of the Dialectic**

Philosophers such as Neuhaus, Pippin, and Westphal might admit the claims made in the preceding discussion and yet still defend their interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right*. They might argue that Hegel’s general remarks about his method do not apply to the dialectic as employed in the *Philosophy of Right*. Hegel seems to employ different dialectical approaches in his various works, and thus, they might argue, it would be foolish to assume that he possesses a single, unified dialectical method. Moreover, contradictions seem to play a much smaller role in the *Philosophy of Right* than they do

in other works, such as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Therefore, such philosophers might argue, we should not be too hasty to apply these very general remarks about the dialectic to specific passages in the *Philosophy of Right*.<sup>312</sup>

In response to this objection, this section considers a specific example of the dialectic in the *Philosophy of Right* – namely, the transition from “Morality” to “*Sittlichkeit*.” In accordance with the general remarks made in the previous section, we will see (1) that the section on morality develops a fundamental distinction between rigidly oppositional categories; (2) that these oppositional categories lead to contradictions; (3) that “*Sittlichkeit*” provides the more basic unity that grounds the oppositional categories of “Morality,” and (4) that the categories presented in Hegel’s discussion of morality must be reinterpreted from the standpoint of this more basic unity.

The section on morality construes the individual as a subject. It develops various conceptions of subjectivity, conceptions that presuppose a rigid or complete distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. Among other things, it assumes we can characterize subjective intentions without reference to the objective features of the intended action. It determines the identity and moral culpability of the agent in relation to her subjective intentions, thereby protecting her from unintended consequences and the contingencies of the objective or external world.

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<sup>312</sup> In paragraph 31 of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explicitly claims that the *Philosophy of Right* employs the dialectical method developed in *Science of Logic* and the first volume *Encyclopedia*. He says: “The method whereby, in philosophic science, the concept develops itself out of itself is expounded in logic and is here likewise presupposed.” Of course Hegel’s characterization of his mode of proceeding *might* be wrong, and his claim here might *simply* express his wishful thinking about the unity of his method and the unity of his system. Nonetheless, this passage presents at least *prima facie* support for the view that the *Philosophy of Right* follows the specific form of the dialectical method discussed in the previous section.



In the following passage, Hegel characterizes the standpoint of morality in terms of the rigid distinction between subject and object, and he claims that this distinction leads to contradictions. He says:

At the standpoint of morality, subjectivity and objectivity are distinct from one another, or united only by their mutual contradiction; it is this fact more particularly which constitutes the finitude of this sphere or its character as mere appearance, and the development of this standpoint is the development of these contradictions and their resolutions, resolutions, however, which within this field can be no more than relative.<sup>313</sup>

This passage shows how the first two stages of Hegel's dialectical method apply to the section on morality. Hegel's discussion of morality develops two rigidly oppositional categories – subjectivity and objectivity. The standpoint of morality assumes that we can characterize subjectivity without reference to the external or objective world, and it privileges subjectivity as the domain relevant for determining the nature of the action and the agent. Hegel expresses the priority of subjectivity in the so-called right of the subjective will, the right of the will to recognize objective features of the world only insofar as “the will is present to itself there as something subjective.”<sup>314</sup> This rigid distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, along with the prioritization of the subjective, leads to various contradictions. In this section on morality, Hegel shows how our conception of subjectivity always makes implicit reference to objectivity, and thus he shows how the attempt to prioritize subjectivity always ends up implicitly privileging objectivity.<sup>315</sup> In this way, morality leads us into various contradictions.

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<sup>313</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 112.

<sup>314</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph, 107.

<sup>315</sup> Paragraph 119 sets out one of the crucial steps in this argument. In paragraphs 117 and 118 Hegel argues that, in order for the subjective purpose to determine the nature of the agent, it must at least have some expression in the objective world. In order to protect the subject or agent from unintended consequences, morality seeks to distinguish the immediate effect of the purpose from the secondary and

These contradictions can only be resolved from the standpoint of *Sittlichkeit*, from the standpoint that recognizes the essential relation between subjectivity and objectivity. Subjectivity only exists as it is embodied in an objective social world. It always exists in relation to its objective manifestations or external expressions, and thus it should not be construed as some power, capacity, or realm distinct from its specific acts. Alternatively, the objective social world only exists as the embodiment of subjectivity. Thus

