

Asger Sørensen, Morten Raffnsøe-Møller & Arne Grøn
(eds.):

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Copenhagen, October 2008, Arne Grøn, Morten Raffnsøe-Møller, and Asger Sørensen



Introduction: Hegel, History and the Hegelian Legacy

Arne Grøn

Hegel's influence on post-Hegelian philosophy is as profound as it is ambiguous. Modern philosophy is philosophy *after* Hegel. Taking leave of Hegel's system appears to be a common feature of modern and post-modern thought. One could even argue that giving up Hegel's claim of totality defines philosophy after Hegel. Modern and post-modern philosophies are philosophies of finitude: Hegel's philosophy cannot be repeated. However, its status as a negative backdrop for modern and post-modern thought already shows its pervasive influence. Precisely in its criticism of Hegel, modern thought is bound up with his thinking.

But there is more to be said about Hegel's influence. Modern and post-modern philosophy is also a matter of Hegelian legacy. It often reformulates key motives and insights learnt from Hegel. Maurice Merleau-Ponty even declares that what is great in modern philosophy one way or the other originates in Hegel: he inaugurates the search for a notion of reason that is not simply opposite to the irrational, but can be enlarged in understanding it.¹

Part of the Hegelian legacy is that he has changed the way philosophy deals with its own history. Hegel interprets his own philosophy through the history of philosophy to a point where this history seems to lead to Hegel's own philosophy. In a sense, he takes Aristotle as a model: Aristotle

who finds his own philosophical problems in revising the thought of his predecessors. Hegel's grand move however is deeply ambiguous: is history a matter of risking one's own thought, or of reaching a panoramic view on history? No one has taken history into philosophy, as Hegel did. In a sense, he interprets himself back into the history of philosophy, but at the same time, history seems to come to a close in *his* thought on history. However, if we would claim that Hegel brings metaphysics and its history to completion, and thereby to a close, we should recognize that he, by this very gesture, also opens up criticism of metaphysics in modern and post-modern philosophy. In reinterpreting Hegel, we might even question the current tradition of criticism of metaphysics in (post)-modern thought.

Hegelian legacy is not only dialectical, but also about *dialectics*. Of central importance in the legacy of Hegelian dialectics is the question of *recognition*, and with this question, the relation of *subjectivity and sociality* is at issue.

Dialectics, self-consciousness and recognition are the focus of this volume dealing with the Hegelian legacy in 2007, 200 years after the publication of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The first part addresses the legacy of dialectics in terms of the concepts of rationality, philosophy, history and subjectivity. In his article 'Hegel's Phenomenology of Rationality', Jørgen Huggler claims that Hegel contributes to 'a rich concept of rationality, combining individual consciousness with societal and historical concepts of freedom and reason'. Thomas Schwarz Wentzer argues for a 'hermeneutic idealism' that paves the way for metaphysics in its true sense, as 'Subjective Logic': 'in his *Science of Logic* Hegel explores the possibility to regain an understanding of dialectics which has gone through the modern idea of subjectivity'. In interpreting dialectics in Plato and philosophy as expression in Adorno, Anne-Marie Eggert Olsen investigates the two-fold nature of philosophy: as a discipline and as a non-discipline, claiming that this is what makes dialectics necessary. Contrary to the views of Foucault and Derrida, Asger Sørensen points to Bataille as a dialectical thinker: Bataille even endorsed a totalizing

metaphysical concept of dialectics, including nature within the scope of dialectics, but in Bataille's materialist dialectics of nature 'within the perspective of inner experience' – seeking to understand the material *flux* of life as a historical process – there is nothing unconditional worth dying for. In addressing the issues of vision, normativity and subjectivity, Arne Grøn seeks to reformulate a dialectics of recognition in terms of two, equally radical, insights into alterity and selfhood: alterity of the other implies that her identity is beyond my grasp (exteriority), and selfhood means that I am myself as no other (interiority).

Part two focuses on recognition. In his article on 'The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution', Robert B. Brandom reconstructs the transition in Hegel's phenomenology of consciousness from biological desire to socially structured recognition and argues that it is only achieved in reflexive recognition: selves are the locus of accountability; to be a self means to be able to take a normative stand on things. Axel Honneth sketches the architecture of a theory of justice based on mutual recognition. Following Hegel, he argues, against contemporary individualist theories of freedom, that human recognition is not only a presupposition of freedom, but an integral part of the practice of freedom itself. And hence, that a theory of justice must sketch the social practices and institutions that allow for such recognition to take place, and hence, secure equal social freedom for all. In discussing Honneth's attempt to maintain a Hegelian notion of progress without subscribing to its metaphysical foundations, Ejvind Hansen claims that the aims of critical theory are to be rearticulated in terms of recognition as norm for locating disagreement rather than solving conflicts. In his article, Henrik Jøker-Bjerre argues that multiculturalism and theories of recognition fail to recognize a crucial metaphysical aspect of Hegelian legacy: the difference between recognizing an individual as a person and as an independent self-consciousness. Drawing upon a Lacanian notion of subjectivity, Jøker-Bjerre claims that genuine recognition is about encountering the other not as a representative of some culture, but as a naked subject.

ARNE GRØN

The articles in this volume thus testify to the fact that in dealing with Hegel and history, we are already taking part in the Hegelian legacy. Dealing with history becomes a matter of exploring systematic possibilities. The Hegelian legacy is about the future of thought.

Endnotes

1 'Hegel est à l'origine de tout ce qui s'est fait de grand en philosophie depuis un siècle, – par exemple du marxisme, de Nietzsche, de la phénoménologie et de l'existentialisme allemand, de la psychanalyse; – il inaugure la tentative pour explorer l'irrationnel et l'intégrer à une raison élargie que reste la tâche de notre siècle' ('L'Existentialisme chez Hegel' (1947), in: *Sens et non-sens*, Paris 1966, 109).

Hegel's Phenomenology of Rationality

Jørgen Huggler

Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Phenomenology of Spirit*) from 1807¹ is probably the most interesting philosophical work of its time. As Rudolf Haym pointed out, it is a book through which many of the particular themes of its time run and achieve clarification.² The purpose of this paper is to elucidate Hegel's conception of rationality and to defend the thesis that Hegel is an author engaged in discussion with a wide variety of sources. He uses sceptical reasoning to form a line of argument with a necessary progression, although the various materials that he considers are not linked in a simple, compelling logical way.

Here I will first discuss what Hegel aimed at and the methods he used to reach his goal (sect. 1). Then I will cast an eye on the development of the contents (sect. 2). Last, I will contemplate a metaphysical interpretation of the course of experiences and discuss why Hegel's sceptical method is adequate to the metaphysics of spirit with which the book concludes (sect. 3).

1. The Phenomenology of Spirit as an enquiry on rationality

My thesis is that Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* made an enquiry concerning rationality. This was to be developed as a first step, instead of plunging directly into a metaphysics of rationality. Indeed, the reason for this lies in Hegel's metaphysical aspirations. Wishing to defend the legitimacy of a metaphysics of spirit, Hegel must address the problem

of its accessibility for consciousness, without which the spirit would not be *spirit* but rather what Hegel termed spiritual substance.³ However, in giving a pivotal role to consciousness, Hegel provoked the challenge of equipollency, the use of Pyrrhonian sceptical method against dogmatism. His philosophical science would be confronted with other philosophical and non-philosophical positions making the same claims (cf. 55/12 ff.; #76). Against these, it was not enough to defend a conception of philosophy as the self-knowledge of reason, i.e. a thesis of the numerical uniqueness of philosophy, taking for granted that reason is *one*. Hegel was well aware that even if he considered conceptions diverging from his own as reflections of and mirrors of the true philosophy, '*Reflexionsphilosophien*' as he calls them, he could not without engendering debate defeat the claims made by a position not prepared to share his views.⁴

For Hegel, therefore, it became a central issue how to deal with other opinions and claims. Already the introductory article in his and Schelling's *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* from 1802 bears witness to Hegel's preoccupation with the problems of philosophical (literary) criticism. All of his published papers in the Jena-period were indeed critical works, including the dissertation on the orbits of the planets, *Dissertatio philosophica de Orbitis Planetarum* (1801), the *Differenzschrift* (1801) and the book-long essay on '*Glauben und Wissen*' (1802–03). As Michael Forster has argued in his book on *Hegel and Scepticism* (1989), the problems inherent in the critical task – sharpened as they were through Hegel's profound understanding of the antique sceptical method and its challenge to dogmatism and its armoury of critical examinations – can be seen as an underlying theme in Hegel's various attempts in Jena.⁵ In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* not only the challenge, but also the particular sceptical teaching concerning tropes, are designed to cope with the problematic defence of idealism.⁶

It has been held that Hegel's lecture notes in the Jena period are a key to his *Phenomenology*.⁷ However, I disagree.⁸ Only the published *Phenomenology* can show us what Hegel aimed at in his unpublished manuscripts – or at least in some part reveal his efforts. Understanding

the *Phenomenology*, we can identify those of his endeavours which were integrated in the published book, and those which could not fit into the first volume of *The System of Science*, i.e. the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

In his book, Hegel considered the points of view that were common in his own time and that already had a long and distinguished historical pedigree concerning the fundamental basis for rationality and the conceptions of knowledge and reality. He was ready to accord a relative amount of justification to these opinions, although he found that they in their particularity were blind to their own limitations. Detached from the true understanding of the whole, which they overshadowed, they appeared inconsistent. He does not discuss abstract concepts or theories, but so-called figures or shapes of consciousness (*Gestalten des Bewußtseyns*)⁹ which articulate various opinions that philosophers both in Hegel's time and earlier had explicitly or implicitly contended expressed a true and irrefutable understanding of the object. Hegel exemplifies these assumptions in order to demonstrate their limited validity and inner conflicts. He presents the various forms of consciousness' understanding of its object, of itself and of the relation between these two. Hegel has, however, by testing a large number of specific shapes of consciousness, the positive aim of clarification of the necessary and sufficient conditions for rationality. Concurrently he seeks to illuminate and alter the implied concepts of consciousness and of reality. The aim of the book is not merely epistemological, but also metaphysical. In its progress it therefore has to involve the political, historical and religious aspects of human existence.

Some remarks on Hegel's epistemological *method* in the *Phenomenology* seem to be relevant. In his book, Hegel wanted to make a progression through immanent criticism of points of view, which he did not share, but which he nonetheless considered important. In order to secure this endeavour he developed the concept of 'shapes of consciousness'. Two further devices joined it: a distinction between the 'for it' (*für es*) and 'for us' (*für uns*) viewpoints, and Hegel's mode of exposition: a theatrical performance-model of a '*Darstellung des erscheinenden Wissens*'.¹⁰

Hegel's instruments are the following: (i) The '*Gestalten des Bewußtseyns*':

The theme in his exposition should not be opinions simpliciter, they have to be embodied or figured opinions, i.e. particular opinions held to be true about particular objects. *Prima facie*, these opinions are assumed certain, because they are justified through particular reasons.¹¹ This model makes it possible to examine the claims of every particular figure of consciousness through pointing out discrepancies between reality and its self-understanding – i.e. a model of immanent criticism solving what Hegel, inspired by Sextus Empiricus, called the problem of criterion (*Maafstab*).¹² This is his first defence against the charge of equipollency and dogmatism. (ii) The ‘für es’/‘für uns’-distinction: Distinguishing between the perspective of the observed ‘shape of consciousness’ and our own (‘we’ – the observing philosophers), Hegel manages to let ‘our’ opinions be postponed to benefit the examination of the figures of consciousness. This is the second antidote against the sceptical challenge: to hold back his own opinions in order not to expose them to the charge of dogmatism. Hegel accepts that his argument is based on claims and opinions that he does not himself share. He underlines the observing, contemplative role of the philosophers (*das reine Zusehen*, cf. 59/13–30; #84 f.). (iii) The ‘*Darstellung des erscheinenden Wissens*’: Hegel can now set up the stage. His mode of exposition contains an unrivalled possibility of progression. An important aspect is the ‘for us’ knowledge concerning the foregoing acts of the drama, unknown to the new figure of consciousness naively entering the stage. Other aspects of his method include ‘our’ possibility of summing up the results of an examination and *reinterpretation* of former parts. As I shall show later, this aspect is a very important precondition for Hegel’s metaphysical claims (sect. 3 below).

Hegel takes recourse to the material of representations (*Vorstellungen*) and positions (56/29 ff.; #78, cf. 26/6 ff.; ##30–34) lying outside his ‘*Darstellung*’, i.e. to sources given in the course of cultural history and at hand in his own time. Every position that appears in the exposition and makes claims about the adequacy and certainty of its own knowledge, has to explain itself in terms of philosophical concepts such as knowledge (*which* knowledge about *what*) and truth.¹³ I am underlining this aspect

of his method firstly, in order to explain the *richness* of the *Phenomenology's* material, and secondly, in order to point out the ways in which Hegel *can* claim a necessary progression for the course of experiences and the ways in which he *cannot*. I will return to this later.

Let us consider the beginning of sect. 10 of the 'Introduction'. Hegel here presents the features of the figures of consciousness that enable him to examine their claims, and thereby to solve the problem of criteria. Hegel writes that he is talking abstractly, referring to the formal features of knowledge (*Wissen*) and truth (*Wahrheit*) related to consciousness, not to the concrete conceptions or realisations of those:

Consciousness, we find, *distinguishes* from itself something, to which at the same time it *relates* itself; or, to use the current expression, there is something *for* consciousness; and the determinate form of this process of relating, or of there being something for a consciousness, is knowledge. But from this being for another we distinguish being in itself or *per se*; what is related to knowledge is likewise distinguished from it, and posited as also existing outside this relation; the aspect of being *per se* or in itself is called Truth. What really lies in these determinations does not further concern us here; for since the object of our inquiry is phenomenal knowledge, its determinations are also taken up, in the first instance, as they are immediately offered to us. And they are offered to us very much in the way we have just stated. (Baillie #82)¹⁴

In the last sentences, Hegel underlines the *formal* status of the model outlined in the first two sentences: In order to fill out the features, the model must be supplied with a *content* coming from or representing the concrete figure of consciousness.¹⁵ The shape of consciousness has a (particular) knowledge (*Wissen*) that it *relates* to its particular object, in order to make a *distinction* between what that object is for consciousness, and what it is objectively, i.e. *per se* (*an sich*). This aspect is called the truth (*Wahrheit*). It is measuring its own knowledge against what the object really is, i.e. with what it conceives its truth to be. Hegel uses here the collapse of distinctions as a weapon against positions not fulfilling the

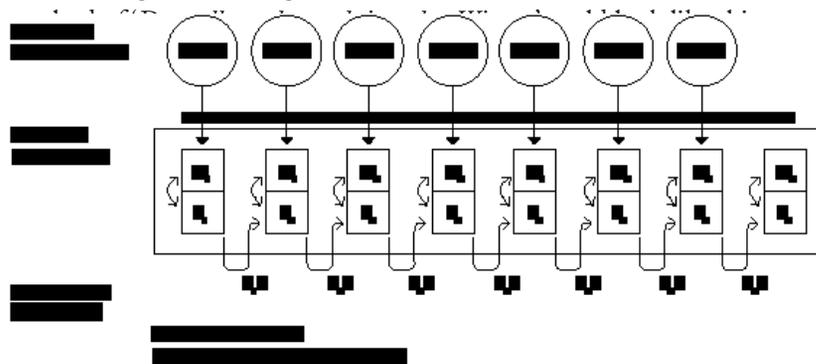
demands of a scientific philosophy.¹⁶

In this way, a consciousness is not only consciousness of an object, but also consciousness of itself (59/31 ff.; #85). This self-understanding is at stake when it is confronted with the object and finds it different from what it first was taken to be. Just because of this moment of self-consciousness, the shape of consciousness involves a dynamic educative process. Hegel has not claimed that we are reaching '*das Ding an sich*', only that we are distinguishing consciousness' knowledge and conception of its object on the one hand, from the object '*an sich*' and the truth on the other hand.

This conception led Hegel to prescribe a progression in the process of inquiry. We should however, distinguish between the necessary and the arbitrary aspects of the transitions in the progress of experience. What Hegel writes in the Introduction about things 'contributed by us' (*unsere Zuthat*) (61/5 ff.; #87) implies that the Hegelian 'we', after examining a figure of consciousness, extracts and develops what Ulrich Claesges calls a conceptual result¹⁷ and determines an outline for the object of the subsequent figure of consciousness. Therefore, the next figure should present¹⁸ a concrete particular knowledge concerning a concrete particular object. We take the figure up¹⁹ because it is able to fill out the outline drawn from the foregoing examination. This interpretation, substantiated in the Introduction,²⁰ has the consequence that with the necessary progress of experience, we have to distinguish two aspects: 1) A *formal* aspect, which gives a sort of necessity to the progression. 2) A *substantive* aspect of concretisation that is connected with what the new figure of consciousness is able to fulfil regarding the object, and that sketches out its knowledge of the object, and the criteria for its claims of knowledge and truth. In my opinion, the concretisation (or figuration) does not follow immanently in consequence of the exposition itself, but invokes a range of positions from an external source, namely the rich store of cultural history available to Hegel and purportedly well-known to his reader.²¹ If this interpretation is inadequate, then Hegel's procedure of concretisation for each new position must be considered unwarranted. His claim of necessary progression would then be too strong compared with the means he has devised to do the job.

In fact, this reading solves the old question: Why is it meaningful to include such rich and specific material content in the *Phenomenology* – the book which Hegel supposedly claimed to be a work progressing by an almighty inner dialectics, only in need of our contemplation.²² Instead of taking up such an impossible dialectical task, Hegel seems to be aware that the necessity of progression is only possible through a combination of formal progression and an examination of external material. The progression should not be considered as entirely immanent.

Let *Vorst* stand for ‘*Vorstellungen*’ (representations), *W* for a particular ‘*Wissen*’ (knowledge) and *G* for a particular ‘*Gegenstand*’ (object). The arrow connecting *W* & *G* represents a particular self-understanding. Then a diagram showing the theatrical model that is contained in the



Sitting in the auditorium, *we*, the audience, *we*, the spectators, know what has happened in the foregoing acts; *we* know all of the faulty and vain claims made by the foregoing figures; *we* know their errors and understand why they could not satisfy their claims. *We* are able to reinterpret the past acts, knowing what we know now. Even though we do not know everything (yet!), *our* knowledge certainly is not any old thing. *We* have obtained ‘the conscious insight into the untruth of

the phenomenal knowledge' (Baillie #78)²³, sufficient to single out and call in from our cultural memory a new figure of consciousness able to make new and stronger claims, claims which in the present act could be disproved, *or* could pass examination. However, it is those figures outside the '*Darstellung*' which provide the *Phenomenology* with its rich contents.

Hegel, therefore, seems justified in claiming a progress based on (more or less) immanent criticism of the given figures of consciousness. However, Hegel has not justified (and maybe he has not claim to do so) the concretisation of the 'shapes of consciousness' as something lying totally *immanent* within the limits of his exposition. At the beginning, we could not deduce *ex nihilo* the sequence of acts in the drama. It may be objected that this 'weak' interpretation makes Hegel more trivial than he deserves. Perhaps the objection is correct, but then we need to explain how Hegel *could* justify an exposition-immanent *concretisation* of the positions examined in the *Phenomenology*. Why, for instance, is the immediate knowledge of the immediate object in ch. I, knowledge of the 'sensible singular'? Why is the sensible universal in ch. II identified with 'the thing with many characteristics'? Why is 'the not-dependent universal' (*das unbedingte Allgemeine*) in ch. III identified with 'force'? Why is the consciousness of consciousness in ch. IV identified with 'self-consciousness'? Etc. – You can take the suggestions here as a helpful device to make Hegel readable, or as an instrument of criticism.

In the same way, another familiar problem appears to be a pseudo-problem: How can Hegel go from the highly abstract topics in the first chapters to the rich, historical figures in the sixth chapter?²⁴ The answer is that the development of experiences (*Erfahrungen*) in ch. V shows it necessary, that reason is not bound to the individual, but to something common to many individuals. Can we then find reason in society? Well, let us try with the seemingly harmonic Greek ideal! Does it prove that identification with society is sufficient to justify the claim of reason? Why then conflict – tragic conflict? The answer is that not every society that appears to be harmonious is reasonable. The consciousness that identifies itself with society can be only partial, since reality is differentiated,

not fully transparent and therefore partly unconscious. Therefore, a consciousness that identifies itself with society can be opposed by another consciousness making an opposing equipollently justified claim, like Antigone's opposition to Creon in Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*.

I am not arguing that Hegel solved either the epistemological demands for a path and introduction to the Absolute, or the puzzles of the Absolute as subject. What I want to maintain is that Hegel's *Phenomenology* can be interpreted as an epistemological attempt to justify absolute metaphysics which certainly has interesting features even for the non-believers. The book could be interpreted as a non-dogmatic attempt to examine the *insufficient* criteria for absolute knowledge. This attempt can be understood as a very good systematic proposal for developing a conjunction of justified conditions for rationality – each of which is insufficient, but is *justified* through the foregoing examination of other insufficient claims.²⁵ However, my intentions in introducing this defence for more moderate expectations to the Hegelian method are of a double nature: I want not only want to make Hegel actual as a thinker of rationality, but also to make the reading and understanding of the *Phenomenology* easier. Let me therefore proceed to an exposition of the text.

2. The course of experiences

In this section I will argue that Hegel's 'dialectics' is a *discussion* and an analysis of a range of topics relevant for an enquiry into *rationality*. I will not treat every part of the *Phenomenology* in detail, but will consider the overall course.²⁶ Admittedly, I am discarding many heavy expectations often linked with the understanding of dialectics. I hope instead to provide a clearer insight into the nature of the Hegelian progression.

To begin with, in chapters I–III, Hegel discusses *realistic* points of view that predicate true and certain knowledge as based on an object's existing prior to one's understanding of it. He shows that we cannot uphold the claim to have isolated the thing in itself, in a way that is potentially corrective to our knowledge. It will not do to conceive of our knowledge as a simple report of our sensory apprehension of this object. Neither

will it succeed as perception that takes the object as a complicated entity incorporating various qualities, nor by putting aside sensory perception altogether in favour of an intellectual distinction between the object as it appears to the senses and its inner world of laws, which presumably govern the object's appearance.

Because of the realization that we are not able to grasp the object as it is, independent of consciousness, Hegel discusses in the next main section (chapter IV) *idealistic* interpretations, which assume that consciousness' awareness of itself, also called self-consciousness, is the indisputable fundament for all knowledge, including our knowledge of objects. At first Hegel shows that self-consciousness understood in this way is problematical, since even though it should be considered as a unified, singular structure, it quickly becomes bipolar. From which of the two poles of consciousness in 'consciousness of consciousness' should the entirety be viewed?²⁷ Which perspective should be dominant? Hegel called this situation a battle of life and death, one that neither pole could win without the structure collapsing. Whereas the problem for realism was to keep knowledge and object separated,²⁸ the problem for idealism is to retain the structure established by positing self-consciousness as the explanatory principle. Instead of reciprocal recognition between two equally indispensable moments, the framework breaks down. In an attempt to avoid this purely negative result, Hegel discusses an oblique form of recognition, which he illustrates by using the relationship between Lord and Bondsman as a model. The bondsman has, in the battle of life and death, realized that survival is more important than being the dominating pole in the structure that binds him to the lord. Thus, the bondsman has passed a step further than the lord has; this same step has relieved the lord of fighting without increasing his knowledge. The bondsman works with the object, not for himself, but for the lord – who then enjoys the fruits of the bondsman's endeavours. In his own perspective, the lord is allowed to enjoy these fruits because he is always ready to risk his life in the battle for recognition. But in reality, his enjoyment is due to the bondsman. The lord is only free in a negative sense. In reality, he is constantly dependent on the bondsman's submission and toil. Conversely,

the bondsman has an alienated consciousness; in the lord, he recognizes what he is *an sich*: a free 'I'. Nevertheless, the bondsman does not see this 'I' as himself, but as an other; more precisely, as 'the lord'. Even more importantly, through his work of fashioning things, the bondsman executes precisely what idealism posits as the contribution of self-consciousness: the bondsman *forms* the object, giving it the self's form. However, for the bondsman who is obliged to surrender the product of his endeavours to the lord, such a moment of recognition and identification is impossible. The bondsman remains subjugated and uncomprehending; even the structure renders it impossible for the bondsman to perceive himself as the lord – as the person who actually bestows structure on reality (115/12 ff.; #196).

Thus, the problem of freedom and consciousness is analysed and Hegel hereby uses the opportunity to discuss two historical positions in which both concepts stand central: Stoicism and Scepticism. He views Stoicism as a position that posits itself in the lord's place: as free, whether as Caesar (Marcus Aurelius Antoninus) or as slave (Epictetus) – as long as it is free in its consciousness. Nevertheless, this form of freedom is, according to Hegel, a purely negative freedom: freedom *from* something rather than freedom *for* something. Stoic freedom remains on a higher, universal level, and cannot be connected to the more tangible reality. Conversely, Scepticism chooses (not as method, but as a philosophical stance) the way of negation: it moves in the footprints of the bondsman, specifically negating this and that point of view, so that the Sceptic can tread along the road of life without being bound by anything in particular. However, according to Hegel, this form of freedom is also an illusion. The Sceptic is not only constantly obliged to receive the material and doctrines he wishes to negate from others; he is also so thoroughly compelled to negate, that his consciousness becomes self-contradictory. His scepticism is like a child's game – where the point is to incessantly say the opposite of one's partner – notwithstanding the fact that one must reply in one way to one thing, and quite the opposite to another. According to Hegel, the reaction to this process is that consciousness, instead of experiencing itself as free, notices that it lacks constancy and that it is composed of

contradictions (120/39 ff.; #205). This ‘unhappy consciousness’ posits – in relation to its own contradictory and unsteady nature – something that it describes as the Unchangeable (*das Unwandelbare*), something it itself is not (122/12 ff.; #208). In many ways, this consciousness behaves as a religious consciousness. But Hegel’s point is that whether consciousness conducts itself devoutly or altruistically in relation to the Unchangeable, which is consciousness’ own self-projection, this performance is contradictory. Consciousness projects a positive element (*viz.* its own doing) into an *alter ego*, although that element has not been produced by this opposite figure.

Continuing the progression of the book, Hegel addresses the question of the subject’s idealistic-realistic rationality in relation to the surrounding world (ch. V). The naïve transcendental idealism identifies its own rationality with the world. This spontaneous claim – undefended against the charge of equipollency (cf. 133/6 ff.; #233 f.) – is not sustainable, because the World is simply not as the subject imagines or wishes it. The individual can attempt to classify, using its own criteria, but such a classification will remain arbitrary and opposed to another equally arbitrary attempt of classification. In a similar vein, the individual can claim a privileged insight into the practical life of actions, thanks to being ‘pure of heart’, but others may and can do the same. The criteria for truth remain inadequate. If the individual sets himself as judge of the unfolding of the history of the World, then this reality emerges as more substantial than the individual’s personal understanding. It is society’s development, rather than mere moral formulas, that decides what is right.²⁹

Next Hegel moves into an area concerning society and history, the themes of chapter VI. As his starting-point, Hegel discusses the Greek *polis* as it had been described in Sophocles’ tragic drama *Antigone*. In Germany, the work of art historian and archaeologist Johann Winckelmann had contributed to a preoccupation with Greek antiquity, and in his younger days, Hegel had taken the polis as his political role model. However, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* he gives a more critical analysis of it. The argument runs along these lines: let us assume that the polis was an ethically harmonious society, where individuals’ immediate consciousness

was congruent with society as the substantial common reality. Sophocles' tragedy is then, the story of twin brothers who by birthright can both claim to rule the city-state. Each agrees to rule one year at a time. However, when a year has passed, Eteocles, the brother who has been ruling, refuses to give up the throne. The wronged brother Polynices now seeks help from the neighbouring powers. The conflict results in war, where both brothers fall. Now, one brother has stood defending the city ramparts with the people, whilst the other has united with the enemy. Therefore, the new king Creon demands that the defending regent be honoured with a state burial, whilst the aggressor brother be left unburied as food for dogs and birds. This is according to the law of the state, which supplies Creon's spontaneous knowledge of what is right. Anyone who transgresses this edict is to be stoned to death. However, Antigone, the sister of the twins, is opposed to this edict. Whereas Creon represents male society (by extending the differentiation in Aristotle's *Politics*, he represents the *polis*, the political community large enough to be self-sufficing), Antigone gathers her female knowledge from the same substance of society. She also represents something real, *oikos*, the home or household, which for Aristotle signified the association established by nature for the supply of everyday needs. It is the god-given law in this society that the family, in this case the sister, must arrange for the burial of her brother, so that the gods of the underworld are not deprived of him. It is at the precise moment where Creon and Antigone *act* in accordance with their own certainty that the conflict breaks out. Both act from spontaneous convictions and in accordance with the identity that society has bestowed on them. They share that criterion (*viz.* immediacy) for what is right and reasonable.³⁰ However, the being and meaning of society exceeds the bounds of what can be present in each separate individual consciousness (cf. 252/35 ff.; #467). As long as no action was necessary, this discrepancy remained hidden by harmony. The course of action brought the unsolved conflicts into the light, showing that society was not transparent and that it had not solved the conflict between nature and ethical virtue – as Hegel was no doubt acquainted with through Fr. Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education*

of Man (1795). Through diabolical logic, Hegel lets not only the feeling of harmony, but also the entire Greek society, founder because of feminist anti-war revolt (Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*) and the elderly men's inability to maintain power outwardly. With the coming of a powerful young man (Alexander the Great), a new type of organization of society definitively destroyed the city-state. In the new form of society – i.e. Rome under the emperors – all power was vested in one single individual, the emperor. In formal terms, all were equal before the law; however, the more profound reality was an isolation of all, as unimportant atoms in society. Here lay the real historical basis for the intellectual currents of the time, such as Stoicism and Scepticism – apparent harmony was replaced by alienation.

Precisely rationality in an alienated world is the next subject that Hegel treats in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Here he discusses conditions in a feudal society, Western Europe from the decline of the Roman Empire up to and including the French Revolution. This feudal society is obviously the result of people's own activity, but for each individual it appears as a foreign and spontaneous present-at-hand reality – the opposite of the self. Human beings are here advised not to attempt to realise themselves in respect to what they immediately are. Thus, a key word is *Bildung*, the concept of culture that is at once the self's emancipation from an outer naturalness and the internalization of the alienated substance. From the restraining character of the particular, i. e. the given naturalness, the self must develop a more common as well as a more individually conscious and active freedom. Another key concept in relation to alienation is *Entzweiung*, the tearing apart or division – the division in the singular consciousness and the division between different spheres in society (265/16 ff.; #486). Hegel endeavours to show that such a society develops consciousnesses that in the public sphere say one thing, but act in self-interest from opposite motives. Since this is the case in the world of reality, then an ideal is posited, one that goes beyond this world to an elevated world, the world of faith, which to Hegel appears as an escape from the miserable existence in the real world. However, in this superstructure (266/26 ff.; #487), the division repeats itself. Two opposing types of ideological

consciousness are developed. In protest against the religious belief in the afterlife, an intellectual critical thinking sprang up. Here Hegel focuses on French Enlightenment thought, in the figures of Voltaire and d'Holbach, who had endeavoured to reveal religious belief as a bluff, and whose critical analysis partly aimed at the clergy's social deception and partly at the belief in the afterlife promised by faith, which was nothing but an anthropomorphic illusion. These opposed Enlightenment parts (rational critique and religion) did not consider their similarities. Both reduced thinking to something essentially negative and formal, and both made a formal simplification of the spiritual to something either beyond the human world or reduced to a primitive materialism.

Hegel lets his analysis of the stratification of society into base-superstructure, where humans misunderstand themselves and others, result in the crumbling and dissolving of the base, whilst the transcendence of the superstructure falls to earth as humankind's own doing.

This dissolution, the result of the Enlightenment, achieves its apotheosis in the French Revolution. Hegel devotes a special analysis to the progress of the French Revolution. The starting point is that the layers stabilising feudal society have disappeared, and that culture (*Bildung*) has removed the order established by nature as well as the transcendent order and apparently cancelled the conflict between the individual and the universal. Everything now seems to be a question of freedom. However, the immediate identification of the (Rousseauian) *General Will* and the individual will let the different interests and institutions disappear, which had been stabilizers of society, as the intermediary link connecting citizen and government. Instead of a situation where each individual citizen works within his metier, the people are now merely occupied with state business. The understanding here is that the individual and the universal should be at once the same thing. In Hegel's words, the demand is for 'the gazing of the self into the self, the absolute seeing of *itself* doubled' (#583).³¹ The consequences are fatal: on the one hand, the guillotine must be at work night and day, as society cannot tolerate something in the individual that is not at the same time universal. On the other hand, it is impossible to

create a stable government, as the government will always be forced to bow to the particular. Thus, its claim to represent the universal public good is revealed as 'factionary', or in other words, as a party.

In this analysis, one can begin to discern the background for Hegel's later, warm defence of the institutions of society. These institutions administer the instruments of powers, on the one hand for the substantial interests of society, and on the other hand, for the tasks that further the common good.³²

With the analysis of the French Revolution in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel approaches his own time. He continues in the book a discussion of Kant's and, to a certain degree, Johann Gottlieb Fichte's moral philosophy. At the forefront of his critique is Kant's 'moral view of the world'. The postulates of pure practical reason express the view that we must presume the existence of God, of freedom and the immortality of the soul. These postulates are needed in order that a pure moral of duty, that does not seek any form of exterior happiness, can remain meaningful for us in a world where experience teaches us that moral rectitude and happiness are not causally connected. According to Hegel, however, the postulations merely show that Kant does not recognise any goodness in the world. Through a basically nihilistic philosophy, Kant reduces everything to an unrealizable infinite 'ought'. It is not morality, but rather 'the non-moral' that rules existence (331/27 ff.; #613). The activities of practical life reveal the different attempts to disguise the contradictions inherent in these postulated harmonies between the worldly here-and-now and the hereafter or transcendent.

Hegel elaborates in detail the interpretation of morality as moral consciousness. He regards it, in a way, as the highest expression of the idealism that Kant had founded – because it negates the transcendence of reality, its independence of the self. Consequently, in Hegel's optic it accords with the French Revolution's conception of society. However if morality builds on the self's conscience, then an even more serious dilemma remains: in so far as my actual action always results in something particular, then I am unable to substantiate for others its claim to absolute universality as duty.

Others judge my action with precisely as justifiable a measure as my own, with the use of each and every singular conscience as a criterion. Nor can I, without appearing hypocritical, claim in words to base the reasons for my actions in conscience. Hegel wishes here to show that action belongs to a common public space – action is discussed by other persons and action contributes to the continuation and development of our shared reality. However, action and its appraisal inhere in the individual: a person can choose to act and admit the action's particularity; he or she can choose to enter a community of recognition. Nevertheless, he can also fail to act, and omit recognising the actions of others. In that case, subjectivity is placed as prior to or outside the communal space of others. This is, in Hegel's view the negative, vile possibility. The positive reply to action and acknowledgement or confession is instead the 'reconciliatory YES' between people. This 'YES' means the appearance among humans of a subject-transgressing subjectivity and reality – *viz.* the appearance of an intersubjective 'spirit' (361/26 ff.).³³

The question is, however, what constitutes the spiritual foundation for human community. World religions have given their answer to this question. Hegel reviews, (chapter VII) one after another, Natural religions, Greek religion and Christianity. His major point is that the object of religion, from having been initially something substantial, over time has become dependent on subjectivity. The worshipping of a stone is thus altered when a sculptor begins to form the stone in the image of God. In ancient Greece, the last remnants of a substantial basis for religion disappear. In theatrical performances and in dialectics, an extreme subjectivisation in the worship of God takes place. The gods disappear like 'clouds', as happens in Aristophanes' satirical depiction of Socrates and his pupils in the comedy *The Clouds*. Not only the object, but also its transcendent character in relation to the observer, disappears (398/35 ff.; #746). However, this disappearance is at the same time a loss. Thus, the climate is ready for the arrival of the revealed religion of Christianity. God reveals himself to humanity in the form of a man, as subjectivity. The emptiness of the 'unhappy consciousness', which the Greeks also had experienced, is hereby

filled. Jesus could be seen, heard and felt (404/34 ff.; #758). Hegel regards Christianity as the religion towards which all other religions pointed, and which gathered all of them in itself. Christianity is the absolute, definitive religion – the terminus of the history of religion. However, the content of the revelation is not readily apparent in primordial Christianity. The death of Jesus made theological reflection necessary, and it is only later, through Martin Luther, that this resulted in a proper understanding of the revealed religion. This religion is not a subjective projection. Nor is it an escape from an alienated world. It is, instead an affirmation readily available to all that human existence is part of God's design for salvation, and that God is not something distant from our tangible existence. On the contrary, Luther's thought ties together the congregation and God as 'Holy Spirit', so that in our daily lives we belong to God's reality; our actions and our consciousness are part of God's actions and consciousness.

Even though Christianity attains an understanding of the foundation of human existence as 'spirit', its comprehension of the full consequence is, according to Hegel, hindered. The content of absolute religion is the unity of pure thought and being (405/33 ff.; #759-761). However, religious consciousness is merely the pinnacle of all the inadequate shapes of consciousness that Hegel had examined earlier in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the same way as these other inadequate forms, Christianity too is subjected to a specific form of consciousness, that of 'representation-thinking' ('*Vorstellen*') (Miller #765: picture-thinking). This form separates the subjective and objective side of understanding (cf. 29/14 ff.; #36) in such a way that the resultant consciousness of 'spirit' is unclear and contradictory (407/1 ff. & 415/26 ff.; #761 f. & #780). Despite all the theological reflections that had given Jesus Christ another role rather than a purely natural one, the representation (*Vorstellung*) of God is split into natural relations, such as the 'father-son' relation. One cannot reach logical-conceptual coherence between the three moments of the trinity. The concept of God's design for salvation ties God and the world together via the notions of good and evil, but consciousness cannot grasp these concepts, as it immediately constructs an objective series of events

in which God represents everything good and the subjective – human – side represents all evil. Finally, the notion of reconciliation is split by time, in that it *either has* taken place or *will* take place at some other time in the future. The congregation reserves its image of God and the human community as unified for practice on Sunday; in real, practical, everyday life, there is no unity (421/8 ff.; #787)³⁴

Philosophy, or 'the Science of Knowing' as Hegel prefers to call it, is the result of this journey made explicit in his exposition (ch. VIII). Conceptual thinking that is not bound by the (visual) structure of the consciousness-of-an-object can grasp unity and differentiation at the same time. It has no need for the differentiation of time and of space that characterises the limited viewpoint of finite, representation-thinking consciousness. Philosophy is the self-knowledge of the spirit, a self-knowledge that, according to Hegel, is created behind each individual – in everyone's finite, representation-thinking consciousness of spirit – even though each person does not immediately notice that the object of consciousness is 'spirit', and that consciousness is an expression of spirit, is spirit's self-consciousness.³⁵

Read from the beginning, Hegel's book was an attempt to examine the experience of consciousness scientifically. Each step was followed by despair in relation to the immediate conceptions of the specific shape of consciousness. However, read retrospectively, and keeping in mind that the entire progression has been a form of 'spirit's self-knowledge' through the shapes of consciousness, one can discern a positive progression, a 'phenomenology of spirit'. Through the continual revisions of the short-sighted assumptions of consciousness, the progression has not only increased the understanding of the complex notion of rationality, but also of reality and of subjectivity to which reason relates. This reality is irreducible to some pure thing situated at a convenient distance from the consciousness by which it is objectified. What appeared as an object is spirit, something that indeed is active in and a prerequisite for the rationality of the subject's consciousness of it. It is in this retrospective light that Hegel's contemporaries, according to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, can realise that the rationality at stake is one attainable for them,

although it was never possible earlier in history.

3. Metaphysical aspects

So far, I have not taken into account the metaphysical aspects of Hegel's aim but only considered the epistemological aspect. However, the *metaphysical* line of argument does not conflict with the interpretation above. In the course of experiences, the demands for the complexity of the object increase, and so do the demands for a complex subject related to that object. In the first three chapters, Hegel moves, first, from an object and a subject qualified only by immediacy, to a second position designating an object and a subject involved in the problems of universals and individuality. He moves, further, to a third position maintaining an object and a subject involved in Platonic problems of accounting for the fluid outer appearance by an inner cause or law – i.e. by something non-sensible, and therefore something not different from consciousness. Therefore, in the next chapter (IV), the object for consciousness is consciousness itself. But through this figure's identification of itself and its object with self-consciousness, the structure is doubling up in a fatal way.

I will not reiterate here all the stations along the way again. Indeed, seen from the book's last chapter, three of these stations are singled out, *reinterpreted* and emphasized for their ontological importance (423/17 ff.; #790-792). These are the transitions of the conception of the object as (1) a purely material being (*'festes geistloses Seyn'*) in ch. V.A.c³⁶ to (2) to a being that has a purpose and utility (in ch. VI.B.I.b-II.a³⁷); to (3) a being that depends on human action, i.e. the German Idealistic ontology (ch. VI.C³⁸). In these passages, consciousness approaches – and misunderstands – the unity of being and self, thinghood and thought, or being and concept. Cf. the unsolved question concerning unity of pure thought and being in absolute religion (405/33 ff.; #759-761). Similarly, the subject or consciousness is transformed from pure immediate consciousness, 'the consciousness is I — nothing more, a pure this' (Baillie #91),³⁹ to individual theoretical and practical reason (ch. V), then to Geist in intersubjectivity (ch. VI. C), and finally to conceptual knowing (ch. VIII, sect. 12; 428/4 ff.; #799).⁴⁰

Hegel's method stresses the importance of the book's last chapter. In the final chapter, the reinterpretation of positions that appeared earlier in the course of experiences is substantiated by a shape of consciousness that is said to be epistemologically without need for further revision or supersession (*Aufhebung*) of content. Now, only the *form of representational thinking* (Miller's translation 'picture-thinking', # 788, is a bit far-fetched) should be negated. This move is motivated through the crisis brought on in that form in the end of ch. VII.C.⁴¹ Hegel ends up with an object, which is spirit (*Geist*), and a subject, which at last has been proven to be spirit as well. At the end, we are met by a full congruency between subject and object – there is no conflict between the *Bewußtseynsgestalt's* reality and its understanding of itself. However, the transition from *Bewußtseynsgestalten* to *Geistesgestaltungen* (ch. VIII, sect.7.4)⁴² means also that a new light can be thrown on the foregoing process of experiences. Being the expressions of the totality, the whole process can be interpreted as a division and a manifestation of Geist. Formerly, not developed as what it ought to be, spirit was forced into the alienated perspective of an opposition between consciousness and object. There, related to each other in the mode of '*Vorstellung*', i.e. structured in analogy with the perceptual situation of knowing, both parts were unable to appear as what they rightly were. However, seen from the end of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's book is not just 'the Science of the *experience of consciousness*', a '*Wissenschaft der Erfahrung des Bewußtseyns*' as the original title said (444, cf. 61/29 f. & 29/18.; #88 & #36), that is an epistemological examination of heterogeneous positions (*Bewußtseynsgestalten*). If the epistemological line of argument has been completed correctly, the book is at a more fundamental level the exposition of the 'phenomenology of the spirit', i.e. an exposition of spirit's coming to itself.⁴³

The course of the progress of experiences cannot be predicted. Nevertheless, the end of Hegel's book can be. Given Hegel's understanding of the sceptical challenge – and of the sceptical method that he used to defeat it – one can have the presentiment that the only object and the only subject able to satisfy the clause that knowledge must not be

disturbed by any example refuting its claim of justification could only be something like ‘the whole’ on both sides. What is less trivial is Hegel’s understanding of the appearance of *Geist*, and of what it presupposes. Seen from the end of the book, Hegel has intertwined three threads: a politico-historical leitmotif, a religious-historical one, and a thread concerning the form of understanding, in which the amplification of subjectivity to an intersubjective, common and integrating subjectivity (viz. conceiving thought) is at stake. To sum up: Hegel concludes that his own time has made it possible for the individual to understand and to appropriate philosophical ‘Science’ to itself because of three developments. 1) As a result of the political development of the relation between nature and freedom from classical Greece to the time after the French Revolution, the individual can understand itself as free and as the origin of political society. 2) As a result of the history of religion’s development, it can succeed in understanding the content of the religious basis for human interaction and community, culminating with the Lutheran understanding of the congregation as the bearer of the Holy Spirit. Here we should consider freedom to be the principle giving meaning and measure to human community. 3) As a result of the development of the post-Kantian understanding of the subject-transgressing subjectivity (*selbstbewußter Geist*), the individual can reach the key required for understanding the connection between the religious and the political views of freedom. This last perspective gives us access to a conceptual understanding, which is not split up in time or in spatial compartments. However, Hegel’s own ‘*Darstellung*’ would not have been possible without the cultural fundament available in 1807.