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tertiary effects over which the agent has no direct control. Paragraph 119 sets out this conception of action and then presents Hegel's response. It says: "An action as an external event is a complex of connected parts which may be regarded as divided into units ad infinitum, and the action may be treated as having touched in the first instance only one of these units. The truth of the single, however, is the universal; and what explicitly gives action its specific character is not an isolated content limited to an external unit, but a universal content, comprising itself in the complex of connected parts. Purpose, as issuing from a thinker, comprises more than the mere unit; essentially it comprises that universal side of the action, i.e. the intention" (*Philosophy of Right*). This passage describes the transition from the category of "purpose" to the category of "intention." When we construe action in terms of the category of "purpose," we construe it as a subjective or mental event that causes a physical effect. Here the question becomes: what physical effects can we ascribe to the purpose? Since the physical world and its events are infinitely divisible, any effect we might ascribe to the purpose can be further subdivided indefinitely. The act of killing the man can be subdivided into (a) the act of pulling the trigger, which causes (b) the motion of the bullet, which (c) ultimately kills the man. Similarly, the act of pulling the trigger can be divided into the act of (a) the brain generating electrical impulses, (b) the electrical impulses traveling through the nervous system, and (c) the muscles in the finger contracting. Hegel argues that this division can be carried on indefinitely, and that therefore there is no first effect. Moreover, he argues that the more we sub-divide the effect, the more we lose the nature of the action. Actions are defined holistically rather than atomistically. Thus Hegel argues that, "what gives action its specific character is not an isolated content limited to an external unity, but a universal content, comprising itself in the complex of connected parts. This universal, which Hegel designates as the intention, exists immanently in the physical event itself. It is the form that organizes the matter of the event. Hegel argues that we construe action in terms of intentions, not in terms of purposes, for a conception of action in terms of purpose leads to contradiction. The account of action in terms of purpose claims to construe action in terms of the immediate effect of the purpose. This leads to contradictions because: (1) there is no immediate or first effect, and (2) insofar as we try to characterize the event as an action, we must always explain the sub-parts or moments in terms of the action as a whole, not the action as a whole in terms of the sub-parts, one of which is somehow privileged as the first part. Hegel expands upon this basic argument in the Remark to paragraph 119. He says: "Actuality is touched in the first instance only at a single point (arson, for instance, *directly* concerns only a tiny section of the firewood, i.e. is describable in a proposition, not a judgment), but the universal nature of this point entails its expansion. In a living thing, the single part is there in its immediacy not as a mere part, but as an organ in which the universal is really present as the universal; hence in murder, it is not a piece of flesh, as something isolated, which is injured, but life itself which is injured in that piece of flesh. It is subjective reflection, ignorant of the logical structure of the single and the universal, which indulges *ad libitum* in the subdivision of single parts and consequences" (*Philosophy of Right*).

“*Sittlichkeit*” presents the unity that grounds the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity.<sup>316</sup>

The unity presented in “*Sittlichkeit*” forces us to reinterpret and reevaluate the claims of morality. In one of the *Zusätze* from the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel indicates the radical nature of this reevaluation. In his explanation of the relationship between insanity and objective consciousness, Hegel makes the following remark:

The moral sphere...must be considered before the ethical sphere [i.e. before *Sittlichkeit*], although the former to a certain extent comes to view in the latter only as a sickness. But for the same reason in the sphere of Anthropology, too, we have had to discuss insanity before the concrete, objective consciousness, since insanity, as we have seen, consists in an abstraction rigidly held in opposition to that concrete objective consciousness.<sup>317</sup>

This remark points out similarities between morality and insanity. In both cases, subjectivity becomes an isolated phenomenon, one that is not fully integrated into the objective world. Hegel says that from the standpoint of *Sittlichkeit*, morality represents a kind of sickness. It remains ambiguous whether morality demonstrates the sickness of

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<sup>316</sup> In “*Sittlichkeit*,” Hegel’s clearest statement of the essential relation between subjectivity and objectivity comes in paragraph 152, where he says: “Subjectivity is itself the absolute form and existent actuality of the substantial order, and the distinction between subject on the one hand and substance on the other, as the object, end, and controlling power of the subject, is the same as, and has vanished directly along with, the distinction between them in form.” Hegel makes a similar point much more clearly in the *Zusätze* to paragraph 140 of the *Encyclopedia*, where he considers the categories “inner” and “outer,” categories that serve as close analogs to the moral conception of subjectivity and objectivity. Hegel says: “Yet so long as understanding keeps the Inward and Outward fixed in their separation, they are empty forms, the one as null as the other. Not only in the study of nature, but also of the spiritual world, much depends on a just appreciation of the relation of inward and outward, and especially on avoiding the misconception that the former only is the essential point on which everything turns, while the latter is unessential and trivial. We find the mistake made when, as is often done, the difference between nature and mind is traced back to the abstract difference between inner and outer.” This is the mistake presented in the right of the subjective will, the right proclaiming that a subject’s self-understanding determines the nature of her action. In the same *Zusätze*, Hegel goes on to discuss the same mistake in terms that directly relate to his discussion of morality. He says: “There certainly may be individual cases where the malice of outward circumstances frustrates well meant designs, and disturbs the execution of the best-laid plans. But in general even here the essential unity between inward and outward is maintained. We are thus justified in saying that a man is what he does.”

<sup>317</sup> *Philosophy of Mind*, Paragraph 408Z.

the individual who takes the moral standpoint or the sickness of the society that forces an individual to withdraw in this manner from objective reality. In all likelihood, morality indicates the sickness of both.

Hegel's claim that morality persists in *Sittlichkeit* as a kind of sickness presents a strong challenge to the interpretations presented by Westphal, Neuhouser, and Pippin. This passage makes it clear that moral subjectivity does not present one of the necessary conditions for self-determination. Instead, it seems that morality presents one of the distortions we must consider as we seek to grasp the nature of social and political reality. From the standpoint of *Sittlichkeit*, we have a better understanding of morality. Among other things, we are able to recognize morality as a kind of sickness. Morality is still retained within *Sittlichkeit*, but only – or at least primarily – in the sense that the possibility of insanity exists in the very structure of healthy or objective consciousness.

### **6.1) Beyond Liberalism: The Basic Dichotomies of Civil Society**

In the transition from “Civil Society” to “The State,” the *Philosophy of Right* makes a definitive move beyond the concepts and categories that define the liberal tradition. Hegel's discussion of civil society follows the dialectical method presented in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*, the same method instantiated in the dialectical transition from “Morality” to “*Sittlichkeit*.” Following the three moments of the dialectical presented in the *Encyclopedia*, in this section I consider the various rigid dichotomies presented in “Civil Society.” In section 6.2 and 6.3, I briefly demonstrate how contradictions develop from two of the more important dichotomies, and in section 6.4, I show how Hegel's conception of the state unifies these dichotomies.

Hegel's discussion of civil society articulates two oppositional concepts or principles. In the following passage, Hegel introduces these principles:

The concrete person, who is himself the object of his particular aims, is, as a totality of wants and a mixture of caprice and physical necessity, **one principle of civil society**. But the particular person is essentially so related to other particular persons that each establishes himself and finds satisfaction by means of the others, and at the same time purely and simply by means of the form of universality, **the second principle here** [emphasis added].<sup>318</sup>

Here, as in his accounts of abstract right and morality, Hegel focuses on a particular conception of the contrast between the self and its other. In "Abstract Right," for instance, Hegel considers the agent merely in terms of her general capacity to pursue self-determined ends. He contrasts this general capacity with the specific instantiations of it, with the specific aims and desires the agent actually pursues. In a more or less Kantian fashion, this standpoint identifies the self with the rational capacity for determining ends, and it construes all specific needs, desires, and ends as empirically given and therefore external to the true self.<sup>319</sup>

In the section on morality, Hegel considers the self as a subject, as a being with a certain kind of internal life that includes intentions and self-interpretations. The standpoint of morality sharply contrasts these subjective intentions and self-interpretations with the external or objective world, the world where actions express – or fail to express – the intentions and self-conceptions of the subject. In his discussion of civil society, Hegel considers a third manner of distinguishing between the self and its

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<sup>318</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 182.

<sup>319</sup> See paragraphs 35-37 of the *Philosophy of Right*. In paragraph 35, Hegel explains the personality or personhood of abstract right as follows: "Personality begins not with the subject's mere general consciousness of himself as an ego concretely determined in some way or other, but rather with his consciousness of himself as a completely abstract ego in which every concrete restriction and value is negated and without validity." The self as person stands over against all "concrete restriction[s]," all particular desires, needs, and goals that constitute its concrete or empirical existence.

other. He considers the self as an empirically given collection of aims and desires, as a “totality of wants” that stem from “caprice and physical necessity.” The standpoint of civil society contrasts the empirically given desires and needs of the individual with the social interactions that serve as the “means” for the fulfillment of these desires and needs. Hegel refers to these social interactions, considered in their totality, as the “form of universality.”

In accordance with his general account of the dialectic, Hegel sets out the standpoint of civil society in terms of the rigid or complete distinction between (1) the needs and desires of the individual as a private person, and (2) and the totality of social interactions that serve as a means for fulfilling these desires and needs. The standpoint of civil society explains the relationship between these distinct categories in terms of the relationship between means and ends. In other words, it assumes that social interactions serve merely as means for satisfying the needs and desires of the individual. In civil society, the individual “finds satisfaction by means of the others.” Or, as Hegel states elsewhere:

Individuals in their capacity as burghers in this state are private persons whose *end* is their own interest. This *end* is mediated through the universal which thus appears as a *means* to its realization [emphasis added].<sup>320</sup>

In this context, the term “universal” designates the institutions, practices, and contractual relations that unite individuals in society. Civil society conceives these unifying bonds and relationships exclusively as *means* intended to fulfill the needs and desires of “private persons.”<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 187.

<sup>321</sup> In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls discusses “private society,” a conception of the social realm that he explicitly compares with Hegel’s conception of civil society. Speaking of “private society,” Rawls says:

The standpoint of civil society seeks to *explain* and *justify* social institutions, practices, and contractual agreements in terms of the desires of the individuals who sustain them. It holds that individuals enter into various personal, institutional, and economic relations in order to satisfy needs and desires that precede these relations. Thus it *explains* society as the result of actions performed by self-interested individuals. It also *justifies* society in similar terms. Existing social relations must satisfy the needs and desires of the “individuals” or “private persons” who sustain them. Otherwise, they are illegitimate or oppressive.

The conceptual articulation of civil society rests upon the rigid distinction between the needs and desires of the private individual, on the one hand, and the institutions, practices, and agreements that constitute social existence, on the other hand. In Hegel’s discussion of civil society, three related dichotomies develop and express this original distinction. These include: (1) the dichotomy between the natural and the social, (2) the dichotomy between consumption and production, and (3) the dichotomy between the private and the public good. In each case, the standpoint of civil society privileges the first member of the dichotomy, and it explains and justifies the second member as a *means* for achieving the first. Thus, for instance, many theories of civil society explain and justify the development of society as a means for satisfying the pre-social needs and

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“Its chief features are first that the persons comprising it, whether they are human individuals or associations, have their own private ends which are either competing or independent, but not in any case complementary. And second, institutions are not thought to have any value in themselves, the activity of engaging in them not being counted as a good but if anything a burden. Thus each person assesses social arrangements solely as a means to his private aim” (p. 521). *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard, 1971). Rawls argues that his contract theory does not necessarily imply private society as the ideal. He argues that humans “in fact...value their common institutions and activities as goods in themselves” (p. 522). Rawls grounds this “fact” in human biology or psychology, in what he terms “the Aristotelian Principle.” One corollary of this principle reads: “When men are secure in the enjoyment of the exercise of their own powers, they are disposed to appreciate the perfections of others, especially when their several excellences have an agreed place in a form of life the aims of which they all accept” (p. 523).

desires already present in the state of nature. Such theories employ the state of nature, or various related thought experiments, as a means for rigidly distinguishing between the desires of the individual and the institutions, practices, and economic arrangements of society. Hegel criticizes this distinction in paragraphs 190-195 (“The Kind of Need and Satisfaction”), where he considers how social development radically transforms our biological nature and the basic structure of desire.