This is a nontrivial result, furthermore, because the metaphysics of spirit understood in this manner throws new light on Hegel’s preference for the sceptical path in the *Phenomenology*. The result is that the Absolute is *spirit*, and that the *Absolute* conceived as spirit should let itself be knowable in human consciousness in which it has knowledge of itself as spirit. Hegel therefore had to deal with the problem that the *Absolute* only can appear for human consciousness as object and as limited. Taking

the sceptical-epistemological path, Hegel took up the approach invented by Fichte, who criticized the traditional metaphysics of substance at the same time as he tried to develop the conception of subjectivity.⁴⁴ What Hegel in the end could add to the sceptical path was the conception that *the Absolute already was active* on that path – that it developed itself, became itself. The Absolute could not be in play as *absolute* in the beginning of the path, and it could not have appeared as subject. It had to – seen from its point of view – resign from appearing as itself, i.e. as subject and as subject for consciousness. Finite consciousness cannot know the Absolute as what it is, i.e. as absolute subject. The Absolute can only be thematized through a series of subsequent attempts, which are bound to fail, because the Absolute so far did not appear as what it is, and because consciousness did not understand what it was that appeared for it. The consequence is that human consciousness cannot force its way to the Absolute by itself. Only the Absolute can give itself away to human consciousness behind its back, so to speak. For this reason, consciousness has to take up a contemplative passivity: ‘knowing is this seeming inactivity which merely contemplates how what is differentiated spontaneously moves in its own self and returns into its unity’ (#804), as Hegel remarked in ch. VIII.⁴⁵ But the Absolute only appears through human action and knowledge. The sceptical exposition and ‘*das reine Zusehen*’ have, therefore, a metaphysical correlate.

Hegel’s solution should be studied within the context of German idealistic philosophy, in which a fundamental problem is, how finite understanding can conceive of the Absolute. We can doubt whether in the *Phenomenology* he actually has delivered a satisfying chain from the beginning to the end, or whether he in fact made an unwarranted jump to the end. The difficulties of making a path to the desired goal seem very hard: The representative form of consciousness has to be transgressed and abandoned, because it makes knowing the Absolute as absolute and as subject impossible. Only conceptual thinking can successfully lead to a final solution of the task. If consciousness has not reached that final form of thinking, the Absolute is bound to appear for consciousness in limited,

inadequate representations. The Absolute as absolute must, according to Hegel in ch. VIII (428/37-429/7, #801), and according to Schelling too in his later writings, not be exhausted by any of these figures, but pervade all of them.⁴⁶ Humankind had been waiting for that since the days of the expulsion of Adam and Eve. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* made the path to science and to freedom available for Hegel's contemporaries. If we are not convinced of this scheme, we may benefit from other aspects of Hegel's work: The interesting concept of freedom that he developed there and in his later works, and its relation to the complexity of the concept of reason, which he defended throughout the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Whether or not we accept the Hegelian metaphysics, we should recognise Hegel's contribution to a rich concept of rationality, combining individual consciousness with societal and historical concepts of freedom and reason. Without their combination, both of these concepts would be nonsense, as Theodor Adorno rightly pointed out.⁴⁷ It is interesting that Hegel combined those necessary conditions for rationality with the timeless conceptual structure of metaphysical logic in order to make sufficient the conditions for rationality.

Hegel's *Phenomenology* had a metaphysical motivation, which he had to conceal in order to free himself from sceptical objections and to use the advantages of sceptical reasoning for an epistemological enquiry. Nevertheless, the deeper reason for his use of sceptical methods can be found in the special features of his metaphysics. Conceiving the absolute as spirit, he had to use the passivity of sceptical method and of philosophical contemplation (cf. 431/33 ff.; # 804) in order to introduce individual consciousness to the intersubjective, timeless structure of spirit. The *grasping, conceptual nature of thought* is the final achievement which (closing the series of conditions for rationality) connects consciousness and reality. For the connection of Hegelian Logics, Philosophy of Nature and Philosophy of Subjective, Objective and Absolute Spirit, that concept of rationality is the fundament.

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Endnotes

- 1 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 9, W. Bonsiepen & R. Heede eds. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1980 (quotations: 'page/line'). – Quotations in English (marked with '#') after Hegel: *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford, New York etc.: Oxford University Press 1977. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind*. Translated by J. B. Baillie (1910). New York: Harper & Row 1967. Quotations after J. B. Baillie are marked 'Baillie #'.
- 2 Haym 1870, p. 864.
- 3 Cf. 22/9 f.; #25. For an analysis of Hegel's Preface, cf. Huggler & Huggler 2002–2003, pp. 91–125.
- 4 Cf. Huggler 1999.
- 5 Cf. Forster 1989 & Forster 1998.
- 6 Cf. Hegel's 'Verhältniss des Skepticismus zur Philosophie, Darstellung seiner verschiedenen Modificationen, und Vergleichung des neuesten mit dem alten' (1802), *Gesammelte Werke 4*, 1968, pp. 197–238, pp. 215–219.
- 7 Cf. Heinrichs 1974. Pöggeler 1973, pp. 269 ff. Trede 1975, pp. 173–209. For a fine far-reaching elaboration of this conception cf. Düsing 1993, pp. 103–126.
- 8 Cf. Huggler 1999, pp. 154–174 & 329–337.
- 9 Cf. 29/17, 55/35 f., 56/18 f., 57/5 ff., 61/36 f., 432/11 f.; #36 (shapes of consciousness), #77 & #78 (configurations), #79 (patterns of incomplete consciousness), #89 (patterns of consciousness), #805 (specific shapes of consciousness).
- 10 Cf. Miller #76: 'an exposition of how knowledge makes its appearance'; Baillie #76: 'the exposition of knowledge as a phenomenon'.
- 11 Very interesting observations are here made by Gabler 1827, pp. 33–110, and by Schaller 1837, pp. 80–107.
- 12 Cf. Sextus Empiricus 1976, ii, 14 ff.
- 13 Cf. Claesges 1981, pp. 18 ff., 56 ff., 59 ff. & 95. My understanding of the differentiation of layers in the *Phenomenology* is greatly indebted to Claesges. For other elegant reflections, cf. Klein 1971, pp. 370–396.
- 14 'Dieses (i.e. das Bewußtseyn) *unterscheidet* nemlich etwas von sich, worauf es sich

zugleich *bezieht*, oder wie diß ausgedrückt wird, es ist etwas *für dasselbe*; und die bestimmte Seite dieses *Beziehens*, oder des *Seyns* von Etwas *für ein Bewußtseyn* ist das *Wissen*. Von diesem *Seyn* für ein anderes, unterscheiden wir aber, das *an sich seyn*; das auf das Wissen bezogene wird eben so von ihm unterschieden, und gesetzt als *seyend* auch ausser dieser Beziehung; die Seite dieses an sich heißt *Wahrheit*. Was eigentlich an diesen Bestimmungen sey, geht uns weiter hier nichts an, denn indem das erscheinende Wissen **unser** Gegenstand ist, so werden auch zunächst **seine Bestimmungen aufgenommen**, wie sie sich unmittelbar darbieten; und so wie sie gefaßt worden sind, ist es wohl, daß sie sich darbieten.' (58/25–35. Italics – Hegel; bold – JH).

15 Cf. Cramer 1978, pp. 360–393.

16 Cf. Labarrière 1979, pp. 56–60.

17 Cf. Claesges 1981, p. 187.

18 '*sich darbieten*', 58/32–35; 'as they present themselves', #82, 'offered to us', Baillie #82.

19 '*aufgenommen*'; 'be taken', #87, 'are...taken up', Baillie #87.

20 'Thereby there enters into its process a moment of being *per se*, or of being for us, which is not expressly presented to that consciousness which is in the grip of experience itself. The *content*, however, of what we see arising, exists for it, and we lay hold of and comprehend merely its formal character, i.e. its *bare* origination; *for it*, what has thus arisen has merely the character of object, while, *for us*, it appears at the same time as a process and coming into being.' (Baillie # 87). 'Es kommt dadurch in seine Bewegung ein Moment des *an sich*, oder *für uns seyns*, welches nicht für das Bewußtseyn, das in der Erfahrung selbst begriffen ist, sich darstellt; der Inhalt aber dessen, was uns entsteht, ist *für es*, und **wir begreifen nur das formelle desselben, oder sein reines Entstehen**; *für es* ist diß entstandene nur als Gegenstand, *für uns* zugleich als Bewegung und Werden' (61/22–27. Italics – Hegel; bold – JH).

21 Cf. 24/13–29/6, #28–34; 56/29–35, #78.

22 Fichte 1841, pp. 803 ff. He objected that Hegel jumped from an epistemological to a 'realphilosophical' enquiry. Haym 1857, pp. 236, argued that Hegel began with a transcendental-psychological analysis and ended with a historical construction. Schaller 1837, pp. 94–107 argued against Fischer 1834, pp. 11 ff. & 397 ff. Schaller made very convincing replies to Fischer's charge of circle-demonstration. Fischer 1845, pp. 106–113 continued this important discussion. Fischer was of the opinion that Hegel's idealism committed a 'circulus in demonstrando' (Fischer 1845, pp. 105 ff.).

23 'die bewußte Einsicht in die Unwahrheit des erscheinenden Wissens' (56/10 f.).

Gabler 1827, p. 98 pointed out the risk of an immanent criticism: to reach a truth which meant nothing more than the accordance of untrue knowing with itself.

24 Haym 1857, p. 236.

25 Cf. Huggler 1999, pp. 174–179.

26 Cf. Heidegren 1995.

27 Cf. Theunissen 1975, pp. 318–329.

28 Cf. Claesges 1981, pp. 84 ff., 92 ff., 141–182.

29 Cf. Kaehler & Marx 1992.

30 Cf. 251/26: 'Als *sittliches* Bewußtseyn ist es die *einfache, reine Richtung* auf die sittliche Wesenheit, oder die Pflicht'. 'Qua ethical consciousness, it is the simple, pure direction of activity towards the essentiality of ethical life, i.e. duty' (#465).

31 'das absolute *sich selbst* doppelt sehen' (317/7; compare: hearing 'only the echo' of its own speech 354/25 f.; #658).

32 Cf. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Elements of the Philosophy of Right, 1821).

33 #671: 'The reconciling *Yea*, in which the two 'T's let go their antithetical *existence*, is the *existence* of the 'T' which has expanded into a duality, and therein remains identical with itself, and, in its complete externalization and opposite, possesses the certainty of itself: it is God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge'.

34 Cf. the illuminative reading by Guibal 1975, 66–219.

35 Cf. the very interesting analysis in Labarrière 1968, pp. 185–263.

36 Cf. 188/31; 190/31 ff.; #344.

37 Cf. 312/34 ff. & 315/3 ff.; #578 & 580.

38 Cf. 330/27 ff.; #611.

39 'das Bewußtseyn ist *Ich*, weiter nichts, ein reiner *dieser*' (ch. I, 63/31 f.).

40 In Huggler 1999, pp. 220–328, the fragment 'C. Die Wissenschaft' is used to substantiate such an interpretation of ch. VIII as a key to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Remark Hegel's notion of '*Spitzen*' (peaks) used 188/33, 315/10, 323/12, 354/2, 361/26 & 423/23; #340 (have reached its peak), #580 (at the summit), #595 (driven to the extreme), #657 (driven to the limit), #671 (only at that point) & #790 (at its peak).

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41 Cf. 415/11-421/18; #780-787.

42 The unification 'that closes the series of the shapes of Spirit', #794, 'this series of embodiments of spirit', Baillie #794; cf. 427/28. Here it is 'Spirit that knows itself in the shape of Spirit, or a *comprehensive knowing* (in terms of the Notion)' #798, 'it is knowledge which comprehends through notions', Baillie #798.

43 Cf. Huggler 2003, pp. 279-285.

44 Cf. Hühn 1994, pp. 1-17 & 43 ff.; Huggler 2006, pp. 1356-1400.

45 'das Wissen besteht vielmehr in dieser scheinbaren Unthätigkeit, welche nur betrachtet, wie das Unterschiedne sich an ihm selbst bewegt, und in seine Einheit zurückkehrt' (431/33 ff.).

46 Cf. Schelling: 'Ueber die Natur der Philosophie als Wissenschaft' (1821), Schelling 1856-61, p. 215.

47 Adorno 1974, p. 46.

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Exposition and Recognition: Preparing Subjective Logic in Hegel's *Science of Logic*

Thomas Schwarz Wentzer

1. Plato and dialectics

Plato's phrase '*logon didonai*' belongs to the oldest and maybe shortest descriptions concerning the essence of philosophical activity. It is regularly used by Socrates, who asks his interlocutors 'to give a reason' – i.e., to justify a claim made in a conversation about a certain subject. In many of Plato's early dialogues, this call for justification leads to an elucidation of the implicit presuppositions and premises, to the relevant part of the interlocutor's belief system which explicitly has to be brought into play in order to defend or sometimes just to understand the original claim. In most of these cases, Socrates identifies a contradiction or a misfit between possible consequences or applications of the claim made and the interlocutor's set of beliefs. Given that the interlocutor shows a rudimentary interest in maintaining what one could call a coherent personality, he is thus compelled to specify, to improve or to give up his original claim, which one might see as the strategic goal of this *elenchus*.¹ This pattern of dialogical argumentation obviously has its origin in the sophistic challenge as it was understood by Plato. But its

scope is not limited to ethical or educational matters. The dialectical method, understood as a virtue of conceptual analysis and encompassing conceptual organization, is held to be the philosophical method *per se*.

One can easily point out two distinctive aspects of the Socratic *elenchus*: On the one hand, it reveals a context of beliefs which are meant to explain and support a certain claim or opinion. As this context is organized at least potentially by certain rational or intelligible structures, the Socratic dialectic moreover elucidates the corresponding conceptual framework in which this context of beliefs might or should be embedded. It clarifies the meaning and the explanatory force of concepts and convictions which have been brought into play, and by this means indicates an actual or at least a possible justification of a proposition by means of conceptual structures, i.e. by forms or ideas. The later Plato's method of *dihairesis* can be seen as a sophisticated strategy to uncover the hierarchical structure of such a conceptual framework in detail. On the other hand, *Elenchus* aims at what one might call the illocutionary force of a *contradiction*. The interlocutor cannot just repeat the original claim; rather he has to deal with the incoherence of his utterances, to give a new or improved account of the subject in question. Or he has to leave the stage in favour of a better opponent – as Kephalos does in Plato's *Republic*.

These epistemological implications of the Socratic dialectic have to be enhanced by a third aspect, by no means of lesser importance. This feature concerns the idealistic ontology according to which *forms* are the true objects of dialectical thinking. As we may extract from the *Republic* (for instance, from the simile of the sun or the divided line), forms must not be understood as instrumental tools of thinking, as if their function were to organize empirical, non-eidetic content. The forms themselves are the only true content of thinking. Dialectics in the Platonic tradition is thus more than just a sophistic strategy in oral disputes or a tool in defense of dogmatic metaphysics (as in Zeno). The Platonic dialectic provides a reflection on the very nature of *thinking in concepts*, which at the same time uncovers the structure of philosophical description of the universe, such as it is accessible to human thinking. To sum up, as the method of

philosophical thinking the dialectical enterprise is characterized by (i) the exposition of a relevant system of concepts or forms relative to a certain claim, (ii) the emergence of a contradiction for any substantial claim, (iii) the idealist ontology, according to which reality in its true sense depends on thought, i.e. concepts as forms. A theory of dialectical thinking is thus a discourse on epistemology as well as metaphysics.

There is no doubt that Hegel considered himself part of the idealist Platonic tradition of dialectical philosophy, in contrast to both the skeptical and the dogmatic use of dialectics (see also Gadamer 1961). Explicitly criticizing Kant's devaluation of dialectical thinking, he defends the ontological implications of dialectics.² One might say that Hegel's dialectic fuses the three aspects of dialectical thinking mentioned above into the unity of one single movement. We are thus to understand contradictions as necessary moments within the process of the exposition of the system of our basic ontological and logical concepts. By this means, this conceptual system reveals the very essence of the intelligible world, that is, the world in its truth.

2. Hegel and the reanimation of dialectics

Contrary to Kant and like Plato, Hegel holds that it is crucial 'to see that thought is dialectical in its very nature and that, as understanding, it must fall into contradiction, the negative of itself [...]' (GW 20, 51). In this sentence Hegel defends the view that philosophical concepts may at first glance be understood as finite determinations which establish a semantic content or meaning of a predicate opposed to its opposite. As understanding, thinking is inclined to stick to finite oppositions of predicates of for instance freedom or necessity, one or many, being or nothing. As understanding is the faculty of judging or predicating, predicates must neither contradict themselves nor may opposite predicates be predicated of the same subject. What is held to be free can thus not be necessitated; what is as one cannot be many etc. On the level of understanding, it seems to be rational to refer to the world via these fixed and exclusive concepts. But this form of rationality underestimates both

the complexity of the world and of the concepts in their true semantic relatedness. As Hegel learned from Plato's *Parmenides*, the concept of the *one* cannot even be articulated if it is not thought in conjunction with its opposite, the *many*. One might object that somebody, say, the thinking subject, deliberately contrasts the concept of the *one* with the concept of the *many*, thereby creating an opposition between them which was not there to begin with. But this is obviously wrong. The claim is that it is necessary to presuppose the concept of the 'many' any time one is about to state the concept of the 'one' and vice versa. It follows that the opposition is not secondary, but belongs to the very heart of our conceptual development. Provocatively speaking, the 'one' *is* the 'many', as Hegel likes to phrase this point in what he calls a 'speculative sentence'.

Accordingly, Hegel claims a logical and ontological priority of *negation* rather than plain affirmation or brute posture. Negation functions in its various forms as that which makes both concepts and entities distinct and different from each other. *Omnis determinatio est negatio* – this famous sentence by Spinoza, quoted in the first part of the *Science of Logic* (GW 21, 101; SL 113), is at the centre of Hegel's methodological and ontological convictions. In its original Spinozian sense, however, this sentence underestimates the speculative power of negation and comprehends its function only in abstraction, i.e. rather superficially and ontologically insufficiently. What has to be understood and articulated is the *self-determination* of the system of concepts as a self-revealing *process* of negation. This means that the oppositions of the discursive power of understanding (like movement and stance, form and content, being and nothingness etc.), must not be understood as immediate or external determinations. Speculative thinking or reason acknowledges and articulates the unity of these oppositions, thereby providing a proper insight into the conceptual structures at stake in their systematic relatedness.

It therefore simply does not suffice to enumerate different aspects of dialectics. Simply claiming that the exposition of a system of concepts or a framework of forms together with the emergence of a contradiction

for any substantial claim are at the centre of the Socratic *elenchus* offers nothing more than just an abstract way of cataloguing dialectical items; it does not provide a real understanding of the philosophical issue. One has to show the one as the essence of the other, to show the necessity and self-reflexivity of this relation and thereby articulate the *unity* of the oppositions at issue. Speaking in the Hegelian tongue, this means one has to comprehend truth not only as a substance, but as a subject.

In the *Science of Logic* Hegel thus explores the possibility to regain an understanding of dialectics which has gone through the modern idea of subjectivity. More specifically, Hegel is convinced that a compelling reconstruction of the *Logic* necessarily has to uncover the underlying dialectical movement in terms of subjectivity. The *Logic*, which is supposed to be both the most difficult (the most abstract) and the easiest (since its content is nothing but one's own thinking) science among the philosophical sciences, thus contains the acquisition and the recollection of thoughts within pure thinking. It aims towards what one could call the 'recognition of the concept'. This expression highlights Hegel's conviction that the philosophical exploration of the *Logic* in the sense just mentioned has to be understood in analogy to the movement of *subjectivity*. Its essence is the *freedom* of real comprehension. It thus adds a fourth aspect to the Platonic dialectic. It maintains freedom to be at the very heart of an idealistic ontology. Hegel's idealism does not regard freedom as Kantian moral freedom, nor as freedom of the will, as it often is understood in recent debates. The roots of political freedom are neither to be found in a discourse on natural rights, nor in an anthropological theory about human biological indeterminacy. Prior to these undoubtedly important dimensions is nonetheless the *metaphysical* understanding of freedom. A metaphysical account of freedom implies the idea that any entity which is considered to be free must recognize the condition of its actual existence as its own.³ Hegel's *Logic* articulates this insight, as it promotes a theory of thought which compounds subjectivity (as it had been introduced in Kant's idea of the transcendental Ego) and the concept of the *concept*. This means that one has to understand the philosophical structure of

subjectivity as the structure of the concept in its speculative sense. And *vice versa*: one has to understand the concept in terms of subjectivity. This is the double meaning of the expression ‘the recognition of the concept’. The following considerations might enlighten parts of the path leading to this figure, a path which goes through the field of what I shall call Hegel’s *hermeneutic idealism*.

This agenda has its textual basis not in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but in the *Science of Logic*, which Hegel took to be his major work concerning metaphysics. The overall aim of this difficult and maybe even monstrous book is to produce the fundamental concepts of all that is through an exhaustive presentation of the system of pure thought. In contrast to Hegel’s *Phenomenology* (see among others Pöggeler 1993, Pinkard 1994, Siep 2000, Stern 2002), we do not yet possess a convincing commentary on⁴ or plausible reconstruction of the main line of argumentation of the *Science of Logic*.⁵ While *Phenomenology* was considered Hegel’s predominant masterpiece for many years, one can observe an increasing interest in the *Logic* within the last four decades. Scholars have mainly been interested in selected parts of this work, especially its beginning,⁶ or in methodological questions, the answers to which allegedly might enlighten the function and the validity of the inherent dialectical movement (i.e. Henrich 1978a and 1978b, Quante 1996, Koch 1999). In recent years important efforts have finally been undertaken to give an account of the meaning and the philosophical actuality of the systematic ambitions of the *Science of Logic* (Burbridge 1981, Pippin 1989). Furthermore, prominent modern philosophers like John McDowell and Robert Brandom do not hesitate to refer affirmatively to Hegelian thoughts in a way that is suitable to introducing Hegel’s speculative thinking to hitherto reluctant philosophical traditions. But although the *Logic* has thus become the subject of increasing, serious philosophical interest, there is still a lot of work to do in order to promote a satisfying understanding of this book and its philosophical agenda.

Having thus depicted the background for Hegelian thinking from the perspective of the Platonic dialectic, I shall now outline some considerations which outline an agenda for idealistic philosophy in a Hegelian sense and

are connected to what I take to be central thoughts of the *Science of Logic*. These thoughts are expressed in the following four claims:

- a) Hegel aims at the true theory of *absolute rationality* as a philosophy of pure thought.
- b) For rationality or a theory of rationality to be absolute in the Hegelian sense, it has necessarily to be (i) *self-referential* and (ii) *self-explicatory*.
- c) Hegel considers the principle of *subjectivity* to be the appropriate *metaphysical* role model for the ambition raised in (a) and (b).
- d) Hegel considers the speculative *concept* to provide the *logical* structure of subjectivity as it is maintained in (c).

In what follows I will try to give a more or less Hegelian account of the claims made in (a) and (b). When it comes to (c) and (d), I will try to promote what can be called a *hermeneutic idealism*, which is based on a methodological concept presented as a transitory stage by Hegel at the end of the second part of his *Logic*, the concept of ‘exposition’ (*Auslegung*). In Hegel’s line of argument this hermeneutic perspective paves the way for metaphysics in its true sense, i.e. as ‘*subjective logic*’. Not that Hegel ever considered this ‘post-metaphysical idealism’ to be a serious philosophical option for modern thinking. At the end of the day, ‘recognition’ – possibly the key term in Hegel’s philosophy of subjectivity – is held to be superior to the concept of exposition. What I thus try to identify is just an intermezzo in Hegel’s screenplay, a last orientation on the way to the *logic of subjectivity*.

3. A theory of absolute rationality

Most philosophers would apparently aim at a theory of rationality, but not a theory of *absolute* rationality. However, the systematic task of *Phenomenology of Spirit* is just to prepare the possibility of such an ambitious enterprise. With respect to the topic of this paper, a brief summary of the relevant perspective from the *Phenomenology*, as it is presented at the beginning of the *Logic*, should be sufficient to give us an

idea of what is meant by *absolute* rationality.

Rationality might be understood as the ultimate resource for justification. When asked why a certain claim is held to be true, one tries to give a sufficient reason, usually by presupposing the acceptance of the relevant discourse of justification. Depending on whether the issue at stake deals with an empirical fact, an aesthetic judgment or an ethical decision, one will rather automatically enter into different discourses of rationality and justification.⁷ Hegel thinks he has shown that all these different discourses might be appropriate with respect to certain limited problems. But since they are related to a certain area, they are not patterns of rationality *per se*. Moreover, these discourses are not just different from each other without any relatedness, as if one could choose among them according to private preferences or mere tradition. The phenomenological analysis shows the insufficiency of every discourse in its own terms, which necessitates the transition to a new, more complex stage, providing another, improved, more encompassing discourse of rationality. Hegel calls these discourses *features of the consciousness* ('*Gestalten des Bewußtseins*'); and the *Phenomenology* provides a report of the philosophical genesis of all (or at least all philosophically relevant) forms or features of consciousness in terms of a 'science of the experience of consciousness'.

Speaking in terms of literature, the process of cultivation or *Bildung* of the consciousness narrated in the *Phenomenology* results in the insight of the inaccuracy of all the oppositions and contrasts which used to be basic convictions of both the pre-philosophical common sense as well as of Hegel's philosophical predecessors. Following Hegel's narrative, we have undergone an ongoing extension of our horizons, motivated solely through dialectical experiences, i.e. through the inability to articulate or just to understand a realized feature of the consciousness by means of this feature itself. The transition to a new feature or a new perspective thus comes from within due to what one might call the first rule of Hegelian philosophy, the demand for *proper articulation*. The term 'proper articulation' designates rather modestly the aim of the phenomenological enterprise, which from a first person's perspective can be phrased as my

ambition to say what I mean, i.e. to articulate my beliefs concerning what I take to be true, what I recognize as significant and normative in both theory and praxis. As I usually presuppose certain implicit epistemological, ontological, metaphysical or ethical standards and convictions, I quickly realize that it is not so easy to articulate properly what I really mean. The ultimate ideal of this experience of articulation would be the identity of my opinion and my expression, between the form of a thought and its content. It turns out that the unpretending ambition of proper articulation entails nothing less than a clue to Hegel's holistic expressionism. The experience of consciousness terminates in 'absolute knowledge' as its ultimate form. First at this stage is it possible to say what one means, when the unity between form and content, subject and object, the object of knowledge and the object itself, evidence and truth is finally accomplished.

The *Logic*, however, does not deal with forms or features of consciousness, but with pure concepts or thoughts which no longer contain the oppositions of consciousness. It can be conceived as a process of an all-encompassing *auto-poiesis* of the fundamental concepts of being and thinking. These concepts or categories are supposed to be logically developed out of each other, so that the conceptual universe has to be understood as a continuum of thought rather than as a system of isolated or abstract distinctions. The semantic content of these concepts, as well as inferential and normative conceptual relations and the overall standards of rationality have to be worked out in their necessary and systematic configuration. According to its author, the *Logic* thereby accomplishes a 'system of pure reason', a precise map of the logical infrastructure of the universe. In a remark not quite as humble as the above mentioned Platonic phrase concerning *logon didonai*, Hegel claims the content of the *Logic* to be 'the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind' (GW 21, 34). Thus Hegel's project aims at a theory of absolute rationality.

4. Features of the absolute: self-reflexivity and self-explication

Most philosophers would subscribe to the reflexivity of a theory of rationality. This means that a theory of rationality itself has to meet the rational standards it is about to work out. At first glance this characteristic might look like a triviality. Hegel's dialectic, however, does not only meet its own standards; it contains many examples where the dialectical progress is gained by applying a concept or a conceptual relation to the concept or relation itself. Instead of avoiding antinomies by prohibiting self-reference, Hegel's dialectical method makes use of self-referential arguments in various forms. In many cases this requires that a concept should be a member of the class it denotes. If containing negations, self-referential propositions may lead into logical antinomies, which motivate the need for a better, more adequate conception in which the antipodes can be dissolved, conserved and raised (the three distinctive meanings of the German word '*aufheben*').⁸

However, probably few philosophers, if any, would hold that a theory of rationality should be designed in such a way that the exposition or explanation of the standards of rationality belongs to the very heart of the employed concept of rationality itself. This is nevertheless the position of Hegel. Hegel holds the view that the true concept of rationality substantiates its own actuality, insofar as it shows the necessity of its own development, i.e. its philosophical articulation and – with regards for instance to ethics or political life in general – its socio-practical employment. The philosophy of spirit develops this thought in its systematic implications in detail with regards to laws, world history, aesthetics and religion. The *Logic* deals with the metaphysical fundament of this systematic enterprise. My suggestion is to read Hegel's philosophy in general and the *Logic* in particular as the self-exposition of rationality. Hegel's idealistic theory of absolute rationality is self-explicatory in the sense that it exposes the genesis of conceptual content as an internal process within pure thinking. The movement which keeps this process going relies in nothing but the need for clarification and articulation, i.e. interpretation of primary concepts. It is important not to underestimate the metaphysical implications of this thought. It means that we strictly

speaking are not allowed to think of the *Logic* as a book written by a certain individual named Hegel. Probably most books at least in philosophy have a more or less intelligible structure, which presents a subject in a more or less natural way, so that the reader recognizes the composition of a somehow necessary connection between the chapters of the book including some progression towards a conclusion. We are inclined to praise the author for her success in doing so, and we blame her if she fails. But when it comes to Hegel's *Logic*, neither the author of the book nor its readers are considered to be agents in any substantial sense. The theory of rationality Hegel has in mind encompasses its own articulation in the various philosophical approaches provided by the history of philosophy, which together culminate in the single presentation of the system of thought as it is presented in the *Science of Logic*. As odd as it seems, the true philosophizing subject is nobody but the speculative *Logic* itself. The double-meaning in the title of the book is no coincidence. The *Logic* is both the object and the subject of this philosophical enterprise, the subject presented and presenting itself for itself – or it is what Hegel calls the *idea*.

The *Science of Logic* as the 'drama of God's presentation' consists of three parts. Part one, the *logic of being*, and part two, the *logic of essence*, are gathered together as *objective logic*. Part three, the *logic of the concept*, is also called *subjective logic* by Hegel. These three parts each represent a different way of explaining what one might call conceptual relatedness. These modes of relatedness are in themselves teleologically organized, so that the third part has to be understood as the fulfillment or the termination of the two first parts. According to Hegel, they represent fundamental paradigms in the history of philosophy, culminating with the modern philosophy of subjectivity.

Roughly speaking, the *logic of being* deals with distinctions which have to be taken in their simple relation to themselves or simplicity. Categories like 'being', 'determinate being' or 'something' pretend to be semantically self-sufficient, to denote ontological content or qualities in a straightforward way. The articulation of what is really said when 'being'

is stated reveals the relatedness of 'being' to its counterpart, 'nothing', since 'being' has to be grasped as indeterminate immediacy without any distinctive qualification whatsoever (see GW 21, 68 ff; SL 82 ff). In its emptiness and abstract formality the semantic content of 'being' has to be identified with the content of the concept which was supposed to be its opposite. However, this holds for nothingness as well, as it now can be said to *be*. One can thus observe a transition from being to nothingness and from nothingness to being. Instead of just understanding the simplicity of being and nothing else, it is necessary to recognize 'coming-to-be' and 'ceasing-to-be', '*entstehen und vergehen*', as the result of this effort. The supposed simplicity of ontological categories of this type cannot be defended, since there in fact are implicit conceptual relations at play, without which the meaning of the category in question cannot be articulated. Within the plot of the first part, considerations of this sort lead to what Hegel calls '*das Ineinander-Übergeben*', the mutual transition or transformation of a distinction to its richer or more articulated successor.

Whereas the dialectic of the *logic of being* shows the mediation of allegedly independent or unmediated categories with and into each other, there is another plot to be told in the *logic of essence*. The concepts presented here do not conceal the dependency of their counterpart. They are concepts of relation or 'reflection', as Hegel says. Categories like 'form' and 'content', 'the thing' and its 'qualities', 'inner' and 'outer' or 'the whole' and its 'parts' do in fact articulate their relatedness. They reflect each other in the sense that the whole is nothing without or beyond its parts, and vice versa. A category of this type does not have a different, but at first glance hidden, category as its counterpart, as was the case in the *logic of being*. In the *logic of essence*, this relation has been internalized and exposed, so that these concepts are closer to a proper articulation of their content. They 'reflect into each other', to use Hegel's description of the conceptual movement from one concept to the other. One might therefore say that the *logic of essence* displays the relatedness in itself as an essential part of each of its categories. In Hegel's view, the *logic of essence*

articulates the stance of traditional pre-Kantian metaphysics, in that the basic approach of the philosophical systems from Plato to Spinoza and Leibniz is based on such pairs of categories (basically the distinction between 'Sein' and 'Schein', *being* and *illusory being*, as the precondition for the concept of essence ('Wesen')).

In contrast to this, the third part of the *Logic*, the *logic of the concept*, describes the dialectical movement as *development*.⁹ There can be no doubt that Hegel considered this part and its metaphysical function his true philosophical innovation within the *Science of Logic*. Objective logic, representing the metaphysical conceptions from the Pre-Socratics up to Spinoza, ultimately terminates in the logic of subjectivity. In the footsteps of Kant and Fichte, Hegel promotes the modern paradigm of subjectivity and freedom. But in contrast to Kant, he tries to articulate the metaphysical foundation in terms of a logic which is not bound by anthropological subjective limitations like transcendental logic.¹⁰ Thought delimits and expresses itself and is not bound by finite human thinking.

5. Between Substance and Subject: Hegel's Hermeneutic Idealism

These superficial remarks should be sufficient in order to prepare the claim I wish to defend. Given the agenda presented thus far, one can easily grasp the importance of the transition from *objective* to *subjective logic*. The specifications made in (2) and the qualifications made in (3) and (4) can be explained by a necessarily superficial reading of the last chapter of the *Logic of Essence*, entitled actuality ('*Wirklichkeit*').¹¹ In this chapter the auto-poietic process of a dialectical reconstruction of the ontological and metaphysical categories has reached the concept of the *Absolute* as the ultimate conceptual characteristic for that which is. This category describes the highest point of pre-Kantian metaphysical understanding as it was presented by Spinoza. To think the category of the Absolute means to recognize the world in its manifoldness and countless specifications as a unified One. It cannot be thought as being conditioned or related to something beyond or outside this unity. Actuality thought as the

Absolute is what it is; it is in its appearance. It does not stand in relation to something else as its true essence or cause of existence. It is not the appearance of a thing in itself, nor is it the thing in itself in contrast to its appearance. It entails all its relations in itself. In order to understand the Absolute, it should be pointed out that there is no thinkable entity which itself would not be a part or a feature, an attribute or a mode of the Absolute. The Absolute therefore cannot be thought as a concept of an *entity* or the *class* of entities, since this ontological simplicity would be inaccurate regarding the conceptual complexity which has to be expressed. Strictly speaking, the category of the Absolute denotes a metaphysical *relation* or, more precisely, a relation of totalities. This means that both elements of this relation already refer to the entirety of that which is. This line of argumentation reveals the structure of metaphysical monism as it was maintained by Spinoza.

Spinoza's metaphysics of substance defended the unity of substance in spite of the apparently undeniable Cartesian bias between thinking and matter or extension. Spinoza maintained understanding as the mode of substance according to the attribute of thinking, and the physical body as the mode of substance according to the attribute of extension. Understanding and body have to be substantially identical, as they do not limit or constrain each other. Each attribute is a feature of substance as a whole. Both are thus entire expressions of the Absolute. Ontologically speaking, there are not two distinct entities, understanding and body, but two perspectives or relations, each displaying substance in its entirety.

Before explaining why the metaphysical Absolute grasped as substance is not sufficient to satisfy the requirements for a philosophical theory in the Hegelian sense, I shall dwell a little bit on the implications of the need to unfold the category of the Absolute for the dialectical enterprise itself. The problem is this: If the Absolute should really be understood as absolute, one cannot give an adequate conceptual determination defining this category as a concept distinct from other concepts, since this would entail some sort of external relation. Not only is there the need to give an account of the semantic content of this concept, but the dialectical

elaboration has to be performed in accordance with its subject, i.e. absolutely, rather than in external reflection or determination.

But if the semantic content of this category cannot be *determined*, how are we to understand the Absolute, given that the tautological declaration – the Absolute is really absolute – does not suffice? Hegel introduces a slight shift in his methodological instrumentation. We are no longer in a discourse of determination or definition. The dialectical movement can no longer be understood as a *transition* from one category to another (as it could in the *logic of being*), nor can it be grasped as the *reflection into its other* (as it could in the *logic of essence* up to now).¹² We are now in a discourse of *Auslegung* and *Manifestation*, *exposition* and *manifestation*. As Hegel puts it:

But we have to exhibit what the absolute is; but this ‘exhibiting’ can be neither a determining nor an external reflection from which determinations of the absolute would result; on the contrary, it is the *exposition*, and in fact the *self-exposition*, of the absolute and only, and only a *display of what it is* (GW 21, 370/SL 530).¹³

For a moment we are thus in a discourse of *interpretation*, in a hermeneutic discourse, ruled by the logic of *Auslegung*. Hegel even claims this interpretative enterprise to be the self-interpretation of the Absolute. The dialectic of the Absolute displays a movement which, strictly speaking, has always already taken place. Its own interpretation must therefore be understood as a manifestation, as showing or *displaying* what it is.

I take this consideration to represent Hegel’s hermeneutic idealism. It is hermeneutic in the sense that its primary mode is that of interpretation, exposition or *Auslegung*. It is a sort of idealism in the Platonic sense, in that the mode of *Auslegung* or exposition concedes the self-sufficiency of the dialectical movement developed so far and its last result, the Absolute. This stance thus explicitly acknowledges that philosophy cannot perform its task unless it understands itself as a moment of the exposition of the Absolute. However, this insight contains important implications

with regard to the categories and concepts developed thus far. From the point of view of hermeneutic idealism one can recognize the former distinctions given in the *logic of being* and the *logic of essence* as the *negative exposition of the Absolute* (see GW 21, 371/SL 531). This means we can understand these categories as belonging to the Absolute because they necessarily lead to the Absolute, in which they ‘have returned as into their foundation’ (GW 21, 372/SL 532). Part one and two of the *Science of Logic* can thus be seen as systematically insufficient efforts towards a determination of the Absolute,¹⁴ showing what it is not.

The movement of *Auslegung* or exposition obviously presents a paradigm of semantic relations different from the paradigm of predicative determination. Like translation, *Auslegung* establishes what Hegel calls an ‘absolute relation’, since both interpretandum and interpretation have to be regarded as totalities. The dialectic between parts and whole, presented in the previous paragraph of the *Logic*, has now been doubled up. There are now two parts-whole relations embedded in the relation of the Absolute and its *Auslegung*. Moreover, the dialectical movement up to this point had made explicit those semantic and conceptual structures which could be understood as the implicit presuppositions of the relevant logical stage. But this had been done under the heading of *determination*, whereas *Auslegung* makes the movement from implicit presuppositions to explicit determinations explicitly. Now the dialectical movement no longer serves to unmask or unveil something which has not said from the start; it acknowledges the explication of the thought as belonging to the thought itself. The next step would be to grasp this movement not as necessary determination, but as free development, as the *logic of subjectivity* would argue. But this destination can only be reached via the logic of *Auslegung*, which is located between necessity and freedom or determination and development within Hegelian *Logic*.

Hegel presumably reflected on the theological origins of the concept of *Auslegung*, a notion which unmistakably declares a turning point within the logical enterprise. There cannot be a concept beyond the Absolute. All we have to do is to start once again, now in a modus of self-display

or self-interpretation of the Absolute. This means that although the ontological and metaphysical analyses were not satisfying, we do not need to look for a more sophisticated set of metaphysical categories. Instead, the work done so far has to be reinterpreted in the perspective of the self-explication of the Absolute. This shift of perspective is performed in the transition from the category of substance to the concept of subjectivity. It leads the enterprise of *objective logic* to its reorganization or recognition in *subjective logic*. Its first concept is consequently the concept of the concept. It is crucial to understand that this transition is the step from exposition to recognition. The Absolute does not only manifest itself as itself; this self-manifestation has to be *for* itself, i.e. the structure described as ‘actuality’ has to be aware of its own actualizing process. Self-interpretation, which is the movement of the Absolute as ‘the display of what it is’ according to Hegel, presupposes self-awareness, or the ability to recognize both parts of the absolute relation as referring to an identical subject. In other words, the category of exposition as manifestation and display in its speculative sense leads to the idea of an identity between interpretandum, interpreter and interpretation. This structure and its identity should be understood as the structure of subjectivity. Its crucial importance legitimates and necessitates, according to Hegel, a new paradigm in ontological thinking, *the logic of subjectivity*.¹⁵

This means, however, that the logical feature I have coined hermeneutic idealism is only a transitory episode in the actual plot of the *Science of Logic*. Appropriately, the term *Auslegung* can only be found in the chapter I have referred to and is absent in the rest of the book. Its successor is the concept of development (*Entwicklung*). At the end of the day, the recognition of the concept is superior to its mere interpretation. Interpretation is thus a mediating activity in more than one sense. It stands in between the objective and the subjective, making the transfer or translation from the one to the other possible. This position is actually a good place for hermeneutic philosophy. It is already a part of idealism, but not yet bound to the ideal of pure transparency built on subjective recognition. This status might be suitable to explicate the systematic finitude of

hermeneutic philosophy. A philosopher with a certain predilection for philosophical hermeneutics would thus appreciate this inter-esse of the term called *Auslegung*. Its being is being-in-between. To Hegel, however, this interregnum of the Absolute and its mere interpretation is not an option. This has to do with Hegel's philosophy of subjectivity and his conviction that subjectivity is the essential metaphysical principle.