In a similar fashion, the dichotomy between consumption and production develops the fundamental distinction between the private desires of individuals and the social arrangements that serve as a means for the fulfillment of these desires. As society progresses, production becomes an increasingly social process. The division of labor requires increasing degrees of cooperation, and the exchange of finished products leads to developed forms of social interaction. By contrast, consumption remains a largely, though not exclusively, private affair. So the distinction between consumption and production corresponds to the distinction between the private and the social. Work is a social activity, consumption a private one. Moreover, from the standpoint of civil society, production serves as a *means* for consumption, work as a *means* for leisure. Civil society explains and justifies work as a means for attaining the various forms of consumption or leisure that private individuals desire. In paragraphs 196-208 (“The Kind of Work” and “Capital”) as well as paragraphs 250-256 (“The Corporation”), Hegel presents various dialectical arguments that reverse the priority of these categories, arguments that, among other things, demonstrate the essential role of work in the constitution of the self and the process of recognition.



Civil society also rests upon the distinction between the private and the public good. The private good consists in the fulfillment of the given desires and needs of “private persons.” The needs, desires, and aims of various private persons, or “individuals in their capacity as burghers,” may diverge radically. From the standpoint of civil society, the purpose of the social realm – or the universal – is not to unite these various needs, desires, and aims into *one* complex goal – i.e. the good that is common to all. Instead, civil society works with a minimal and instrumental conception of the common good, one that involves (a) protecting the freedom required for individuals to pursue their diverse private goods, and (b) the procurement of certain basic goods and services that enable individuals to pursue their private goods. These enabling goods might include things such as education, healthcare, and basic infrastructure.<sup>322</sup> Thus, from the standpoint of civil society, the public good serves as a *means* to the fulfillment of private needs and desires. In paragraphs 231 – 239 (“The Police”), Hegel argues for the incoherence of this strong distinction between the private and the public good.

## **6.2) The Dialectical Development of the Natural and the Social**

Hegel’s discussion of civil society undermines the absolute nature of the dichotomies presented in section 5.1. The standpoint of civil society privileges the first term in each dichotomy. It assumes that the first term can be clarified without reference to the second one. Moreover, the standpoint of civil society assumes that both the *meaning* and the *value* of the second term can be explained in terms of the first one. In

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<sup>322</sup> These enabling goods resemble Rawls’ primary social goods. Rawls argues that, “though men’s rational plans do have different ends, they nevertheless all require for their execution certain primary goods, natural and social” (*A Theory of Justice*, p. 93). Among primary social goods Rawls includes “rights and liberties, opportunities and powers, income and wealth” (Ibid., p. 92).

general terms, it assumes that the desires of private individuals determine the meaning and value of social practices, institutions, and economic arrangements. Hegel's critique of civil society demonstrates how these assumptions undermine themselves. He shows, in each case, how the value and/or meaning of the first term rests upon that of the second term.

The standpoint of civil society assumes that the desires of individuals can be determined in isolation from the practices, institutions, and economic arrangements that satisfy these desires. Theories of civil society often present accounts of the state of nature as a means for distinguishing the basic needs and desires of individuals from the institutions and practices of society. These theories often employ the desires and needs present in the state of nature (a) to explain the development of society and (b) to justify its current state. Even when theories of civil society do not make direct recourse to the state of nature, they often take natural desires, rather than social ones, as their basic model for understanding the individual. In "The Kind of Need and Satisfaction" – or, as it might be translated, "The Nature of Need and Satisfaction" – Hegel considers the development of human beings from natural to social creatures. Drawing upon various themes from Kant and Rousseau, he shows how the process of socialization radically transforms the basic structure of our desires.<sup>323</sup> This transformation merits careful consideration.

In our pre-social desires for food and water, for instance, we seek the satiation and pleasure that comes from eating and drinking. Likewise, in our basic desire for shelter, we seek the warmth and security that shelter provides. The ultimate ends of these desires

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<sup>323</sup> Compare, for instance with Kant's account of the transformation of natural desires in his essay, "Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte," in *Werke XI*.

can be defined in terms of some biological state or sensation of pleasure. This model of desire allows us to explain two basic distinctions – (1) the distinction between the individual and society, and (2) the more radical distinction between the self and all other objects in the world – in terms of the relationship between means and ends. With regards to our natural desires, all objects in the world merely serve as a means to fulfill biological needs or to provide some sensory gratification.

Many philosophers and lay people alike assume that all desires fit this basic model. They assume that internal sensations of pleasure serve as the ends for all desires, and they assume that all objects, actions, and people in the world serve only as a means for the achievement of this gratification or pleasure.<sup>324</sup> Thus natural desires provide a model that allows us to spell out the ends of desire in terms of internal gratification, and that therefore allows us to rigidly distinguish these ends from the external and social means that yield or produce, but do not constitute, the ends we desire. This model of natural desire provides the basis for the rigid distinction between the individual and society, the distinction that structures and supports the basic conceptual space of civil society.

The development of society affects our desires in two ways. First, social or cooperative production leads to the diversification of the kind of goods available for the

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<sup>324</sup> This position need not be quite as crass as it sounds, for many philosophers who embrace this basic view make important distinctions between objects and people. Such philosophers argue that while objects are merely means for our gratification, people have basic rights that limit the ways we can use them for our own pleasure. Basically, the use that people make of one another must be consensual. Kant's conception of marriage presents one notorious example. Thus Kant defines sex as "the reciprocal use that one human being makes of the sexual organs and capacities of another" (*The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 61). Thus sex involves the use of another person's body as a *means* for our sensory pleasure. Kant notes that, in a sense, sex involves treating another person "as if it were a thing," and he argues that only the mutual and contractual nature of this act, determined by the vows of marriage, make it permissible (p. 62).

satisfaction of our desires.<sup>325</sup> Thus our basic desire for food becomes the desire for seared tuna, grilled asparagus, or *fois gras*, and our basic desire for shelter becomes a desire for a house with large windows, wooden floors, and vaulted ceilings. The increasing complexity and quantity of our desires doesn't necessarily change the structure of these desires. It is plausible and perhaps correct to say that I desire the tuna steak and the asparagus as a means to the pleasurable sensations that eating them produces. Likewise, I might simply desire the large windows so that I can sit content and warm in the sun on a winter day, reading by natural light. In this case it also seems plausible to describe my pleasurable sensations of warmth and contentment as the ultimate end towards which my shelter serves as a means.

However, in addition to the multiplication of desires, advanced production and social interaction also lead to fundamentally new kinds of desire. Hegel discusses these new desires in terms of social recognition (*Anerkennung*), a process that transforms “isolated and abstract needs and their ways and means of satisfaction” into ones that are “concrete” and “social.”<sup>326</sup> Hegel argues that recognition imports social relations into the very structure of our needs and desires. He mentions two examples – the “need for equality and emulation, which is the equalizing of oneself with others,” and the “need of the particular to assert itself in some distinctive way.”<sup>327</sup> Social interaction and the process of recognition produce the desire to be like others as well as the desire to be

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<sup>325</sup> Social production, with its attendant multiplication of desires, serves as one of the features that distinguishes humans from other animals. In paragraph 190, Hegel comments: “An animal’s needs and its means of satisfying them are both alike restricted in scope. Though man is subject to this restriction too, yet at the same time he evinces his transcendence of it and his universality...by the multiplication of needs and means of satisfying them.”

<sup>326</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 192.

<sup>327</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 193.

different from others. The desire to be like others includes the desire for economic equality as well as the desire to be identified with a particular social group. Both kinds of desire involve self-expression, the portrayal of oneself in a certain manner *to others*, and the recognition of this portrayal *by others*. These desires actually present new categories of desire, categories that subsume and transform the very structure of most, if not all, of our pre-social needs and desires.

Thus consider again the development of our basic natural desires for food and shelter. As our desires become explicitly social, we not only desire to eat the tuna steak, but we desire to eat it in the restaurant that our friends are talking about. We desire a house in a certain part of town, and we desire it to be of a certain architectural style, one that displays our appreciation for the workmanship of the past, or perhaps our interest in new, experimental design. These desires have a new structure. They do not aim at a private or internal pleasure, but rather they aim at an end that can only be socially defined. In each of these desires, we desire to be seen or recognized in a certain way by our peers or by other members of society. This recognition of the kind of person that we are exists as an explicitly social end. Of course one might argue that we simply desire social recognition as a means to feeling good about ourselves – i.e. as a means to some internal pleasure. However, this is surely false, for we do not simply desire *to believe that others see us in a certain way*, though this would be sufficient to ensure internal pleasure or gratification, but rather we desire *that others actually see us in a certain way*. Thus we seek recognition, not the pleasure that may arise from it.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> We all have strong need to know what others *really* think about us, and few things seem worse, or more foolish, than assuming others see us in one way when they really see us in another. This shows, I think, that we seek the recognition itself, not some pleasure we derive from recognition.

As our desires take on this social structure, the distinction between the desires of private persons and social interactions can no longer be construed merely in terms of the relationship between means and ends. Social interactions do not merely serve as a means for satisfying the ends of social desires, but rather various kinds of social interactions actually constitute the end that we seek in our social desires. This dialectical reversal begins to undermine the basic dichotomy that defines civil society.