A philosophy of the Absolute must finally try to understand the exposition of the Absolute as its own articulation, as argued above. As reasonable as this is, it reveals the insufficiency of the Absolute and the kind of dialectical movement *objective logic* has provided hitherto. This conception does not yet contain the need for its self-exposition as a need for itself. Although manifestation and exposition both are movements performed by the Absolute itself, the motivation and the origin of this performance has to be provided from the outside. Substance thus cannot be considered *causa sui*, as its own cause, as Spinoza maintained. The manifestation of the Absolute in its modes, i.e. the exposition of it in the manifold of its aspects, happens in a state of what Hegel calls 'blind necessity' (GW 21, 391; SL 552).¹⁶ It is thus not absolute, as it still bears an external cause as its point of departure. The movement of manifestation has not only to happen or to be presented, but to be known as its own happening and self-presentation. This consideration motivates the transition to the spheres of the *logic of subjectivity* or, as this part of the *Logic* only has one chapter, the *logic of the concept*.

Hegel claims subjectivity to be the metaphysical principle at work not only in the *Science of Logic*, but also in the history of Western civilisation and the history of philosophy. The cognitive impact of this claim, according to which metaphysics actually has to be built upon the desire of a principle to be known – what we have encountered in a rudimentary form as the *Auslegung* of the Absolute – is founded on Hegel's theory of the concept. However, the way in which the *logic of subjectivity* could be interpreted along the lines of a figure concerning the 'recognition of the concept' calls for further reflection.

Endnotes

1 See, for instance, *Republic I*, the *Meno* or the *Euthyphro*, which can be considered typical examples of the kind of *elenchus* outlined here.

2 See, for instance, the introductory remarks to the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* concerning the 'three positions of the thought to objectivity', esp. §§ 48 ff., GW 20, 84 ff. – References to and quotations from Hegel's works refer to the critical edition of the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Meiner-Verlag Hamburg). Apart from *Wissenschaft der Logik*, all translations are my own. Quotations from *Wissenschaft der Logik* are taken from the translation of A. V. Miller, references to this edition are given behind the reference to the relevant passage from the *Akademieausgabe*.

3 I choose the word 'entity' in order to indicate that 'freedom', as 'subjectivity', is not limited to denoting a certain quality or essence of human individuals. The metaphysical understanding of freedom and subjectivity is neither based on nor limited to the empirical human subject. It is rather the other way round.

4 With regard to the 'minor logic', the version given in the *Enzyklopädie*, see Stekeler-Weithofer 1992. Stekeler-Weithofer has provided a very useful outline of a commentary which tries to gain access to the Hegelian universe by actualizing its content within the framework of recent philosophy of language. He correctly points out that philological interpretations alone cannot satisfy the need for a convincing systematic approach, which his reading of the logic along the lines of neopragmatic philosophical semantics and reflection (in large parts) persuasively provides. However, due to the focus on the minor logic, Hegel's major work *Science of Logic* and the substantial differences between the two versions of the logic (for instance, concerning the transition from 'objective logic' to 'subjective logic') are not discussed by Stekeler-Weithofer in his important contribution to a systematic understanding of Hegelian logic.

5 An exception is the systematic reading Theunissen 1980. Theunissen tries to defend the *Logic* against the verdict of its allegedly oppressive idealism. He reconstructs the conceptual relations presented in the three parts of the *Logic* as *indifference*, *command* and *communicative freedom*, along the lines of relations in political philosophy. According to Theunissen, the true critique against traditional metaphysics (as it is exposed in the *Logic of Being* and the *Logic of Essence*) is to be found in the foundation of (political, social, individual) freedom, which is the subject of the third part of the

Logic, the *Logic of Concept*. – In historical perspective helpful is Burkardt 1993.

6 See the papers collected in Horstmann 1978 and di Giovanni 1990. Wieland 1978 (in Horstmann 1978) is especially illuminative.

7 For an elaboration of these considerations, see Habermas account of rationality in the opening chapter of his *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* in Habermas (1981).

8 Among the efforts to logically reconstruct the aspect of self-referential negation in Hegel's method, see Henrich (1978a), Koch (1999), Wandschneider (1999) (although limited to the *Logic of Being*), and Kesselring (1982).

9 See Hegel's characteristic of the three modes of dialectical movement in the three parts of the *Logic* in *Enc.* § 161, GW 20, 170.

10 For a reading that presents the *logic of the concept* in analogy to Kant's synthetic a priori, especially with regard to the ontological ambition of the Hegelian enterprise, see de Boer (2004).

11 I am referring to the third division in the *Logic of Essence*, entitled "Actuality" (GW 21, 369–410; SL 529–571), with its three chapters: 1) 'The Absolute', 2) 'Actuality' (on the dialectic of the modal categories actuality, possibility and necessity), 3) 'The Absolute Relation' (on the dialectic of substantiality, causality and reciprocity).

12 See GW 21, 380, 371. See also § 161 of the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, GW 20, 177.

13 *Es soll aber dargestellt werden, was das Absolute ist; aber diß Darstellen kann nicht ein Bestimmen noch äussere Reflexion seyn, wodurch Bestimmungen desselben würden, sondern es ist die Auslegung und zwar die eigene Auslegung des Absoluten, und nur ein Zeigen dessen was es ist.*'

14 Accordingly, Hegel calls the conceptual determinations or categories exposed in the *Science of Logic* 'definitions of the Absolute', even 'God's metaphysical definitions' (*Enc.* § 85, GW 21, 121).

15 It is worth mentioning that in this context 'recognition' is a feature of *subjectivity*, not or not yet of mutual acknowledgement or *intersubjectivity*.

16 See also the oral explanation ('*Zusatz*') given by Hegel in his classes of § 147 of the

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The Necessity of Dialectics according to Plato and Adorno¹

Anne-Marie Eggert Olsen

Dialektik ist der Versuch, das Neue des Alten
zu sehen anstatt einzig das Alte des Neuen.²

In the first lecture of *Philosophische Terminologie* Adorno comments on the fact that while nobody blames the sciences for a terminology that is often incomprehensible to the lay, the difficulty of philosophical terminology is generally considered a problem:

If you have taken up philosophy, and philosophy is not so much a topic as a spiritual attitude, an attitude of consciousness, then you have to render an account of what is actually causing this difference. There you hit upon that philosophy itself is paradoxical; at the same time it is a discipline and no discipline... (Adorno 1973, p. 9.)³

The opposition between philosophy as an academic or scientific discipline (an *episteme* or *techne*) and philosophy as something else and perhaps superior has always been a basic theme in philosophy. In the following we shall first turn to Plato who presents the first and perhaps most authoritative elaboration of the issue and afterwards probe the

issue a little further by way of Adorno's understanding of philosophy as expression.

The Divided Line: Plato on dialectics and disciplines

The identification of philosophy with dialectics will to some express a truism, to others a highly controversial, perhaps even fallacious proposition. The identification is of course not empirically true. Philosophy appears in non-dialectical manifestations and it would be absurd not to recognise the division of labour and consequently of method within the field of philosophy itself. But the question remains – to speak Socratically – of what unites the various philosophical pursuits and justifies the use of one name for them all. If it is not one object or one definite issue, which would just produce a Third Man situation, the answer may be either the truth-seeking ethos of philosophical activity or some mediating, critical exercise that philosophy may perform on rational activity as such. In both cases dialectics may be taken to cover what is in this sense basic and essential to philosophy.

And yet, this is not quite satisfactory. To regard dialectics as a kind of glue that keeps the philosophical disciplines together is to make it exterior to philosophy and rather incidental than essential. This is the case whether dialectics is understood as an awakening and a movement towards and thus prior to, or as a meta-reflection and thus posterior to, the disciplined and epistemic operations of reason. In both cases Plato figures as the originator of the notion of dialectics in question. The Socratic dialogue – read or practised – serves as authoritative instance of existential and pedagogical dialectics; and the first passage we shall examine, the simile of The Divided Line in *The Republic* (509d–511e), constitutes more than any other the philosophical ABC on dialectics as a meta-reflection on epistemic disciplines.

In continuation of the simile of The Sun that presents the intelligible and the visual as two separate, but analogous genera, the simile of The Divided Line illustrates the same with respect to clarity and lack of clarity (509 d). The analogy is thus supplemented with a gradation: The

obvious clarity of the visible world, illustrative – in accordance with the principle of passing from the better known to the less known inherent in all analogous thinking – of the clarity of the intelligible world, is in fact less. It seems to be a simple case of Aristotle’s ‘better known in itself’ that is universal and furthest from perception (*Anal. post.* I. 2, 72a 1–5), but that may not be precisely, let alone entirely Plato’s point.

The shift from Sun to Line is not just a shift from co-ordination to subordination of the visual to the intelligible; it is also a shift from objectivity to subjectivity. The simile of The Sun deals primarily with what is; that of The Line primarily with what is in relation to the subject. In The Sun the intelligible is presented *an sich*; in The Line the perspective is rather *für uns*. It may be argued that the simile of The Cave thus articulates the *An-und-für-sich-Sein* by merging the two previous expositions into that of one complete, dynamic process of experience, education, and knowledge set in the total reality. Taken together the three similes may be said to constitute an instance of dialectics. Sun and Line must be understood as abstractions; The Line does not illustrate the whole story, but it gives the more explicit, albeit most condensed, presentation of dialectics.

For all its mathematical clarity and brevity The Divided Line is the most difficult of the three. Some of the intricacies are due to its relational and *für uns* perspective. It is not a simple inventory of what is: shadows and images, things, numeral and geometrical objects, ideas. The issue is rather formal than material. Another difficulty is therefore the multiplication of perspectives following from imposing one analogy on another; the material aspect of the former simile is maintained as point of departure. As in the previous case, the proceeding is from the known to the less known or unknown, and it seems what is at work when we first fill in the two lower sections of the line with shadows, reflections and images, and the things around us (animals, plants, and artefacts). But these things are no longer ‘what is known’. The known, from which we set out, is now the distinction between *to doxaston* and *to gnôston*.⁴ The direction of the analogical reasoning is this, however surprising: As the imagined or opined is to the known, so the similar (*to homoiôthên*) is to

what it is similar to (510a).

To elaborate: We pass from what is now known, the distinction between visual and intelligible, to the less known or unknown, a relation of clarity between image and original within the visible and intelligible. The impact now is not that there are these two different types of things or a corresponding distinction between *doxa* and *episteme*. We know that already, it has been thoroughly discussed from the beginning of Book V, and it now forms our presupposition: The principle of the initial section of the line. What *The Line* adds is the proposal of an immanent relation intelligible to the subject in these classes of things. The overall distinction, of which the distinctions visual/intelligible and *doxa/episteme* are instances, is also present within *doxa* and *episteme* as such. The relation representing different measures of clarity is ‘continuous’ as is later unfolded dramatically and dynamically in *The Cave* where every advance marks the conscious experience of this difference. The relation between shadow and thing is already to some degree intelligible. Shadows and things as such are not intelligible, but visual. The relation between them, however, is intelligible, but not visible.

The transition from Sun to Line expresses the basic dialectical recognition of reason: We do not know phenomena. That something is given and therefore serves as point of departure is not the same as its being known. On the contrary: It only serves as point of departure when recognised as unknown. The experience of phenomena becoming opaque is, however, an effect of their relational intelligibility. The *für uns* perspective of the Line supplies the distinction necessary for the given appearances to become starting points: A distinction of original and image, true and false within the visible world. Without this consideration thing and shadow would be just two unconnected appearances.

This brings us to the upper part of the line, the section of *to noëton* that seems to be the most intricate part; at least it is the part of the exposition Glaucon does not really understand and has to have repeated (510 b). In the lower part of the upper section, it is said, the soul uses the things of the previous section as images, and setting out from presuppositions, *ex*

hypotheseôn, it searches not for a principle (*archê*), but for an end. In the top section, on the other hand, the soul sets out from presuppositions as before, but recognising their pre-suppositional character and working purely through concepts or ideas without the use of images, it goes in search for an unconditioned principle. The first way is here termed *technai*, i.e. (scientific) disciplines, while the other is termed dialectical *episteme*.

Glaucon does not fully understand, but he immediately grasps the consequences: The rationality of the disciplines is not – strictly speaking – true knowledge, not because they operate from presuppositions, but because they take the opposite direction from the one that will secure the assumptions. This does not mean that the operation area of the disciplines is not intelligible or that their conclusions are not true. They merely have no knowledge of their points of departure and consequently neither of their conclusions even if the presuppositions are knowable *meta archês*, in principle. Hypothetical reasoning, *dianoia*, is to knowledge through dialectics, *noêsis*, as *doxa* is to *episteme*: It is not subjectively secured. Seen from the point of view of thought, what the soul reaches by way of conclusions is related to the object of dialectical knowledge as a shadow is related to the thing that casts the shadow, as image to original. *Dianoia* is thus a state of mind between *doxa* and *nous*, between opinion and reason.

This is a rather provocative conclusion considering that the *technai* in question are the mathematical disciplines whose objects, the ideal numbers, geometrical forms or proportions, also constitute the foundation of Plato's essentially Pythagorean physics. However, it is important not to let Glaucon's ready understanding and Socrates' conclusive summary prejudice one's reading of The Line. It is still not an inventory of what is, but an illustration of four 'passions' of the soul (511d8). The shift of perspective from Sun to Line is thus not just a shift from one model of reality to a more complex one; in that analogy, proportionality itself, becomes thematic as illustrative principle, the shift proves an instance of what it illustrates: The transition from visual to intelligible, from *to doxaston* to *to gnôston*. The overall signification of The Line is that this

transition, made possible by the concepts of image and original, difference and likeness, permeates the whole range of being represented by the line. The intelligible, or rather the Good in itself, of which the 3 similes are illustrative, is not limited to its top section instances but is present and intelligible to dialectical knowledge everywhere. If it were not possible to perform the negation of the given within the world of *doxa*, there would be no continuation of the story: There would be no advance from the bottom of the cave. Without this dialectical movement on the level of the phenomenal world, on the level of the visible, the ordinary consciousness would never stand a chance of becoming philosophical.

Dialectics or the Second Sailing

It was stated in the beginning that dialectics in Plato might be approached along two lines of questioning: First, how to understand dialectical knowledge as opposed to epistemic or technical knowledge; what is actually going on in the top section? Second, what is the relation between dialectics as presented here, as a kind of basic procedure to secure scientific and technical rationality, and dialectics as a more comprehensive notion of philosophy as such, encompassing philosophy as lived experience and education and – not least – philosophy as mediated with and through language?

The interpretation presented above turns on the point that these two questions cannot be answered separately. If 'The Line' is read 'materially', as a direct continuation of 'The Sun', presenting the more specified inventory of being supplemented with the corresponding mental states, dialectics admittedly remains enclosed in the top section as a meta-reflection securing the synthetic operations of pure reason. Dialectical knowledge of this kind has no bearing on the question of dialectics as an advance from ordinary to philosophical consciousness, and the passage to 'The Cave' must be seen to introduce the heterogeneous elements of education and experience. If, on the other hand, the focus is on the formal and relational significance of the simile, the two lines of questioning are merged into one consideration of the intelligibility present in all being.

What goes on in the top section may not be so different from what goes on at ground level. This, however, does not in itself determine the relation between dialectics and the disciplines.

The question of the character and purpose of dialectical knowledge as presented explicitly in *The Line* seems familiar to the line of thought pursued by Aristotle in the first book of the *Analytica Posteriora*: All knowledge must come from something previously known; if we are not to end up in a permanent regress or circle, there must be something that is known in itself (I.3, 72 b5f). The immediate grasp of principles Aristotle terms nous (*Nichomachean Ethics* VI.6 & 7, 1140b31ff). It appears to be the same general epistemological distinction between an intuitive and a discursive function of reason that we find in Plato's *noesis* and *dianoia*, and in modern philosophy as the question of the self-evident, e.g. clear and distinct ideas or indubitable impressions. It is, however, questionable whether this posterior notion represents Plato's issue adequately.⁵

In order to gain an understanding of what might have been Plato's perspective, let us consult another classic, the *Phaedo*, more specifically the passage with the simile known as the Second Sailing (99d1f). Socrates has just told how he studied natural philosophy and ended up with Anaxagoras who proclaimed nous as first principle of all things; how this nous was no more satisfactory than the physical principles of the natural philosophers, eventually conveying only 'that' and not explaining 'why', and how this kind of principle leaves the reason for Socrates' staying in prison completely unintelligible. We shall not dwell on the normative aspect or the introduction of final causality, but focus on what Socrates relates about how he chose to adhere to reason by undertaking the second sailing, which may be interpreted as follows: When you are not passively brought ahead by some outer force, you have to take to the oars and work your way yourself with your back towards your goal.

Plato prepares his point using the same analogies as later in the *Republic*: Sun, vision, and understanding. Socrates has come so far as to renounce truth in things as they are in their immediate presence to the senses. He is afraid that by contemplating things directly he will

share fate with people who look directly at the sun. They not only see nothing, they lose the very sense of sight. The interpretative focus may be laid on the new approach as a secondary way, implying that the first would have been better had it been possible. This ignores the force of Socrates' narrative: The realisation that he could not continue as before. Reaching the sphere of the intelligible he realises that he cannot proceed in the same way, just on another level. The transition from vision and the other senses to intellect not only involves a realisation of the difference between perceiving and thinking, but also the realisation that what was there before did not render any knowledge at all. Considered from the level of thought, vision is not a more primitive form of knowledge. It is something completely different, even if – at its own level and compared to dreams and reflections – it represents something more similar to knowledge. Plato thus renounces the idea of intellectual 'vision'; there is nothing that is in itself intelligible or 'known' in the sense of being immediately present and intuitively known. The second sailing is not secondary, but subsequent, following on another in time and experience.

The second sailing may be said to illustrate the transition of the first general section of the line, that between *doxaston* and *gnoston*; the way of *logoi* thus equals the whole upper part and ignores the difference of *dianoia* and *noesis*. It may very well be so. What is interesting is that the transition as such is presented with the characteristics of dialectical experience: The reflection upon the relation between what is given to the senses and the subjective conditions of understanding, and the subsequent negation, the turn in the opposite direction. The 'logic' of dialectics obviously does not belong to a special section of rationality on top of others, dreaming, vision, deduction, but constitutes the basic logic of reason. Just as no perception, so no process of deduction could have performed the transition from the world of vision to the world of intellect. The reflection upon image and original, difference and similarity, presence and absence or known and unknown, however, may succeed. Reason is thus fundamentally, according to Plato, neither immediate – sensual or intellectual – awareness nor rational operations performed on the basis of

assumptions. Reason is fundamentally a dialectical movement, the ability of opposing the self-presentation of being on all levels. In treating them as presuppositions, dialectics even turns its back on the ideas.

The figure of 'turning around', which is here taken as expressing the intellectual operation of negation, may of course be otherwise interpreted: It may be seen as a way of recommending a spiritual life through the renunciation of the body and the corporeal world, – the traditional notion of what 'Platonic' really means. It may along the same line be taken as the historical establishment – in continuation of Parmenides – of the epistemological principle that there is no knowledge through the senses. It is questionable, though, whether this purely spiritual perspective, let alone the spiritual notion of philosophy which it is taken to support, does justice to Plato's sophistication and his conception of dialectics.

The fundamental reason for the dialectical approach is that phenomena are not what they are. It is not just that they seem to be one thing, while in reality they are something else. This would place the whole burden on the subject. Phenomena are literally not what they are because they partake both of being and not-being. They are both intelligible and not intelligible. They are not primary, but mediated. I should like to suggest that there is a tendency to conceive the Platonic world of phenomena as if it consists of Aristotelian substances just without the form *in re* – and consequently to conceive the world of ideas as Aristotelian essences corresponding to classes of composite substances; because of this deficiency Plato must deny any knowledge of phenomena. In Aristotle there is of course no knowledge of the singular qua singular; it is however knowable in virtue of the equation of substantial form and essence. In positing the fundamental *chorismos* between idea and phenomenon, Plato automatically, it seems, makes the phenomenal, physical world unreal and untrue, unintelligible and unknowable.

This so to speak 'proto-substantial' view of Platonic phenomena may prejudice the interpretation of Plato's notion of intelligibility and knowledge. Without the Aristotelian metaphysical concept of substantial forms in things it makes no sense to view the world of phenomena

merely as a collection of unconnected singular entities. First of all, that phenomena qua singulars are unknowable does not necessarily entail that the world of phenomena is unknowable as such or as a whole, i.e. as cosmos. Moreover, that phenomena are insubstantial may not – in the Platonic universe – present a deficiency, a problem solved historically by subsuming singulars under their proper universal. To Plato the question of the unknowability of phenomena seems to present itself differently.

The philosophical explanations of the natural philosophers were said by Socrates to be unsatisfactory because the proposed physical-mechanical causes could not count as real causes. But is the type of cause Socrates calls for actually a formal and final cause in the Aristotelian sense? In the example of Socrates himself – why stay in prison? – it is obviously a cause including intention, but in the following exposition final causes play no part. It may be that the concept of causality looked for is not simply to be regarded as a forerunner of the Aristotelian causal complex centred around the physical substance if the theory of ideas is not simply taken as a station on the road to the Aristotelian concepts of substance and essence.

That the world of phenomena is insubstantial may not be a problematic notion. It may be considered, as Plato does, to be a fact. So we could rephrase the Platonic problem, accepting the impossibility of ignoring Aristotle's authoritative terminology: How is it possible to obtain knowledge of a world 'without substance', a world in perpetual flux between being and not-being where nothing is anything by itself, but where everything is according to the relations it partakes in? Where, in short, everything is mediated? It seems obvious that in order to obtain knowledge of such a world one must address the relations in which phenomena appear as they do. And relations are intelligible, not appearing.

The immediate answer to the question: By positing a world of ideas, does not in itself solve the problem. Plato is taken, already by Aristotle, to betray the post-Parmenidean programme of saving appearances by positing this second world; what is actually known is no longer what was questioned. In the same vein: The ideas do not constitute convincing

causal principles of the phenomena. Both objections are to some extent true – the ideal tendency of Plato’s or for that matter of any philosophy cannot be ignored – but they also presuppose that we have asked a certain question, namely about the nature and causes of something experienced as and regarded as primary and substantial. In other words: The presentation of dialectics as somehow securing the assumptions of the disciplines by establishing their ‘principles’ may very well be viewed as an equivalent of Aristotle’s metaphysical enterprise, a search for the first principles of being and of thought. It must, however, be borne in mind that to Plato the world for which those principles are to be explanatory is above all the world of changeable and contingent ‘insubstantial’, functional social or political phenomena, not the Aristotelian world of natural substances.

Parmenides had convincingly identified the characteristics of the object of knowledge, unity, eternity, immutability etc., and in consequence of this Plato – taking the existence of knowledge as no less a fact than the existence of the mutable world – assumes as indispensable something that will meet the demand: A world of ideas. Plato often seems to be trifling with the assumption of ideas as a classifying and identifying structure manifesting itself in our rational, practical or discursive, dealings with the world. But he may be serious in his trifling. What every actual instance of knowledge and every intellectual discipline necessarily presuppose in order to get anywhere at all, something universal or ideal, philosophy or dialectics treats as ‘real’ presuppositions and turns in the other direction. ‘Knowing that’ is still not ‘knowing why’, not even if the ‘that’ is the necessary assumption of ideas. Just as reason turns its back on phenomena in moving from the visual to the intelligible, it also turns its back on the ideas in order to become truly philosophical. Philosophy is something different from the disciplined rationality manifested in our regular epistemic operations. If we are to trust the similes of *Republic* and *Phaedo*, philosophy has more in common with the rationality implicit in becoming aware that there is a sphere of intellectuality at all.

The question inherited from Parmenides, however, was not just what would satisfy as an object of knowledge. It was perhaps above all about

how to get there. In establishing that nothing comes from nothing, Parmenides had made the transition from ignorance to knowledge impossible. It is this issue that forces Plato to work out the epochal concepts of the phenomenon and of *doxa* that form the basis of the discussion of philosophy and how to become philosophical in the central books of the *Republic* (V, 476cff). In order to be possible at all, the process of knowledge must be a continuous exercise from its first and lowest to its last and highest manifestations – a transformation of *doxa* into *episteme* by means of that type of reasoning which is termed dialectical knowledge in the simile of The Line.

And yet, according to Plato, it is not possible to become a philosopher merely through a process of dialectical reasoning. The education in philosophy has to be prepared through a comprehensive study programme of mathematics, geometry and other disciplines as described in Book 7 (536d). Why is it not possible to move from a Socratic critique of opinions towards a still higher consciousness exclusively by means of dialectics? Why was knowledge of geometry declared an indispensable condition of access to the Academy?

Adorno on discipline and expression

'Philosophy is a discipline and no discipline'. This dictum covers the Platonic notion of philosophy to some extent. To Plato the disciplined study of reality is of importance for the recognition of the intelligible as the true object of thought and for the development of a disciplined use of reason. Philosophy itself never takes the guise of a discipline, although some characters (Diotima, Parmenides, the Stranger from Elea) teach with academic authority within the framework of dialogue – as if to prove the point. Since Aristotle's epochal founding of the philosophical disciplines, however, philosophy as dialectical in opposition to disciplined knowledge has successfully been challenged by the view of philosophy as a sort of 'super discipline'. Only few thinkers, such as Hegel and Adorno, maintain dialectics as the epistemologically adequate medium of philosophical understanding. While Hegel, however minutely conscious

of the infinite nature of individual understanding, considers philosophy in the light of absolute knowledge, Adorno rather sides with the ancient view of philosophy as an essentially human enterprise and desire. However, to Adorno the necessity of dialectics does not follow solely from the 'phenomenon not being what it is', in his case the antagonistic character of *Gesellschaft*, but as much from the paradox nature of philosophy as a human enterprise. Philosophy must manifest itself as dialectics not just out of the need for a critical justification of the hypothetical assumptions of the disciplines, and not just out of the need for securing the steps of reasoning on whatever level in relation to something other than reason itself, but as much out of a desire of expression (*Ausdruck*). The necessity of dialectics is thus equivalent to the necessity of taking seriously, within the discipline of philosophy, the amateur nature of philosophy.

'Discipline and no discipline' is intended as a strict paradox by Adorno. It is neither a contrast between philosophy and non-philosophy, nor a differentiation between two types of philosophy, academic or scholarly or professional philosophy on the one hand, and applied or lay or personal philosophy on the other. The opposition is one of philosophy itself, a sort of double intention. Tentatively one could say that philosophical thought encompasses two opposed, but connected efforts: First, to delimit and define itself as a discipline by forming a specific, identifiable way of conceiving a subject matter. This comprises the total effort of philosophy to articulate its categories, in general the disciplines of philosophy (metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, ethics etc.) and more specifically the proper concepts of philosophy, its 'terminology' as Adorno has it. In this effort philosophy delimits itself from other spiritual efforts (art, religion) by operating rationally and discursively in concepts and reasoning, and from other rational, scientific disciplines by its specific terminology or method as well as by its level of abstraction and reflection in relation to the particular sciences (Adorno 1973, p. 87). Secondly, and now the matter becomes more diffuse, philosophical activity is an effort to deal with issues that are of importance to the individual human being, with what is expressed in the lay expectation that philosophy is concerned with life and death and the meaning of everything. Adorno

continues the declaration of the paradox nature of philosophy quoted at the beginning:

...and this particular resistance against the terminology of philosophy has its justification, its element of truth in that, working with philosophy, you expect something different from what you are faced with in the so-called positive, scientific disciplines. Philosophy should be concerned with issues that are of essential importance to every human being, issues which cannot be adequately dealt with through the division of labour in our society, let alone through the division of labour within the various scientific disciplines. (Adorno 1973, p. 9)

We are faced with something that does not find expression in reason's division of labour into scientific disciplines, but which, it must be stressed in continuation of Adorno, also escapes the division of labour within philosophy itself. Philosophy is more than the sum of its sub-disciplines, and what is essential in philosophy may even lie somewhere else. This amounts to the demand experienced by all concerned with academic teaching that the disciplines of philosophy each offer something that surpasses their respective limitations.

The paradox of philosophy is often mistaken for a question of theoretical or practical application of the disciplines. For instance: In the shape of epistemology and theory of science, philosophy is in a way – albeit indirectly – concerned with 'everything'. And the more our dealings with reality are rationalised and regulated by scientific research and results, the more does philosophy of science meet the demand to be concerned with everything – even the meaning of life. The very considerable part of contemporary philosophy that takes the essence of philosophy, even of ethics, to be formal rationality and argumentation can be understood and to some extent justified in this perspective. The application may also be directly practical as personal acting up to what is gained through philosophical understanding. In this way the demand of essentiality to everyone is met in an existential dimension: You live

up to your philosophy, or simply: You live your philosophy. The double, paradox demand and effort of philosophy cannot, however, be solved by a distinction between theoretical application and practical use. The paradox does not articulate itself outside of philosophy, as a demand for application, but inside, on the part of philosophy itself. The widespread desire and effort to apply the philosophical disciplines in theory and action bear witness to the inherent need of philosophy to be more than an academic discipline, but also to a naive understanding of the non-disciplinary aspect of philosophy. The age-old ambition of philosophic enlightenment, to make reason practical, is not solved by prescription or mission.

That the disciplinary or technical character prevails in philosophy is seen from the way philosophy manifests itself. Elaborating Adorno's point one might say that from Aristotle on every philosophical occupation falls – willingly or unwillingly – within a discipline; you are always somewhere in a set or even a system of disciplines. Consequently, the very medium of philosophy, the philosophical concepts, develop a primary attachment to a discipline; the meaning of a concept is coloured by, and its relation to other concepts determined by, its traditional disciplinary home. But the most telling and ironical effect is that the question of philosophy as something essential to the individual person ends up in one set of disciplines, practical philosophy in its broadest sense, while the desire to grasp what eludes the division of labour, the totality of being, the structure of things, *das Ganze*, ends up in another, viz. metaphysics or ontology.

In this way philosophical thinking is not only disciplined; its non-disciplinary aspect or effort is divided into two fundamentally different functions of reason: the theoretical and the practical. The amateur element, the element of desire, is thus disciplined and subjected to division and rule. Plato's concept of *Eros*, the hybristic ambition of human beings to transcend the human condition through reason, has no counterpart in the philosophy of Aristotle where it is split into *orexis* and *nous* and disciplined accordingly. The opposition between philosophy as a discipline and as a non-discipline is therefore necessarily a post-disciplinary relation. The

very articulation of the amateur element, its determination as well as its expression, has to be undertaken on technical-terminological conditions. The effort to express the totality of philosophical *Eros* is forced to take the shape of a combination of the practical and the metaphysical – or to become dialectical.

Philosophy's debt

In the 11th lecture of *Ontologie und Dialektik* (Adorno 2002, p. 153–167) Adorno resumes the question he has posed at the beginning of the course, the question of the 'ontological need' that may explain the spread and popularity of ontology, Seinsphilosophie, Existentialontologie, through the works of especially Heidegger and Jaspers. The success of ontology is, according to Adorno, an

indication of a deficiency [*Index eines Fehlenden*]. Ever since Hegel, philosophy... has actually owed a debt of that which those who approach philosophy without preparation or training expect from it. (Adorno 2002, p. 153)

The philosophy of Hegel, the last of the great philosophical systems, was still able to meet the amateur expectation of a total understanding. Since then something has been missing:

...that is, those questions which make you approach philosophy in the first place have lapsed. And just when the great speculative systems, including that of Hegel's, had broken down; when their claim to construct the universe out of their own capacity could no longer be honoured, philosophy gave up any hope of addressing the issues that make an engagement with philosophy meaningful at all. (Adorno 2002, p. 162)

The problem, however, is not just the problem of the totality of wisdom, of the system. It is also the problem of philosophy as a discipline, and

not in any restricted sense of the term discipline, but in the full sense of *philosophische Bildung*:

In this respect we are all somewhat spoiled by our philosophical education. It is a funny thing: Without philosophical education, i.e. without knowing the significance of the concepts, without knowing the literature, without becoming, if I may put it like this, initiated into the tradition, there is no understanding of philosophical questions whatsoever. But at the same time this initiation tends a little to wean one of the intent for actually wanting the initiation. (Adorno 2002, p. 153–54)⁶

Adorno thus retrospectively exposes yet another motive for the inclusion of the scientific discipline in Plato's plan for the education of the philosopher although the aim is more than epistemic knowledge. Philosophy has this inherent contradiction: Only through philosophical education or *Bildung*, i.e. only from within, are philosophical questions to be articulated. On the other hand, that very learning itself jeopardizes the philosophical desire – as in the popular quiz: Here is the answer, but what was the question?

The post-Hegelian phenomenology and the Heideggerian ontology, according to Adorno, understand the task of philosophy as making a pure or original view or experience (*Anschauung*) possible by so to speak clearing the ground theoretically and ultimately leaving behind the restricting, limiting disciplinary conceptual grasp. The demand for philosophical understanding is honoured by the effort to bring man *zur Sache* ultimately unrestricted by technical, disciplinary borders, unlimited by historical-traditional determination. To Adorno, this is no way out. There is to him only the second sailing of Plato's *Phaedo*, the way of *logoi*. On no level of philosophical understanding is it possible to dispense from the *Anstrengung des Begriffs*.

In order to pay its debt philosophy must therefore perform a ruthless self-criticism, in main the recognition of the limitation of the conceptual medium as such, instead of, as Adorno puts it polemically, pretending that words such as *Wesen* or *Sein* may magically conjure up what is essential

(Adorno 2002, p. 161).⁷ Socrates' criticism of Anaxagoras' nous is echoed in these phrases. Still:

Philosophy has promised to somehow provide the magic word or, as it became less naive, at least to provide the language, to provide the insight, through which the world's pretence [*Schein*], to be as it appears, disappears. (Adorno 2002, p. 166)

The promise of Hegel's phenomenology, '*die Bildung des Bewußtseins selbst zur Wissenschaft*', was the promise of bringing consciousness to the goal of its initial desire or ambition: The absolute understanding. In the shape of the system, as the completion of the dialectical process of knowledge, the desire of expression is fulfilled: The system is the expression. Now, the legitimacy of the system is annulled by its untruth, according to Adorno. What is not annulled, however, is the necessity of dialectics as the continuous expression of the experience that concept and object, *Begriff und Sache*, do not match. It is the experience of this discrepancy that originates philosophical desire. There would be no reason to philosophise if I were convinced that everything is as it appears, appearances being always already to some degree conceptualised, and if I did not have this constant suspicion that there is more to the matter than we are able to conceptualise.

Moreover, if everything were ultimately conceptually identifiable, philosophy would historically have manifested itself as a discipline or science in principle able to determine its subject matter to the last. Philosophy or more specifically first philosophy would, with Kant's words, operate dogmatically and progress like the sciences. The lack of progress in the scientific sense is index of the literally 'extra' within philosophy. Kant solves the case by posing subjective, transcendental conditions of experience and knowledge. The subject matter of philosophy becomes, analytically, what we are able to conceive. What goes beyond the set conditions of experience is referred either to the practical use of reason, i.e. to the will, or to dialectics, by Kant adequately defined as a metaphysical

need of reason.

However, while dialectics in Kant's conception at least in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* according to Adorno remains running on the spot and actually serves to ban the element of desire from philosophy, with Hegel it becomes the very motor of philosophical understanding. The question – for Adorno, but inevitably for anybody acknowledging the ancient idea of philosophy as a desire for wisdom – is how, when the philosophical system is no longer a satisfactory expression, to save, not so much the motor, but what the motor is expressive of. This involves the recognition of the essential connection between dialectics and language:

But Hegel's dialectics was one without language, while the simplest literal meaning of dialectics postulates language; to this extent Hegel remained the adept of current science. He did not need language in the emphatic sense, because to him everything, even what is devoid of language and opaque, is supposed to be Spirit and the Spirit the context. (Adorno 2001, p. 164–166; Adorno 1970b, p. 165)

Transformed into spirit, the opaque becomes conceptually articulated and transparent and is no longer what it was. If philosophy is identified with its terminology without attention to the 'material' or expressive moment of language, the philosophical discipline produces truth in the same way and by the same logic as a permanent relationship of love, thereby betraying that fascination of the non-identical which provoked desire in the first place. The object of desire becomes entangled in a functional logic prescribing its possible movements and thereby determining the ways in which it may be given. In this mutual functionality words are superfluous. Without words philosophy becomes like an old couple that have not spoken to each other for years. Easy to mistake for a perfect idyll – until the day one part speaks out and tells the truth, not the truth of the whole, but the truth as the expression of a desire for what is absent.

The 6th and 7th lecture of the *Philosophische Terminologie* are devoted to the concept of philosophy and the need of expression. As a Platonic

echo Adorno states

that philosophy does not have its object, but is searching for it. From the beginning philosophy involves the subject quite differently than is the case with the objectified and objectifying scientific disciplines... And that has something to do with the element of expression; philosophy actually wants, with the concept, to express what is non-conceptual. (Adorno 1973, p. 82)

To Adorno philosophy depends on the preservation of this moment of expression. That philosophy is not primarily about truth may seem provoking. But perhaps the problem is rather this: Conceding that philosophy is not primarily a matter of truth in the colloquial sense of truth, it still remains to say what it is then a matter of; and that is immensely difficult exactly because it tends to disappear in the conceptualising that is necessarily a part of the philosophical truth project.

Still, this does not mean that it cannot be expressed. Confident that what a reflected person has experienced in himself is very seldom unique Adorno relates how, when he himself took to philosophy, the drive was not to find the highly praised truth, but rather to be able to say *'was mir an der Welt aufgeht, was ich an der Welt als etwas Wesentliches erfahre'* (Adorno 1973, p. 83).⁸ From this stems the expectation that if philosophy is a search for truth, this is not to be understood primarily as an adaequatio of propositions, judgements, or thoughts to given matters of fact, but rather as precisely this element of expression. All this may be rather vague, but try to see, Adorno exhorts us, if you do not know from yourself this need, *'das Bedürfnis, es zu sagen'*. It is a small wonder that Wittgenstein's decree of silence is, perhaps not fully justified from an academic point of view, a favourite target to Adorno:

When the famous Wittgensteinian dictum says, that you should only say what you are able to speak out clearly, and keep silent about the rest, then to this I would directly oppose the concept of philosophy and say,

philosophy is the permanent and perhaps ever desperate effort to say what is really unutterable. (Adorno 1973, p. 82)

Adorno's thoughts on the need of expression in philosophy and on the mimetic aspect of language that basically makes philosophical expression and truth possible has often led to the interpretation that the intention of philosophy is to Adorno ultimately only to be realised in the work of art. This interpretation completely misses the point of maintaining philosophy as a paradox enterprise: The need of expression in philosophy is the need of articulating a rational, conceptual understanding with the convictional force, with the *Verbindlichkeit* that goes with it. It is the need of philosophical expression, not of any kind of expression whatever.

Adorno never elaborated the affinities between his own thinking and that of Plato's. It may be that he underestimated the sophistication of Plato, or it may be the result of the necessary division of labour in philosophy. He was, however, clearly conscious of the significance of certain central Platonic motives as stated in a note in *Against Epistemology. A Metacritique (Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie)*:

Among the proofs of the immortality of the soul in the Phaedo the argument is not missing that, corresponding to a likeness between the body and the world of appearances, is a likeness between the soul and the world of ideas. (p. 79). It is not far from that to the conclusion that the resemblance between subject and object is the condition for the possibility of knowledge.

If rationality is altogether the demythologization of mimetic modes of procedure... then it can be no surprise that the mimetic motif survives in reflection on cognition. This is perhaps not simply an archaic holdover, but is rather due to the fact that cognition itself cannot be conceived without the supplement of mimesis, however that may be sublimated. Without mimesis, the break between subject and object would be absolute and cognition impossible. (Adorno 1982, p.143 n.)

If knowledge is ultimately impossible without mimesis, it is indeed impossible without the necessarily dialectical reflection on the affinities

between subject and object that lie at the core of Plato's Divided Line.

Endnotes

1 I would like to thank Robin May Schott for her very generous and considerate help in correcting my original English manuscript. All shortcomings of expression are due to the author's obstinacy and limitations.

2 Adorno 1970a, p.46.

3 Adorno's lectures have not yet appeared in English. Translations from *Philosophische Terminologie I* (Adorno 1973) and *Ontologie und Dialektik* (Adorno 2002) are my own.

4 Or *to noêton* and *to horaton*. In these passages Plato's vocabulary is inconsistent to a degree that must be deliberate. In 508 e, for instance, he uses 3 different words for 'knowledge', *gignôskein*, *episteme*, *gnosis* in as many lines. In 511 e the knowledge corresponding to the *dianoia*-section is termed 'the so-called *technai*' – as opposed to the just mentioned dialectical *episteme*. The simile of the line is not in itself illustrative of *dianoia*, i.e. of a type of reasoning that needs illustrations from the visible world. Glaucon is asked to think of a line, not to draw one. It is the geometrical proportions, not the line as such, that are of significance. Rather, the simile is an operation of dialectical reason using the mathematical original as illustrative image, i.e. a type of reasoning not represented by any definite section of the line.

5 It is hardly representative of Aristotle, either, as Aristotle is somewhat ambiguous on this point. On the one hand he does not consider any *discursive* access to first principles, only an immediate. Theoretical knowledge is demonstrative reasoning. On the other hand he acknowledges that at least the principle of non-contradiction must be established indirectly, in fact dialectically. Aristotle sees dialectics as primarily useful for training and discussion, although he concludes that dialectics is the way of establishing principles by cross-examination of common beliefs (*Topica* I.2). This is actually the way Aristotle himself founds the philosophical and scientific disciplines.

6 The same considerations are elaborated in greater philosophical detail and perspective in the *Negative Dialektik*, Erster Teil, I: Das ontologische Bedürfnis (Adorno 1970b, p. 69-103). Almost as a case in point, however, the disciplined treatment of the *Negative Dialektik* misses some of the finer and more sensitive facets, not to speak of the immediate freshness and direct appeal, of the lectures addressed to students without academic training in philosophy. For instance, the references to personal experience, which – of course? – have no place in academic treatises (*pace* Socrates), enable Adorno to express acute observations of philosophical motivation.

ANNE-MARIE EGGERT OLSEN

7 Cf. p. 66–79: ‘5. Vorlesung’.

8 Adorno’s point about language is illustrated by the difficulty in translating the datives of these phrases.

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The Inner Experience of Living Matter. Bataille and dialectics.

Asger Sørensen

Like many left-wing intellectuals in the twentieth century, Georges Bataille made Hegel the main point of reference for discussions of dialectics, citing his *Phenomenology of Spirit* in particular. Following a quite normal path from political-theoretical discussions within various left-wing groups to discussions of Hegelian dialectics, Bataille, however, is distinguished by belonging to a small and very privileged group of French thinkers. Not only did he attend the famous lectures of Alexandre Kojève in the 1930s and followed his extensive commentaries on the *Phenomenology*, he was also able to discuss the issues raised there with Kojève himself, since he very soon became part of the inner circle together with, among others, Jacques Lacan and Raymond Queneau. Bataille remained in contact with Kojève, he wrote extensively on Hegel, and their philosophical discussions went on until the very end of Bataille's life.