### **6.3) The Dialectical Development of Consumption and Production**

The relationship between production and consumption undergoes a similar dialectical development. Following the basic dichotomy of civil society, we are led to conceive the social processes of production as a means for the private gratifications that occur in consumption. In his discussion of civil society, Hegel shows how this order of priority reverses itself, leading to a conception of work as an essential moment for determining the social nature of the self. Hegel sets out the basic framework for this argument in paragraph 185, where he alludes to the master/slave dialectic from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He says:

Particularity by itself, given free rein in every direction to satisfy its needs, accidental caprices, and subjective desires, destroys itself and its substantive concept in this process of gratification. At the same time, the satisfaction of need, necessary and accidental alike, is accidental because it breeds new desires without end, is in thoroughgoing dependence on caprice and external accident, and is held in check by the power of universality. In these contrasts and their complexity, civil society affords a spectacle of extravagance and want as of the physical and ethical degeneration common to both.<sup>329</sup>

This passage presents multiple allusions to the discussion of master and slave in the *Phenomenology*, a discussion that provides an important subtext for Hegel's treatment of

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<sup>329</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 185.

civil society.<sup>330</sup> The final sentence of the passage makes the most direct allusion, speaking of the difference between extravagance and want. Many commentators, particularly those in the Marxist tradition, see the divergence between rich and poor, between capitalists and workers, or between masters and slaves, as *the* fatal contradiction in civil society. Hegel develops this contradiction in paragraphs 241-245, where he argues that the acceleration of the division between rich and poor presents an essential – rather than merely contingent or accidental – feature of civil society.<sup>331</sup>

The first sentence presents a more subtle, though perhaps more significant, allusion to the master/slave dialectic. The first sentence speaks of the destruction and instability inherent in a self-conception based on consumption and desire, and it thus recapitulates one of the fundamental lessons learned by the master. In the master/slave dialectic, the slave works to *produce* goods for the master to *consume*. In this arrangement, the master and the slave represent two distinct conceptions of the self's relation to the world, one based upon desire and consumption, the other based on work. While the master appears to have the more enviable position, the relation of the slave to the objective world ultimately proves more sustainable. In the following passage from the *Phenomenology*, Hegel expresses the results of these two approaches to reality:

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<sup>330</sup> In this context we should remember, as Hegel himself reminds us in the very first sentence of the “Preface,” that the *Philosophy of Right* – like the three volumes of the *Encyclopedia* – presents a mere outline, one originally published for students attending his lectures. In the “Preface” Hegel also admits to the incomplete nature of the arguments presented in this work, claiming that he often “omitted to bring out and demonstrate the chain of logical argument in each and every detail.” We can only assume that Hegel filled in the relevant details in his lectures. Contemporary readers, however, must reconstruct Hegel's arguments by considering the *Zusätze* and by carefully following Hegel's various allusions to other discussions in his corpus.

<sup>331</sup> In paragraph 241 Hegel speaks of poverty that arises from “contingencies, physical conditions, and factors grounded in external circumstances.” However, in paragraph 243 and 244 he speaks of the necessary internal dynamics within civil society that produce a divergence between rich and poor.

Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby its unalloyed feeling of self. But that is the reason why this satisfaction is itself only a fleeting one, for it lacks the side of objectivity and permanence. Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing...It is in this way, therefore, that consciousness, *qua* worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its *own* independence.<sup>332</sup>

Hegel conceives desire and work as two distinct ways of dealing with what we might describe as our fundamental anxiety at the otherness of the world. Desire destroys the object in its otherness by consuming it. Work, on the other hand, fashions the object and thereby overcomes its otherness. The destruction and satisfaction of desire do not present a stable way of relating to the world, for such satisfaction is “fleeting,” and it lacks “permanence.” Because of its fleeting nature, the satisfaction of desire, “produces new desires without end.” Thus Hegel argues for the instability of the model of desire and consumption that underlies civil society.

Like the development presented in the master/slave dialectic, Hegel’s discussion of civil society shifts the emphasis from consumption to production, from desire to work. Thus Hegel repeatedly emphasizes the role of work in self-actualization and social recognition. For instance, he says:

A man actualizes himself only in becoming something definite, i.e. something specifically particularized; this means restricting himself exclusively to one of the particular spheres of need [i.e. classes of production].<sup>333</sup>

Hegel goes on to describe how this identification with a particular kind of work leads to “recognition both in one’s own eyes and in the eyes of others.”<sup>334</sup> Hegel makes the same

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<sup>332</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 118.

<sup>333</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 207.

<sup>334</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 207.



point even more forcefully in his discussion of corporations – the guilds or organizations that form within the business class. Speaking of membership in a specific corporation, Hegel says:

In addition, this nexus of capability and livelihood is a recognized [anerkannt] fact, with the result that the Corporation member needs no external marks beyond his membership as evidence that he is a somebody. It is also recognized [annerkannt] that he belongs to a whole which is itself an organ of the entire society, and that he is actively concerned in promoting the comparatively disinterested end of this whole. Thus he commands the respect due to one in his social position.<sup>335</sup>

This passage ties together most of the themes we've discussed thus far, including (1) the relationship between the desires of the private person and social institutions, (2) the relationship between the structure of natural and social desires, (3) the desire to be *recognized* as a member of a group, and (4) the relationship between work and consumption.

A specific form of work, designated by membership in a corporation, provides the individual with a form of social recognition and respect. Moreover, it provides the individual with a social identity. Here a new conception of the self emerges. Civil society construes the self as collection of desires and aims, and it sees participation in various social institutions and practices as a means for *self-fulfillment*, but not as a means for the more fundamental process of *self-determination*. After passing through various dialectical developments, however, we arrive at a conception of the self as something fundamentally determined by the institutions and practices in which it participates.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 253.