Despite this, Bataille is today mostly associated with the kind of thinking that rejects the idea of dialectics as such. This impression is due primarily to Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, who both praised Bataille in the 1960s, first, for giving voice to a non-dialectical

philosophical language and, second, for stating an alternative to Hegel's dialectics, which had allegedly reduced thinking to labour and closure. Since then very few philosophers have actually discussed dialectics and the relationship between Hegel and Bataille in any detail. This article is a contribution to filling this gap in the literature and thereby adding to the understanding of both dialectics as such and the thinking of Bataille.

First, Foucault's and Derrida's employment of Bataille in the critique of dialectics is presented as based on a conception of dialectics that is not shared by Bataille (1.). Instead, the dialectics of Bataille must be understood together with his peculiar epistemological position (2), and his materialist ontology, which extends the scope of dialectics beyond conscious being and history (3.). Bataille's dialectical ontology does also extend the concept of desire and this gives another constitutional logic for self-conscious being (4.). The conclusion is that Bataille's dialectics is related to that of Hegel in a way that distinguishes it from most modern dialectics by totalizing dialectics even more than Hegel, admitting both nature and the original human consciousness to have a history as well as humanity, but without the idea of one determinate end of history. Bataille's dialectics can be said to be the result of a determinate negation of Hegel, which makes him one of the few non-Marxists in the 20th century who has maintained and positively endorsed a totalizing metaphysical concept of dialectics. Including reality as such within the scope of dialectics in an even wider sense than Hegel, however, makes it very difficult for Bataille positively to recommend a specific course of political action (5.).

1. Critique of dialectics

To the young Foucault, criticizing Hegel was not just a matter of denying the widely accepted conception of history as collective human progress, nor of negating Kojève's idea of communism as 'the end of history'; like the classical positivists, he wanted to do away with all varieties of dialectics, metaphysics and speculative philosophy, and it is for this task that he employs Bataille. In the now classic article about Bataille from 1963, 'A Preface to Transgression' Foucault claims that the language of philosophy

is linked 'beyond all memory (or nearly so) to dialectics' (Foucault 1963, p. 759 (1998, p. 78)¹), and a critique of dialectics is therefore a critique of philosophy as such.

Foucault construes 'dialectical thought' as 'the experience of the contradiction' (1963, p. 754 (1998, p. 72)), and what he praises in the thinking of Bataille is what he conceives as the attempt to break with 'the sovereignty of the philosophizing subject', to insert a 'fracture', which can develop 'the form of a non-dialectic philosophical language' (p. 766 (p. 84)), 'a language that speaks and of which he is not the master' (p. 760 (p. 79)). To such a 'mad philosopher' 'the philosophical language proceeds as if through a labyrinth', in the middle of 'the transgression of his being as philosopher' (p. 762 (p. 80)). A transgression is given by inner experience and cannot as such be accessed by transcendental analysis or 'dialectical movement' and is best described as a 'non-positive affirmation' (p. 756 (p. 74)) and, like Nietzsche, Bataille's thought is 'a critique and an ontology' that 'understands both finitude and being' (p. 757 (p. 75)). According to Foucault, Bataille introduces a 'philosophy of being speaking' in the place of a 'dialectics of production', 'a philosophy of the working man' (pp. 766 f. (pp. 84 f.)).

In spite of these radical claims about Bataille as contesting dialectics, and thus philosophy, as such, Foucault never went into detail about the concept of dialectics or the relations between Bataille and Hegel. And even though Foucault's perspective is often recognized as being determined by Bataille, he only published one more text on Bataille (Raffnsøe 1994, p. 91; Habermas 1985, 279 f. (1987, p. 238 f.)), namely the very short presentation of Bataille's *Complete Works*, which does not contain anything of philosophical substance (Foucault 1970).

Derrida's reading of Bataille, meanwhile, focuses precisely on the relationship to Hegel and dialectics. In his very influential article, 'From Restricted to General Economy: a Hegelianism without reserve', Derrida delivers a detailed, well argued and well substantiated analysis of Bataille that has become the last word for many thinkers on these matters. In Derrida's interpretation, Bataille also stages a radical critique

of metaphysics that aims to do away not only with the idea of history, but with the ontological conception of dialectics as such. However, as Derrida correctly emphasises, ‘all of Bataille’s concepts are Hegelian’ (Derrida 1967, p. 26 (1978, p. 320)), and the negation of Hegel could therefore easily be called determinate or immanent, and thus dialectical.

Derrida, however, prefers to interpret Bataille’s thinking as ‘displacing’ Hegel’s. According to Derrida, Bataille displaces the very conception of reality as a conscious being whose experience can be understood dialectically as an *Aufhebung*: ‘the speculative concept par excellence, says Hegel, the concept whose untranslatable privilege is wielded by the German language’ (Derrida 1967, p. 29 (1978, p. 324)). ‘The *Aufhebung* is included within the circle of absolute knowledge, never exceeds its closure, never suspends the totality of discourse, work, meaning, the law etc.’ (p. 43 (p. 348)) To Derrida it is the same ontological logic that structures Hegel’s conceptions of both history and experience, and Derrida identifies the dialectical logic with the totality of the ontological movement towards a determined end; that is, the accomplished movement of conscious being, which through the experience of determinate negation has lifted itself to a (pre-)determined result.

In doing this, Derrida makes use of Hegel’s remarks, that the dialectical movement cannot find rest until the ultimate end and that the goal is as necessary for knowledge as the progression (Hegel 1807, p. 69 (1977, p. 51)). It is in this sense that he can denounce dialectics as a ‘closure’. But this is an interpretation of dialectics that is not universally shared. Max Horkheimer, for example, reads the same remarks, not as a statement about dialectics, but as an expression of the non-dialectical, dogmatic aspect of Hegel’s philosophy (Horkheimer 1935, p. 330 ff. (1993, p. 185 ff.)).

Like Foucault, Derrida makes Bataille his ally in a critique of dialectics as such, claiming that Bataille has ‘displaced’ ‘the Hegelian *logos*’ (Derrida 1967, p. 29 (1978, p. 325)). However, in his reading Derrida of course also displaces Bataille, and towards the end of his reading he admits that this actually amounts to interpreting ‘Bataille against Bataille’ (p. 43 (p. 348)).

And the reason why this becomes necessary is simply that Bataille did not want to contest Hegelian dialectics in the same radical sense as Foucault and Derrida, because Bataille thought of dialectics in a different sense, namely in a sense close to that of Horkheimer. In this sense dialectics is a method that, as it has been put by Hans-Georg Gadamer, aims at grasping conceptually reality in motion, reality in change (Gadamer 1961, p. 13 ff.). Thus, whereas Foucault and Derrida had a concept of dialectics that implies system, totality, identity, end of history and thus closure, Bataille's concept of dialectics is inherently open-ended.

For Bataille, it is therefore possible to criticize Hegel and Kojève very strongly and still (or perhaps precisely therefore) consider his own thinking dialectical in the same sense as those criticized, i.e. those negated. Like Marx, Bataille states that his thought is the 'opposite' of Hegel's (Marx 1867, p. 27; Bataille 1958, p. 615), but he immediately afterwards adds: 'I only found myself there dialectically, if I may say so, Hegelically'. As in the case of Marx the opposition of Bataille to Hegel must be understood dialectically, as a determinate negation, and Bataille can therefore, in the words of Queneau, be said to develop 'a kind of anti-Hegelian dialectics' (Queneau 1963, p. 696).

This may come as a surprise to those familiar with the post-structuralist discourse and rhetoric that often surrounds Bataille. What may be even more surprising is that, though initially arguing for the now common position reserving dialectics only for the *praxis* of the changeable human world, Bataille keeps the possibility open for reintroducing nature into the realm of dialectics (Queneau 1963, p. 698), and, as we shall see, in his later work he actually revives and uses the totalizing concept of dialectics of Hegel and the traditional Marxists as basis for his understanding of reality as such. Bataille can thus be employed to negate various forms of closure but this did not lead him to denounce dialectics, quite the contrary.

2. Experience and scientific knowledge

Still, most twentieth-century readers of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, we

recognize today, conceive of dialectics as the proper way to think of human reality in contrast to nature. By acknowledging the epistemological importance of this ontological distinction they implicitly adopt the traditional Aristotelian, non-empiricist way of understanding the relation between epistemology and ontology, i.e. that it is the structure of the being in question that determines the right way to understand that being, and that since human reality is structured differently from natural reality, we should relate differently to these two spheres intellectually.

This was also the case for the young Bataille and Queneau who criticized Friedrich Engels' totalizing and reductive concept of dialectics by understanding dialectical development as part of the 'real existence' of 'every human being', namely as the 'lived experience [*expérience vécue*]' of 'negativity', i.e. something very close to Foucault's conception of dialectics as the experience of contradiction mentioned above. Such experience structures dialectics as a specific 'method of thought', whose application to the 'intelligence of nature' therefore is 'risky' (Bataille & Queneau 1932, p. 288 f. (1985, p. 113)).² To Bataille, however, accepting the metaphysical implications of this conception of dialectics is complicated by, first, his concept of 'inner experience', and, second, his unconditional materialism, and it is the gradual realization of this in his later work that makes the idea of a dialectics of nature reappear, although in another form than that conceived by Engels.

'Inner experience' is a development of the concept 'lived experience', by which Bataille wanted to express something like the German '*Erlebnis*'.³ In *The Inner Experience* from 1943 he concentrates on the more dramatic aspects of inner experience like anxiety, ecstasy, and meditation, attempting with the form of the text to communicate the inner experience in a way which 'corresponds to its movement' and to avoid just 'a dry verbal translation' (Bataille 1943/54, p. 18). This becomes a kind of textual communication comprising aphorisms, poetry and prose, which Bataille takes as constitutive of a large textual project called *The Atheological Sum* after the Second World War.

The analysis of laughter, however, reveals to Bataille 'a field of co-

incidences between the facts [*donnée*] of a common and rigorous emotional knowledge [*connaissance*] and the facts of a discursive knowledge' (1943/1954, p. 11), i.e. some objects of experience common to both scientific cognition and lived, inner experience. In *Eroticism* from 1957, Bataille can therefore attempt a more traditional discursive characterisation of the objects of inner experience, and of inner experience itself. Inner experience is then taken to comprise all those experiences that are not scientifically objectifying, i.e. the experience of art, erotics, laughter, etc. Science aims to describe reality as objects 'from without', whereas Bataille wants to investigate reality experienced 'from within', in the case of religion, for instance, not like the historian or sociologist, but as a theologian or a brahman. Inner experience can thus be communicated discursively, and Bataille also emphasizes that 'the inner experience is not given independently of objective views' (Bataille 1957, pp. 35 (2001, p. 31)). Such a discursive communication of inner experience and its relation to scientific knowledge constitutes Bataille's other big project, *The Accursed Share*, of which *Eroticism* was planned to constitute volume two.

Like Hegel's concept of experience, Bataille's inner experience is the experience of a consciousness. Bataille, however, makes a distinction between two different ways of experiencing reality, which do not depend on the object side of experience, but on the subject side. Though still within an ontological framework, these epistemological distinctions imply that the link between conscious being and reality as such becomes less definite for Bataille than for Hegel. It is therefore possible for Bataille to think the experience of reality, both human and natural, in two parallel, but each by itself unified, ways: scientific cognition and inner experience. It is within the latter that dialectics finds its place as the discursive translation of lived experiences of real negations, just as was already the case in Bataille's early discussion of dialectics mentioned above.

However, just as it is the case for Hegel in *The Phenomenology*, for Bataille dialectics includes the ontological movement of experience, which conscious being must go through in order to realize it-self as self-

conscious. Still, there are crucial differences: one is that Bataille's concept of experience is more comprehensive than that of Hegel, another is that Bataille thinks of experiences as communicable in more than one way, and yet another is that when Bataille speaks of science, it is in a modern sense, as empirically based natural science, not in the classical philosophical sense used by Hegel.

To Aristotle, scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*) is knowledge of what necessarily is, which gets its validity from being structured by syllogistic logic (*Eth.Nic.* 1139b, 1140b). The idea of being as that which necessarily is, i.e. that being is eternal, unchangeable and structured by logic, whereas what changes, becomes, or disappears, simply is not, neither in the ontological nor in the logical sense, goes back at least as far as Plato (*Rep.* 521d). Hegel, however, modifies the antique conception of being by accepting change as inherent in what is, thinking of life as the infinite movement-by-it-self.

For Hegel the dialectics of life is basic to the dialectics of being, it is life that, uplifted through experience, becomes absolute knowledge. Being is to Hegel always-already in-it-self conscious being, and as such being is only fully realized as uplifted to the conceptual movement-by-it-self of pure self-conscious being and spirit, *Selbst-bewußt-sein* and *Geist*, when the dialectical process of experience reaches its end in absolute knowledge. Reconstructing this movement conceptually as Hegel does in the *Phenomenology* is, as the original subtitle says, the *Science of the Experience of Conscious-being*, and this science leads to the *Science of Logic*. To Hegel science is in the end philosophy (Heidegren 1995, p. 345), which produces wisdom in the Aristotelian sense, i.e., intuitive insight in the principles of reality that becomes scientific knowledge by being well founded in reason (*Eth.Nic.* 1141a).

As mentioned above, for Bataille science produces objective knowledge from without, that is, objectifying knowledge, not knowledge about what necessarily - or objectively - is. Science is not philosophy and does not deliver the only possible or the whole truth about reality. Bataille thus has a concept of science very different from that of Hegel, and, as

Lyotard pointed out, the conflict between the two concepts is that with a Hegelian conception of scientific knowledge, modern empirical science cannot be said to deliver knowledge as such (Lyotard 1979, p. 63 f. (1984, p.37 f.)). It is, however, only with such a modern positivist conception of science that Bataille can legitimately divide what to Hegel in the end is only one. To sum up, first, that experience is more than (scientific) knowledge in both the senses mentioned, and that it as such can have other kinds of validity. Second, that with the modern idea of empirical science one can distinguish between a experience from without, which is objectifying, and an experience from within, which is not. Third, that such inner experiences can be communicated in various ways: discursively (or dialectically), simply verbally, or even without words, and all have their peculiar validity as forms of communication.

3. Matter and life

This complex epistemological position is, as mentioned above, coupled with a materialism that Bataille in his formative period declared to be 'excluding all idealism' (1929, p. 180 (1985a, p. 16)). What is important is that the matter in question must not be understood as physical matter in the sense often employed by empiricists, i.e. as something that is fundamentally unchangeable, but can be moved in bulks and thus be understood primarily in terms of mechanics. Neither must matter be understood in the sense often employed by Marxists. Bataille distances himself from 'giving matter the role that thought had' in Hegelian idealism, and thus making matter 'a source of contradiction' (1930, p. 221 (1985b, p. 52)), determining the direction and end of the general history of man.

Bataille's ideals of scientific knowledge are not taken from classical philosophy, nor from Newtonian physics or classical economy, but from twentieth-century scientific theories. Bataille's epistemology is developed on the basis of the new experiences of physics, biology, psychology, and sociology, that is, sciences investigating and trying to grasp reality in change, and, in accordance therewith, Bataille's ontological materialism

is inspired by thinkers such as Nietzsche, Freud, and Mauss. Matter is to Bataille first of all living matter, in natural and human beings, and excluding all idealism means that it 'can only be defined as the non-logical difference that represents in relation to the economy of the universe what the crime represents in relation to the law' (1933, p. 319 (1985c, p. 129)), i.e., the difference involved in a violation or a transgression. Matter signifies for Bataille the insubordination of nature in relation to culture, the continuous rebellion of life against all limits, in short, growth.⁴

Absolute knowledge about and in being is the only desirable goal for the kind of ideal self-conscious being that Hegel brings to an experience of it-self, but not necessarily for other kinds of conscious being. From the very beginning of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, consciousness is defined by the desire to become scientific knowledge of reality in the ancient sense. However, to a living conscious being, who like Bataille is having inner experiences both of the negation of its own material life and of the material transgression of the result of this negation, this goal can only appear as death. Bataille recognizes the essential link between ontology and epistemology, but conceives of both being and experience as essentially changing and constantly in motion.

Bataille's materialist dialectics of nature within the perspective of inner experience thus attempts to offer something that neither the ancient conception nor the Hegelian conception of dialectics could offer, namely, a comprehension of the material *flux* of life as a historical process, i.e., grasping it with concepts that do not degrade it to, at best, a deficient mode of being, which must be negated in order to make consciousness appear. However, Bataille thinks of his dialectics as the result of a determinate negation of Hegel's, which of course maintains the Hegelian dialectic in the dialectics of Bataille as *Moment*.

In *Eroticism*, Bataille is mainly concerned with inner experiences, but he also describes 'the physical condition' (Bataille 1957, p. 95 (2001, p. 94)) of the objects of inner experience as 'established by objective science' (1957, p. 19 (p. 13)), and this description is dialectical in the sense already mentioned, namely, as the attempt to grasp change conceptually.

According to Bataille, non-sexual reproduction, which is the most primitive kind of reproduction, is the division of one cell into two. In the reproductive movement there is, as Bataille emphasises, a 'passage', where the first cell dies as a discontinuous being, but 'as it dies there appears a moment of fundamental continuity of the two new beings' (1957, p. 20 (p. 14)), and reproduction at this level cannot be distinguished from growth (1957, p. 96 (p. 95)).

Being cannot of course be considered conscious at this level, but when Bataille lets himself be guided by 'our human inner experience' (1957, p. 104 (2001, p. 103)), the cell must also have an 'experience from within' (1957, p. 100 (p. 99)), which in the moment of change is an experience of a 'crisis' (1957, p. 97 (p. 96)). Within a traditional ontology this moment is best described as contradictory in the Hegelian sense, being at one and the same time neither one nor many, but exactly in the process of both disappearing and becoming, both giving birth and dying, growing and reproducing, being both continuous and discontinuous. However, such a moment is part of a real material process, and such a process is for Bataille an evolution with a direction. The new continuity is the result of a determinate negation, which both annihilates and keeps the old continuity as *Moment*. The resulting continuity is both the same as the old continuity and different from it, both itself and not itself; that is, it remains conceptually contradictory, but also the result of an *Aufhebung* in the Hegelian sense.

In sexual reproduction the initial production of sexed cells is a reproductive division, but now distinguished ontologically from growth, and therefore not contradictory at the same level. At another level, however, this kind of division means that the same becomes even more different, i.e. that the ontological and logical contradiction within life becomes even more pronounced. The sexed cells of life are produced in different beings, and even when produced in the same particular being, they are not the same. For the reproduction to be complete, however, it is necessary that what is only living as differences again becomes one and the same, i.e. that two cells of different sex melt together and become

one, that the fission is followed by a fusion and what was discontinuous becomes continuous. As Bataille expresses it, ‘a continuity establishes itself between the two to form a new being, originating from the death, the disappearance of the two separate beings’ (1957, p. 20 (2001, p. 14)). Life’s continuity is established by the death of discontinuous beings, and this movement shows that ‘the lost continuity can be found again’ (1957, p. 99 (p. 98)).

This scientific knowledge about asexual *vs.* sexual reproduction was of course not known to Hegel. Still Hegel’s speculative account of life also focuses on the contradictions of the fundamental movement of life. He describes life as essentially determined by an event, namely as when what does not rely on anything else, or is same-to-itself, *das Sichselbstgleiche*, divides itself: ‘The differences between dividing [*Entzweiung*] and becoming-same-to-itself [*Sichselbstgleichwerden*] are in themselves precisely only this movement of uplifting itself [*sich Aufhebens*]’ (Hegel 1807, p. 126 (1977, p. 100–01)⁵). What is self-reliant as same-to-itself is then in an opposition to the division, and as such not same-to-itself, but in-itself relying on something else, and thus divided. The result is to Hegel ‘the infinity or this absolute unrest of pure movement-by-itself [*Sichselbstbewegens*]’ (p. 126 (p. 101)).

This simple infinity, or the absolute concept, may be called the simple essence [*Wesen*] of life, the soul of the world, the universal blood, which is omnipresent, without being driven by any difference, but still interrupted, which rather is itself every difference, just as their uplifted being [*Aufgehobensein*], it pulsates within itself without moving, vibrates in itself without being restless. It is equal to itself [*sichselbstgleich*], for the differences are tautological; it is differences that are not. (Hegel 1807, p. 125 (1977, p. 100))

This movement must be considered so fundamental and objective that in a ontological sense it exists necessarily. According to Hegel life simply is, but its way of being is simultaneously disappearance and appearance,

death and birth, one and many etc.. This way of being is best described as the ontologically necessary and constantly changing material identity of what is different and formally contradictory, in short simply as material *flux*. To Hegel life is in-it-self a 'general fluidity', whose different 'parts' become 'independent' by negating 'the universal substance', 'the fluidity and continuity with it' (Hegel 1807, p. 136 f. (1977, p. 107)). Negating is first a 'consuming', and this maintains the independence of the being in question. This 'immediate unity', however, passes from a stage of 'immediate continuity' to be a 'reflected unity', which is the 'pure' or 'simple I' (p. 138 f. (p. 108 f.)).

Whereas Bataille focuses on the reproduction of life as a material development with a result that can be thought of as an *Aufhebung* and therefore within the sphere of history, what is at stake here for Hegel is only the initial constitution of conscious being by the negation of life as such. Hegel does not make any distinction here between the reproductive structure of a complex sexual being in relation to life and that of primitive asexual cells; both pass in the reproductive act between being one and two, continuous and discontinuous. Higher as well as lower forms of life proceed through the process of fission and fusion, continuity and discontinuity. The only difference between primitive life and higher forms is apparently the number of necessary elements in the process of reproduction and the complexity of the ordering.

4. Desire and conscious being

To understand what is at stake here, and how Bataille can be said to develop Hegel's dialectics beyond Hegel, it is necessary to be more detailed in the account of life and the initial constitution of the self. One can say that in Hegel's dialectics of life the ontologically necessary correlate of division and discontinuity must be attraction, and within the consciousness of one of the two sides such an attraction is experienced as a desire directed towards that which is different, i.e. the other or another. The human being is as self-conscious being constituted by the negation of life, which means that 'self-consciousness is certain of itself only by

the *Aufheben* of this other that presents itself to self-consciousness as independent life' (Hegel 1807, p. 139 (1977, p. 109)). If this desire is experienced as hunger, it is consciousness' desire to annihilate another independent living being, 'consuming' (p. 137 (p. 107)) the other, and such an annihilation of another being Hegel calls 'natural' or 'abstract negation' (p. 145 (p. 114)). This is precisely the primary movement of self-conscious being, still only in-it-self and not yet for-it-self, namely the desire for an opposite, which is 'a living thing' (p. 135 (p. 106)). Desire in this sense can therefore be considered a contradiction of life within the experience of consciousness: life giving birth to death. What in reality is one, self-conscious being-alive, develops into a contradictory opposition.

For Hegel, the problem for desire as consciousness is that satisfaction in it self makes the object of desire disappear, which leaves desire to look for a new object. However, regardless of whether desire is experienced from without or from within in the reproduction of life, it is not only directed towards nourishment, but also towards the other sex. The development of life towards higher forms is precisely expressed in this duality of desire. Whereas Hegel focuses on hunger, Bataille interprets desire primarily as the inner experience of sexual attraction. As such, desire naturally presupposes a difference; but, more importantly, it presupposes an opening up towards communication with another: 'the passage from the normal state to that of erotic desire presupposes in us the relative dissolution of the being constituted in the discontinuous order' (Bataille 1957, p. 23 (2001, p. 17)). It should also here be pointed out that satisfaction is not an abstract negation in the case of erotic desire, but an event that leaves the object capable of being negated and thus of satisfying desire again.

For Bataille, as for Hegel, desire must be considered the desire to become continuous with the other by negating its independency, to annihilate the other as (an)other. In relation to life independent continuous beings are discontinuous. Sexual activity must in this perspective be seen as the 'critical moment of the isolation' (Bataille 1957, p. 101 (p. 100)), and this crisis is solved by the real continuity of the moments of sexual union.

In a Bataillan perspective, however, this only makes desire even more contradictory. The desire of a being is directed towards a momentary union with another being that both annihilates and keeps the difference by uplifting it to a 'momentary continuity' (1957, p. 103 (2001, p. 103)). Such a momentary *Aufhebung* of independence and isolation gives, objectively speaking, birth to more life, that is, makes life as such grow, although the more we enjoy the act in it self the less we worry about the possible outcome, i.e. the children (1957, p. 103 (p. 102)).

Desire is necessary for the fusion of sexual reproduction and therefore for the growth of life, when first it has become sexualized; but desire is also a negation of life, creating contradictions within life at various levels. The discontinuity of life as experienced in desire forces every being to make distinctions and to choose in relation both to what to annihilate by consumption, and what to treat as attractive in the sexual sense. The necessity of choosing between the objects of desire introduces a pause, a temporal discontinuity that inhibits the continuous process of life, and a choice like this must be termed conscious in some rudimentary sense.

Conscious life is thus in itself a contradiction, and in an even more radical way than the contradictions at the unconscious level. As a contradiction conscious life appears within life itself, not as something anti-thetic coming from outside life, but exactly as the determinate negation of life by life itself. Such a consciousness of distinction and choice, however, demands justification, first in the simple form of reasons to make one distinction and not another, one choice instead of another, and later as full-blown subjective rationality, which claims to be in accordance with objective reason. This is the logic in 'the passage of existence in-it-self [*en soi*] to existence for-it-self [*pour soi*]', where the animal's 'sentiment of it-self' becomes a 'self-consciousness' (Bataille 1957, p. 100 (p. 99)).

In Hegel's account of life in the *Phenomenology* there is only movement and change, no development and no direction; history begins with the negation of life by conscious being and comes to an end when consciousness is realized as self-conscious being. With his concept of desire Bataille opposes Hegel's undifferentiated and ahistorical concept

of life and introduce a development, both within the process of life's reproduction of it-self and in the evolution from asexual to sexual reproduction. This also transforms Hegel's idea of history as nothing other than the progression of a collective spirit through experience to become absolute knowledge, which however only begins with the birth of individual human consciousness in the initial negation of nature. As Queneau notes, Bataille conceives of the dialectics of nature as constituting 'a sort of natural history' already in his early writings (Queneau 1963, p. 698). Bataille can be said to extend history back to the development of consciousness in nature, and can therefore also think of history as extending beyond the disappearance of man. In contrast to Hegel, Bataille thinks of life as historical, although this history has neither a beginning, nor any end, and this contrast reappears, when Bataille turns to the development of human consciousness.

Hegel's dialectics of being is objective in-it-self, as it is obvious in his conception of life, but the dialectical movement of conscious being only gets its validity for-it-self through conscious being's experience of its own development. This experience leads self-conscious-being to *Geist* and absolute knowledge, where being comes to know itself in-and-for-it-self. To both Hegel and Bataille self-consciousness is specifically human, but whereas Hegel thinks of its constitution as an undifferentiated negation of life as such, Bataille in his perspective speaks of the passage from animal to man as a 'dialectical process of development' (Bataille 1951, p. 36 (1993, p. 43)), that is, a material movement experienced as an inner experience of negation by being becoming human. Bataille notes that no one can know how this really happened in the natural history of human beings; what can be said with certainty is only how conscious life relates to reality as such, namely by negating it, by being moral and rational, by working, and by annihilating something else.

To Bataille this development is not just a matter of one negation and one *Aufhebung* of life, but a complex sequence of real material and historical negations, which together, through real inner experiences, finally lifts being up to become human. These negations are first of

all the universal taboos in relation to death and reproduction, which anthropological studies have called our attention to. As Bataille says, 'man is an animal which remains suspended [*interdit*] before death and sexual union' (1957, p. 53 (2001, p. 50)). It is not just a matter of the prohibition against incest, for instance, which to Bataille is just one particular 'aspect' of 'the totality of religious prohibitions' (1957, p. 54 (p. 51)). The point is that the confrontation with whatever is prohibited in this sense produces an inner experience, which cannot be caused only by what is experienced in itself. In a modern scientific perspective such a prohibition is 'not justified' and therefore 'pathological' as a 'neurosis', but, as Bataille stresses, this objective knowledge 'from without' does not make the experience disappear, and as seen 'from within' such a prohibition can both be 'global' and 'justifiable' (1957, p. 40 (p. 37)).

To Bataille what is prohibited in the taboo is the 'violence' of nature, and the human attitude is precisely the 'refusal' (1957, p. 64 (p. 61)) of such a violence. Prohibitions are thus negations of nature as experienced from consciousness. Without such prohibition human beings would never attain 'the clear and distinct consciousness [...] on which science is founded' (1957, p. 41 (p. 38)). The human 'no' to natural violence, however, is never definitive. According to Bataille it is only a pause, 'a momentary suspension, not a final standstill' (1957, p. 65 (p. 62)). The basic non-logical difference does not disappear, it just reaches a temporary unity, and this unity makes life's activity human, i.e. makes activity conscious and reasonable as *poiesis* and *praxis*. The resulting unity is not stable, but what Bataille would call a necessary impossibility. As such an impossibility, human life will break down again and again, not because of outer pressure, but because of the basic inner difference that cannot be annihilated, but keeps returning in new forms. It is not desire as such that breaks through civilization mechanically, but desire interpreted and thus transformed to a *Moment* of conscious being. In this form desire negates the basis of civilization, and it is in such acts of sovereignty that man transgresses the boundaries set by civilization.

5. Conclusion

If the conflict between the reasonable order of civilization and the subversive, violent pleasure of nature is understood theoretically as a logical contradiction it must be resolved, i.e., what was above described as the ontologically necessary contradiction in life as self-conscious being must be explained away. A non-conflicting, i.e. a non-dialectical, solution can only consist in siding with one or the other, idealizing either a self-defeating critique of civilization as such, or a pure and therefore senseless negation of nature as a whole. Hegel chose the last solution, accepting in the end only being uplifted to reason, spirit and absolute knowledge.

This is what Horkheimer termed the dogmatic aspect of Hegel's philosophy. However, if dialectics is understood in the sense proposed by both Horkheimer and Gadamer, i.e. as the method employed in Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a way of grasping change, one can oppose both theoretically and practically almost any given social organization to be, as Herbert Marcuse expresses it, 'in contradiction with its own truth' (Marcuse 1941, p. 51). Of course, these reasons must be specific, and the result of the negation will not be something entirely new *ex nihilo*, since truth, as Marcuse says, is 'a real process that cannot be put into a proposition' (1941, p. 100). But Hegel's dialectics makes it possible to conceive of politics as a matter of reason and truth, that is, as society's reflective and autonomous organization of itself, and not just a matter how the ruling classes organize the distribution of power and wealth.

Hegel's dialectics makes it possible to claim that a real existing society has not realized itself as a society if it is not a just society because the very concept of society implies justice. The practical opposition of a conscious being against such an insufficiently realized (and thus untrue) society can be said to be a determined negation, and the dialectical movement that it provokes becomes a real experience to conscious being. The theoretical aspect of such an opposition happens within the existing consciousness and can as such be labelled immanent critique, both in the logical and ontological sense.

The existing solution, i.e. self-conscious being as we know it, is the

result of an infinity of real negations and *Aufhebung*'s, but it can always be negated itself by practical scepticism, by consciousness demanding a reason, why the existing solution is worth choosing. As Hegel has demonstrated, it is possible to criticise and oppose any particular way of organizing our social being politically, just as it is possible to change that organization quite radically, if only we can give reasons that are acceptable to those affected by the change, i.e., reasons which hold in relation to the yardstick of the social being in question. Scepticism demands an acceptable reason for the determinate negation, and the critique will therefore always be immanent.

However, even without the dogmatic aspect of Hegel's philosophy, dialectics thus understood in terms of theoretical reasoning, i.e. in terms of logic and ontology, might be considered inhuman. Instead, inspired by the dialectics of Bataille, one could understand the basic contradiction in and of human life as just a conflict, a tension inherent in human and social being as such, and as such an ontological condition that is dealt with - and thus solved - practically every day. The point to discuss politically is therefore not whether we can dissolve what the dialectical tradition would call the contradictions of the existing solution and reach the truth of the social being in question. The contradictions are always-already solved practically, and the question is only how to make these practical solutions better.

No society is completely homogenous, since any human being takes part in more than one social being, e.g., families, classes, subcultures, associations, etc. The social being is in constant motion and change, and man as a self-conscious being is in itself in conflict, constantly negating nature and culture in himself and outside, obeying the norms and transgressing them, working and enjoying life, alone and together, thinking and acting. The only thing that does not make sense in such a dialectical materialist perspective is to hope for and attempt to realize a fixed ideal of conscious social being, once and for all, a final and eternally valid solution.

And maybe this is the problem, namely, that Bataille's dialectics is so

thoroughly atheist and materialist that it does not lend any ontological credit or epistemological validity to those pure ideals and values that we normally let ourselves be motivated by in politics, morality, and religion. Bataille's dialectics allow for critique and improvements, but there is nothing in Bataille's materialism that attributes ideal meaning and validity to some individual actions; there is nothing unconditional and absolute worth dying for, since such ideal values are just death in a symbolic form, fixed solutions that negate life. Reality changes, but since it is difficult to give reasons for choosing between various lines of closure and action, the postponement and the pauses keep getting longer. Politics demands a negation of change in the form of a disciplined effort over time, and a disciplined organisation powerful enough to exercise authority, again over time. Revolts are always possible, but revolutions and reforms, that is, real political action, require fixed goals and sometimes inhuman discipline, treating human beings almost like things. In relation to such demands, Bataille's materialist dialectics, his recognition of the validity of inner experience as such and his radical critique of authority, risk becoming a mystifying ideology for a world organized only by the market, since no long term political action, no persistent use of force, seem legitimate in Bataille's perspective.

To sum up, contrary to the views of Foucault and Derrida, Bataille is one of the few twentieth century philosophers, who have actually taken Hegel's totalizing concept of dialectics seriously, acknowledging the importance of consciousness for the process and developing it in a consistently materialist way. Bataille describes the processes of nature and human culture dialectically, without comforting himself with dreams and hopes of ideals of a harmony that history or experience will realize in the end. As such Bataille's dialectics makes it possible to criticize not just any given society, but any attempt to give social being a determinate form, any vision about the perfect society, and it is this anti-idealism that Foucault and Derrida perceive as a critique of dialectics.

This anti-idealism, however, is also a source of a great vagueness in Bataille's work when it comes to saying positively how society should

be. For Bataille to believe in an ideal, which can demand a sacrifice of humanity, would mean that we must negate dialectics undialectically, willingly not accepting change, that is, changing change into rest, forming the identity of identity and difference, the unity in rest incorporating motion and change as *Moment's*, as a conscious act accepting the unacceptable, believing the unbelievable, in spite of knowing all beliefs to be futile. Needless to say, this is not easy.

In short, with an epistemology and an ontology like Bataille's, it is very difficult to believe in anything worth dying for. And that's a shame. The world is in need of political action that can confront the fundamentalist belief in the blessings of market economics with equally strong beliefs in human solidarity and the possibility of doing politics with respect for human reason. We may have to reject Bataille's material dialectics, not in order to be able to criticize, but in order to believe in the possibilities of practical politics.

Endnotes

1 All quotation have been translated from the original texts by the present author, but have been compared with authoritative translations when available.

2 Although making claims about Hegelian dialectics, in 1932 Bataille had not studied Hegel as such (Bataille 1958, p. 615). It was only after following Koyré's and especially Kojève's lectures from 1933–39 that Bataille can be said to know the 'right' Hegel (Queneau 1963, p. 700). From then on, when Bataille refers to Hegel, he is normally careful to specify that he is discussing 'the fundamentally Hegelian thought of Alexandre Kojève' (Bataille 1955, p. 326), as it is expressed in the translations and notes from lectures, edited and published by Queneau (Kojève 1947). However, as Derrida notes, when referring to the *Phenomenology*, Bataille is not consistent in his use of Kojève's translation (Derrida 1967, p. 27 (1978, p. 436)), and this indicates that Bataille was familiar with Hyppolite's translation from 1941.

3 The conceptual connection between these three terms is made explicit by Paul Ludwig Landsberg (1934, p. 178 f.), who was a close friend of Bataille in the 30'ies (Bataille 1935, p. 266 ff.).

4 To many liberal and left-wing rationalists such an organic way of understanding of reality in its totality is assumed to be irrational and as such in itself leading to fascism. Whatever can be said of this general line of reasoning, when it comes to Bataille, the charge is up against not only his explicit statements, personal sympathies, and organisational practice, but also the standard definition of fascism employed by political science (Sørensen 2001).

5 Unfortunately, the english translator of the *Phenomenology* has chosen to depart

from “a rigid consistency in rendering Hegelian locutions’ (Miller 1977, p. xxxi). It has therefore been necessary to correct the wording in most of the quotations used here.

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Dialectics of Recognition: Selfhood and Alterity

Arne Grøn

Dialectics – of Recognition

Dialectics is a key issue in the Hegelian legacy in modern philosophy. If we want to reconsider this legacy, the dialectics of *recognition* offers more than just an example. It turns dialectics itself into a question. This is a thesis to be developed and argued for, but let me begin by briefly indicating the context for my discussion.

Dialectics concerns relations of identity and difference. It originates in the interplay of different perspectives in a dialogue, in particular the interplay between questions and different positions taken to what is in question. Philosophically, dialectics reflects on this communicative situation and asks how it is possible for us to orient ourselves in a world of changing differences, and thus to articulate that *something* is different or the same. Not only is the situation itself dialectical, our thinking moves in differences of perspectives and positions in order to articulate relations of identity and difference. When dialectics seeks to account for the situation in which it originates, that is: the interplay of different perspectives, the question of identity and difference is intensified as a dialectics of selfhood and alterity. But this turns identity and difference into critical issues that affects and questions dialectics itself. Is dialectics, as an account of *relations* of identity and difference, a dialectics of *identity*?

If it is, is *alterity* integrated into the dialectics of selfhood? Does dialectics turn alterity into a moment of self-realization? Such questions reflect a Levinasian critique of dialectics. But how can we articulate radical, irreducible *difference* without a notion of identity being at stake?

In this article, I will review the dialectics of recognition along this line of questioning. The dialectics of recognition deals with relations of different perspectives as a question of selfhood and alterity. If we turn to Hegel, the dialectics of recognition becomes a question of selfhood and alterity in particular in the context of a *phenomenology* of spirit, but this makes our critical question even more pertinent: does a dialectics of recognition, especially as a turning-point in the phenomenology of *spirit*, lead to a totalizing dialectics of identity that establishes an identity encompassing self-identity and alterity of the other?

My interpretation of Hegel will be limited in scope. I will only consider in some detail chapter IV A of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 'Selbständigkeit und Unselbständigkeit des Selbstbewußtseins; Herrschaft und Knechtschaft'.¹ If we want to consider the dialectics of recognition after Hegel, several candidates would be obvious. Sartre would be one of them, while Kierkegaard would not. To bring Kierkegaard, and moreover *Works of Love*, into this discussion is not an obvious approach to the Hegelian legacy. In fact, dialectics is a Kierkegaardian theme, as a dialectics of existence, but not it would seem as a dialectics of *recognition*. The *problem* of recognition, however, is of critical importance in *Works of Love*. To discuss it in this context may help us to explicate the problem of recognition as a matter of ways of seeing, or, in other words, to unfold the dialectics of recognition as a dialectics of vision. This enterprise involves an unorthodox reading of *Works of Love* for which I have argued in other studies (e.g., Grøn 1998).

In this article, I will focus on a sequence of related questions. First, what is a *dialectics* of recognition? Second, what is the role of vision in a dialectics of *recognition*? Third, how does one account for the *normative* dimension of recognition when recognition is taken as a matter of dialectics? Fourth, can we reformulate a dialectics of selfhood and alterity

in terms of the problem of *subjectivity*?

Phenomenology of Spirit – Dialectics of Perspectives

In Hegel, dialectics deals not only with identity and difference, but with *relations* of identity and difference. Moreover, dialectics deals also with the relations of different *perspectives* implied in talking about a *world* of identity and difference. This way of staging and transforming dialectics takes place in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Phenomenology of spirit can be taken as a phenomenology of perspectives in the following two senses: (1) It is a phenomenology of fundamentally different ways of relating: to an object, to oneself, and to others (implying others relating to oneself). In seeing how these different ways of relating come to appear, we come to see how they are interrelated. Self-relating is implied in relating to an object, relating to others is implied in relating to oneself. Thus, the phenomenology of spirit is about the relation of these different ways of relating. According to this reading, *spirit* concerns the relation of the different ways of relating: consciousness (of an object), self-consciousness and intersubjectivity. The turning-point in the phenomenology of spirit is that these ways of relating are not just different ways of relating oneself to the world, but become a matter of different perspectives: others seeing oneself and the world differently. This turn takes place in the dialectics of recognition. Only this turn makes it possible to speak of a phenomenology of spirit.² Differences *in* perspectives thus enter the phenomenology of relations: not only relating to others implied in relating to oneself, relating to others implies *others* relating to oneself. Furthermore, it can be argued that this is not just implied in, but transcends, my relating to others.

(2) Phenomenology of spirit thus takes the form of a phenomenology of perspectives. But what do we, the readers of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, come to see? If we take the notion of spirit as our lead, the answer would be that we come to see how different perspectives of the world are related to each other *in* differing from each other. Hegel's

phenomenology of spirit is dialectical, firstly in the sense of overcoming the appearance of consciousness being on one side and the object being on the other side, thereby overcoming the isolation of beings, secondly in the intensified sense of establishing spirit as ‘unity in doubling’ (Hegel 1807, 108f.). The question then follows: does a phenomenology of *spirit* exceed a phenomenology of different perspectives of the world in that it shows how these perspectives presuppose each other in being different? Is the phenomenology of spirit in this sense a *dialectics* of perspective: overcoming the perspectival character of consciousness? If it is, it would be a *phenomenology* of spirit in focusing on what takes place between different perspectives (they are interrelated in differing), and it would be a phenomenology of *spirit* encompassing differences in perspective. Let us look more closely into the dialectics of recognition, as the turning-point in a phenomenology of spirit (making phenomenology of consciousness into a phenomenology of spirit).

Dialectics of Recognition – Logic of Recognition

In focusing on the ‘turning-point’, I can limit myself to the section (chapter IV A) on independence and dependence of self-consciousness in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I shall not attempt to follow its movements in detail. It is often identified with the dialectics of master and slave, but if we take a closer look at Hegel’s text it is clear, I think, that it has a double beginning.³ It does not only contain a dialectics of recognition, in the form of the dialectics of master and slave. It also defines the ‘pure concept of recognition’.⁴ The dialectics of recognition only comes in as a second beginning. First, the pure movement of recognition is presented: ‘Die Bewegung ist also schlechthin die gedoppelte beider Selbstbewußtsein. Jedes sieht *das andre* dasselbe tun, was es tut; jedes tut selbst, was es an das andre fodert; und tut darum, was es tut, auch nur insofern, als das andre dasselbe tut; das einseitige Tun wäre unnütz; weil, was geschehen soll, nur durch beide zu Stande kommen kann’ (110).⁵ In short, this means that the two parties *anerkennen* sich, als *gegenseitig sich anerkennend*’ (ibid.).⁶ Recognition is a movement, but a redoubled one in that recognition

demands reciprocity.

So much for the first beginning: the pure concept of recognition, or the pure movement of recognition. This first part concerns what recognition is, according to its concept, and provides the answer: recognition is reciprocal. The second beginning is now announced as follows: 'Dieser reine Begriff des Anerkennens, der Verdopplung des Selbstbewußtseins in seiner Einheit, ist nun zu betrachten, wie sein Prozeß für das Selbstbewußtsein erscheint' (110).⁷ Hegel thus distinguishes between the (pure) *concept* of recognition (recognition is a reciprocal movement taking place between two parties relating to each other) and the *process*, which is 'its' process ('sein Prozeß'), the process of the notion of recognition. It shows what is implied in the concept, but it does so in a negative manner.

In the logic of recognition it was said that the unilateral act, or project, is useless: 'das einseitige Tun wäre unnützt, weil, was geschehen soll, nur durch beide zu Stande kommen kann' (110). However, the dialectics of recognition in the form of master and slave begins with the project of unilateral recognition: The point of departure is that 'das eine nur Anerkanntes, [das] andre nur Anerkennendes ist' (110).⁸ The master is recognized without recognizing, the slave recognizing without being recognized. This point of departure of the second beginning, the dialectics of recognition, thus brackets or even negates the point of the first beginning, the logic of recognition: that recognition is reciprocal. The project implied in the second beginning is one-sided in two senses: it is the project of the master, and it is the project of being recognized without recognizing. But the *process* of this project is a process taking place *between* the two parties, master and slave. This is what makes it a *dialectics* of recognition.

The exposition of this process, the dialectics of master and slave, can be viewed as a sustained argument in three main steps. It shows why the project of being recognized without recognizing must fail. Put most briefly, the argument can be reformulated as follows. *First*, the relation of dependence and independence between master and slave is *reversed*. In leading his life as a master of life, the master depends on the slave

working up objects, giving them form, his form. Thus, the life of the master becomes a life provided for by the slave. The master has the other self-consciousness, the slave, mediating his (the master's) own relations to a world of objects. *Second*, the master is only master *before* the slave: he can only come to see himself as master *through* the slave seeing him as master. He has his self-consciousness in the other. And *third*, the project of unilateral recognition – to be recognized by the other without recognizing him – fails for intrinsic reasons. The master seeks recognition, but he himself destroys the very condition for *being* recognized. This is the crucial argument: to be recognized by someone that I do not myself recognize is not recognition. It does not, for me, have the value of myself being recognized. I have myself deprived the other of the infinite significance of being a person that is the condition if the recognition offered by the other is to have value for me as a person. The dialectics of recognition thus takes place at more than one level: as the reversal of dependence and independence, as seeing oneself through the others seeing oneself, and as the relation to the other as a matter of how one sees the other. We should add that it is also a matter of recognizing oneself as being already involved in the relation as the one seeing the other. In this sense, the dialectics of recognition concerns the presupposition made in the relation to the other. I can only be recognized by someone that I myself recognize. Recognition is mutual.

One could argue that the master still gets some sort of recognition. After all, he is the master. Unilateral recognition might to some extent prove to be effective, but it is not actual or fulfilled: it depends on the other who is being deprived of significance, and thereby leaves the desire of the master for recognition unsatisfied. The criterion implied is that one can only be recognized as independent in a relation in which one can acknowledge being oneself dependent on the other. Thus, the dialectics of recognition is a dialectics of dependence and independence, with the implication that the relation to the other is reversed, as the other's relation to oneself. It is a dialectics of perspectives. This means that recognition is in a twofold sense about being a self: being recognized is to be recognized

as a self, independent, 'selbständig', 'für sich', but this can only be achieved in relation to others that one recognizes as selves, that is, as independent, relating on their part to oneself. Being a self, independent, thus depends on others recognizing one as independent, but – we should add – in recognizing others, one is *already a self* relating to others (this last point will be of critical importance later).

This means that we should distinguish between two forms of the dialectics of recognition. First, there is a negative dialectics, as illustrated by the dialectics of master and slave. Second, recognition, as reciprocal, only succeeds in a paradoxical dialectics of in-dependence. What is of critical importance, however, is that this dialectics of in-dependence does not absorb the *negative* character of a dialectics of recognition. This indicates that we should make a further distinction between different forms of negativity. The negative character of a dialectics of recognition is not exhausted by the dialectics of master and slave. The latter is a negative dialectics of recognition in the double sense that the point of departure is negative: the project of being recognized *without* recognizing, and that the process is negative: the project fails, and fails from within. Through the *experience* of the negative process the point of the first approach, the logic of recognition, is confirmed: recognition only succeeds as reciprocal. Thus, the negative dialectics of recognition shows what the logic of recognition says. But this does not mean that negative dialectics is instrumental. The two distinctions I have made here should be taken together. First, dialectics of recognition can be taken in a positive sense, as a dialectics of the logic of recognition. Reciprocal recognition is a positive dialectics of dependence and independence: *being* recognized as a *self* implies recognizing the *other* self. In the positive sense, dialectics of recognition concerns the interdependence of self-relation and relation to the other self that is relating to oneself. Second, the dialectics of recognition still has a negative character to it: it is about experiencing alterity. Only then can the dialectics of in-dependence be possible. The experience of alterity is what reciprocity is about. This however anticipates the further argument to be developed in the following section.

Dialectics of Recognition

We are now in a position to answer, in a preliminary manner, our first, opening, question: in what sense is the dialectics of recognition *dialectics*? As we have seen, the dialectics of recognition in the form of the dialectics of master and slave is *negative*, in contrast to the logic of recognition. Through the negative experience – that the project of one-sided recognition fails – we come to see what recognition is, according to its concept: reciprocal. But this is an *experience* of reciprocity. In relating, one experiences that there is another side to the relation in which one takes part. In the perspective being reversed for oneself, the other shows herself to be an other self, capable of reversing the relation. Thus the dialectics of recognition does not just illustrate the point already made in the logic of recognition: that recognition is reciprocal. It is also about *coming to see* what reciprocity means in terms of experiencing alterity. Recognition is a matter of reciprocity, but reciprocity is a matter of recognizing alterity. In this perspective, we, the readers of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, also face the question what the dialectics of recognition means. How should we interpret it as *dialectics*?

Dialectics defined in terms of *relations* of identity and difference is intensified as a dialectics of recognition: it is about relations *between* parties relating to each other. Relations take place between parties taking part in the relations, that is: in and through their relating to each other. In this intensified mode, dialectics concerns the relation between self-relation and relation to others, between oneself relating to others and others relating to oneself, and, consequently, between two forms of doubling: first, the doubling of oneself relating to the other and the other relating to oneself, and second, between relating to oneself and to the other. Dialectics concerns the interdependence in this relation between oneself and the other. On both sides, self-relation and relation to others are intertwined. But this poses the question: if spirit means ‘unity in doubling’, does this only apply to the self (be that oneself or the other self), or is there a unity in the doubling of self *and* the other? If the latter

is the case, dialectics of identity is totalizing. However, it need not be. What I would argue for is that a *dialectics* of recognition can accentuate a critical difference in perspective. It is the difference between oneself relating to others and others relating to oneself, and even more critically the difference in perspective implied in the notion of alterity. Let me explain.

The dialectics of recognition not only exemplifies dialectics, in terms of *relations* of identity and difference, but turns dialectics itself into a question: is it a dialectics of *identity*? In a sense it is. Identity is, as identity of a self, dialectical. We are ourselves, not *in* ourselves, but in ourselves *relating* to others. But is *alterity* also dialectical? It seems so. It is not only alterity of the other. One also becomes an other to oneself in relating to others. There is, however, a critical difference in perspective here. I can and should understand myself as a self in relating to the other, but that is not the way I should see the other. Of course, the other is also a self in relating, on his or her part, to others, including me. But her *alterity*, in being an other, means that she is *in herself*. That is how *I* should see her. In this sense, her alterity is *for me*, as an *ethical* demand: I should see her as other, i.e., in herself, outside of my relation to her. Thus, the difference in perspective is ethical. I cannot take others in the sense that I should take myself. This ethical asymmetry shows up in the middle of a dialectics of recognition that accentuates reciprocity. How is this possible? It has to do with the *dialectics* of recognition.

In order to bring out the link between the difference in perspective implied in the notion of alterity and the character of dialectics, let me first point to a remarkable, but easily ignored feature of Hegel's phenomenological dialectics. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, there is a dialectics of consciousness at work. Consciousness shows itself to be more than it takes itself to be. It comes to experience itself in experiencing the object differently. What makes the movement of consciousness dialectical is that consciousness escapes and encounters itself. It does not simply plan to take a move which it then carries out. It is itself moved in relating to the object that turns out to be different from what consciousness first

thought. Consciousness itself turns out to be other than it first took itself to be. Only slowly does it come to consciousness. Hegel's phenomenological dialectics is about this detour in coming to know oneself. The detour has to do with consciousness experiencing the object, the other, the world, and in this consciousness itself, to be different from what it thought. This dialectics of consciousness is intensified in the dialectics of recognition. The other *shows herself* to be different in reversing my relation to the object, to the other herself, to the world. Consciousness itself is altered. It is not just consciousness, but one among others. We can come to see ourselves as others to the other. As consciousness, we not only escape ourselves in relating to object, others, the world. We become distanced from our own perspective on objects, others, the world, and thereby from ourselves.

In Hegel, however, the dialectics of consciousness seems to be absorbed by the phenomenology of *spirit*. Absolute spirit comes to appear in reconciling consciousness in conflict: consciousness as acting and consciousness as judging. Here, at the end of the chapter on spirit, the dialectics of recognition ends in reconciliation as a reciprocal recognition that is absolute spirit.⁹ Thus, differences in perspectives, as conflicting, are overcome by each consciousness recognizing the other in giving up what is one-sided in its own relating to the other. But this is only possible in coming to see oneself as bearer of an encompassing consciousness, that is, in seeing oneself as a vehicle of spirit. Thus, spirit realizes itself in and through finite subjects relating to each other. The dialectics of consciousness then seems to be put into the service of a phenomenology of spirit encompassing differences in perspectives between self and other. Against this background, how should we reformulate a *dialectics* of recognition?

I would suggest two moves. The first is to continue our line of thought and further unfold the difference in perspectives that is implied in the notion of alterity. What makes the dialectics of recognition into a *dialectics* is the experience of *alterity*: we *encounter* the other escaping our grasp, seeing the world differently, and seeing us in ways that we cannot

see ourselves. As a self, the other is in herself, although she relates to us. In relating, she shows herself to be in herself. This means that there is no 'unity in doubling' between self and the other. Interpreted along the line of a dialectics of consciousness, the dialectics of recognition cannot be integrative. But we should focus even more on the *subjectivity* involved in differences of perspective. In the other reversing my perspective, I become distanced from myself, and yet, it is crucial that *I* am seeing the other seeing me. Although I can become an other to myself, I am *not* other in the same sense as others are (to me). I am to take myself in ways that I cannot take others: *as myself*. The critical difference in perspective implies that internal alterity (being another to oneself) is radically different from the alterity of the other.

The second move is to review the *negativity* implied in a dialectics of recognition. It does not simply amount to what recognition is not: one-sided. What recognition is (reciprocal) is learnt through negative experiences (of reciprocity). But the negative character is even more intrinsically related to the issue of recognition. In relations between self and other, recognition is at issue, but what is recognition about? What is at stake? Recognition is a matter of dialectics in the sense that self and other relate to each other. In the relation between self and other, the problem is how they relate, that is: how they see themselves and each other. If recognition is to be reciprocal, each should see the other as another self, independent, 'für sich'. This indicates the normative dimension of recognition already touched upon. The normative dimension, however, is only to be accounted for when we take the implied negative possibility into account. There are various ways of *not* recognizing the other (and also of not recognizing oneself). We learn what recognition means in response to negative possibilities inherent in seeing one another, that is: negative possibilities that tell something about us, what we are as subjects. The dialectics of *recognition* thus opens up the issue of normativity and negativity, and the issue of subjectivity. We are facing the three guiding questions following our opening question on dialectics, i.e., vision, normativity, and subjectivity.

As already indicated, it is difficult to bring out in Hegel's dialectics of recognition the normative dimension of recognition and the implied subjectivity. When negativity is put into the service of a dialectics of spirit that is to overcome the isolated perspectives of consciousness, the normative dimension of recognition seems to dissolve into dialectics. Still, the dialectics of recognition within Hegel's phenomenology of spirit displays a crucial feature of dialectics in terms of selfhood and alterity. What makes it into a *dialectics* of recognition? The turning-point is that we *encounter* the other seeing the world and us differently. Not only does the object stand against us. The other stands against us in the sense that the perspective can be reversed – for us. This seems to be what Sartre emphasized in his analysis of the gaze.

The Gaze of the Other

The 'turning-point' in the dialectics of recognition, that which turns it into a dialectics, is the encounter of the other escaping and reversing my perspective. It is the experience of reciprocity: that there is another side to the relation to the other, namely the other relating to me. Seeing the other is turned around in the other seeing me. My perspective can be reversed – for me. If we reinterpret the dialectics of recognition in terms of the experience of the other escaping my perspective by herself seeing the world to which I belong, and seeing me seeing her, how does this experience take place? I come to see the other escaping my seeing her. I come to see that she, for herself and by herself, sees me and the world between us. But how does this happen? Sartre's answer, in re-interpreting Hegel's dialectics of recognition, is to insist on the almost traumatic experience of being seen by the other. I am, for myself through the other, turned into an object (Sartre 1943, 298ff. / 276ff.).

For Sartre, the point of departure is once again a phenomenology of perspective: objects present themselves in my perspective. In this perspective, others are objects. But I come to see that they are objects of a special kind, objects around which objects present themselves. In my perspective I discover other perspectives. My world is stolen, Sartre says.

But I only come to realize this in being myself turned into an object. The other brings one's exteriority before oneself. One becomes another for oneself through the other.

In Sartre's account of the look or the gaze of the other it is difficult to discern the relation of negativity and normativity implied in the problem of recognition: seeing the other as other. In what follows I will outline a reading of Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* in terms of a dialectics of vision that focuses on the difference inherent in seeing the other as other.

Dialectics of Vision

In a passage on the criterion of the self in the second part of *The Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard has Anti-Climacus use the example of a master who is a self directly before slaves: 'A cattleman who (if this were possible) is a self directly before his cattle is a very low self, and, similarly, a master who is a self directly before his slaves is actually no self – for in both cases a criterion is lacking' (Kierkegaard 1849, 193 / 79). What is in focus here is not the relation between master and slave as such, but the question: what it means to be a self. To be a master is an example: it is a way of being a self. It is, however, not an example taken at random. By using the master as an example, Anti-Climacus is able to focus on the problem of the criterion of the self. A master is only a master by having the criterion by which he measures himself against slaves. He sees himself before slaves who see him as a master. The comment made by Anti-Climacus is important: the master actually lacks a criterion for the self. That by which he measures himself he does not himself see as a self. The conclusion drawn by Anti-Climacus is that the master is actually no self. As in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the relation of master and slave is viewed as a dialectics of self-consciousness, a dialectics that is negative in the sense that the relation fails to bring about genuine self-consciousness.

This short example used in the second part of *The Sickness unto Death* appears only to be an isolated reference to the dialectics of recognition. The *problem* of recognition, however, is not a marginal but rather a

crucial one in Kierkegaard, even though he does not directly speak of recognition. What he does speak of, however, is *vision*: seeing and being seen. This is especially the case in *Works of Love*. And what is particularly important in our context is that, in *Works of Love*, vision plays a crucial role by virtue of its normative significance. The ethics in *Works of Love* can be interpreted as an ethics of vision (Grøn 2002). However, the role played by vision is an ambiguous one. The normative significance of vision is to be seen from its negative possibilities. Thus, to the *ethics* of vision belongs a *dialectics* of vision. And in this dialectics of vision one can discern a remodelled or even intensified dialectics of recognition.

Let me just give two examples, a negative and a positive one. The negative one is to show how the problem of recognition is accentuated through the dialectics of vision. It is a passage taken from discourse II C in the first part of *Works of Love*, a passage which also appears to refer to the dialectics of master and slave:

The times are past when only the powerful and the prominent were human beings – and the others were bond servants and slaves. This is due to Christianity, but from this it does not follow that prominence [*Fornembed*] or power can no longer become a snare for a person so that he becomes enamored of this dissimilarity [*forseer sig paa denne Forskjellighed*], damages his soul [*tager Skade paa sin Sjæl*], and forgets what it is to love the neighbor. If this happens now, it certainly must happen in a more hidden and secret way, but basically it remains the same. Whether someone savoring his arrogance [*Hovmod*] and his pride openly gives other people to understand that they do not exist for him and, for the nourishment of his arrogance, wants them to feel it as he demands expressions of slavish submission from them, or whether he slyly and secretly expresses that they do not exist for him simply by avoiding any contact with them ... – these are basically one and the same (Kierkegaard 1847, 80 / 74).¹⁰

As in the passage in *The Sickness unto Death*, the relation between master

and slave is important, but not in focus. The way it is displaced, however, is telling. The discourse only refers to the relation between master and slave as a point of departure. It then makes a turn in that it re-directs the reader's attention to more hidden or subtle ways of depriving another person of significance, that is: of not recognizing the other. These ways are ways of seeing. What is here (mis)translated as 'becomes enamored of this dissimilarity' reads in Danish: '*forseer sig paa denne Forskjellighed.*' '*At forse sig*' means to do wrong (in Danish: *at begå en forseelse*), but the literal meaning is informative: '*at for-se sig på*' is to see wrongly, namely to see in such a way that one fixes one's eyes on something, thereby not seeing something else which one should have seen. The discourse indicates that one avoids seeing this something else by fixing one's eyes, for-seeing. In this case, what one looks fixedly upon is the dissimilarity between oneself and the other, thereby not seeing the basic equality, 'the kinship of all human beings [*Slægtskabet mellem Menneske og Menneske*]' (76 / 69).

The passage is even more remarkable if we define dialectics of recognition as a dialectics of self-relation and relation to others. The passage demonstrates and intensifies the dialectics between relation to the other and self-relation. Kierkegaard expresses this tersely, in explicating what is implied in seeing the other wrongly: to do wrong by seeing wrongly (*at forse sig på*) means to damage one's soul (*at tage skade på sin sjæl*). To see the other person wrongly is a snare for *oneself*. One ensnares or enslaves oneself *in* seeing the other person wrongly.

This is demonstrated by interpreting the phenomenon of arrogance or pride. In arrogance, one '*gives* other people to understand' that *they* do not exist for oneself. The point in doing so is to tell others how *they* should see themselves in seeing oneself, to *make* them see oneself as superior. Arrogance is an attitude towards others, and, in this, it is also a way of seeing oneself, but this self-understanding depends on others seeing themselves as inferior to the arrogant one. If they do not see themselves in this way, arrogance does not work. In arrogance, one ignores others, but this is precisely a way of seeing others, and it is so in a rather complicated manner: it is a way of telling others how to see

themselves, and the persons to see in this way are the others themselves. In seeing in arrogance, in ignoring, one gives others to understand. As arrogance is a way of seeing, so is envy. The relation to others here seems to be viewed from opposite perspectives: from above (arrogance) or from below (envy). Kierkegaard, however, describes envy as a figure parallel to arrogance (85f. / 80f.), making the same point: in envying others one ensnares oneself. Arrogance and envy are two ways of seeing the other wrongly, thereby damaging one's soul (cf. 76f. / 70).

To conclude, in the dialectics of vision the *problem* of recognition is understood in an intensified mode, accentuating the negative possibilities inherent in vision, possibilities that pertain to the issue of identity and alterity in self-relation in relation to the other self. The dialectics of vision is not only a way of exemplifying the dialectics of recognition, but a more radical way of understanding this dialectics. To this negative example let me add a second one where the interdependence of self-relation and relation to others is demonstrated in a positive manner.

The Other's Own

This second example is taken from discourse IV 'Love Does Not Seek Its Own' in the second part of Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*. A central motive in *Works of Love* is human equality, that is: the equality *between* humans *as* humans. In this discourse, Kierkegaard accentuates individuality or distinctiveness [*Eiendommelighed*] in emphasizing the basic human equality:

Love does not seek its own. The truly loving one does not love his own distinctiveness but, in contrast, loves every human being according to his distinctiveness; but 'his distinctiveness' is what for him is his own [det for ham Egne]; that is, the loving one does not seek his own; quite the opposite, he loves what is the other's own (268 / 269).

In our context, the point of the passage is that love, as neighbour love, sees and affirms what is the other's own. Love recognizes the other in the sense

of affirming what it sees: the other, but it does so in a movement beyond or against our ways of seeing and identifying the other: the other is seen and affirmed as distinctive from us, in her own. In contrast, the domineering person 'lacks flexibility, lacks the pliability to comprehend others; he demands his own from everyone, wants everyone to be transformed in his image, to be trimmed according to his pattern for human beings' (269 / 270). 'The domineering person' is the rendering of '*den Herskesyge*', the one who wants to be the master. '*Den Herskesyge*' will not see or affirm the distinctiveness of the other. His way of seeing the other is to demand his own, seeking his own image. Thus, distinctiveness is first and foremost the distinctiveness of the other: that which distinguishes the other from oneself. In this sense one should not love one's own distinctiveness.

Still, one's own distinctiveness is also to be affirmed or accepted. A human being *receives* her or his distinctiveness. This gives a clue to Kierkegaard's emphasis on the duty of self-love (in discourse II A in the first part of *Works of Love*). What it means to love oneself in the right way is learnt in loving the neighbour. It implies accepting oneself as an other, i.e.: as other than the one that one conceives of in seeking one's own. Consequently, Kierkegaard links the difficulty of affirming the distinctiveness of the other together with the difficulty of accepting one's own distinctiveness:

The small-minded person has never had the courage for this God-pleasing venture of humility and pride: *before* God to be oneself – the emphasis is on "before God," since this is the source and origin of all distinctiveness. The one who has ventured this has distinctiveness: he has come to know what God has already given him, and in the same sense he believes completely in everyone's distinctiveness. To have distinctiveness is to believe in the distinctiveness of everyone else, because distinctiveness is not mine but is God's gift by which he gives being to me, and he indeed gives to all, gives being to all (270 / 272).

The point of this second passage is that to have distinctiveness, to be

oneself, is to believe in the distinctiveness of everyone else. Here we find the double emphasis on the interdependence of self-relation and relation to the other (I do not have distinctiveness on my own) *and* on the distinctiveness of the individual. This is an intensified form of the dialectics between independence and dependence which we first met in the dialectics of recognition.

Thus, the problem of recognition is accentuated in what I have called an ethics of vision. This implies a *dialectics* of vision both in a negative and a positive sense: it focuses on the power inherent in vision of identifying the other, thereby not seeing the other in her distinctiveness, and it focuses on the possibility of seeing the other in a movement beyond our own ways of seeing. Distinctiveness as independence is accentuated ethically as the independence of *the other*. According to *Works of Love*, the greatest beneficence is in love to help someone 'to become himself, free, independent, his own master [*sin Egen*], to help him stand alone' (272 / 274). Thus, in neighbour love, the issue of independence recurs, but as the independence of the other. We then seem to have the asymmetry reversed, compared to the dialectics of recognition in Hegel. *I* should be the one recognizing the independence of the other, without asking for reciprocity or for the perspective being reversed.

An ethics of vision harbours a dialectics of vision also in the sense that it emphasizes the interdependence of self-relation and relation to the other, but it does so in *ethically* emphasizing both the independence of the other *and* self-relation as self-acknowledgement. Also in this sense the dialectics of recognition is intensified. A dialectics of vision does not just explicate the interdependence of self-relation and relation to the other. It unfolds the interdependence *in* emphasizing both the independence of the other and one's own singularity. Thus, identity and alterity is accentuated in an ethics of vision: identity being interpreted as distinctiveness, alterity being accentuated against ways of seeing in identifying the other and ourselves.

Let me continue the more systematic reformulation in three steps, first on the complication of selfhood and alterity, second on dialectics of

recognition, and third on dialectics and ethics.

Selfhood and Alterity Revisited

The dialectics of recognition is often understood in terms of a theory of selfhood which claims that we become selves in being recognized. *Dialectics* of recognition however itself requires that we *are* selves: in relating to others relating to us. What is at stake in recognition therefore is selfhood in a normative sense, that is: a sense in which we, as selves, can fail. Selfhood in the normative sense does not consist in taking over ways others see us, but in appropriating what we are, as selves. We are the ones seeing others seeing us. Consequently, we are the ones to recognize the other. *Selfhood* depends on this active sense of recognition: not just on being recognized, but oneself *recognizing* the other, *seeing* the other *as other*. Thus, the normative sense of selfhood turns out to be a matter of recognizing *alterity*. This is in itself a crucial insight. The further critical point however is that this does not turn recognition of the other into a way of achieving selfhood. If we recognize the alterity of others in order to realize our own potentiality as selves, it is not alterity that we recognize, nor selfhood we achieve.

This means that the relation of selfhood and alterity is complicated in a way that affects the very sense of dialectics, defined in terms of *relations* of identity and difference. The dialectics of recognition does not simply transpose the issue of identity and difference into the issue of selfhood and alterity (so that selfhood would amount to self-identity and alterity to the difference of the other). By this I do not only mean that selfhood itself becomes a matter of alterity: seeing oneself as another (internal alterity) and recognizing the alterity of the other (external alterity). The point is that in a critical sense it is not possible simply to recognize the alterity of the other. To recognize the alterity of the other is to *see* that there are limits to *one's own seeing*. In this sense, our ways of seeing become twisted. Alterity is not just the difference of the other, but the other's identity. She is in herself, not just different from oneself, or different to oneself.

But how is the identity of the other then alterity? Is alterity her identity seen from oneself? In the sense that *we* should see the other as other, yes. But would alterity then not still point back to selfhood? Yes, but it does so in a double move: *we* are to see the other as other, and in this sense to affirm or to recognize her alterity, but this implies seeing that she is *in herself*, apart from us, beyond her relation to us. This alterity shows up precisely *in* her relations to us. There is transcendence *in* the relation to the other. Our relation to the other contains something it cannot encompass: the other (not) relating to us, beyond our relation to her. In our search for a critical reformulation, this is the point of a *dialectics* of recognition: that we encounter the other escaping us in herself seeing us and the world in between, and that *recognition* is at stake in our relating to the other. Alterity is not something that we just see and recognize, but that which we are challenged to recognize in ourselves coming to see differently, in seeing the other being beyond our seeing her.

What does this amount to? In reformulating a dialectics of recognition we will have to revisit the issue of selfhood and alterity. It is not possible to emphasize alterity (as not to be integrated) without a strong notion of selfhood. Selfhood is not just what is to come about in and through a dialectics of recognition, but is implied in seeing the other as to be recognized and in *recognizing* her. What then is the other to be recognized *as*? The answer seems to go in two directions: as a *self*, and as *the other*. However, what is to be recognized is the other (being) *in herself*, beyond our relating to her. But this is what *we* should come to see. As a self she escapes *us*, in herself seeing the world, in herself (not) relating to us. Alterity is an other identity: the other being herself. This is no shared identity. We can come to share understanding, in coming to understand ourselves differently. To recognize alterity implies the possibility of having one's own way of seeing transformed. This, however, is implied in a strong notion of selfhood.

Recognition of Dialectics Revisited

Thus, a dialectics of selfhood and alterity does not follow, but rather complicates the model of dialectics defined in terms of relations of

identity and difference. It accentuates *relation* as the relation between parties relating to each other, thereby making their relation into a relation, *taking it as* a relation. But as a relation between selves relating to each other, the relation itself is a matter of perspective. It is a relation of critical differences in perspective. Although we can and do take part in each other's lives, each has a life to live on her or his own.

What I have argued for is that reformulating the dialectics of recognition must do justice to *two, equally radical, insights*: 1. *Alterity* of the other implies that her *identity* is beyond my grasp (exteriority). 2. *Selfhood* means that I am myself as no other. If I am to myself an other, it is in a sense in which no other is (interiority). Both insights complicate the notion of self as relational. We are not ourselves in ourselves, but in relating to others, and in relating to others we become others to ourselves, but this internal alterity differs radically from the alterity of the other. Oneself as another implies: as no other.¹¹

How is it possible to reformulate the dialectics of recognition from these two insights into alterity and selfhood? First and foremost, alterity of the other accentuates selfhood of the self. This dialectics of alterity and selfhood is not about identifying oneself with the other, or of coming to see oneself in the other (as in Hegel). Instead, selfhood means that I am the one to recognize the other, that is: to see the other as other, in herself, *beyond me*. Alterity of the other is *for me*. In this sense I am myself and no other. Likewise, I can and should see the other as another in a sense in which *the other* cannot and should not. The other is not an other to herself in the sense of alterity that *I* face.

Why should these insights into alterity and selfhood be formulated in terms of recognition? Apparently, recognition means coming to see oneself in the other, re-cognizing the other as a self. This is at least what comes into the foreground in Hegel. However, in our reformulation, recognition is about re-cognizing limits to one's own seeing the other. It concerns the other beyond recognition in the sense of identification, but this demands recognition in the sense of recognizing the other in herself, that is: beyond what I see.

I have argued that the *dialectics* of recognition is about the other escaping one's grasp, and that this is what is to be recognized. What I should recognize is the alterity of the other in the almost paradoxical sense that she is in herself, beyond the relation to me, be that my relation to her or her relation to me. This is what *I* should see. Thus, alterity demands selfhood that becomes a matter of oneself recognizing the alterity of the other.

Let us take this reformulated dialectics of recognition one step further, unfolding the implication of what has just been said. Recognition is about the other beyond recognition. This demands recognition. And this is the dialectics of recognition reformulated. This 'beyond what I see' indicates that I will have to wait for the other to give her answer and for the other to ask questions that I was not waiting for. This waiting for the other is part of the dialectics of recognition.

How is it *dialectics* of recognition? In the double sense that first, dialectics is about the experience of alterity and the alterity of the other is what is to be recognized, and, second, it is an open question whether we actually recognize the other as other: in herself. *Recognizing this open character* is part of the recognition of the other. Dialectics is in this sense also a matter of *the other showing herself*. The dialectics of recognition thereby points to an ethics of vision.

This way of reinterpreting the *dialectics* of recognition seeks to do justice to the connection of negativity and normativity that I have indicated above. Dialectics is about experiencing alterity, but this turns out to be a matter of recognizing the other as other. The negative character of the dialectics of recognition shows recognition to be an open question: is it actually recognition? This in turn points back to *subjectivity*: the possibility of *failing* to recognize the other.

In sum, the dialectics of recognition is about alterity and selfhood in the strong sense indicated: the other escaping my grasp (the other in herself) and the self as not to be escaped (oneself as no other). The alterity of the other demands selfhood, and selfhood is about oneself recognizing the other being beyond one's relation to her. In this accentuated dialectics of alterity and selfhood recognition is what is at stake. This re-opens the

issue of dialectics and ethics that was too quickly closed in Hegel and in most of the Hegelian legacy.

Dialectics and Ethics

If we continue this line of reformulation, the dialectics of recognition opens up and requires an ethics of recognition. It is not as such an ethics of recognition. The point lies in the relation between dialectics and ethics.

Recognition is not simply a matter of dialectics, but is also an ethical demand.¹² It does not just come about in a process of relating, but requires each of the two parties to give up his or her one-sided way of holding to the relation. This normative surplus is to be seen in the negative possibility that the process fails to bring about recognition. Thus, it can be argued that normativity enters the dialectical process, being implied in the ways the two parties relate to each other. Otherwise, it would not be a dialectics of *recognition*. In that sense, the ethical demand is part of the process of parties relating to each other in a struggle for recognition.

How should we understand recognition as an ethical demand? It is a demand for reciprocity, but reciprocity itself implies the demand of oneself *recognizing*, not just of being *recognized*. In a second turn, recognition can be made into a demand to the other, but only on the condition of reciprocity. An ethics of recognition however does not simply amount to an ethics of reciprocity. It also implies asymmetry in the sense that recognizing the alterity of the other means to affirm an identity that does not depend on, but rather withdraws itself from, us. It is in this sense *alterity*: withdrawn, beyond, but for us.

Thus reformulated, recognition is about *us* seeing the other being *in herself*, beyond her relation to us. There is a critical limit to our seeing the other, and this is what we should see or recognize. Through this critical limit, vision and subjectivity are accentuated. Let me conclude by taking the issue of normativity, vision and subjectivity a bit further.

I have argued for a reinterpretation of the *dialectics* of recognition that makes the relation of dialectics and ethics more intrinsic than

traditionally conceived in the Hegelian legacy. As we have seen, the negative dialectics of recognition has a normative force to it, showing how one-sided recognition fails from within. As a dialectics, it points to the encounter of the other escaping our seeing the other. Moreover, in the *dialectics* of recognition something is at stake: recognition itself. But what is at stake in recognition? In answering, let me briefly return to the issue of negativity and normativity.

The problem of recognition pertains to the negative possibilities inherent in ways of seeing oneself and the other self. Recognition is about seeing and being seen. There is, however, a critical difference in both seeing and being seen. Recognition is about this difference. To recognize someone is not just to see, but to affirm what you see. In this sense, recognition is *about* seeing. It is to see in the emphatic sense of paying attention to or giving significance to what you see. To recognize is to see the other *as* other, that is: to affirm the other to be an other self, in herself. Here, however, lies the *problem* of recognition. It is possible to see the other in ways *not* affirming the other as other. The difference inheres in seeing. The manner in which one does not see can consist precisely in ways of seeing. For example, to ignore or to overlook is not simply *not to see*, but on the contrary, *ways of seeing*. We can see others in such a way that we do not see them (and, to make the case even more complicated, this can be a way of telling them how to see themselves, as already mentioned).

Taken along this line, the dialectics of recognition is a dialectics of vision: seeing others seeing oneself. The critical point is that one can relate to others in ways in which one ensnares oneself in seeing the other wrongly. Both possibilities, first the possibility of seeing without seeing, and second the possibility of ensnaring oneself in seeing the other wrongly, indicate the ethical significance of vision. What we should have is both a dialectics of vision and an ethics of recognition. The link between dialectics and ethics would be that the *dialectics* of recognition implies

that *recognition* is at stake in the relation between the two parties.¹³

Endnotes

1 In Miller's translation: 'Independence and dependence of self-consciousness: Lordship and bondage'.

2 Cf. the following key passage: ‚Hiermit ist schon der Begriff des *Geistes* für uns vorhanden ... Das Bewußtsein hat erst in dem Selbstbewußtsein, als dem Begriffe des Geistes, seinen Wendungspunkt', but self-consciousness exists only for a self-consciousness (Hegel 1807, 108f.). In Miller's translation: 'With this, we already have before us the Notion of *Spirit* ... It is in self-consciousness, in the Notion of Spirit, that consciousness finds its turning-point' (§ 177).

3 I have argued for this interpretation in Grøn 1997.

4 ‚Dieser reine Begriff des Anerkennens' / ‚this pure Notion of recognition' (Hegel 1807, 110 / § 185). References in this section are to Hegel 1807.

5 In Miller's translation: 'Each sees the *other* do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same. Action by one side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both' (§ 182).

6 'They *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another' (§ 184).

7 'We have now to see how the process of this pure Notion of recognition, of the duplicating of self-consciousness in its oneness, appears to self-consciousness' (§ 185).

8 '... one being only *recognized*, the other only *recognizing*' (§ 185).

9 '... ein gegenseitiges Anerkennen, welches der *absolute Geist* ist' (Hegel 1807, 361) / ‚... a reciprocal recognition which is *absolute Spirit*' (§ 670).

10 References in this section are to Kierkegaard 1847.

11 Thus, the reformulation of the dialectics of selfhood and alterity I have suggested is not only a rejoinder to Levinas, but also to Ricoeur. Contrary to Levinas, I have argued that the alterity of the other is a matter of *seeing* the other, and in that sense a matter of selfhood. Levinas defines alterity as exteriority against seeing and understanding, implying that seeing and understanding encompass and reduce the other to the same. Therefore, the face of the other is not a phenomenon, but speaks

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(cf. Levinas 1961, 61 / 66). Contrary to Ricoeur, I will argue that the dialectics of selfhood and alterity cannot be accounted for in terms of the two intersecting movements: the gnoseological movement from the self and the ethical from the other (cf. Ricoeur 1990, 387ff. / 335ff., 390f. / 339). It is a dialectics of two equally radical insights into alterity and selfhood. To recognize the alterity of the other means to see that she is in herself, beyond the relation, but this requires selfhood: being the one to see that the other is exterior to me, beyond my grasp. Oneself as another thus implies: *as no other*.

12 In Hegel, the ethical appears to be absorbed in the dialectics in two connected ways: first, in focusing on what takes place *between* the selves relating to each other and second, in an encompassing or totalizing movement.

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The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution

Robert B. Brandom

1. The Historicity of Essentially Self-Conscious Creatures

One of Hegel's big ideas is that creatures with a self-conception are the subjects of developmental processes that exhibit a distinctive structure. Call a creature 'essentially self-conscious' if what it is *for* itself, its self-conception, is an essential element of what it is *in* itself. How something that is essentially self-conscious *appears* to itself is part of what it *really* is. This is not to say that it really *is* just however it appears to itself to be. For all that the definition of an essentially self-conscious being says, what such a one is in itself may diverge radically from what it is for itself. It may not in fact be what it takes itself to be. But if it does mis-take itself, if its self-conception is in error, that mistake is still an essential feature of what it really is. In this sense, essentially self-conscious creatures are (partially) self-*constituting* creatures. Their self-regarding attitudes are efficacious in a distinctive way.

For such a being can change what it is *in* itself by changing what it is *for* itself. To say of an essentially self-conscious being that what it is for itself is an *essential* element of what it is in itself entails that an alteration in self-*conception* carries with it an alteration in the self of

which it is a conception. Essentially self-conscious creatures accordingly enjoy the possibility of a distinctive kind of self-*transformation*: *making* themselves be different by *taking* themselves to be different. Insofar as such a difference in what the essentially self-conscious creature is *in* itself is then reflected in a further difference in what it is *for* itself – perhaps just by in some way acknowledging that it has changed – the original change in self-conception can trigger a cascade. That process whereby what the thing is in itself and what it is for itself reciprocally and sequentially influence one another might or might not converge to a stable equilibrium of self and conception of self

Because what they are in themselves is at any point the outcome of such a developmental process depending on their attitudes, essentially self-conscious beings don't have *natures*, they have *histories*. Or, put differently, it is their nature to have not just a *past*, but a *history*: a sequence of partially self-constituting self-transformations, mediated at every stage by their self-conceptions, and culminating in them being what they currently are. The only unchanging essence they exhibit is to have what they are in themselves partly determined at every stage by what they are for themselves. Understanding what they are requires looking retrospectively at the process of sequential reciprocal influences of what they at each stage were for themselves and what they at each stage were in themselves, by which they came to be what they now are.

Rehearsing such a historical narrative (Hegel's '*Erinnerung*') is a distinctive way of understanding oneself *as* an essentially historical, because essentially self-conscious, sort of being. To be *for* oneself a historical being is to constitute oneself as *in* oneself a special kind of being: a *self-consciously* historical being. Making explicit to oneself this crucial structural aspect of the metaphysical kind of being one always implicitly has been as essentially self-conscious is itself a structural self-transformation: the achievement of a new kind of self-consciousness. It is a self-transformation generically of this sort that Hegel aims to produce in us his readers by his *Phenomenology*.¹ The kind of self-consciousness it involves is a central element in what he calls 'Absolute Knowing'.

I suppose that when it is sketched with these broad strokes, this is a reasonably familiar picture. Entitling oneself to talk this way requires doing a good bit of further work, however. Why should we think there are things that answer to the definition of ‘essentially self-conscious beings’? What is a self? What is it to have a self-conception – to take oneself to be a self, to be a self to or *for* oneself? For that matter, what is it for *anything* to be something *for* one? And how might the notion of a self-conception, or anything else, being *essential* to what one really is, what one is *in* oneself, be cashed out or explained? Hegel’s way of answering these questions, his detailed filling in and working out of the relevant concepts, is no less interesting than the general outline of the story about essentially self-conscious, historical beings those details are called on to articulate.

2. Identification, Risk, and Sacrifice

Let me address the last question first. Suppose for the moment that we had at least an initial grasp both on the concept of a self, and on what it is to have a self-*conception*, something one is *for* oneself. The story I’ve just told about essentially self-conscious beings indicates that in order to understand the relationship between selves and self-conceptions, we would need also to understand what it is for some features of a self-conception to be *essential* elements of one’s self, that is, what one is *in* oneself, what one *really* is. A self-conception may include many accidental or contingent features – things that just happen to be (taken to be) true of the self in question. The notion of an essentially self-conscious being applies only if there are also some things that one takes to be true of oneself such that one’s self-conception having those features is essential to one’s being the self one is. How are they to be thought of as distinguished from the rest?

Hegel’s answer to this question, as I understand it, can be thought of as coming in stages. The first thought is that what it is for some features of one’s self-conception to *be* essential is for one to *take* or *treat* them *as* essential. They are constituted as essential by the practical attitude

one adopts toward them. The elements of one's self-conception that are essential to one's self (i.e. that one's self-conception has *those* features is essential to what one actually is), we may say, are those that one *identifies* with. Talking this way, essentially self-conscious beings are ones whose *identity*, their status as being what they are *in* themselves, depends in part upon their attitudes of *identification*, their attitudes of identifying with some privileged elements of what they are *for* themselves. Of course, saying this does not represent a significant explanatory advance as long as the concept of the practical attitude of identification remains a black box with no more structure visible than its label.

So we should ask: what is it that one must *do* in order properly to be understood as thereby *identifying oneself* with some but perhaps not all elements of one's self-conception? The answer we are given in *Self-Consciousness* is that one identifies with what one is willing to *risk* and *sacrifice* for. Hegel's metonymic image for this point concerns the important case of making the initial transition from being merely a living organism, belonging to the realm of Nature, to being a denizen of the realm of Spirit. The key element in this index case is willingness to risk one's biological life in the service of a commitment – something that goes beyond a mere desire.²

It is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not [just] being, not the immediate form in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as vanishing moments, that it is only pure being-for-self. (*Phenomenology* §187)

By being willing to risk one's life for something, one makes it the case that the life one risks is *not* an essential element of the self one is thereby constituting, while that for which one risks it is. An extreme example is the classical Japanese samurai code of Bushido, which required ritual suicide under a daunting variety of circumstances. To be samurai was to

identify oneself with the ideal code of conduct. In a situation requiring seppuku, either the biological organism or the samurai must be destroyed, for the existence of the one has become incompatible with the existence of the other. Failure to commit biological suicide in such a case would be the suicide of the samurai, who would be survived only by an animal. The animal had been a merely necessary condition of the existence of the samurai (like the presence of oxygen in the atmosphere, which is important to us, but with which we do not just for that reason count as identifying ourselves). No doubt even sincere and committed samurai must have hoped that such situations would not arise. But when and if they did, failure to act appropriately according to samurai practices would make it the case that one never had been a samurai, but only an animal who sometimes aspired to be one. One would thereby demonstrate that one was not, in oneself, what one had taken oneself to be, what one was for oneself. The decision as to whether to risk one's actual life or to surrender the ideal self-conception is a decision about who one is.