<sup>336</sup> In section on anthropology in the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel discusses the growth of the individual from childhood to adulthood. In speaking of the transition to adulthood, Hegel says: "By his share in this collective work he first is really somebody, gaining an effective existence and an objective value" (paragraph 396). It is work, as an explicitly collective process that precedes and transcends the

Accordingly, Hegel speaks of individual members of a corporation as “actively concerned in promoting the comparatively disinterested end of this whole [i.e. the corporation].” Civil society construes social institutions as a means for satisfying the desires of individuals. In the discussion of corporations, the discussion that forms the transition between civil society and the state, Hegel moves to *a conception of individual action as a means for fulfilling the ends of various social organizations*. In doing so, individuals also achieve their own ends, since membership in these social institutions constitutes what counts as an end for them.

One final feature of the relationship between consumption and production merits consideration. In paragraph 246, Hegel describes a further dialectical twist in this relationship. He says:

This inner dialectic of civil society [the accumulation of capital in the hand of the few, and the divergence of rich and poor] thus drives it...to push beyond its own limits and seek markets, and so its necessary means of subsistence, in other lands which are either deficient in the goods it has overproduced, or else generally backward in industry, &c.<sup>337</sup>

Work originally serves as a means to consumption. From the standpoint of civil society, production provides goods in order to satisfy the needs and desires of private persons. However, as the economy develops, Hegel argues that a dialectical transformation occurs, and consumption ultimately serves production. While a lack of goods originally forces consumers to produce, a surplus of production ultimately forces society to seek out further consumers. Among other things, this dialectical transformation points to the need for centralized control of the economy. This transformation demonstrates, at least on

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individual, that ultimately constitutes the individual’s selfhood and worth. Hegel compares the adult worker with the youth, a person who still believes that she can determine the world according to her own ideas, a person who has not yet realized how collective practices have formed her.

<sup>337</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 246.

Hegel's view, the contradictions that arise from the laissez-faire economic model that duplicates the structure of civil society, a model that involves self-interested persons pursuing their own desires.

#### **6.4) The Unity of the State**

Hegel's critique of civil society includes further lines of argument that cannot be pursued here.<sup>338</sup> The dialectical contradictions presented in sections 5.3 and 5.4 should provide a basic sense of the methodological procedures Hegel employs in his critique of civil society. In response to the contradictions that emerge from civil society, Hegel develops a conception of state that grounds or unifies the basic dichotomies found in civil society. Hegel presents this unity in paragraph 258, where he describes the state in terms

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<sup>338</sup> Hegel's discussion of the relationship between the private and public good presents a particularly important strand of his argument that cannot be addressed here. In this discussion, Hegel shows how various private conceptions of the good come into inevitable conflict. Among other conflicts, he speaks of the "collision" between the interests of producers and consumers," (paragraph 236) and the divergence between rich and poor (paragraphs 244-245). These conflicts require some mediation in terms of a robust notion of the public good. Additionally, and more importantly, Hegel argues that there is no principled manner of determining a private sphere where my actions do not affect others. Hegel describes this problem in paragraph 232. He says: "But, crime apart, the subjective willing which is permissible in actions lawful per se and in the private use of property, also comes into external relation with other single persons, as well as with public institutions, other than law-courts, established for realizing a common end. This universal aspect makes private actions a matter of contingency which escapes the agent's control and which either does or may injure others and wrong them." A person's actions always come "into relation with other single persons," and at least from the standpoint of the agent, the relationship between this action and its further implications is a matter of "contingency." For this reason, Hegel concludes in paragraph 234, that, "there is, therefore, no inherent line of distinction between what is and what is not injurious." I take this claim to mean that we cannot divide all kinds of action into two broad types – those that are essentially private and therefore non-injurious to third parties and those that are public in the sense that they affect others. Finally, Hegel expresses the greatest problem with this form of the distinction between the private and the public good. Since the private good presents a merely partial conception of how social reality ought to be, this good, as a kind of plan for future action, always comes into conflict with aspects of reality not considered by it. In other words, various conceptions of the private good must remain frustrated unless they integrate themselves into the larger processes that define the good of society as a whole. Hegel presents this problem in paragraph 246, where he presents the problem of overproduction.

that overcome the rigid distinction between the desires of private persons and the institutions, practices, and social relations intended to fulfill these desires. He says:

If the state is confused with civil society, and if its specific end is laid down as the security and protection of property and personal freedom, then the interests of the individuals as such becomes the ultimate end of their association, and it follows that membership in the state is something optional. But the state's relation to the individual is quite different from this. Since the state is mind objectified, it is only as one of its members that the individual himself has objectivity, genuine individuality, and an ethical life. Unification pure and simple is the true content and aim of the individual, and the individual's destiny is the living of a universal life. His further particular satisfaction, activity, and mode of conduct have this substantive and universally valid life as their starting point and their result.<sup>339</sup>

In this passage Hegel makes a number of important points. First, he makes it clear that the state does not merely present a necessary condition for the "security and protection of property and personal freedom." The state doesn't simply support or ground civil society, but rather it provides a new conception of social reality. Thus the transition from "Civil Society" to the "State" cannot be understood in terms of the structure of a transcendental argument. Second, Hegel directly contrasts the standpoint of civil society with the standpoint of the state. He points out that from the standpoint of the state, "the interests of individuals" do not serve as the "ultimate end of their association." Thus he rejects the merely instrumental conception of social institutions and practices that grounds civil society.