I called the sort of example Hegel uses to introduce this thought 'metonymic' because I think that a part is being made to stand for the whole in this image. The point he is after is far broader. For identification in the general sense is a matter of being willing to risk and if need be sacrifice something one actually is (in oneself) for something one is merely for oneself, even if what is risked is not life, but only other commitments or entitlements. Hegel's arresting story of the struggle-unto-death offers a vivid image of one important dimension of the transition from Nature to Spirit. But once the realm of Spirit – all of our normatively and conceptually articulated doings – is an up-and-running enterprise, most of what we have to lose, to risk, and to sacrifice is not a matter of biology, but of culture. What we at these subsequent stages in our development are in ourselves is in large part a matter of status, commitment, authority, and responsibility. Rejecting something one already is because it collides with some commitment is identifying with the commitment one endorsed, by sacrificing something else.

So for instance risking or sacrificing one's job for a point of moral or

political principle is a self-constituting act of identification in the same sense that risking or sacrificing one's life for it is. And acts of identification through risk-or-sacrifice need not be such large-scale, wholesale affairs as these. From the point of view of identification, paying taxes, though seldom a threat to biological endurance (though there is a box labeled 'death and taxes'), does belong together with liability to military service (a risk of a risk of life). Both express one's practical identification, through sacrifice, with the community one thereby defends or supports. Whenever undertaking a new commitment leads to breaking a habit or abandoning a prior intention one is identifying with that commitment, in practical contrast to what is given up. The historical cascade of sequential self-transformations by identification with elements later sacrificed, each stage building on the previous ones, takes place largely in the normative realm opened up by the initial bootstrapping transition from the merely natural.

Indeed, I want to claim that Hegelian *Erfahrung*, the process of experience, ought to be understood as having this shape of identification and sacrifice. It, too, is a process of self-constitution and self-transformation of essentially self-conscious beings. Each acknowledged error calls for an act of self-identification: the endorsement of some of the mutually incompatible commitments one has found oneself with, and the sacrifice of others. Experience is the process whereby subjects define and determine themselves as loci of account, by practically 'repelling' incompatible commitments. (Compare the way objects are determinately identified and individuated by the specific properties they exhibit, and hence the materially incompatible properties they modally exclude – properties themselves determinately contentful in virtue of their relation of exclusive difference from a specific set of materially incompatible properties.)³ Subjects do that by *changing* their doxastic and inferential commitments: rejecting some, refining others, reciprocally adjusting and balancing what claims are taken to be true, what one is committed to doing, and what is taken to follow from what, so as to remove and repair discordances. This is the process by which the always somewhere colliding and competing claims of the mediating authority codified in universals and the immediate authority exercised by particulars are negotiated and

adjudicated. It is accordingly the process by and in which conceptual contents develop and are determined.

3. Creatures Things Can Be Something *For*: Desire and the Tripartite Structure of Erotic Awareness:

The story about essentially self-conscious beings, elaborated in terms of identification through risk-and-sacrifice, is what forged the link between the constitution through development of *selves* and the constitution through development of *conceptual contents* in the process of experience. And that story presupposes a conception of selves, and so of self-conceptions. In order to entitle ourselves to an account of the shape sketched in the previous two sections, we must answer the questions left hanging at the beginning of the previous one: What is a self? What is it to have a self-conception – to take oneself to be a self, to be a self to or *for* oneself? For that matter, what is it for *anything* to be something *for* one?

The first and most basic notion, I think, is *practical classification*. A creature can *take* or *treat* some particular *as* being of a general kind by responding to it in one way rather than another. In this sense, a chunk of iron classifies its environments as being of one of two kinds by rusting in some of them and not in others. The repeatable response-kind, rusting, induces a classification of stimuli, accordingly as they do or do not reliably elicit a response of that kind. Since reliable differential responsive dispositions are ubiquitous in the causal realm, every actual physical object exhibits this sort of behavior. For that reason, this sort of behavioral classification is not by itself a promising candidate as a definition of concepts of semantic content or awareness; pansemanticism and panpsychism would be immediate, unappealing consequences.

Hegel's alternative way in is to look to the phenomenon of *desire*, as structuring the lives of biological animals. A hungry animal treats something as food by 'falling to without further ado and eating it up,' as Hegel says (*Phenomenology* §109). This is clearly a species of the genus of practical classification. The state of desiring, in this case, hunger, induces a two-sorted classification of objects, into those consumption of which

would result in satisfying the desire, and the rest. The constellation of *hunger*, *eating*, and *food* has structure beyond that in play in the inorganic case of *rusting* (response) and *wet* (stimulus). What ultimately drives the classification is the difference between hunger being satisfied and its not being satisfied. But the classification of objects by that difference is conditioned on a mediating performance, process, or response. What is classified is objects which *if* responded to by eating *would* satisfy the hunger, and those that do not have that property. Both the role played by the practical activity of the desirer, that is, what it *does* in response to the object, and the hypothetical-dispositional character of the classification in terms of the effect of that doing on the satisfaction of the desire are important to Hegel's picture.

Desires and the responsive practical performances that subserve them play distinctive roles in the lived life of an animal. They are intelligible in terms of the contributions they make to such functions as its nutrition, reproduction, avoidance of predation, and so on. Because they are, they direct the erotic awareness of the desiring animal to the objects that show up as significant with respect to them in a distinctive way. They underwrite a kind of primitive intentionality whose character shows up in the vocabulary it entitles us to use in describing their behavior. Dennett⁴ considers in a related context a laboratory rat who has been conditioned to produce a certain kind of behavior in response to a stimulus of a repeatable kind, say, the sounding of a certain note. We can in principle describe the repeatable response in two different ways: 'The rat walks to the bar, pushes it down with his paw, and sometimes receives a rat-yummy,' or 'The rat takes three steps forward, moves its paw down, and sometimes receives a rat-yummy.' Both describe what the rat has done in each of the training trials. What has he been conditioned to do? Which behavior should a reductive behaviorist take it has been inculcated and will be continued? Abstractly, there seems no way to choose between these co-extensional specifications of the training. Yet the way in which desiring organisms like rats are directed at desire-satisfying objects via expectations about the results of performances lead us confidently to

predict that if the rat is put six steps from the bar, when the note sounds it will walk to the bar and push it down with his paw, *not* walk three steps forward and move its paw down. We do so even in this artificial case for the same reasons that we expect that if we move a bird's nest a few feet further out on a limb while it is away, on its return it will sit in the nest in its new location, rather than on the bare limb in the nest's old location. The bird is 'onto' its nest (to use a locution favored by John McDowell in this context) rather than the location. That is the object that has acquired a practical significance because of the functional role it plays in the animal's desire-satisfying activities. A desire is more than a disposition to act in certain ways, since the activities one is disposed to respond to objects with may or may not satisfy the desire, depending on the character of those objects.

Erotic awareness has a tripartite structure, epitomized by the relations between *hunger*, *eating*, and *food*. Hunger is a desire, a kind of *attitude*. It immediately impels hungry animals to respond to some objects by treating them *as* food, that is, by *eating* them. *Food* is accordingly a *significance* that objects can have to animals capable of hunger. It is something things can be *for* desiring animals. *Eating* is the activity of taking or treating something *as* food. It is what one must *do* in order in practice to be attributing to it the desire-relative erotic significance of *food*. *Eating* is the activity that is *instrumentally appropriate* to the desire of *hunger*. It is *subjectively* appropriate, in that it is the activity hungry animals are in fact impelled to by being in the desiring state of hunger. It is *objectively* appropriate in that it is an activity, a way of responding to environing objects, that often (enough) results in the satisfaction of the desire.

This distinction between two sorts of instrumental propriety of activity to desire funds a distinction between *appearance* and *reality* for the objects responded to, between what things are *for* the organism (the erotic significance they are *taken* to have) and what things are *in* themselves (the erotic significance they *actually* have). Anything the animal responds to by eating it is being taken or treated *as* food. But only things that

actually relieve its hunger really *are* food. The possibility of these two coming apart is the organic basis for conceptual *experience*, which is the collision of incompatible *commitments*. Even at the level of merely erotic awareness, it can lead to the animal's *doing* things differently, in the sense of altering which objects it responds to by treating them as having the erotic significance generated by that desire. Its dispositions to respond to things differentially as *food*, that is, by *eating* them, can be altered by such practical disappointments. If all goes well with an experiential episode in such a process of learning, the *subjectively* appropriate differential responsive dispositions become more reliable, in the sense of more *objectively* appropriate to the desire that motivates those activities.

4. From Desire to Recognition: Two Interpretive Challenges

This account of the tripartite structure of erotic awareness offers a reasonably detailed answer to the question: What is it for things to be something *for* a creature? It is a story about a kind of proto-consciousness that is intelligible still in wholly naturalistic terms and yet provides the basic practical elements out of which something recognizable as the sort of theoretical conceptual consciousness discussed in the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology* could perhaps be understood to develop. We know that Hegel subscribes to the Kantian claim that there can in principle be no consciousness (properly so described) without *self*-consciousness. So making the step from the erotic awareness of animal denizens of the realm of Nature to the conceptual consciousness of knowers and agents who live and move and have their being in the normative realm of Spirit – creatures who have achieved the status of *selves* or *subjects* – requires the advent of self-consciousness. We need to understand what this achievement consists in, and why genuine consciousness requires it. As we'll see, what is required to be able to take something to be a *self* is to be able to attribute attitudes that have distinctively *normative* significances: to move from a world of *desires* to a world of *commitments*, *authority*, and *responsibility*.

The account of the tripartite structure of erotic awareness gives us a

place to start in addressing this issue. We should apply the answer we have in hand to the question ‘What is it for things to be something *for* a creature?’ to the more specific case: ‘What is it for *selves* to be something things can be for a creature?’ That is, what would be required for the erotic significance something had for a desiring animal to be not *food* or *predator*, but *self* or *subject*, in the sense of something things can be something *for*? And second, once we understand what it is to take or treat things as selves or subjects, what must one do to take *oneself* to be a thing of that kind, to take oneself to be a *self*?

The tripartite account of the structure of erotic awareness provides two sorts of resources for answering these questions. First, it tells us something about what a self or subject *is*. It is something things can be something *for*. What it offers is a construal of that status in terms of what it is to be a *desiring* animal, a subject of erotic awareness, an institutor of erotic significances, an assessor of the consilience or disparity of what things are *for* it or subjectively and what they are *in* themselves or objectively, the subject of the experience of *error* and the cyclical feedback process of revision-and-experiment it initiates and guides. This is what a (proto-)self in the sense of a subject of erotic awareness is *in* itself. The question then is what it is for something to be one of those, to have that erotic significance, *for* some (to begin with, some *other*) creature. The second contribution the tripartite structure of erotic awareness makes to understanding the nature and possibility of self-consciousness consists in providing the form of an answer to this more specific question. For it tells us that what we must come up with to understand what it is for something to be accorded this sort of erotic significance by some creature – to be *for* it something things can be something *for* – is two-fold: an account of the desire that institutes that erotic significance, and an account of the kind of activity that is instrumentally appropriate to that desire. The latter is an account of what one must *do* in order thereby to count as *taking* some creature as itself a taker, something things can be something *for*, an institutor of erotic significances.

The philosophical challenge, then, is to see what sort of an account of

self-consciousness one can produce by assembling these raw materials: applying the tripartite account of erotic awareness to itself. The interpretive challenge is see to what extent one can by doing that explain the index features characteristic of Hegel's distinctive claims about the nature of self-consciousness. Two features of his approach are particularly worthy of attention in this regard, both of them features of his master-concept of recognition. First is his view that both self-conscious individual selves and the communities they inhabit (a kind of universal characterizing them) are synthesized by reciprocal recognition among particular participants in the practices of such a recognitive community. Self-consciousness is essentially, and not just accidentally, a *social* achievement. Second, recognition is a *normative* attitude. To recognize someone is to take her to be the subject of normative statuses, that is, of commitments and entitlements, as capable of undertaking responsibilities and exercising authority. This is what it means to say that as reciprocally recognized and recognizing, the creatures in question are *geistig*, spiritual, beings, and no longer merely natural ones. Here are some of the familiar representative passages:

Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged....The detailed exposition of the Notion of this spiritual unity in its duplication will present us with the process of Recognition (§178).

A self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it. The 'I' which is the object of its Notion is in fact not 'object'; the object of Desire, however, is only independent, for it is the universal indestructible substance, the fluid self-identical essence. A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as 'object'. With this, we already have before us the Notion of Spirit. What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is – this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-

consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I' (§177).

But according to the Notion of recognition this [that a self-consciousness' certainty of itself have truth] is possible only when each is for the other what the other is for it, only when each in its own self through its own action, and again through the action of the other, achieves this pure abstraction of being-for-self (§186).

I see two principal philosophical challenges that arise in understanding the discussion of recognition and self-consciousness in these and related passages in the material in *Self-Consciousness* that precedes the discussion of *Herrschaft und Knechtschaft*. First, how are we to understand the transition from the discussion of the concept of desire to the discussion of the concept of recognition? This corresponds to the shift from consideration of particular merely *biological* creatures impelled wholly by *natural impulses*, in relation to their species, on the one hand, to consideration of genuinely *social* self-conscious individuals motivated by normative relations of *authority* and *responsibility* within their communities, on the other. How one understands the relation between these, both conceptually and historically, is evidently of the first importance in understanding what Hegel has to teach us about the normative realm he calls '*Geist*'.

The second issue concerns the formal structure of his account of the synthesis of social substance by relations of reciprocal recognition. To recognize someone is to take or treat that individual in practice as a self: a knowing and acting subject, hence as subject to normative assessment as potentially committed, responsible, authoritative, and so on. The picture that is presented of the sort of community within which fully adequate self-consciousness is achieved is one in which recognition is an equivalence relation: everyone in the community recognizes and is recognized by everyone else ('each is for the other what the other is for it'), and so recognizes everyone recognized by anyone else. Individuals are, roughly, particulars whose exhibition of, characterization by, or participation in

universals is essential to them. In the case of self-conscious individuals, this means that the norms of the community they are members of are essential equally to the individual members and to the community as a whole.⁵

In such an ideal community, each member is to be able to recognize himself *as* a member. To say that is to say that recognition is *reflexive*. Recognition is also to be *symmetric*, that is to say, reciprocal or mutual (Hegel's '*gegenseitig*'). It is this aspect that is lacking in the defective forms of recognition that structure the defective forms of self-consciousness rehearsed in the *Phenomenology*, beginning with the discussion of Mastery. The view appears to be that insofar as recognition is *de facto* not *symmetric*, it cannot be *reflexive*. I cannot be properly self-conscious (recognize myself) except in the context of a recognition structure that is *reciprocal*: insofar as I am recognized by those I recognize. (This is the essence of Hegel's wittgensteinian view of self-consciousness, which by contrast to a cartesian view sees it as a *social* achievement, which accordingly takes place in important respects *outside* the self-conscious individual. It is not a kind of inner glow.)

A big question is then: why? Why should it be the case that *reciprocal* (that is, *symmetric*) recognition is a necessary condition of *reflexive* recognition (that is, self-consciousness, awareness of oneself *as* a self).

Here is a thought about the shape of a possible answer. It is a formal fact that *if* a relation is both symmetric and transitive, then it is also reflexive, and hence is an equivalence relation. That is, if $\forall x, y [xRy \rightarrow yRx]$ and $\forall x, y, z [xRy \& yRz \rightarrow xRz]$, then $\forall x [xRx]$. For we can just apply the transitivity condition to the symmetry pairs xRy and yRx to yield xRx .⁶ So *if* recognition were (for some reason) *de jure* transitive – if it were part of the nature of recognition that one is committed to recognizing anyone recognized by someone one recognizes – *then* achieving *de facto* symmetry of recognition would suffice for achieving *de facto* reflexivity of recognition. That is, each community member would recognize himself – and in that sense count as self-conscious – so long as everyone was recognized by everyone they recognize, that is, so long as recognition were *reciprocal*. So *one* way to forge the desired connection between social

reciprocity of recognition and self-consciousness would be to establish that recognition must by its very nature be *transitive*.

In what follows, we'll see how the tripartite account of erotic awareness can be used in a natural way to build a notion of recognition that satisfies these twin philosophical constraints on the interpretation of Hegel's notion of self-consciousness in terms of recognition. Doing so will both clarify the nature of the transition from *desire* to *recognition*, and explain why *reciprocal* recognition is the key to *self-consciousness*.

5. Simple Recognition: being something things can be something *for* being something things can be *for* one

We can think of the tripartite structure of erotic awareness as consisting of three elements and three relations among them. The three elements are:

- a) an *attitude* (desire), e.g. *hunger*,
- b) a responsive *activity*, e.g. *eating*; and
- c) a *significance*, e.g. *food*.

The three relations are:

- d) The attitude must *motivate* the activity, in the sense of *activating* a (more or less reliable, in a sense determined by the assessments in (f) below) disposition to respond differentially to objects.
- e) Responding to an object by engaging in the activity is taking or treating it in practice *as* having a significance defined by the attitude that motivates the activity. This is the *subjective* significance of the object.
- f) The desiring attitude *assesses* the object, implicitly attributing to it an *objective* significance, accordingly as responding to it by engaging in the activity the attitude motivates does or does not satisfy the desire. If it does not, if what the object was subjectively or *for* the animal does not

coincide with what it was objectively, or *in* itself, that is, if the activity was not *successful* in satisfying the motivating desire, then an *error* has been committed. In that case the desire motivates *changing* the reliable differential responsive disposition to engage in the associated activity when activated by the desire and stimulated by a range of objects.

What we are now interested in is a more complicated constellation of elements and relations, in which the tripartite structure of erotic awareness enters *twice*. It is, of course, the structure of the whole thing: ‘Self-consciousness is desire.’ (§174), at least in the sense that the most primitive form of self-awareness is to be understood as a development of the basic structure of erotic awareness. But the significance attributed to an object, what it is *for* the organism exhibiting the erotic awareness in question, is to be erotically aware: to be something things can be something *for*. That is, the significance attributed by engaging in a responsive activity and assessed by the motivating attitude (item (c) above) must itself exhibit the tripartite structure of erotic awareness. For one to have that significance *for* oneself – not just being *in* oneself something things can be something *for*, but being that *for* oneself as well – that significance must be something things can be or have *for* one.

The tripartite structure of erotic awareness (TSEA) tells us that the two big questions that must be answered are these:

What *activity* is it that institutes this significance (namely, having the TSEA)? That is, what is it that one must *do*, how must one *respond* to something, to count thereby as *taking* or *treating* it *as* exhibiting the TSEA? What is to the TSEA as *eating* is to *food*?

What *desire* or other *attitude* is it that motivates that *activity* and *assesses* the *success* of taking something *as* having the erotic significance of being a TSEA, i.e. being something things can be something *for*? What is to the TSEA as *hunger* is to *food*?

To begin to address these questions, and to indicate an important point of contact with Hegel's own vocabulary, we may call what I must *do*, the activity, whatever it is, that I must engage in, in order thereby to be *taking* or *treating* something in practice *as* something things can be something *for*, 'recognizing' that other creature. So far, this is just a label for an answer to the first question. Recognizing others is attributing to them the practical significance of exhibiting the tripartite structure of erotic awareness: taking them to be takers, subjects for whom things can have a practical significance relative to a desire and mediated by an activity. What can we then say at this level of abstraction about the desire or *attitude* that is the third element completing the TSEA whose attitude is recognizing and whose significance is exhibiting the TSEA? Hegel's answer is, I think, clear, if surprising: it is *desire for recognition*, the desire that others take or treat one in practice as a taker, as something things can be something *for*, as an instituter of significances.

If we bracket for the moment the crucial question of *why* a desire to be recognized is the attitude for which recognizing others is the appropriate activity, and so why it institutes the significance of being something things can be something *for* – making that something things can be *for* one, a proto-conception of *selves* – we may ask what would happen if a being with that desire got what it wanted. If the desire for recognition is satisfied by responding to others by recognizing them, then according to the TSEA the subjective significance the recognized ones have *for* the recognition-desirer shows up as being *correct*, as what they objectively are *in* themselves: subjects of significance-instituting attitudes and activities. And what is required for that is just that one be recognized (for that is what it takes to satisfy the desire) by those one recognizes (for that, on the line of thought being considered, is what one must *do* in order, if all goes well, to satisfy the desire). So it follows from the claim that the desire that completes the higher-order TSEA whose activity is recognition and whose instituted significance is exhibiting the TSEA is a desire for recognition that the recognition-desire can be satisfied only by achieving *reciprocal recognition*. On this construal, then, having a practical proto-conception of *selves*

– being able to take or treat things as subjects things can be something *for*, recognizing them – and being self-conscious in the sense of *reciprocal* recognition are two aspects of one achievement, two sides of one coin.

In order to give a reading of these claims in terms of the tripartite structure of erotic awareness, the black-box notion of recognition must be filled in so as to answer the following three questions:

I) Recognizing: What, exactly, is it that one must *do* in order to be recognizing someone? That is, what *is* the activity we have labeled ‘recognizing’? How is it that doing that *is* taking or treating someone *as* exhibiting the tripartite structure of erotic awareness? What is the differential responsive disposition that is to be licensed by the instituting attitude?

II) Being recognized: Why should the desire to be taken or treated that way oneself, that is, to be recognized, be the one making appropriate that activity, namely, recognizing?

III) Self-Consciousness: Why does the reciprocal recognition that results when that desire for recognition is satisfied by recognizing someone else amount to *self-consciousness*, in the sense of applying a (proto-)conception of *selves* to oneself?

The challenge is to give an answer to the first question that will entail plausible answers to the other two questions.

The first point to make is that *general* recognition, taking someone to be something things can be something *for*, must be understood in terms of *specific* recognition: taking someone to be something things can have a *specific* significance for, say being of kind K (e.g. food, a predator, a potential sexual partner). One takes someone to be a taker in general just in case there are some specific significances, values of K, for which one takes it that that individual is a K-taker, i.e. can take things to be Ks. So it will suffice to answer the questions above for specific recognition,

relativized to some instituted significance K things can have for a creature, in order to answer those questions for the more general case.

Specifically recognizing someone as a K-taker requires, according to the tripartite structure of erotic awareness, responding to the other in a way that practically or implicitly attributes both an attitude and an activity related to each other and to the significance K in the three ways specified as (d), (e), and (f) above. This means:

One must attribute an activity that one takes to be what it is for the other to be responding to something *as* a K.

One must attribute a desire or other attitude that one takes to *license* or *authorize* responding to things *as* Ks, i.e. by engaging in that activity.

One must acknowledge in practice a distinction between *correct* and *incorrect* responses of that sort, assessed according to the attributed attitude that authorizes responses of that kind.

My suggestion as to where we start is with the thought that in the most basic case, one can only take another to be a K-taker if one is oneself a K-taker. Taking the other to be a K-taker will then be attributing to him activity of the same sort in which one oneself engages in response to things one (thereby) takes to be Ks. That is, my taking you to be able to treat things as *food* is my taking it that you respond to some things with the same behavior, *eating*, with which I respond to food.

We are now in a position to put in place the keystone piece of this explanatory structure. What the recognizing attributor responds differentially *to* as the success of a desire-authorized responsive activity is the cessation of that activity. Thus no longer being disposed to respond to things by eating things indicates that hunger was satisfied, so the thing previously responded to as food was *in* itself what it was *for* the one recognized as a desirer of food.

What, then, is the differential response that is keyed to this difference

in the one being recognized as a K-taker? This is the decisive point. My taking *your* K-response to have been authorized by a K-desire that serves as a standard for the success of your K-taking, and taking that K-response to have been *correct* or *successful* by that standard is my acknowledging the *authority* of your K-taking, in the practical sense of being disposed *myself* to take *as a K* the thing *you* took to be a K. Taking it that the kind of fruit you ate really was food, in that it satisfied *your* hunger is being disposed to eat that kind of fruit myself when and if *I* am hungry, i.e. have a *desire* of the same kind. This is a second-order disposition, involving a change in my first-order dispositions. My specific K-recognitive response to you is to acquire the disposition: *if I have the K-desire, then I will K-respond to the things to which I (thereby) take you to have successfully K-responded.* My acknowledging *your* K-desire as *authoritative* in the dual sense of licensing *your* responsive K-activity and serving as a standard of *normative* assessment of its *success* or *correctness* consists in my treating it as *authorizing* my *own* K-takings, should *I* have a K-desire.

So in the first instance, my treating your K-desire as having the normative significance of being authoritative for K-takings is treating it as authoritative for them full stop – not just for *your* K-takings, but for K-takings generally, and so for *mine* in particular. What it is for it to be *K-takings* (and not some other significance or no significance at all that you are practically attributing to things by responding to them in that way) that I *take* your responses to be consists in the fact that it is *my K-taking* responsiveness (and not some other activity) that I am conditionally disposed to extend to the kind of objects that satisfied your desire. The link by which the specifically recognized one's activity is assimilated to that of the recognizer is forged by the *interpersonal* character of the specific authority of the recognized one's successful takings, whose acknowledgment is what specific recognition consists in. The *only* way the recognizer's erotic classifications can be practically mapped onto those of the other so as to be intelligible as implicitly attributing specific desires, significances, and mediating responsive activities exhibiting the tripartite structure of erotic awareness is if the *authority* of the assessments

of responsive significance-attribution on the part of the one recognized is acknowledged in practice by the recognizer. So specific recognition involves acknowledging another as having some authority concerning how things are (what things are Ks). When I do that, I treat you as one of *us*, in a primitive normative sense of ‘us’ – those of us subject to the same norms, the same authority – that is instituted by just such attitudes.

6. Robust Recognition: Specific Recognition of Another as a Recognizer

Looking back at the most primitive sort of pre-conceptual recognition of others, from the vantage-point of the fully-developed conceptually articulated kind, brings into relief the crucial boundary that is being crossed: between the merely *natural* and the incipiently *normative*. In the merely erotically aware animal, *desire* is a state that *motivates* and *regulates* responsive activity *immediately*. It causally activates differential responsive dispositions to engage in activities, and its matter-of-factual satisfaction causes the creature to desist from or persist in them. But the recognizer, who is aware of the creature *as* aware of things, does not *feel* that creature’s desires, but only *attributes* them, implicitly and practically, by treating the creature *as* having them. The recognizer accordingly takes up a more distanced, mediated, abstract attitude toward these significance-generating attitudes. The recognized creature’s attitudes are seen (treated in practice) as *assessing* the *correctness* of practical responsive classifications, as *licensing* or *authorizing* the responsive activity – in the first instance in the case of the one recognized, but then also on the part of the recognizer who merely attributes the attitude to the other. The relation between the attitude the recognizer attributes and the activity he himself engages in is a *normative* one. Even in the most primitive cases it is intelligible as the acknowledgment of *authority* rather than mere acquiescence in an impulse. In treating the attitudes of the recognized other as having authority for those who do not feel them, the recognizer implicitly accords them a significance beyond that of mere desires: as *normatively* and not merely *immediately* significant attitudes.

The story I have rehearsed about what happens when the tripartite

structure of erotic awareness is applied to itself as significance shows how recognition develops out of and can be made intelligible in terms of desire. But it also shows why just being erotically aware is not enough to give one a conception of a self. That is something one can get only by recognizing others. For the possibility of treating attitudes as having a distinctively *normative* significance opens up in the first instance for the attitudes of *others*, for desires one attributes but does not immediately feel. The claim we have been shaping up to understand is Hegel's central doctrine that self-consciousness consists in reciprocal recognition. It is clear at this point that recognizing others is necessary and sufficient to have a conception of selves or subjects of consciousness. But the relation between that fact and *reciprocity* of recognition as what is required for the participants to count as applying that concept to themselves in the way required for self-consciousness has not yet been made out. To make it out, we can apply the observation made in the previous section that *if* recognition could be shown to be *de jure* transitive, then any case in which it was also *de facto* symmetric (reciprocal) would be one in which it was also *de facto* reflexive. For reflexivity follows from transitivity and symmetry.

Simple recognition is not in the relevant sense transitive. For what I am doing in taking another to be a subject of erotic awareness – namely, simply recognizing that desirer *as* a desirer – is *not* what I take that desirer to be doing. The one simply recognized need not be capable of being in its turn a simple recognizer, and so something with even a basic conception of selves. For that we need to go up a level, and consider what it is to take another not just to be erotically aware, but to be aware of others *as* erotically aware. That is, we must consider what it is to recognize another as a simple recognizer, hence as itself the kind of thing for which things can have a specifically *normative* significance. I'll call that practical attitude *robust* recognition. Robust recognition is a kind of simple recognition: simple recognition of someone things can have a specific kind of erotic significance for, namely the significance of being something things can have erotic significances for.

What is important for my story is that robust recognition *is* transitive. This is clear from the account already offered of recognition in terms of acknowledging the authority of what things are *for* the recognized one. Recognizing someone as a recognizer is acknowledging the authority of their recognitions for one's own: recognizing whoever they recognize.

Since it is a kind of simple recognition, the activity element of the erotic structural triad characteristic of robust recognition – what one must *do* to be taking or treating someone *as* (having the significance of) a simple recognizer – is practically to acknowledge *as* authoritative for one's own takings of the one being recognized (if they are successful, and within the range of significance of one's simple recognition). In this case, doing that is acknowledging the authority of the recognized one's simple recognitions. Those simple recognitions are themselves a matter of acknowledging the authority of the ground-level erotic takings of the one simply recognized. So what the robust recognizer must *do* to be taking someone as a simple recognizer is to acknowledge as authoritative whatever ground-level takings the one robustly recognized acknowledges as authoritative. And that is to say that the robust recognizer treats as *transitive* the inheritance of authority of ground-level takings that is what simple recognizing consists in.

It might seem that the hierarchy generated by acknowledging different levels of recognition is open-ended: robust recognition is taking to be (simply recognizing as) a simple recognizer, super-robust (say) recognition would be simply recognizing as a robust recognizer, super-duper-robust recognition would be simply recognizing as a super-robust recognizer, and so on. Perhaps surprisingly, the crucial structural features of recognition don't change after we have reached robust recognition. The key point is that robust recognition is a specific instance of simple recognition, i.e. recognition of something as having a special kind of erotic awareness, namely, awareness of something *as* being erotically aware. As we have seen, that is a particular kind of erotic significance things can have. As a result of this fact, the nascent recognitional hierarchy could be formulated as: erotic awareness, simple recognition of

something as erotically aware, simple recognition of something as simply recognizing, simple recognition of something as a simple recognizer of simple recognizers, and so on. But what one must *do* in order thereby to be simply recognizing someone – the activity (corresponding to *eating* in the paradigmatic erotic desire-activity-significance triad of *hunger, eating, food*) one must engage in to count as taking or treating an organism as (having the significance of being) erotically aware – is to acknowledge the *normative authority* for one’s own responses of their takings of things as something. Taking someone to be a simple recognizer is accordingly acknowledging in practice the authority of their takings of someone as an erotic taker, which is acknowledging the authority of their acknowledgments of authority. Whatever ground level takings of things as something the one being robustly recognized (simply recognized as a simple recognizer) takes to be authoritative the robust recognizer takes therefore to be authoritative. In robustly recognizing you, I must simply recognize whoever you simply recognize.

The effect is to produce the *transitive closure* of the acknowledgment of authority of ground-level takings in which simple recognition consists. By the ‘transitive closure’ of a relation is meant the relation R' that is generated from R by the two principles: i) $\forall x \forall y [xRy \rightarrow xR'y]$ and ii) $\forall x \forall y \forall z [(xRy \ \& \ yRz) \rightarrow xR'z]$. It is an elementary algebraic fact that the transitive closure of the transitive closure of a relation is just the transitive closure of that relation. (Technically: closure operations are idempotent.) All the structural work has been done the first time around. For a to recognize b in the ‘super-robust’ way – simply to recognize b as a robust recognizer – would commit a to acknowledge as authoritative b ’s simple recognitions of someone c as a simple recognizer. b ’s simple recognition of c as a simple recognizer (which is b ’s robust recognition of c), we have seen, consists in b ’s practical commitment to inherit c ’s acknowledgments of another’s – d ’s – ground-level takings as authoritative. The effect is then that a must likewise be practically committed to inherit b ’s inherited acknowledgments of those ground-level commitments as authoritative. But this puts a in exactly the position a would be in if a recognized b

robustly, rather than *super-robustly*. Formally, once one has established that a relation is transitive, that $\forall x \forall y \forall z [(xRy \ \& \ yRz) \rightarrow xRz]$, that has as a consequence (and hence requires nothing else to establish) that $\forall w \forall x \forall y \forall z [(wRx \ \& \ xRy \ \& \ yRz) \rightarrow wRz]$.

Since robust recognition is the transitive closure of simple recognition, there is no difference between simple recognition of someone as a robust recognizer, and robust recognition (simple recognition of someone as a simple recognizer) of someone as a robust recognizer. And robust recognition is transitive: for what one is doing to be robust recognizing, it must include commitment to robustly recognize (simply recognize as a simple recognizer) whoever is robustly recognized by those one robustly recognizes. These are facts about the activity pole of the structure of simple and (therefore of) robust recognition. What relates them is that the significance pole of robust recognition is the whole structure of simple recognition – just as the significance pole of simple recognition is the whole triadic structure of ground-level erotic awareness. Indeed, we have seen that the significance pole of ground-level erotic awareness is the crucial element in the activity pole of simple recognition (and therefore of robust recognition). For practical acknowledgment of the authority of the ground-level significances attributed in non-recognitional erotic awareness is what the activity of simple recognizing consists in.

If these are the relations between the *activity* and *significance* poles making up the triadic structure of recognitional awareness, what, then, about the *attitude* or *desire* pole? The story told so far lays it down both that the desire that motivates simple recognizing (and so institutes its characteristic significance) is a *desire for* (simple) *recognition*, and that the only erotic takings on the part of one recognized that a simple recognizer is obliged to acknowledge as authoritative are those that the one recognized takes to be *successful*. So we should ask: which of the recognizings of a simple recognizer should a robust recognizer take to be successful? The answer is: only those that satisfy the relevant desire. That is a desire to be simply recognized, which is to say a desire to have the authority of the simple recognizer's takings acknowledged by another. But that is

precisely what a robust recognizer does in simply recognizing anyone as a simple recognizer. So from the point of view of a robust recognizer, *all* the simple recognitions of the one robustly recognized count as successful, and hence as authoritative. There is nothing that could count as taking someone to have a desire to be simply recognized, motivating that one's simple recognitions, which fails to be satisfied.

With this observation, we have reached our explanatory-interpretive goal. For we wanted to know:

- I) how *recognition* should be understood to arise out of *desire*,
- II) how *normativity* should be understood as an aspect of *recognition*,
- III) how *self-recognition*, that is *reflexive* recognition relations, should be understood to require *reciprocal* recognition, that is to say *symmetric* recognition relations, and
- IV) how *self-consciousness* should be understood to consist in the self-recognition achieved by reciprocal recognition.

The answer to the first question was supplied by seeing how the tripartite structure of erotic awareness could be applied to itself, so that what something was taken or treated in practice *as* was a desiring, significance-instituting creature. The answer to the second was supplied by seeing how simple recognizing consists in the recognizer's achieving a mediated, distanced, relation to the immediate felt impulse of the recognized one's desire, in the form of its significance, conditional upon the recognizer's own desires, for the recognizer's own practical awareness. In this way the other's desire is practically acknowledged as *authoritative*, and the other's desire shows up for the recognizer in the shape of the recognizer's *commitment* or *responsibility*. The answer to the third question was supplied by showing how (because of the idempotence of transitive closure operations) the social authority structure constitutive of robust recognition is essentially and in principle, hence unavoidably, *transitive*. For it is a basic algebraic fact that wherever a transitive relation happens to hold *symmetrically*, it is also *reflexive*. It remains only to put these

answers together to supply a response to the fourth and final question.

7. Self-Consciousness

The connection between robust recognition and *self*-consciousness is as immediate as that between the tripartite structure of erotic awareness and consciousness. For to be a self, a subject, a consciousness – for Hegel as for Kant – is to be the subject of *normative* statuses: not just of desires, but of *commitments*. It is to be able to take a normative stand on things, to commit oneself, undertake responsibilities, exercise authority, assess correctness. Recognition of any kind is taking or treating something *as* such a self or subject of normative statuses and attitudes. It is consciousness *of* something *as* (having the normative significance of) a self or subject. For recognition itself exhibits the tripartite structure of erotic awareness – proto-consciousness. The significance it accords to the one recognized is that of exhibiting that same structure. And adopting that practical attitude toward another is taking or treating its states as having normative significance as authorizing and assessing performances – not merely *producing* them but making them *appropriate*. Eating on the part of the one recognized is now treated as something that involves a *commitment* as to how things are, a commitment that can be *assessed* by both recognized and recognizer (who need not agree) as *correct* or *incorrect*.

Self-consciousness then consists in applying this practical proto-conception of a self to oneself: recognizing not just others, but oneself. This is *self*-consciousness, or having a self-conception, in a double sense. First, it is a matter of consciousness of something *as* a self: treating it as having that practical significance. Second, it is an application of that conception *to oneself*. Having a self-conception in the first sense consists in a capacity for *recognition*. We might call this a ‘conception of selves’. For that is what one must be able to *do* in order thereby to be taking or treating something *as* a self, in the sense of a subject of normative statuses of *authoritative* (in the sense of probative, though still provisional and defeasible)

commitments as to how things are. Having a self-conception in the second sense is a matter of the *reflexive* character of one's recognition: that among those one recognizes is oneself. The lowest grade of self-conception that exhibits these two dimensions would be simple recognition of oneself: being erotically aware of oneself *as* erotically aware of things. We might call this '*simple* self-consciousness'. But the two dimensions are much more tightly bound up with one another if one is aware of oneself *as* able simply to recognize things. In that case, the conception of selves that one applies to oneself is *as* something that has a conception of selves. We might call this '*robust* self-consciousness'.

If *a* robustly recognizes *b*, then *a* acknowledges the (probative, but provisional and defeasible) authority of *b*'s successful simple recognitions. Robust recognition, we have seen, is a kind of simple recognition: simple recognition as able to take others to be simple recognizers. If *b* *robustly* recognizes someone, then that recognition is *successful* just in case it satisfies *b*'s desire for robust recognition. If *b*'s robust recognition of someone is successful in this sense, then in virtue of robustly recognizing *b*, *a* must acknowledge *b*'s robust recognition as authoritative. But since by hypothesis *a* *does* robustly recognize *b*, *b*'s desire for robust recognition *is* satisfied, so all his robust recognitions are successful (in *a*'s eyes). Thus if it should happen that *b* *robustly* recognize *a*, then since *a* robustly recognizes *b*, we have a symmetry of robust recognition. Since, as we have seen, robust recognition is transitive, this means that *a* will acknowledge the authority of *b*'s robust recognition of *a*. So *a* counts as robustly recognizing himself. Thus robust self-consciousness is achievable only through *reciprocal* recognition: being robustly recognized by at least some of those one robustly recognizes. This means that a *community* (a kind of universal) is implicitly constituted by one's own robust recognitions, and actually achieved insofar as they are reciprocated. That is the sort of reciprocally cognitive community within which alone genuine (robust) self-consciousness is possible: the "I" that is "We" and "We" that is "I".

8. Conclusion

I can now bring my story to a quick close. I started it with the concept of *essential* elements of one's self-conception being ones that one *identifies* with, in the sense of being willing to risk or if need be sacrifice for them. One consequence of the transition from desire to commitment within the attitude component of the tripartite structure of erotic awareness is that where the activity-motivating character of desire is extinguished with its satisfaction, the activity-licensing character of commitment need not be. In particular, desire for recognition in the form of a commitment to being recognized is a standing, structural element of self-consciousness. It persists even when fulfilled by the achievement of reciprocal recognition that is self-consciousness. Because it persists as part of the necessary background against which any other commitments are adopted and relinquished, being for oneself a recognizer is an *essential* element of one's self-conception. One's identification with it consists practically in the structural impossibility of relinquishing that commitment in favor of others. To be self-conscious *is* to be *essentially* self-conscious: to be *for* oneself, and identify oneself with oneself *as* something that is for oneself, a recognized and recognizing being.

A fuller telling would continue with an account couched in the same basic terms of the specific distorted form of self-consciousness that construes itself under the distinctively modern, alienated category of *independence* that Hegel epitomizes in the form of the 'Master'. It would explain how the self-conception characteristic of Mastery arises from overgeneralizing from its capacity immediately to constitute itself as *essentially* self-conscious – making it so just by taking it so – to yield an ultimately incoherent model of a self-consciousness *all* of whose conceptions are immediately constitutive, thus eliding quite generally the crucial 'distinction that consciousness involves', between what things are *for* it and what they are *in* themselves. And it would explain what Hegel elsewhere calls '*die Wirkung des Schicksals*': the metaphysical irony that undermines the Master's existential commitment to possessing authority without correlative responsibility, to being recognized as authoritative without recognizing anyone as having the authority to do that. But that

is a story for another occasion.

Endnotes

1 All references to Hegel's *Phenomenology* are to sections numbered as in Hegel 1977.

2 This way of putting things, in terms of commitments rather than desires, will be discussed and justified below.

3 This comparison is developed in 'Holism and Idealism in Hegel's *Phenomenology*', Chapter Six of Brandom 1992.

4 Cf. Dennett 1981.

5 Hegel makes claims along these lines in his telegraphic discussion of the relation between self-consciousness and desire. One example is the summary claim that 'the unity of self-consciousness with itself must become essential to self-consciousness, i.e. self-consciousness is *Desire* in general' (§167). He stresses that '*Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*' (§175), that is, in another recognized recognizer. 'The satisfaction of Desire is...the reflection of self-consciousness into itself, or the certainty that has become truth. [BB: that is, what things are for it and what things are in themselves coincide.] But the truth of this certainty is really a double reflection, the duplication of self-consciousness. Consciousness has for its object one which, of its own self posits its otherness or difference as a nothingness...' (§176). The object is the other one recognizes, who cancels the difference between it and the index consciousness in the sense that it, too, recognizes the other, thereby applying to both the other and itself one universal expressing a respect of similarity or identity: being something things can be something for. 'A self-consciousness exists only *for a self-consciousness*. Only so is it in fact a self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it' (§177). 'Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged [*nur als ein Anerkanntes*]...The detailed exposition of the Notion of this spiritual unity in its duplication will present us with the process of Recognition [*Anerkennen*]' (§178).

6 Reflexivity is not redundant in the mathematical definition of equivalence relation because the argument depends on the relation being everywhere-defined, in the sense that that for every x there is *some* y such that xRy , i.e. that everyone recognizes *someone*. Given the philosophical surround, this condition can, I think, be suppressed.

ROBERT BRANDOM

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Justice as institutionalized freedom. A Hegelian Perspective

Axel Honneth

One of the greatest constraints under which political philosophy suffers today is its uncoupling from social analysis and, consequently, its obsession with purely normative principles. This isn't to say that the theory of justice does *not* have the task of formulating normative rules that can be used to measure the moral legitimacy of the social order; but rather, that these principles, as they are currently propounded, are mostly isolated from the ethical life of given practices and institutions, so that they have to be ,applied' to social reality secondarily. The conflict of ,is' and ,ought' that emerges here, or, to put it in another way, the philosophical reduction of moral facticity, is the result of far reaching developments in theory that are not insignificantly joined to the fate of Hegel's philosophy of right. A fate that has, on the one side, led to the loosening of the ties between the philosophical theory of justice and social analysis, while, on the other, provoked a just as momentous separation of sociological theory from normative theories of freedom and justice.

This essay is part of a larger project that takes up the task of bridging this divide in order to develop a theory of justice anchored in contemporary

social analysis. In order to be up to date, such a project must be in alignment with modern theories and conceptions of justice, meaning that it must connect the legitimation of a just social order with the modern hypergood of the individual's 'self-determination' or 'autonomy'. No modern theory of justice can refrain from grounding its legitimacy in the freedom of the individual or the self-actualization of social individuals. On the other hand, such a theory must also take into account the insight of sociology and social analysis that almost all of the collective real forms of human freedom have social contents and goals that have to be developed and reproduced within the community.

The concrete task of legitimating a concept of justice in relation to individual freedom may seem clear, but it is actually as unclear and as ambiguous as the modern concept of freedom itself. Modern philosophy as well as contemporary social practice takes into its purview not simply one single concept of freedom, but at least three competing concepts, which can serve respectively as the normative basis of our conceptions of justice. Thus, justice in modernity is conceived by way of developing a negative, a reflective and a social concept of freedom.¹

1. Negative and reflective freedom

The *negative* idea of freedom, which goes through Hobbes' absolutism, Locke's liberalism and Nozick's libertarianism, runs as a common thread through the modern project of legitimating the state's form of governance and the laws of justice. In these models the forms of the governing order and its justice are legitimated with reference to the mutual wrongs that 'free' individuals in a state of nature would do to each other. The state is justified, so to speak, by the fact that it lessens the „costs“ of freedom of action experienced by individuals in a state of nature without regulation. As a conception of justice, this model suffers from two great problems: first, it leads only to a singularly egotistically motivated idea of justice, and this is hard to reconcile with the claim that justice is normally (also) motivated by virtue or at least derives from a non-egotistical perspective. Secondly,

this concept of freedom is so primitive that it doesn't allow us to label, for example, overwhelming inner compulsions as kinds of 'unfreedom'.

Such problems account for the increasing interest in a new, *reflective* idea of freedom, stemming from Rousseau, Kant und German idealism. The reflective concept of freedom takes its departure from the obvious gap in the negative freedom concept: the latter lacks any *substantive content*. The negative conception of freedom can thus not distinguish between purely emotionally guided actions and morally autonomous actions or self-determined ones that are rational in other respects, even though in everyday practices we would speak here of greater or lesser impression of freedom. Our defenders of reflective freedom do justice to exactly this difference between simple freedom of action and substantial freedom. And thus there arises three *substantive* models of reflective freedom with Rousseau, Kant and Herder: respectively, an authenticity-based, an autonomy-based, and a self-actualization oriented concept of freedom. These three models make possible different response strategies to the question of justice even as they all aim to go beyond the negative model. While it is harder to use the authenticity concept as a basis for justice, the perspective of founding the idea of justice on autonomy and self-actualization dominates contemporary philosophy. With Habermas, Apel and Rawls, the Kantian idea of autonomy has found a new form, and perhaps it most influential one, in theories of justice based on the theory of communication and constructivist premises. In as much as the concept of autonomy is foundational for these theories, a concept of justice must be devised that is largely procedural and distributive.

In the matter of grounding justice in self-realisation, the situation shows itself to be distinctly more complex. All resulting models have this much in common with the autonomy-grounded theories: they too advocate substantive models of justice. But at that point unity ends. Two main traditions can be identified: Coming from Mill, there is a rather individualistic conception of justice, which propagates the „social resources or conditions“ of individual self-actualization. Coming from Tocqueville, we have another – a republican – tradition of justice, which understands self-actualization essentially as a common, cooperative

enterprise, and to that end may even integrate acts of societal solidarity into the concept of justice.²

As this coarse overview shows, ongoing concepts of justice aren't easily enjoined with the idea of reflective freedom. In fact, to be sure, all the above sketched out ideas are distinguished by their opposition to the justice model of negative freedom, since by their positing not a social system of egotism, but instead one of cooperation: the degree of synergy of the individual subjects which has to be assumed solely in order that favourable social conditions for the realization of reflective freedom exist is incomparably higher than is the case of purely negative freedom. But beyond this rather formal mutuality, we see at once a number of differences disclose themselves here which are, essentially, compatible with the possibility of conceiving reflective freedom on the model of self-lawgiving as well as of self-actualization. And according to which of the two models we select as our foundation, the basic institutions of the just order (those institutions that are meant to socially guarantee the realisation of freedom) will be characterized completely differently. To be sure, the method through which in both cases the corresponding ideas of justice are realized is still the same: Out of the presuppositions of reflective freedom, be it of the self-determination or the self-actualization variety, ideas are deduced as to which institutional conditions would be required to enable all individuals to reap the fruit of their respective freedoms.

Neither of the two models of reflective freedom actually make reference to the freedom could be practically realized, even if only as simply an aspect of freedom; such assumptions are given consideration only when the question of the just social order turns on the possibility of realizing the latter within a society. Basically, therefore, the ideas of reflective freedom are stopped before reaching the very conditions by virtue of which the realization of freedom they characterize could solely be completed. By sheer artifice, the determination of this freedom bypasses those institutional conditions and forms that must always be added to

nascent reflection in order to see it through to a successful conclusion. The idea of self-determination itself contains as a further moment of its development at least one social assumption, which is that the moral goals are institutionally tractable - just as to the idea of self-actualization one must add categorically that the goods that correspond to its desires are socially available. But in both cases such conditions first come into play after the performance of freedom has already been fully determined; they are added externally, as elements of social justice, but are not thought of as innate to it. Only the discourse-theoretical determination of the field of reflective freedom constitutes an exception to this logic of supplementarity: because the performance of reflective practices here is bound to the condition of participation in discursive organizations, the social institution of discourses ought not to be interpreted as so many external extensions, but as a component of freedom. Such institutional extension of the concept of freedom uses the third, „social“ concept of freedom as its guiding principle. According to this idea, the idea of reflective freedom cannot unfold without implicating the institutional forms that will make possible its realization.

2. Social freedom as the basis of a theory of justice

The communication theoretical model of discourse that Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas have jointly developed offers a concept of individual freedom which, while yet remaining within the territory of the reflective, already points to another territory, that of a social freedom. For, in distinction to the dominant, monological interpretation of reflective freedom of which here the claim is made, only intersubjective discursive cooperation will make possible the kind of rational self-control which constitutes its inner core (Wartenberg 1971, p. 187 ff.). What is „social“ about this new, discourse-theoretical interpretation of freedom is the circumstance that we no longer see a given particular institution of social reality as a supplement, but instead as a medium and the condition of the realization of freedom. From this perspective, the individual subject can only bring about the reflective acts that are inherent to self-determination

when it cooperates in a social organization with others, who reciprocally realize this same kind of action. The institutional actuality, in this instance discourse, is no longer something that must be intellectually added to the selected concept of freedom in order to get to an idea of social justice, but instead is an element of the realization of freedom itself. It is not until institutions of these kinds are given in social reality that the individual in its framework can realize the kind of voluntary determination that is mandatory for reflective freedom.

Of course, in discourse theory this social turn remains suspended between transcendentalism and institutionalism, value idealism and social theory. That the individual has to be identified with a participant in conversation in order to affirm his will and therewith gain the experience of freedom, is conceived here once as an ahistorical, rational fact, and then again as a historically efficacious necessity. But the premise of the intersubjectivity of freedom is never taken to entail the fact that a structure of institutional practices is required simply to put in motion this process of reciprocal self-determination. – This fact is never filled in. The term „Discourse“ in discourse theory is understood either as a transcendental occurrence or as a meta-institution, but never as a particular institution within the multiple instances of its social appearance. What is lacking here is a decision for historical concreteness, that would need to be combined with the premise of communication theory in order to accrue insight into the institutional foundations of freedom. Thus, although everything pointed to this moment in the approach of Apel and Habermas, that work never could cross the threshold to a social concept of freedom. Only in looking back to Hegel, on the other hand, can we see the outline of how it should be possible to conceive specific institutions as the media of reflective freedom.

Hegel develops his own conception of freedom, that we shall label ‚social‘ here, in agreement with Frederick Neuhouser,³ primarily in the context of his philosophy of right. The point of departure for his thinking is a critique of two ideas of freedom, which is parallel, if not in all details, at least in its essential features, to the two ideas of freedom that we have

distinguished up to this point. While the idea of negative freedom, to use our terminology, must founder on the fact that the 'content' of the action cannot itself be conceived as 'free', the idea of reflective freedom is deficient because it opposes action, the substantive content of which is now free in as much as thought is self-determined, to an objective reality, which is in turn to be conceived as still completely heteronomous to freedom.⁴ It is easy to see that Hegel's reproach against the second model of freedom is complementary to that he brought up to begin with against the first model of freedom: if there the lack lies in the fact that freedom does not extend into the self-relation of the individual's subjectivity, so here, with reflective freedom, the decisive deficit consists in the fact that the now interiorized freedom does not extend out again to the sphere of objectivity. This second course of thought, which is not yet as familiar to us as the critique of negative freedom, loses some of its abstractness when it is related to the formulas with which we have characterized freedom all along. We saw that this idea of freedom, which presupposes a reflective performance of the individual insofar as it requires either an act of self-law-giving or a determination to realize one's wishes: I am free only in the degree in which I am in the position to orient my action to autonomously set goals or authentically decided wishes. If we relate Hegel's objection to this idea, we can see that nothing in it seems to guarantee the realizability of reflectively determined goals. While, certainly, the extension of freedom into the subject's interiority ensures that actual features of freedom will be composed only of those intentions which do not obey some alien authority, the possibilities for their realization are kept completely out of sight, as though irrelevant. Hegel would obviously like us, then, to go to a third model of freedom that would overcome this gap, insofar as even the objective sphere of reality should be subject to the criteria of freedom. Not only individual intentions, which should come about without any foreign influence acting upon them, should satisfy the rules of freedom, but also the external social reality should be arranged in such a way that it should be free from all heteronomy and every constraint. The idea of social freedom, accordingly, should be understood as the result of a

theoretical effort to extend the criterion that engenders the thought of reflective freedom even to that sphere which usually confronts the subject as external reality.

Obviously, the mention of this goal already shows how difficult it has to be to act so as to really execute it. While the realm of individual dispositions and goals may provide us with an adequate number of criteria out of everyday life that give us the means for distinguishing between free and unfree, with regard to the sphere of social reality, those kinds of intuitions seem to completely fail us; at least we cannot simply spontaneously list a series of viewpoints that would allow us, in the realm of social institutions, to make distinctions between degrees of freedom. Yet Hegel himself seems to call upon some such ordinary experience when he observes, in the addition to § 7 of his ‚Philosophy of Right,’ that ‚friendship’ and ‚love’ give us an example of freedom in the exterior sphere of the social: „Here one is not onesidedly in oneself, but instead one limits oneself only too gladly in relation to another, knowing oneself even in this limitation as oneself. In the determinate, a person should not feel determined, but instead, while one sees the Other as Other, one first gains the feeling of self.”⁴⁵ Although Hegel wanted to be able to limit this expository instance to the plane of simple „sentiment,” yet in the therein applied term of „to be itself in the otherness“ is contained the key of his concept of social freedom; it is grounded in a representation of social institutions which can let the subjects interrelate in such a way that they could conceive their opposite as an Other to their self.

3. Recognition as the form of social freedom

From the very beginning, the key to Hegel’s idea of freedom has been the category of ‚mutual recognition’ (Hegel 1986). As an isolated subject, the person in all his reflective freedom remains cut off from the outer world of social organization and institutions. No matter how well she or he succeeds in limiting his actions to only autonomously determined goals, their implementation still remains uncertain in objective reality. The striving for freedom ceases to amount to an element of subjective

experience as soon as the subject encounters another subject, whose goals relate to his own in a complementary fashion, for now the ego, in the exertions of interactive partners, can glimpse a piece of the external world which may allow it to transform its autonomous goals into objective ones. By „mutual recognition“ is meant at first, viewed like this, only the reciprocal experience of envisioning oneself confirmed in the wishes and goals of the person opposite to the extent that his or her existence represents a condition for the realization of one's own wishes and goals. Under the condition that both subjects recognize their need for the complementarity of their relevant goals, and they thus see in the person opposite the Other of their own self, the freedom that so far was only reflective now extends itself to become intersubjective. Hegel, at this point, constructs the connection to the concept of the „institution“ or „medium“ by declaring the existence of normative behavioral practices to be a social precondition for such a recognition of the complementarity of goals and wishes: both subjects must have learned to intelligibly articulate their present goals for their opposite number as well as correctly understanding the Other's expressions of the same thing, before they can recognize one another in their mutual dependence. According to Hegel's theory, such reciprocal intelligibility is guaranteed by instituted recognition, or that bundle of normativized behaviors making it possible to objectively understand interdependent individual goals. These behaviors make certain that the subjects can recognize the alter ego's wish, the fulfilment of which would be a condition of the fulfilment of one's own wish. But since in this way the striving for freedom of individuals is satisfied only within or with the help of institutions, for Hegel, the „intersubjective notion of freedom“ has to be again enlarged to a „social“ concept of freedom. The subject is ultimately only ‚free‘ when it encounters its opposite number* (Other) in the framework of institutional practices to which it is thus bound by a relation of mutual recognition, since it can glimpse in the Other's goals a condition of the realization of its own goals. In the formula of „being-with-itself in the other“ there is thus always already implied a reference to social institutions warranting by coordinated, regulated practices the mutually recognition of participating subjects as others of themselves. And

it is only in such forms of recognition that individuals are at all enabled to transmit and realize their reflectively gained goals (Neuhouser 2000).

Only as long as Hegel believed that he could explain the ethical unity of modern societies directly out of the emotional bonds of subjects, could he plausibly model the social structure of freedom primarily on the love between man and woman. In the love relationship, where freedom is no longer mere desire but already reflective and presents itself as erotic attraction, we find the emergent reflective freedom of two subjects gaining fulfilment through mutually recognizing each other as beings who are conscious of their interdependence:

Longing thus frees itself from the relation to enjoyment, becoming the immediate one-ness of both in the absolute being-for-itself of both, or becoming love; and the enjoyment consists in this apperception of itself in the being of the Other's consciousness (Hegel 1986, Fragment 21, p. 212).

That Hegel by this 'immediate' form of recognition already has a particular institution before his eyes is primarily revealed by his marginal notes, in which he, as though in contrast, enlarges on the older – for example, chivalrous – constellations of the love relationship.⁶ Only under the historical condition, that the modern, romantic ideal of love is substituted for such relational models in social praxis, could two subjects be connected to each other in this way, coming to see reciprocally one in the other the realization of their erotic liberty. So, already Hegel's early conception of love alludes to an institution that is thought of as the enabling social presupposition that makes the corresponding recognition relationship happen at all.

Hegel soon took his increased focus on the newly emerging political economics of his time as the incentive for expanding his recognition theory. If the structure of modern societies, as this new discipline claimed, is always also characterized by its allotting an independent

sphere to the economic market, then its ethical unity can no longer be sufficiently conceived by means of the recognition relationship of love alone. Rather, the expanding domain of market-mediated action must also harbour its own freedom potential, because otherwise it would be inexplicable why it found moral adherence so quickly among the greatest part of the population. In order not to have to surrender his original insight, in the face of this new development, that freedom always presents an institutionally bound recognition relationship, Hegel had to make a plausible argument showing the extent to which the economic market represents such an institution of recognition. His ingenious solution, prefigured already in the Jena writings, consists in the assumption that the subjects in the market sphere have to mutually recognize each other for the reason that the subjects perceive in their opposite one who, as an economic supplier, guarantees the satisfaction of their purely egocentric demands; thus, Hegel concludes, freedom possesses even here, in the seemingly perfectly atomized realm of market activity, the institutional structure of an interaction, since only through reciprocal recognition of their dependence on each other can the individuals achieve the fulfilment of their goals. Interpreting the market as a new, indirect form of „to be itself in the otherness“, means learning to understand that this institution creates a recognition relationship through which individuals can enlarge their freedom.⁷

The consequence of this inclusion of the market in his conception of freedom for Hegel is that he learned to interpret the society of his time as a historically layered relationship of recognition relationships. In the end, in his *Philosophy of Right*, he came to see a differentiation of three of those kinds of institutional complexes, distinguished among themselves by what individual ends or goals would be satisfied by mutual recognition. But always along the path leading to this point, Hegel retained the idea intact that the freedom of individuals is finally only implemented in that space where they can participate in institutions whose normative practices assure a relationship of mutual recognition. At first Hegel's reasons for this idiosyncratic conception seemed to be found only in the completion

of a purely logical operation. The negative concept of freedom failed to include subjectivity which, on its side, we have to be able to imagine as somehow free; and the concept of an inner, reflective freedom that arose out of the resulting concept failed to include objectivity, because outside reality has to be thought of as a sheer heteronomous sphere. In order to overcome the failures of both conceptions, we require a third concept of freedom that can represent subjectivity and objectivity, the particular and the general, in their reconciliation. But as soon as Hegel tries to make this conceptually gained construction plausible by approaching our life-world experiences, it emerges that he is on the trail of an extremely convincing idea; for with the suggestion of including objectivity itself in the determination of freedom, one observes, with a certain justification, that we cannot experience ourselves as being free as long as we don't find in external reality the presuppositions for the implementation of our self-determined goals. All formulations by which Hegel criticizes the standpoint of inner, reflective freedom immediately tend to this insight: if freedom is taken to be exclusively a „faculty“, namely an ability to be able to be led in one's actions only by one's own, self-determined goals, we would “[consider] the relation of the will to what it wills or reality as an application to a given material, which does not belong to the essence of freedom.“ (Hegel 1970, p. 61)

One should remark that a weak and a strong version of this third position according to which the objective presuppositions for its realization belong to „the essence of freedom itself“, can clearly be distinguished; and the peculiarity of the Hegelian idea of social freedom consists in decisively laying out an interpretation of the strong version. According to a weak reading, the inclusion of objectivity should imply that our ideas of autonomy or self realisation remain incomplete, as long as we do not conceptually comprehend therein the social resources for realising our corresponding goals. Joseph Raz represents a contemporary variety of this interpretation when he shows that it would be highly implausible, by reason of the circular relationships between chosen goals and institutional arrangements, not to add on such ‚social forms‘ as the conditions for the

concept of autonomy itself (Raz 1986, p. 307 ff). But as near as Raz comes to certain aspects of Hegel's doctrine of freedom, there still remains a deep fracture dividing him from Hegel's central intuition. For Hegel not only wants to reveal the social conditions of reality that enable the realisation of self-created goals. Rather, Hegel wants to see the very ‚stuff’ of reality so liquefied that the structure of reflective freedom itself is rediscovered, mirrored within it. The world of objectivity is supposed to confront the individual's exercise of freedom so that it to a certain degree converges with what the subject reflectively intends. This strong ontological claim is only fulfilled when other subjects belong to this outer reality, and the goals these other subjects have set demand that the first subject carries out exactly what he or she intends to do; for in this way the objectivity in the exemplary shape of such co-subjects may be imagined in such a way that what objectivity wants or demands from subjectivity is to realize itself in its reflectively determined freedom.

This strong reading of the objective presuppositions of the enlarged concept of freedom is what Hegel is trying to defend with his concept of ‚recognition’; this is in order to characterize a structure of reconciliation not only between subjects, but between subjective freedom and objectivity. In the recognition relation the subject encounters a (on its side subjective) element of reality, through which it sees itself affirmed or even commanded to realize its reflectively gained intentions. For only through this realisation does this objective element on its side gain satisfaction, because as much as the subject it is pursuing goals, the realisation of which demands the carrying out of the intentions of its Other. Of course, it is easy to see how, in consequence of this sketched out construction, Hegel has to have both sides serve only such goals or intentions that are, in a very fastidious sense, ‚universal’: it can only come to a mutual recognition in this sense when the goals of both parties are so supplemented that their fulfilment only comes about through complementary action. What has been called, above, the ‚supplemental necessity’ serves thereto as the presupposition of the form of freedom realized in the recognition relation. For individual freedom to take effect in objective reality, and thus in a

certain sense to be reconciled with the latter, the subject must want to realize goals whose achievement presupposes other subjects possessing autonomous and complementary goals. Hegel must thus let a process precede the attainment of social freedom in which the subjects learn to limit themselves essentially to such wishes or intentions as are ‚universal‘, in the sense of requiring supplementation. Once they take control of this sort of autonomous goal, then they can experience, in the corresponding recognition relationships, that they are „with themselves in the sphere of objectivity“ (Hegel 1970, § 28, p. 79).

To engender such an universalisation of wishes and intentions upon which his whole doctrine of freedom is concentrated, Hegel once again requires institutions. To this end, he allows himself to be led by the essentially Aristotelian idea that the subjects learn under the influence of institutional practices to accommodate their motives to its internal goals. At the end of this socialisation process stands a relatively stable, habit forming system of aspirations letting the subjects aim precisely at those objectives that have been anchored in praxis-embedded normative habits. When the individuals now grow up in institutions in which normative practices of reciprocity have been enacted for some time, they will then learn in the course of their ‚education‘ how to limit themselves in their conduct to those wishes and intentions which can be satisfied only through the complementary actions of others.⁸ As in a virtuous circle, socialisation in institutional complexes of recognition takes care of the fact that the subjects learn to develop universal, supplementary and interdependent goals, which they can later only achieve through reciprocal practices, which in turn is the power that keeps these institutions alive.

There are thus two essential tasks which in the Hegelian doctrine of freedom must be undertaken by those institutions – contained within the Hegelian doctrine of freedom – in which recognition relationships are to endure. One is that they concern themselves in their mediating role with the particular classes of expressions of their members so that they could be mutually understood as requirements to realize complementary goal setting in common. Only on the basis of such intersubjectively

binding rules and symbols do individuals universally come to some agreement to identify with one another and to each realise their goals and intentions. In this sense, institutions of recognition are not simply the annex to or external presupposition of intersubjective freedom; since without them the subjects can't know about their mutual dependence on each other, but instead provide at once the basis and sites of freedom's realization. On the other hand, these same institutions also bring it about that their individuated members are enabled, for the first time, to gain an intersubjective understanding of their freedom in general; for only through growing into practices whose sense is the common realisation of complementary goal-making do they learn to understand themselves as self-conscious members of freedom preserving communities. In this way, Hegel can conclude that individuals only really experience and realize freedom if they participate in social institutions that are formed by mutual recognition relationships.

4. Social freedom in the post-hegelian tradition

Although this concept of social freedom seems to possess expressly eccentric and even extravagant features, it has not remained without influence. Even Marx allowed himself to be led (perhaps unconsciously) in his early writings by Hegelian intuitions, when he made social cooperation into the model instance of freedom.⁹ That concept of individual self-actualization, that we have already met as a particular shape of the idea of reflective freedom, works as the point of departure for his reflections: the human individual is only free to the extent that he succeeds in articulating his ‚real‘, authentic needs and wishes and realizing them in the course of his life. For Marx, however, this then very common model remains much too abstract as long as it is thought of only as it was by Herder and his disciples, in relation to language and poetic creativity; instead, following Hegel whose „Phenomenology“ he is intimately familiar with from 1837 onwards, he wanted to interpret the process of self actualization on the model of some exemplary activity in which the individual objectifies his ‚individuality‘, his peculiarity,

and, in the contemplation of [manufactured – A.H.] objects enjoys to the full his personal abilities.¹⁰ Thus, he foresees a social arrangement or institution in which this form of mutual recognition has lost its simply transitory existence and has been implemented with enduring universal adherence. In cooperation, understood as the real „bond of our productive faculties for each other“,¹¹ subjects can recognize themselves reciprocally in the necessary supplementarity of their natures. For Marx, cooperative production represents the institutionalized median between the individual freedoms of all members of a common organisation. If they don't participate in this institution, and are thus excluded from cooperation, they can't realize themselves in their productive activities, because they would lack the practical supplemental contribution of another subject who recognizes in his production their needs.

Marx during his lifetime never gave up this specific conception of social freedom; he always believed that the reflective freedom of individuals is effective there where its own, productive self-actualization is created in being supplemented through the self-actualization of others. Already in Marx, the early writings' sketched out concept served as the normative background of a social critique that goes far beyond the intention that Hegel connected to his theory of freedom. While Hegel wanted to create a conceptually expanded and deepened basis for liberalism by highlighting the latter's need for freedom preserving institutions, Marx has in mind a critique of the mode of socialisation in capitalist society in general. As soon as the productive activities of individuals are not coordinated with each other directly through the mediating instance of cooperation, but instead through the „alien mediator“¹² of money, Marx argued, the relations of mutual recognition are obscured, so that in the end each sees himself as a solitary, accumulating, self-seeking being. Capitalism, which lets traffic in money take the place of cooperation as the mediating instance, creates social relationships, in which „our mutual supplementarity“ is only a „simple semblance“ supported by „mutual plundering.“¹³ Although Marx in the course of his further work would change and nuance this image, it

yet remains intact in its general features all the way up to his late work: Even in the mature Critique of the Political Economy – *Das Kapital* – the capitalistic social formation is criticized before everything else because it engenders the material appearance of materially mediated social relations that lets the intersubjective structure of freedom be eclipsed.

5. The ethical life as institutional prerequisite for freedom

The Hegelian and Marxist concept of freedom have in common that the achievement of freedom is bound to the presupposition of participation in institutionally regulated practices, and that in this way the institution in question is not an external condition or supplement, but the internal medium of individual freedom. For Hegel, institutions have import in the concept of freedom itself, because their intersubjective structure requires that they lift the external burden of necessary coordination. In the unfolding practices that are objectified in an institutional construct, the subjects can nearly automatically tell what they have to contribute in order to achieve the common possible realisation of their goals. Thus, Hegel can't countenance merely any arbitrary institution as part of his concept of freedom; he must rather limit himself to those constructs in which those recognition relations are fixed, making possible an enduring form of the mutual realisation of individual goals. The category of recognition which Hegel uses as a key to define the intersubjectivity of freedom, is also the determining factor for his interpretation of institutions: because such complexes of normatively regulated behavior have to satisfy the goal of constructing for subjects a social model of the reciprocal realisation of freedom, these complexes must themselves represent congealed forms of mutual recognition. Hegel thus features institutions in his theory of freedom only in the shape of enduring embodiments of intersubjective freedom.

We have seen that each new idea of freedom emerging in the features of the philosophical discourse of modernity corresponds with an alteration in the concept of social justice. On the path that goes from Hobbes by way of Rousseau up to Kant and Herder, the structure of individual freedom

is not only ever more strongly indicated in terms of its reflectivity, but, in tandem, grow the methodical claims to the grounding of justice that are put upon it.

Neither Hegel nor Marx could naturally deem the conceptions of justice that arise out of the particular concepts of freedom of their predecessors as being either persuasive or correct. Against the contractual construct that the theoreticians of negative freedom use as a means to the enactment of social justice, they both even have the same objection: if the hypothetical contract is supposed to be a consensus among subjects exclusively oriented to their own selves, the resulting social order can also rest on nothing other than a well ordered system of private egotism. But this is simply to miss what constitutes the actual reality and prospect of Man, namely, a kind of freedom, in which one person helps the other to self actualization.¹⁴ But only Hegel cares to also maintain objections against the other justice conceptions of the previous tradition; for Marx, on the other hand, such further nuances are of little interest, because he is profoundly convinced that the interest in abstract principles of justice merely mirror a need for the legitimation of the ruling social order. Even Hegel's critique is not much more subtly worked out, but throws a hint into why he thinks of procedural additions in the spirit of Kant as faulty. From his point of view, such theories are caught in a vicious circle, because in order to construct the proceduralist aspect, a whole culture of freedom must be assumed, whose institutional and habitual factors cannot, on the other hand, be taken to be already grounded. Such contents or material substances are construed as merely external outcomes of the application of the procedure, while these external factors, these social conditions, are always required for the implementation of the procedure:

By such a method everything essentially scientific is cast aside. As regards the content there is cast aside the necessity of the self-contained and self-developed subject matter in itself, and as regards the form there is discarded the nature of the conception.¹⁵

For Hegel it is unquestionable that this circularity is connected with all the defects of the presupposed concepts of reflective freedom. Because the proceduralistic theories apply a concept of individual freedom, in which the subjectivity itself, but not yet its outer reality, is thought of as „free“, they can limit themselves to the defining of justice in the statements of a reflective process without concerning themselves with the corresponding presuppositions in the institutional reality of society. For Hegel, there consists an internal concordance between the concept of reflective freedom and proceduralistic justice theories, because the latter's exclusion of objectivity is mirrored in the limitation to defining justice on purely formal principles. To this extent, Hegel is opposed to the whole schema of the division between justification and application, of procedural justification and succeeding application of presumptive outcomes to a given matter. If the supposed concept of freedom contains its orientation to institutional relations out of its own nature, then it must follow that the essence of a just social order must also be given as though of itself. Between the justification and application, according to Hegel, there simply can't arise the whole logical divide that proceduralistic social theories, following in the wake of Kant, commonly think is found there. If objectivity, namely the intersubjective structure of reflective freedom, be only carefully enough traced, an overview of the communicative practices and institutions arises, which, taken all together, defines the conditions of social justice.

Conjoined with his critique of proceduralist justice theories, Hegel thus unfolds the sketch of another, alternative grounding procedure, consisting in grasping the presentation of individual freedom partly within its institutional composition so that on the same level of presentation the outline of a just social order will also show itself. Of course, Hegel has a peculiar problem here, because he must know in advance what goals of the subjects are of the kind that they can be realized only thanks to institutional mediation in uncoerced mutuality. While Kant can satisfy himself, in his proceduralist approach, with assigning to subjects all conceivable goals and intentions as long as they satisfy the conditions

of (moral) reflectivity, Hegel cannot be satisfied with such a pluralism of individual ends because he wants to make the just order directly equivalent to the sum of social institutions that are necessary for the realization of intersubjective freedom. Thus he has to fix those ends in advance that individuals could only reach together in mutuality. We can't directly say that Hegel shows great transparency in his unavoidable fixing of such ends: the presentation of his own program is pursued instead so strongly in the language of his whole critique of reason that independently of it the process can be neither justified nor even presented. But perhaps it can be said using an independent terminology that in accomplishing the adumbrated task, Hegel applies a method that is supposed to create an equilibrium between historical-social factors and rational considerations. In the course of making a corrective comparison of reflection on what goals individuals should rationally pursue and empirical definitions of necessitated socialisation in modernity, gradually those ends do become visible that subjects must realistically follow in order to actualize themselves under some given circumstances. We could just as well call such a method, on the lookout for an agreement between concept and historical reality, a process of „normative reconstruction“. In order to make even clearer how Hegel goes about this business: guided by a general determination of what rational subjects can rationally want, we are to distil out of the historically given relationships those goals that subjects actually pursue, while maximally approaching the conceptual ideal. Hegel must thus put himself in the perspective of social theorists and philosophers when he tries beforehand to name the universal ends of freedom. On the other hand, he has to conceptually outline the goals that all human subjects should rationally set themselves, in order to balance these against the existent empirical intentions to which individuals tend because they grow up in modern culture. Those autonomous goals, which the historically situated subjects follow as rational modern beings, should appear in the sequel, formally approximating the determinations of the ideal type.

Certainly, Hegel himself wouldn't have called upon any of these descriptions to characterize his methodical procedure; rather, in his work it seems as if he wants to develop the subjects' liberatory ends directly and immediately out of the concept of a historically unfolded spirit. But it makes complete sense to use an independent, freestanding descriptive language to make clear that Hegel's chosen method has an existence apart from the background of his Spirit metaphysics. As we've seen, Hegel faces the problem of having to express something substantive about the goals and wishes modern subjects want to pursue in the framework of their individual freedom, because he wants by means of such general goal-making to stabilize the institutional complexes, the institutions of recognition, which all together make up a just order in modern society. If in the balancing out of concept and historical reality we now see which ends the subjects within given circumstances ideally pursue, then Hegel can move on to sorting them against corresponding institutions. Each of these institutional complexes should therefore offer the assurance that the subjects will experience their freedom as something objective, because they must perceive the external conditions of the realization of their individual goals in the institutionalized roles of Others. The number of institutions that Hegel must thereby distinguish, are to be determined strictly by the number of goals that he believes individuals can be subordinated to as universalized goals in modernity, since to each of these goals there must correspond an institutional structure that can enduringly support the practices of reciprocity, therein assuring intersubjective satisfaction.

Hegel names the sum of these kinds of structures, as is well known, with the concept of 'ethical life' inspired by Aristotle: finally, only with this category in his theory do we get an outline of how social justice under conditions of the modern ideal of freedom, can be warranted. Hegel believes that a modern social order is „just“ not simply when it can be proved to be the faithful impress of the results either of a fictional social contract or the popular will of a democracy. Hegel thinks such suggested constructions always fail in consequence of the fact that they assign freedom to subjects as co-workers on these processes which can't

be earned without participation in institutions that are already just. Modern theories of justice conjure away the confusion into which they naturally thereby fall by presupposing concepts of individual freedom which do not take into account the latter's need for objective mediation, for satisfaction in reality. If it is a sufficient condition for freedom to act either without outer limit or to act within a reflective situation, then subjects can be thought of as sufficiently free before any binding to a social order. But if, on the contrary, the subject can only be imagined to be 'free' in that space where his goals from reality are themselves fulfilled or realized, then we have to invert the relation of the legitimating process and social justice. First, we have to be able to think of these subjects as bound within certain social structures that guarantee their freedom before they can be vested as a free being in a process that guards the legitimacy of the social order. Hegel must place the sketching out of a just social order before any legitimation making procedure because the subjects must produce the individual freedom, which to taking part in such procedures would be required only in socially just, namely freedom-preserving institutions. Thus Hegel's whole theory of justice comes out of a picture of ethical relationships, out of a normative reconstruction of this segmented order of institutions, in which the subjects in the experience of mutual recognition could realize their social freedom. And only in dependence on the existence of such institutional constructs as those which relevantly correspond to one of the ends, which subjects in modernity want to realize, do the legitimate securing procedures come into effect for Hegel too, just as out of them other theories of freedom seek their ideas of social justice on the whole.

To speak of an inversion of the relationship of social order and legitimating procedure doesn't at all mean, for Hegel, to renounce the role played by that latter placeholder kind of process in articulating a theory of justice in general. Its function should rather be added in the framework of a social order that is already given as „just“, where, instead of grounding the social order, the process contains a placemaker for the individual's legitimation proof. Hegel rounds off the methodical

architecture of his justice conception in making space for the right of the individual, on the basis of his social freedom, individually to check and see whether the given institution lives up to its own rules. The institution of ‚rights-freedom’ as well as that of ‚self-examination’ are both expressly not conceived as ethical constructs, giving the subjects the civilly protected chance, if necessary, to distance themselves from all recognition relationships to which they owe their social freedom. It is clear that Hegel would thus like to integrate into his system of ethical living both other forms of freedom that we’ve met in the course of this paper. Through the acknowledgement of ‚abstract rights’, the subjects should have the possibility to make use of their negative freedom under precarious circumstances. But through the recognition of their morality they should, on the other hand, have been in the situation to be able to hold their reflectively gained opinions against the ruling order. But Hegel only allows both freedoms to a point, insofar as authentic freedom doesn’t endanger the institutional structure of social freedom. They should only flank the ordered system of ethical institutions when they give the individual the right to legitimately turn away from their expectations, but not become a source of new social orderings. Whether Hegel would have been prepared, by a certain measuring of such deviations and objections, to concede a system breaking legitimacy to legal and moral freedoms, is an interesting question, but one we cannot pursue here.

The picture of methodical consequences that Hegel believes he can pull out of his concept of freedom for a theory of justice, is thus closed. Due to his conviction that the individual’s freedom is first unfolded in institutions of recognition, Hegel cannot bind the outline of such institutional structures cognitively to the hypothetical consensus of all potential members of society; for the production of a consensus like this (in the contract or in the popular democratic will) occurs under pre-conditions in which the subjects by lack of institutional commitments are not yet free enough, to actually dispose of a well informed perspective and opinion. As we saw, Hegel must therefore put the construction of a just order first, of a system of freedom protecting institutions, before

knowing the decisions of isolated or united subjects. First one needs to design the frame of the institutions of recognition, in which the subjects can achieve social freedom, before they can be, in a second step, endowed with the roles of taking as sketched out in the social order. Perhaps we can say summarily that recognition in institutions precedes the freedom of individual persons and the freedom of discursively related deliberations. On the other hand, Hegel also does not want to let the distance to the actual beliefs of historically situated subjects become too great, for he doesn't merely understand his presentation of the ethical order as a „construction“, but as a „reconstruction“; not as the projection of an ideal, but as the faithful sketch of already given historically factual relationships. Those Institutions that are supposed to serve the subjects as stations of social freedom are not taken by Hegel from the drawing board of theoretical idealisations. Rather, as we have already seen in the case of his definition of universal goals, he wanted to distil such institutions out of historical reality – using his notion of freedom as a heuristic means, he tried to identify and characterize those institutional structures that come closest to the desired standards. Naturally, this methodology is supported by the teleological idea that in every instant we find ourselves at the farthest point of a historical process, in which rational freedom has developed step by step. It is only because Hegel believes in such a progress in history that he can be certain that in the society of his time he will meet with institutions which give the social, and thus developed form of freedom space and protection. A sufficiently large remnant of this historical confidence remains even when it is stripped of its metaphysical foundation and must do without an objective teleology – for even then, under such altered conditions, Hegel's claim says nothing more than that the beliefs of members of society (that they belong to a social reality deserving of active support in comparison to the past) are mirrored in the vital work of maintaining institutions. Hegel can take the fact that these institutional constructs, embodying freedom off stage, as it were, are filled with ‚life‘, in this minimal ‚transcendental‘ sense as an indication of a general consciousness of progress in history. As long as the subjects

in their actions actively maintain and reproduce freedom-protecting institutions, this counts as a theoretical proof of their historical value.

6. Outlook: a processual concept of social freedom

From this point on, we can only further pursue the building up of Hegelian theory of freedom and justice in terms of the contents of its concrete implementation. In comparison to other models of justice that we've encountered on the way to a reconstruction of modern ideals of freedom, Hegel's possesses an essentially higher degree of saturation in historical fact. Because he has his eye on the kind of freedom that can only be realized in the form of participation in concrete institutions, he has to check and reference their existence much more strongly against and to historical reality than does Hobbes, Locke or Kant. With Hegel an historical index migrates into the conception of justice that makes it impossible to reduce it to universal principles or procedures. Instead it now would become necessary to observe the way his institution theory plays itself out, it being the integral part of his idea of social justice. On the other hand, our reconstruction up to this point may also suffice to ground a thesis that can count as the summation of this collective overview. Hegel's idea of social freedom possesses a higher measure of agreement with pre-theoretical intuitions and social experiences than has ever been possible other ideas of freedom among the moderns. For socialized subjects it must represent a kind of self-evidence that the level of their individual freedom is dependent upon how responsive the surrounding sphere of actions is to their goals and intention: the stronger their impression that their ends are supported by, or even put into effect within this sphere, with which they regularly have to do, the more they perceive their environment as a space in which they could expand their own personality. The experience of such uncompelled, mutual play between the person and the intersubjective environment represents the pattern of all individual freedom for a being, who is oriented to interactions with its kind (Dewey 1930). That Others don't block one's own aspirations, but make them possible and demand them, constitutes the schema of free activity in social nexuses, before any

individual tendency to retraction. This was the experience that Hegel wanted to incorporate in the concept of freedom with his formula of „being-with-oneself in the other“. Thereby he was able to grasp our intuitive ideas about freedom before the threshold at which they become thematised, if only in reference to a single individual subject.

Of course, other freedom ideals of the moderns also highlight natural aspects of freedom, as these take an enduring place in our everyday experiences. That we occasionally experience ourselves as ‚free‘ when we stubbornly hold out against the claims of normality, or that we are ‚free‘ there where we decide to stick to our own beliefs, all of this must constitute an essential moment in the thick weave of our social praxis, an essential moment of which we would call individual freedom. But such experiences certainly possess a secondary character as it were, because they present reaction formations to quarrels that are borne by our communications with other subjects – firstly we have to be entangled in these kinds of interactions before we can lay claim to those freedoms that we should have at our disposal as individuals or moral subjects. Dealing with others, social interaction logically precedes the distancing effects that are encoded in the features of ‚negative‘ or ‚reflective‘ freedom. Thus it makes sense to disclose an earlier level of freedom, which is at home in those spheres in which people or other beings inter-connect. Freedom means here, if we follow Hegel, the experience of a personal state of non-compulsion and expansion that flows out of the fact that my ends are advanced through the ends of others.

If we understand this kind of social freedom as the core of all our ideas of freedom, against which the other ideas we’ve discussed only hold derivatively, then we have to further infer a revision of our orthodox justice conceptions. What we call ‚just‘ in modern societies must no longer be simply measured in terms of the power of all members of society over negative or reflective freedoms, but instead must satisfy those measures processually, securing the possibilities of these subjects being able to participate in institutions of recognition. Therefore at the

heart of the idea of social justice there migrate particular, normatively substantive and thus ethically designated institutions of legal security, of state protection and civil society. These institutional structures remain alive only in the cooperative play of the division of labor between law, politics and the social public sphere, to which, in its different facets, the members of society owe their intersubjective freedom, thus on the whole the culture of freedom. Of course, we can also learn from Hegel that this kind of structure can only persist in modern institutions of recognition when the subjects possess the acknowledged opportunity to test it in the light of his own plans and beliefs and in a given instance even to leave it. The interpretative schemata provided by the ideas of negative and reflective freedom must be applied to the ethical institutions in the sense that they create the appropriate protocol to prove its legitimacy. With the integration of 'subjective' freedoms into the body of institutionalized, ethical life, there emerges a dynamic already inherent in the theory, an openness and transgressivity that makes it hard in general to normatively outline stable institutions of recognition. If, that is, individual objection and institutional reality as such are to be thought of as interdependent in the sense that the ethical institutions primarily make possible an individual autonomy, whose activation leads once more to a revision of these institutions. This spiral movement precludes a point of stability such as would obtain in a well-structured system of ethical institutions.

As we have remarked, it isn't clear whether Hegel saw his own concept of justice embedded in such processual theory. To be sure, in the different texts around the *Rechtsphilosophie*, there are always indications that awaken the impression as though Hegel had already forestalled his future possible critics by including their criticism in his stylized, normatively shaped description of an ethical institution.