Third, Hegel claims that we cannot conceive the individual and her interests in isolation from the social practices, institutions, and associations that comprise the state. This claim repudiates the essential dichotomy that structures civil society. Hegel conceives the state as the fundamental unity that grounds the distinction between the desires and aims of the individual, on the one hand, and the institutions and practices in

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<sup>339</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 258.

which the individual participates, on the other hand. He claims that a person only becomes a “genuine” individual within the context of the state, and thus membership in the state is not optional. Among other things, this means the desires of the individual cannot be determined or characterized in isolation from society, at least once society has reached the stage of development achieved in the modern state.

It should be noted, however, that Hegel also emphasizes the dependence of society on the individual. In the final sentence he says that the actions and interests of the individual have the state as “their starting point and their result.” Social reality forms and constitutes the desires of the individual. At the same time, the desires of the individual form and constitute social reality. This reciprocal relation should not be construed merely in causal terms. While social reality plays a causal role in determining the desires and actions of individuals, and while the desires and actions of individuals play a causal role in determining social reality, the unity of the state presupposes a more intimate connection between the individual and social reality, one in which there is an essential relation between the meaning, structure, and nature of these two moments.<sup>340</sup>

If two facets of reality stand in a reciprocal causal relation, the facets can still be characterized in isolation from one another. This unity merely consists in an external causal relation. By contrast, Hegel holds that social reality constitutes the very structure and nature of desire, and at the same time, he holds the desires of individuals partially determine the meaning of the social customs, institutions, and artifacts that constitute

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<sup>340</sup> In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel expresses the limitations of causal reciprocity for conceiving social reality. He says: “To make, for example, the manners of the Spartans the cause of their constitution and their constitution conversely the cause of their manners, may no doubt be correct. But, as we have comprehended neither the manners nor the constitution of the nation the result can never be final or satisfactory. The satisfactory point will be reached only when these two, as well as all other, special aspects of Spartan life and Spartan history are seen to be founded in this notion” (Paragraph 156Z).

society. The relation between the two moments is hermeneutic: our conception of each moment depends upon our conception of the other one. We can only interpret the desires of an individual in relation to the institutions, practices, and associations that provide the structure and content for her desires. At the same time, we can only determine the meaning of various practices and social artifacts in relation to the desires of those who engage in the practices and employ the artifacts. In this reciprocal determination, neither moment is more basic than the other. The essential relation between these two moments constitutes the unity that grounds the oppositional categories of civil society. This unity highlights the one-sided and merely provisional nature of the analysis of social reality presented in “Civil Society,” and it points toward some of the deeper conceptual problems in the foundations of political liberalism.

## **7) Conclusion**

In his discussions of private property, contracts, moral responsibility, and civil society, Hegel appears to endorse many of the central values that define political liberalism. However, in his conception of *Sittlichkeit*, and in his description of the state as that to which “individuals are related as accidents to substance,” Hegel presents a political vision that has long been the object of suspicion among the defenders of liberalism. Our ultimate evaluation of these apparently incongruous elements of Hegel’s political philosophy depends upon our conception of the structure of the work as a whole and, more specifically, upon our conception of the nature of its dialectical argumentative strategy. Frederick Neuhouser, Robert Pippin, and Kenneth Westphal construe the dialectical argumentative strategy of the *Philosophy of Right* as a kind of transcendental

argument, and on the basis of this construal, they present Hegel's political philosophy as an attempt to *complete, augment, or ground* political liberalism. These philosophers argue that Hegel's conception of *Sittlichkeit* and the state provide the necessary conditions for the universal rights described in "Abstract Right" and for the subjective self-determination and critical moral evaluation described by "Morality."

In this chapter I have argued against this conception of the dialectic and the interpretation of Hegel's political philosophy it entails. This conception precludes the negative meaning of sublation, which I equate with the hermeneutic demand for reinterpretation, and it fails to account for the role of contradiction in dialectical progression. A careful examination of Hegel's methodological remarks, as presented in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic*, reveals the central role of contradictions and the negative moment of sublation in the dialect. The importance of these aspects of the dialectic can also be seen in the progression of the *Philosophy of Right* itself. As we have seen, morality and civil society contain significant contradictions. In the case of morality, these contradictions arise from the rigid or absolute nature of the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity, while in the case of civil society, they stem from the division between the needs and desires of private individuals, on the one hand, and the institutions and social arrangements intended to fulfill these needs and desires, on the other hand.

In order to overcome these contradictions, Hegel argues that we must seek the ground that unites these apparently rigid oppositions. We must discover a conception of social reality as the original unity of subjectivity and objectivity. Hegel designates this conception of social reality with the term "*Sittlichkeit*." Similarly, we must come to

recognize the true nature of social organization as the original unity of individual desires and institutionalized practices. Hegel presents this higher unity in his conception of the state. Thus Hegel argues that certain values of traditional liberalism, the values presented in “Morality” and “Civil Society,” are *contradictory* and, as they stand, *incoherent*. They are not, in other words, simply incomplete. These values retain a place in Hegel’s final vision of political reality, though first they must be reinterpreted. As Hegel’s comparison of morality with insanity illustrates, this reinterpretation often involves a radical re-evaluation as well.



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