If this were true, then he might have opened his ethical doctrine up to dynamic, even revolutionary changes that could result from frictions in his system of social justice at some point in the future. Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie* would be, according to his own understanding of it, not a book for the rest of human history, but one for the middle station of his own day. But

on the whole this is outweighed by the tendency to maintain that the process of the realization of freedom with the institutionalized ethical life of modernity has achieved closure. For Hegel, the institutions of the bourgeois nuclear family, the corporatively monopolized markets and the state seemed to indicate the end of the moral history of mankind. But we, who have sought to go through Hegel's project almost two hundred years after it was written, are naturally better informed. The forces of individualisation and autonomy, the potential of negative and reflective freedom, have set free a dynamic that penetrates into Hegel's own system of ethical life and has left none of the institutions in the normative circumstances in which he once imagined them. The culture of freedom, if there still is one, has assumed, today, a completely new shape, which makes it worthwhile once again for the brief moment of an historical epoch to normatively reconstruct it. The theoretical instruments required for such an enterprise have already surfaced partially in the context of our picture of Hegel's freedom concept. We require a historical-sociological anatomy of the classes of normative practices, in which today's subjects can so mutually satisfy their ends that, in the experience of this commonality, they can realize their individual freedom. It remains a question what it means in detail that different practices taken together build up the unity of one institution, which serves the reciprocal satisfaction of individual goals. Only in the course of implementation will it become clear that what is meant with these social structures are patterns of social action that contains certain categories of reciprocal commitment. Moreover, the essential task of the whole enterprise really consists in marking and tracing a circle about the exact place that should be taken by negative and reflective freedom in post-traditional ethical life. For from Hegel we learn, above all, that modernity's promise of freedom demands that we help individuals in all their legitimate freedoms to exercise their rights in the social order.

(translation: Roger Gathman with Johanna Seibt)

Endnotes

- 1 For a closer reading and typology of modern theories of freedom, see : Honneth 2003, Honneth 2001b and Raffnsøe-Møller 2001, p.5 ff.
- 2 See Taylor 1995 and Taylor 2003.
- 3 Neuhouser 2000 (on the conceptual use, see p. 5 ff.).
- 4 Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, 1970. Translated as *Philosophy of Right*, S. W. Dyde 1896.
- 5 Ibid, p. 57. [in S. W. Dyde's 1896 translation: ‚Here a man is not one-sided, but limits himself willingly in reference to another, and yet in this limitation knows himself as himself. In this determination he does not feel himself determined, but in the contemplation of the other as another has the feeling of himself.‘]
- 6 See for instance Hegel 1969, p. 202, Randnotiz 2.
- 7 This is the way, more or less, to understand the whole sections on ‚abstract rights‘ and ‚the system of needs‘ in Hegel 1970, s. 92 ff., 346 ff..
- 8 See Axel Honneth 2001a, Ch. 5.
- 9 See for instance.. Brudney 1998, Brenkert 1983, v. a. Chap. 4, Wood 1981.
- 10 Marx 1968, *Ergänzungsband, Erster Teil*, pp. 443–463, esp. 462.
- 11 Ibid. p. 460.
- 12 Ibid. p. 446.
- 13 Ibid, p. 460.
- 14 „eines Not- und Verstandes-Staat“, Hegel 1970, § 258.
- 15 Hegel 1970, §2, p. 31; see also Rawls 2002, p. 427–438.

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The Hegelian Notion of Progress and Its Applicability in Critical Philosophy

Ejvind Hansen

In this paper I will discuss the relevance of the Hegelian notion of progress in relation to problems in present-day discussions of critical theory. I will claim that it is possible to distinguish between two levels of progress in Hegelian thought: a macro and an internal level. In Hegel's thinking these levels are inseparable, but due to certain insights into our embeddedness in contingent factors, it seems difficult to defend the notion of macro-level progress in its Hegelian shape in present-day philosophy. The question is, however, whether rejecting the notion of macro-level progress leaves the notion of internal level progress untouched, and, furthermore, whether it is possible to establish an alternative, non-metaphysically based account of the notion of macro-level progress.

Axel Honneth is an example of a philosopher who has rejected the metaphysical foundation of Hegel's view without at the same time being willing to reject the notion of macro-level progress. I will argue that his alternative strategies for establishing a notion of macro-level progress are not likely to be successful. I do not think, however, that he actually *needs* the notion of macro-level progress in order for his critical theory to have significant implications. Critique does not have to be based upon a firm notion of progress that never changes. I will argue that the defence against

relativity (which seems to be urgent if the notion of macro-level progress is given up) does not have to stem from firm and robust ideals. A return to Hegel's writings will show that absolute relativity is just as abstract an idea as robust macro-level progress. The renunciation of robust norms will, however, force critical theory to rearticulate its aims, since the aim of critical theory can no longer be to reveal norms for *solving* conflicts; at best, critical theory can reveal norms for *locating* disagreement, this being the first important step towards (perhaps) solving them.

* * *

In the following, I will take as my starting point the intimate connection between critique and some notion of progress. I will not claim this connection to be undisputable, but since this corresponds with the view that I am going to discuss, I will not address it in the present paper. I find it intuitively obvious that critique presupposes an idea that, perhaps in a very weak sense, a better state of affairs is possible. In pointing out that certain states of affairs are problematic, it follows that eliminating the problem would – *ceteris paribus* – lead to a better state of affairs. In this sense, critique presupposes a notion of progress.

But the notion of progress has gradually become problematic in the wake of a number of insights into our embeddedness in certain contingent factors that were revealed in the 19th and 20th centuries (such as embeddedness in linguistic structures, pragmatic outlooks and aims, physical, psychological or sociological constitutions, historical and cultural contexts, etc). It has therefore become problematic to defend an absolute robust concept of progress because the notion is itself embedded in such factors to some extent. So, what is seen as progress in one context may be seen as regress in another – or vice versa. It has thus become clear that the notion of progress has to be relativized in relation to certain factors of embeddedness.

Ultimately, these insights into embeddedness threaten to dissolve the notion of progress as such: the notion of progress is used to characterize

the relationship between (at least) two states of affairs. But if the notion of progress were to be absolutely relativized, and the notion therefore differently conceived inside the two states of affairs, it could not be used to measure whether or not the development represented progress or regress. However, the insights into the various kinds of embeddedness do not necessarily take us that far. Even though they entail that relativization is unavoidable, they do not necessarily entail that relativization is absolute. But certainly the scope of both progress and critique has been relativized. In order to criticize – or at least make critique effective – it is necessary for the disputants to reach agreement on what should be taken as progress. There is no relation between facts and values that can be taken for granted in critical discussions. Whether a development should be considered progress or regress is an open question, and in order to agree on this, it will be necessary to agree on a number of things in advance.

It thus seems that the notion of progress is under attack by the insights into our embeddedness. The extent of this attack can be demonstrated through a discussion of Hegel's writings, which are filled with reflections on the role of progress in the development of spirit.

1. The Hegelian notion of progress

It makes sense to distinguish between (at least) two levels of progress in Hegel's thought. On the one hand, progress is crucial on a macro-level: Hegel's works generally have a progressive structure in the way that they describe a development from an immediate and abstract level to a concrete and absolute level, a development that is clearly thought of in progressive terms. On the other hand, progress is crucial on an internal level: each object of reflection in Hegel's writings is found to carry its own *Aufhebung* (alternation or elevation) by pointing to its own negation. The negation is understood as the mediate; it is derived from the immediate and is the medium through which the immediate (in its conflict with the mediate) develops an understanding of how the immediate and the negation can co-exist.¹ On this internal level, progress is, as it were, a product of the object under reflection. Consequently, progress may vary

on this level along with the initial object of reflection. This is, briefly, the dialectical structure of Hegel's writings.

It should be emphasized that this distinction is not in accordance with Hegel's interpretation of his own work. According to Hegel, macro-level progress is a natural product of the various internally conceived forms of progress. The reason why this is so can be found in Hegel's dialectical approach, especially in his thoughts on *Aufhebung*, but this aspect of his thought is not uncontroversial from a philosophical standpoint today.

In Hegel's thought the dialectical movement happens through *Aufhebung*. The *Aufhebung* of the dialectic between the immediate and the negation (mediation) into the concrete (absolute) is not to be understood as an abolishment or dissolution of the dialectic relationship, but rather as an alternation or elevation (*Auf-heben* = up-lifting) into an understanding of how the tension is not a problem, but rather illuminates limits to the initial understanding of the two. Yet, this is not enough to ensure that the notion of internal level progress also leads to the macro-level notion because it could be argued that the various elevations led in various directions – for example, if the elevations happened through certain reductions in the initially tense relationship. Further specification is therefore necessary. Thus, in the conclusion of *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1812–3/1816/1832) he further characterizes his method:

In the absolute method the Notion maintains itself in its otherness, the universal in its particularisation, in judgement and reality; at each stage of its further determination it raises the entire mass of its preceding content, and by its dialectical advance it not only does not lose anything or leave anything behind, but carries along with it all it has gained, and inwardly enriches and consolidates itself. (Hegel 1812–3/1816/1832, 2nd book, p. 250)

Even though Hegelian elevation is not to be understood as a *dissolution* of the tension, the quote shows that Hegel sees it as an absolute *reconciliation* in the sense that both aspects of the initially tense relation are *fully* taken

into account in the elevated understanding. There is no remainder. *If* the new approach is to be questioned, it will happen through a new elevation that is even more all-embracing. This is what makes it reasonable to claim that ‘*Das Wahre ist das Ganze*’²: gradually we come to understand things better because we come to realize how things are connected as a whole. At the same time, this gradual understanding shows that the previous views are inadequately conceived; hence, only the ideas that embrace the world as a whole can be said to be true.

In the light of the insights into various kinds of embeddedness, this aspect of Hegel’s understanding of the dialectical movements has come under pressure. The reason for this is that *if* it is granted that every understanding is situatively biased, and that the bias is different in different situations, it becomes difficult to talk about *one* notion of macro-level progress because the notion of progress will potentially be shaped by the bias. This does not in itself challenge the point that the best understanding would be the one that embraced *everything*, but the idea is that even though this may be intelligible as an ideal, it cannot have practical relevance, since every specific account of all-embrace is embedded in (varying) contingent normative outlooks. These outlooks are founded on certain criteria of relevance that indicate that certain aspects of the world are accentuated – at the cost of others. The ideal of all-embrace is being challenged because it may be argued that there is no stance from which the degree of all-embrace can be assessed.

2. Honneth’s attempt to revitalize the notion of macro-level progress

Axel Honneth is an example of a philosopher who tries to demonstrate how Hegelian insights are still fruitful in relation to critical theory in the wake of the embeddedness insights.³ An example of this is found in chapters 2 and 3 of *Kampf um Anerkennung* (1992) where he demonstrates that the early Hegelian reflections on recognition can be used as a starting point for understanding social relations.⁴ Honneth’s point is that in relations of mutual recognition a contrast does not necessarily exist between social and individual interests. The argument is (in short) that self-realization

depends on receiving different kinds of recognition from others, and we can only receive (or at least appreciate) recognition from subjects that we recognize. So, (1) on the one hand, in recognitive relations there is not an unbridgeable gap between egocentric and non-egocentric interests. (2) On the other hand, mutual recognition is shown to be a starting point for subjective and social relations. Honneth furthermore suggests a general division between significant kinds of recognition: (a) emotional devotion (often concretized as *love* or *friendship*), (b) cognitive respect (often concretized as attributing *rights*), and (c) social esteem (often concretized as *solidarity*).

The theory of recognitive relations did not initially aim towards establishing a robust norm of progress. At the outset it was a theory of moral psychology. Yet, at the same time, Honneth has sought to demonstrate that the notion of recognition can be used to establish a robust notion of progress. As early as in *Kampf um Anerkennung* he touched upon this issue, and it has been an ongoing concern ever since. Most explicitly it was accentuated in his contribution to the symposium on recognition in *Inquiry* 45 (2002).

One could say that in doing so Honneth tries to reunite the notions of macro-level and internal level progress. He is well aware that a notion of macro-level progress does not make sense in abstraction of various contingently embedded outlooks. The notion of macro-level progress is therefore to be considered something that 'ha[s] become differentiated as the result of a historical learning process' (Honneth 2002, p. 513) – i.e. progress is not an ideal that is already there 'above' processes, but is rather the result of actually developing processes. However, Honneth is not satisfied with the Hegelian account of macro-processes because it is too shaped by metaphysical premises (Honneth 1992, p. 107), and these premises are not combinable with present-day insights into theoretical embeddedness. Honneth therefore undertakes to substantiate the thought by drawing on empirical psychological insights, with reference to Mead and Winnicott in the early phase; later he also refers to psychologists like Loewald and Stern. The question is, though, whether Honneth succeeds in presenting

a strategy for substantiating a notion of progress in an alternative manner. This is what I will discuss in the remainder of this paper.

In his *Inquiry* paper, Honneth states that he is dependent on a robust concept of progress. This is necessary, so he claims, in order to justify the assertion that current notions of recognition are not contingent, but rather products of a learning process. Furthermore, he corroborates A. Kauppinen's claim that Honneth's aim is to establish a critique that points out tensions between the actual practices of the addressees and the norms that they implicitly and necessarily rely on. In this connection, the important implication is that he commits himself to being able to show *necessary* – i.e. universally valid – norms. On the other hand, he acknowledges that the founding notions – i.e. self-realization and autonomy – must be taken 'in the most neutral sense possible' (Honneth 2002, p. 516), since they have to be open to various cultural and historical shapes (i.e. embeddedness), and he has to leave room for new improvements of them. The question is, however, how neutrally these notions can be taken without them losing their significance. How is it possible – given the embeddedness insights – to maintain neutral universal criteria for critique? Is it not a consequence of the embeddedness insights that robustness and universality are not reconcilable? The embeddedness insights entail that neutrality is only possible inside a local or regional field, and that universality is only possible in terms that are so abstract that they tend to lose their significance (in order to be open to the different shapes that the embeddedness may take). Is it possible to maintain a view that takes cultural and historical variations seriously and tries to maintain a notion of robust progress?

The point is that the notion of progress has to be less open to cultural and historical variation than the relations which are evaluated through it. If the norm for evaluating the variations changed along with the variations themselves, it would not be able to compare the two states of affairs. However, this condition does not preclude that the notion of progress may be open to variation to *some* extent. It is possible to conceive of a notion of progress that (for certain reasons) changes. This

merely implies that the preceding assessments should be revised. But a notion of *robust* progress would have to be at least *partly* ahistorical. The robust characterization indicates that something does not change, that at least some aspects of the notion of progress resist cultural and historical changes – and hence can serve as a general norm for evaluating these changes.

According to which normativity can such a notion of robust progress be maintained? In other words, what could be the argument for a universal normativity (given an acknowledgement of historical relativity)? Honneth is aware of the difficulty in answering these questions and he does not pretend to have solved them. I think that it is possible to distinguish between two strategies adopted by Honneth in his effort to find a solution. In the remainder of this section I discuss these strategies, pointing out certain problems with both approaches. Since Honneth himself claims critical theory to be dependent on a robust concept of progress, this raises the question whether the critical impulse of Honneth's work can still be defended. In section 3 I argue that it can. Honneth's quest for a robust notion of progress springs from a false alternative between an attributive and responsive account of recognitive relations. In section 4 I return to the Hegelian account of progress in order to show that it entails a possible approach to Honneth's concern over the possibility for critique without a robust norm of progress.

2.1. The differentiation strategy

In his *Inquiry* paper, Honneth seeks to establish a notion of progress based on *differentiation*. Honneth argues that the notion of progress can be substantiated if one analyses the relationship between recognition and self-realization/autonomy. According to Honneth, it is an example of progress if individual self-realization and autonomy are furthered, and since this happens through recognitive relationships, progress is achieved by differentiating the recognitive relations:

...it is the increases in individuality and social inclusion that jointly indicate

progress in social acts of recognition [...] I have attempted to show that we ought to view the differentiation of various kinds of recognition not as an ahistorical *given* but rather as the result of a directional [EH: i.e. positive] process. (Honneth 2002, p. 511 – Honneth’s emphasis)

The point is that a society which recognizes many different kinds of subjectivity is richer than one with limited structures of recognition – because a differentiated society leaves room for diversity. Not only the individuals who resemble those in power are recognized; also odd individuals are allowed to flourish. And this recognition benefits the odd individuals, but it is also good for those who recognize these odd individuals. In this strategy, progress is viewed quantitatively: an *increase* in kinds of recognition equals progress.

This strategy is in fact closely related to the Hegelian conception of progress. The Hegelian move from the immediate and abstract level to a concrete and absolute level is in fact a shift away from a narrow and simple understanding of limited phenomena to an understanding of how plural and complex the concrete world actually is. The question is, however, whether the notion of differentiation in itself can serve as foundation for a notion of progress. Just as the *Ganzheit* ideal has proven unfeasible, it could be argued that it is difficult to establish which recognitive approach is the most differentiated; maybe the degree of differentiation turns out to be revealed only in relation to an embedded standpoint; the differentiation may turn out to merely focus on certain kinds of recognition to the detriment of others.

This objection is, however, less serious in relation to Honneth’s approach than in relation to Hegel’s. Honneth is well aware that ideals should be understood as regulative *critical* ideals that can only be substantiated in concrete (embedded) situations. There is no such thing as *one* ideal of differentiated recognitive approaches. Which approach is to be considered most differentiated is something that is determined in actual practices. But the question remains whether it is reasonable to say that differentiated patterns of recognition as such are better than

less differentiated patterns. Is it possible to infer from a quantitative differentiation to a qualitative assessment of progress?

Intuitively, it certainly seems reasonable to say that individuals that recognize many different kinds of individuals are richer than individuals that only recognize people like themselves. But can this intuition be broadened infinitely? Would the intuition also confirm that we should recognize evil practices? This question is a difficult one because it immediately opens the discussion of the nature of evil. However, this is not a discussion that needs to be solved in the present context, since the question can be reformulated thus: Should we recognize *every* kind of practice? Is it progress to include practices in our recognitive outlooks that are explicitly, and intentionally, harmful towards large groups? In many cases, the answer could be yes, because these practices may serve some purpose that we take to be fruitful (to an extent that the fruitfulness counterbalances the harm). But the question can be pressed even further: Should we also feel devoted towards, respect and esteem the harmful dimensions of these practices? It is easy to see that societies with many tyrannical practices are – according to Honneth’s notion of progress – low on recognitive development. But that is not the question. The question is whether it is progress to recognize evil, tyranny or other harmful practices.⁵ I claim that it is not. It is true that we will have to reach a recognitive relationship in order to criticize and hence try to convince those in power to change these evil practices, but this does not mean that at the outset we have to recognize the evil practices themselves. Hence, it is not always progress to widen the scope of recognition.

In order to defend the differentiation strategy on its own terms, one could argue that recognizing evil practices would not entail ‘increases in individuality and social inclusion’ – that evil practices does not constitute progress because on a global scale it leads to less recognition; in other words, the recognition of evil, tyrannical or harmful practices (which in isolation would constitute social inclusion) furthers exclusive relationships in a broader context. In certain cases this *will* free the concept of progress from its counter-intuitive implications. The question

is, however, whether in some cases one should say that *no* social inclusion is preferable to certain kinds of inclusion that are actually realized. The following example serves to illustrate this idea.

In 1999, nurses in Denmark began carrying out contractual wage negotiations because their wages had fallen behind those of other comparable trade groups. Their own explanation of why this had happened was that they had been recognized as a very special kind of worker for a long time – the kind who does not primarily work for money but to help people in distress. They talked about the Florence Nightingale narrative. In a certain sense, one could say that the Florence Nightingale narrative is actually very positive. People considered someone with a nurse's uniform a Good person (with a capital 'G'), whereas a hospital manager is considered less valuable because he does his job in order to earn a salary. At the same time, however, this recognitive narrative served as a tool for repression: the nurses were not paid well and they had poor working conditions.⁶

For the sake of argument, I take it that at the outset the Florence Nightingale attitude was not a mere strategic tool developed in order to exploit the nurses. Rather, it was a means of social inclusion, indicating something along the lines of 'I recognize you as a good person'. The nurses were thus inscribed in a certain social position. And the question is whether this position, which is founded on high recognition, is preferable in relation to the simpler recognitive approach at play between other wage earners and their employers. It is very clear that the nurses themselves (in the 1999 wage negotiations) preferred not to be recognitively included in this way because it furthered some mechanisms that they regarded as oppressive. This particular situation shows that in some cases social inclusion helps to maintain rather repressive social institutions because the social exploitation is hidden behind a varnish of social respect. Inclusion is therefore not in itself a guarantee for progress.

It could be objected that the reason why the increase in the recognitive capabilities of the Florence Nightingale defenders is not progress is that the expressed recognition is not symmetrical and therefore not genuine

legal recognition. But this defence is also problematic. In a certain sense, every cognitive relation between different subjects is asymmetrical because what can be recognized in the other is different from what can be recognized in oneself. In another sense, though, it is true that (at least legal) recognition also has to be symmetrical in a certain respect: it is not possible to engage in legal cognitive relations without both participants recognizing each other as worthy of cognitive respect. In this sense there *is* certainly symmetry in the example. But this could also have been achieved without the Florence Nightingale ideal and its negative side effects.

A second way to defend the differentiation strategy is by granting that it *would* be progress to be able to recognize evil, tyrannical and harmful practices, in the sense that the practitioners deserve recognition but not realization. So we should – for example – recognize the Nazi minorities of a society as participants in our legal system and therefore also recognize their right to express their views, but not allow them to *realize* their ideals. However, this would lead to a rather abstract notion of recognition that would make it difficult to defend recognition as a reference point for critical reflection. A notion of recognition that allows for no practical consequences (or at least only the consequences of *expressing* something) would be open to all kinds of repressive practices.⁷ The most obvious objection to such a strategy is that it is not always clear exactly *which* practices should not be allowed to be realized. In addition, it is not always easy to sum up exactly how ‘many’ kinds of cognitive relations are furthered through particular practices.

It should be clear by now that I find it hard to see how the quantitative differentiation strategy could be the sole criterion for a robust concept of progress. The differentiation strategy does not limit the concept of progress enough because it is too open to different interpretations. A more robust criterion is still needed to identify cases of ‘good’ recognition. The metaphysical foundation of the Hegelian approach served as such a criterion. Having rejected this part of the Hegelian approach, Honneth

has to deliver an alternative.

2.2. The psychological strategy

This is where Honneth's psychological strategy enters the picture. With this strategy Honneth tries to limit the concept of progress further. It is the strategy of revealing certain empirical *psychoanalytic/anthropological constants* in order to take these as a starting point for substantivizing the notion of progress. Honneth has never explicitly stated that his interests in psychoanalytic insights aim towards establishing a robust notion of progress. On the contrary, he sometimes warns against an immediate shortcut between these insights (and his interest in them) and general critical theory (Fraser/Honneth 2003, p. 258). At the same time, he has, nevertheless, indicated a hope that these insights can lead towards a general idea of the good (Fraser/Honneth 2003, p. 259). In (Honneth 2001) it also seems quite obvious that this is his aim.

Through insights gained from empirical psychological investigations, the strategy seems to be to point out certain human constants in types of recognition that are necessary in order for subjects to become persons in a society, and then to identify a universal norm for progress. Activities that further this kind of recognition would universally signify progress, and activities that hinder it would universally signify regress.

Honneth is very much at home in current empirical psychology. In his writings he draws on D.W. Winnicott's and Daniel Stern's insights into how the individuality of the child is dependent its mother's trust and recognition. He also draws on H.W. Loewald's insights into the idea that even our instincts can be understood as mechanisms to establish intersubjective relations (Honneth 2000). In what follows, I will focus upon Honneth's use of Daniel Stern's insights into the importance of facial gestures between mother and child as a necessary condition for the child's evolving subjectivity and sociality.

Through Stern's research, Honneth claims that we 'make especially clear what those forms of expression through which a human being becomes "socially" visible consist in' (Honneth 2001, p. 18) – specifically,

the facial gestures exchanged between mother and child. The aim is to reveal ‘the fundamental mechanism of becoming socially visible and, in this in turn see the elementary form of all social recognition...’ (Honneth 2001, p. 19). And the implications of this are that ‘every form of social recognition of a person then depends – in a more or less mediated way – on a symbolical relation to the expressive gestures...’ (Honneth 2001, pp. 19–20).

Through the mother-child relationship, which is especially close to ‘nature’, the aim is therefore to gain a clear image of some of the necessary cognitive mechanisms that have to be present in order for intersubjective relationships to exist at all. The nature of human psychology determines certain cognitive mechanisms that have to be available as a minimum.

To my mind, three objections challenge this strategy. The first problem is that it is not certain that one can infer from mechanisms at play in simple pre-personal phases to mechanisms at play in more complex adult phases. This is a point that H.J. Schneider has developed (Schneider 2001). It therefore does not follow from the necessity of mother-child facial recognition that this kind of recognition is crucial between adults too. Honneth reflects on this objection at the end of (Honneth 2001) and acknowledges the point. The problem with cognitive relations between adults is precisely that it is difficult to determine whether they are products of nature or culture. Human psychological nature is most clearly visible in children. But the price to be paid is certainly that we cannot be sure how crucial the mechanisms revealed actually are at a further developed stage!

The second objection is directed towards the status of empirical psychology itself. In order for empirical psychology to serve as a basis for a non-relative robust notion of progress, the insights of the psychological sciences themselves must be non-relative – i.e. empirical psychology must escape the relativizing implications of the embeddedness insights. Yet this is not the case. It is impossible to approach psychological objects through non-embedded points of view. The results of psychological research should therefore be assessed as interpretations that make

sense in relation to quite specific kinds of questions, rather than as revelations of some definite naturally existing object. Hence, the results of psychological research may serve as effective tools for criticizing actual states of affairs, but they cannot serve as a foundation for an ahistorical notion of progress. In the ahistorical perspective psychological insights may – due to later developments – turn out to be at best inadequate, at worst repressive themselves.

My third objection to this strategy is based upon the other two. The point is that a critique that is based on psychological insights may be too narrow: even if it was possible to isolate some universal aspects of a human psychology, it is not certain that we could base a concept of progress on these. On the one hand, other aspects of human nature (that are not yet revealed) could demand opposing cognitive structures. On the other hand, some aspects of human *culturation* could require that the demands of the human nature be put aside. The point is that no demands are isolated; rather there are often opposing demands. Even if it is demonstrated that certain cognitive structures are universally demanded by human nature, it is not certain that the *universal* demands are always the most *important* demands. In some cases it should not be considered progress to redeem the universal demands – because sometimes the non-universal demands that oppose the universal demands are more important. A development that is abstractly considered progress may actually be regress in a global perspective because abstract progress involves certain crucial losses. The psychological strategy focuses on aspects in isolation (even though these may be quite *complex* aspects), whereby the global state of affairs is reduced. The above example of the nurses' wage negotiations could (at least if one does not take the nurses' self-narrative as the only one possible) be used to demonstrate how cognitive structures contradict each other:⁸ The nurses had to choose whether to be recognized as altruistic persons or as wage earners who deserve a decent income. They could not have it both ways.

These objections show that it is not possible to provide a robust norm for progress through the notion of recognition (as it is developed in

Honneth's writings) because the notion of recognition is itself too open to various interpretations to provide such a norm. The differentiation strategy cannot account for 'wrong' recognition relations, and the psychological strategy narrows down recognition relations too much in (at best) only being able to take single aspects into account at a time. It may be possible to show the necessity of certain recognitive relations, but only in relation to *certain* features – and it still needs to be shown that these features should always be considered the *most* important, that they always have enough weight to determine whether a relation constitutes progress relative to other relations.

3. Do we need the notion of macro-level progress?

This does not prove that a robust notion of progress is impossible. It has merely been shown that Honneth's account of recognition has not yet been proven fruitful for such a notion. The psychological approach has not been proven fruitful as a form of compensation for the metaphysical premisses that founded the Hegelian approach. I must admit that I am sceptical about the possibility of a robust concept of critique along the lines taken. As stated in the beginning of this article, I agree that a notion of progress is necessary for critical theory, but, unlike Honneth, I do not think that the notion needs to be robust. In other words, I think that the notion of internal level progress makes sense even if it is not possible to have *one* macro-level notion. The concept of progress is necessary in order to explicate the importance of critique and the results of critique. But I do not think that it is necessary or possible to say once and for all *in what way* critique is important. The critique advanced is always itself open to further criticism and evaluation, precisely because the underlying notion of progress is open to discussion. However, this openness towards variation in norms of progress calls for reflection on the sense in which the openness is limited – that is, in what sense the notion of progress does not dissolve into mere relativism. This is probably Honneth's main concern when arguing for a more robust notion of progress.

In this section I will argue that a possible key to articulating how

relativism is avoided can be found in the *Inquiry* symposium. His reflections on progress spring from a rejoinder to some considerations on the concept of recognition that Arto Laitinen and Heikki Ikäheimo have put forward (In Laitinen 2002 and Ikäheimo 2002). Honneth takes these considerations to show that it is necessary to choose between two main approaches towards critique: on the one hand, we can understand recognition as a merely *attributive* relationship (i.e., recognition considered ‘on the model of attributions as a result of which the other subject acquires a new, positive property’ – (Honneth 2002, p. 506)). On the other hand, we can understand recognition as a *responsive* relationship (recognition thought of as ‘a certain kind of perception of an already independently existing status’ – (Honneth 2002, pp. 506–7)).

Honneth is uneasy about both approaches because they may both lead to a relativism that would make critique impossible. The attributive approach leads to relativism because a purely attributive approach would lack ‘an internal criterion for judging the rightness or appropriateness of such ascriptions; instead, the variability of recognition would then have no boundaries, since anything could end up having to count as a capacity or status, as long as it comes about through an act of attribution’ (Honneth 2002, p. 507). The problem with the responsive approach is that in order for it to account for the status of the *reasons* for different kinds of response, it is also open to relativism, since these reasons will have to be founded on values that ‘represent lifeworld certitudes whose character can undergo historical change’ – i.e. the responses depend on lifeworld embeddedness (Honneth 2002, p. 508). This in turn paves the way for relativism, since the lifeworlds are culture specific – apparently with no bridge between them.

In order to avoid relativism, Honneth introduces his reflections on progress:

I have to rely on a conception of progress; for in order to show that the currently dominant norms of recognition are not just relatively but rather universally valid, it must be possible to assert their normative superiority

over all previous recognition regimes. (Honneth 2002, p. 517)

In this quote, Honneth does not talk about a *strong* (or *robust*) conception of progress, but I think that in order to establish norms of recognition as universally valid, a strong conception must be presupposed.

As should be clear by now, I am more sceptical than Honneth about the possibility of revealing norms of recognition that are universally valid. Nor do I agree that we can neutrally argue that the present norms of recognition 'have become differentiated as the result of a [unequivocal] historical *learning process*' (Honneth 2002, p. 513, my emphasis) – i.e., that the current dominant norms must necessarily be thought of as better than preceding norms. It may be argued that history reveals several instances of existing dominant norms resulting from a historical process of oblivion. Our present dominant norms of recognition may be judged likewise. Actually, some critical grassroots groups make these arguments already (e.g. the Attac and Seattle movements).⁹

Honneth might object that the criticism raised inside these movements presupposes that the critics themselves have been through a learning process which has led them to the insights on which they base their critique. The critics have to presuppose a learning process that justifies the problematizations. In this sense, claiming the necessity of a learning-process does not involve assuming that we always move forward towards better constellations of recognition, but rather that *at the moment of critique* someone has been through a learning process that has shown the necessity of critique. I would agree on this point, but do not see why a *robust* notion of progress is called for to secure the notion of a learning process. This is only necessary if the critique is considered to be non-criticisable itself.

Honneth's search for universals, however, does not aim at such critique-blocking arrangements. Honneth is very well aware that universality claims are fallible and hence criticisable. In other words, in his view, even if we take the current norms of recognition to be universally valid, we are still aware that they are products of an ongoing learning

process. Consequently, the current normativity could be shown *not* to be universally valid. We may be proven wrong, which would then lead to new conceptions of recognition. And the new conception would then be considered universally valid – in the same way as the old one. But the question is whether the universality of the norms of progress should not be thought of as fallible too. If the universality of the robust norms of progress is thought of in fallible terms, I find it hard to see what the significance of the *robust* characterization should be. Because, just as it is admitted in the weak approach that the addressee of critique may try to avoid the critique by questioning the presupposed notion of progress, in the robust fallibilist approach the addressee may try to avoid critique by proving the universal notion of critique to be fallible. I therefore suggest that we think of the notion of progress as something that is open to deliberation in the critical process too. It is true that the critic has to presuppose a norm of progress when criticizing, but in responding to the critique, the addressee may always take the strategy of rejecting this norm of progress.

The question is where this leaves Honneth's general theory. Is the theory of recognition fruitful in a critical theory? How is the threat of relativism to be avoided? How does an approach that takes progress as 'open to discussion' differ from mere 'relativism'?

In the following, I will argue that some of Honneth's problems stem from a false alternative. I think that Honneth's statement that we have to *choose* between the attributive and responsive approaches to recognition shows that he misses an important point. He appears to think that attribution and response can be thought of independently; that if recognitive values are merely attributed then there are no constraints on what might *successfully* be attributed – and that if recognitive values are merely a product of a response towards certain states of affairs, then there will be no spontaneity (in the Kantian sense) or creativity (attribution) involved in the relation. However, this is not a tenable analysis of recognition.¹⁰ Rather, recognitive relations must be understood as *both* attributive and responsive. It is, for example, evident that to a certain extent the way

parents relate to their child ‘creates’ (or shapes) the character of the child. Similarly, it makes a difference to factory workers whether they are recognized as ‘Florence Nightingales’, comrades or inferior wage slaves. The recognitive relationship in these examples is attributive in the sense that it generates a self-relation that did not exist before. But this does not mean that recognitive relations cannot go wrong. The recognizer has to be ‘recognizee sensitive’ (Ikäheimo’s expression): if the employer relates to the nurses as ‘Florence Nightingales’ but they do not identify themselves as such, the recognitive relationship will fail – there is, as it were, no foundation (response) for the recognition. Absolute relativization is thus not possible.

Recognitive relationships are therefore most obviously *both* attributive *and* responsive. This is of relevance to the discussion of relativism: even though we may not avoid relativity, this relativity is not so absolute that critique becomes impossible. Recognitive relations may vary in relation to different kinds of lifeworld contexts, and may even change these contexts, but only to a certain degree. Some recognitive relations will fail because of recognizee insensitiveness. The relationship between the attributive and the responsive aspect of recognitive relations is open to critical discussion. The point that recognition has both an attributive and a responsive side is crucial in order to account for ‘wrong’ or ‘bad’ recognition (which is not the same as *lack* of recognition) because in order for this idea to make sense it is necessary to be able to speak of a *tension* between attribution and response.

Honneth’s analyses have shown us that rejecting existing norms of recognition has severe consequences, since in a certain sense it means excluding oneself from the existing society and the communicative community, as well as rejecting important aspects of one’s self-image (self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem). Even if it *is* possible to modify these notions, it is not *easily* done – at least not if the alternative recognitive structures are to be both consistent (consequent attribution) and adequate (sensitive towards responses). The consequences of such relativization may thus be regarded as harder to bear than accepting the critique posed. So

even though it is possible to relativize, it is not always attractive to do so. Sometimes accepting the critique may be more attractive.

The analyses of recognitive structures may, furthermore, be of value in meetings between people of very different backgrounds. I think that Honneth has shown that it is reasonable to expect that some notion of recognition is at play in all human cultures. And even though I may expect a greater degree of discrepancy between different notions of this than Honneth does, I still think that this can be an important tool for establishing a meeting between greatly differing horizons: since we may expect others to have a notion of recognition too, we can use this knowledge as a *reference point* for further discussion. The parties involved in a discussion may start out trying to articulate the similarities and differences between their norms of recognition and then from this point try to localize the fundamental differences that seem to prevent them from being able to meet. Having articulated these similarities and differences, they may subject their similarities and differences to further deliberation and discussion, possibly attempting to argue for or against the reasonableness of the differences. And *perhaps* a meeting will take place. Honneth is certainly right that lifeworld relativity opens up the possibility of not being able to meet. This cannot be avoided. But the turn towards notions of recognition can be a valuable tool if the discussing parties are willing to *try* to meet.

This approach differs from *robust universalism* in leaving the standards of recognition open to historical and cultural variation – the concrete actualisations of recognitive structures are open to critique. It differs from *absolute relativism* in indicating some weak issues universally at play (recognitive structures, including emotional devotion, respect, esteem¹¹) that we may expect to find in all cultures even though they vary. These weak issues are important because they make it possible to *locate* disagreement as to fundamental elements in differing cultures. This does not mean that we can reach a satisfactory *conclusion* when discrepancies appear; it only means that we have some tools to put to use. Recognition as a universal *reference point* (in a weak sense) serves as a tool for *locating*

disagreement rather than a strong tool for *solving* it.

4. Critical philosophy with a less ambitious account of progress

My point is thus that Honneth does not succeed in establishing a robust alternative to Hegel's metaphysically based notion of macro-level progress. I have furthermore argued that he does not actually need it – if he is willing to revise his understanding of the progressive structure of critical arguments. We may still operate with notions of internal level progress – we just cannot take for granted that they always move in the same directions. This revised understanding actually finds support in the writings of Hegel:

If it was once the case that the bare possibility of thinking of something in some other fashion was sufficient to refute a given idea, and the same naked possibility, the general thought, possessed and passed for the entire positive worth of actual knowledge; then we find here all the value ascribed to the general idea in this unreal form [*Form der Unwirklichkeit*], and the resolving of the determinate and distinct; or, in other words, the speculative style of contemplation is being understood as the hurling down, that what has not been justified, into the abyss of vacuity. (Hegel 1807, p. 17)

The Hegelian point is that pure attribution does not in itself lead to dialectical development – but rather to mere repetition. Attributions are only fruitful if they are directed towards something that in a certain sense is out of the attributor's hands:

The determinateness appears at first to be so solely through its relation to something *else*; and its process [*Bewegung*] seems imposed and forced upon it due to an external power [*fremde Gewalt*]. But its having its own otherness within itself, and the fact of its being a self-initiated process – these are implied in the very simplicity of thought itself. (Hegel 1807, p. 40 – Hegel's emphasis)

The reason why this is so is that there would be no inner tension or heterogeneity if the attributions were not directed towards something in relation to which they could be right or wrong (in a broad sense). The '*sich selbst bewegende und unterscheidende Gedanke*' (Hegel 1807, p. 40) is only self-moving because it consists of *both* attribution and response. Putting it trenchantly, one could say that *Aufhebung* consists in a reflection on and reaction to the *relationship* between attribution and response.

In this sense the immanent notion of progress in the Hegelian approach may still prove to be fruitful in relation to critical philosophy. Norms of progress are always at play internally in actual situations because situations always point beyond themselves and are not purely self-reliant (attributions and responses are mutually dependent). This is not to say that the notion of macro-level progress should (or could) be wholly abandoned: due to the embeddedness insights it is just not possible to establish a notion of macro-level progress in an absolute and one-dimensional sense.

This is, to my mind, the situation critical philosophy has to accept. It leads to a less ambitious notion of the relevance of recognition in relation to critique and progress than the one Honneth aims for. But it does not prove the results of Honneth's analyses to be without importance. Instead of being applicable in a robust, strong notion of progress, the recognition insights may be used in a weak notion of progress: a notion of progress that has to be settled on in concrete situations, where the recognition insights may be used as a *reference point* – a point from which we can *localize* differences in outlook and thus make it easier to arrive at a mutual understanding of the norms of progress.

If we accept the insights into embeddedness, it follows that every approach is in some sense limited. Accordingly, several differing approaches may be equally fruitful in actual situations. This is one of the reasons why the differentiation strategy has a certain intuitive appeal: if there is not one (e.g., recognitive) approach or pattern that is the best (in an absolute sense), it is reasonable to say that the best approach is the approach that is open towards several (but not necessarily all) aspects

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of human life. And this is a very Hegelian thought: the best approach to the world is the approach that is able to understand how seemingly opposing or heterogeneous aspects can meaningfully co-exist. This is the Hegelian challenge to every succeeding philosophy. The quest for a *robust* notion of progress seems, however, to point in the opposite direction: toward unification and one-dimensionality (this is the reason why it is not sensible to label Hegel himself a critical philosopher). And, as demonstrated in this paper, this one-dimensionality is not necessary in order to escape absolute relativism.

Endnotes

1 It is slightly misleading to speak of co-existence since the notion of being itself is reflected on in these terms (Hegel 1812–3/1816/1832, part I, book I; Hegel 1817/1827/1830, part I, section I).

2 (Hegel 1807, p. 18). The page numbers refer to the *Gesammelte Werke*. Felix Meiner Verlag.

3 Another version of the following discussion of Honneth's approach to progress will be published in a separate paper titled 'Recognition as a reference point for a concept of progress in critical theory' in *Critical Horizons* 10:1 (2009).

4 *Recognition* is used here as a translation of Honneth's key term, *Anerkennung*. Recognition is probably not the best translation of the term, but since it is used in all published translations, I use it too.

5 This question cannot be avoided by referring to the lack of consensus about what should be considered evil, tyrannical or harmful. It can only be avoided by a reader who thinks that nothing is evil, tyrannical or harmful.

6 This is the self-narrative that the nurses articulated in their wage battle. The truth is probably much more complicated, and personally I am not quite convinced that the nurses made the right decision in the battle, but for brevity I will accept this narrative in what follows.

7 Honneth himself has rejected this strategy (Honneth 2004, pp. 51–70). The problem is that recognizing practices that are not allowed to be realized may serve rather oppressive ideological strategies.

8 The example does not contain cognitive structures that have been shown to be *universally* relevant for acting agents. Since I am sceptical about the possibility of demonstrating such structures, I obviously find it difficult to offer an example of them.

9 A good example of this can be found in (Klein 2000, especially chaps. 9–11). In this book the author argues that the wealth produced in welfare states in Western Europe and North America is to a large extent made possible by oblivion of the poor conditions under which people work in sweatshops.

10 Actually, this is not what either Laitinen or Ikäheimo suggests. Laitinen in

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particular emphasizes that inside the response model it is necessary to think of recognition as attributive (or generative) too (Laitinen 2002, pp. 468 and 474). See also (Ikäheimo 2002, p. 450) for Ikäheimo's point about the attributive recognizer having to be 'recognizee-sensitive'.

11 In his paper in this anthology Henrik Jøker Bjerre indicates that this list of recognitive key issues should probably be extended.

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Recognition of an Independent Self-Consciousness

Henrik Jøker Bjerre

The concept of recognition has become a central concern for Western academia. The reasons why this is so, I believe, are quite diverse, and some of them are not always appropriately appreciated. At first glance, philosophy is contributing to making clear some concepts, which have gained in importance as well as complexity within the past couple of decades. The post-Cold War globalized economy and the increase in migration have highlighted issues concerning the peaceful coexistence of mixed populations with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This gives concrete tasks to political and social philosophy, such as the issues taken up by various multicultural theorists concerning which rights should be given to minority groups, how group rights relate to rights of individuals within the groups, and the more fundamental theoretical task of analyzing the conditions of the possibility and the importance of living in a society of mutual recognition and respect. The latter is a task, which Axel Honneth for one has contributed significantly to shedding light on.

Recognition seems to be a theme, which actually allows philosophy to have direct relevance to contemporary society and in some cases even to impact on political decision making. Simultaneously, however, the strengthened awareness of these questions seems to be in some sense a redirection of the attention of moral and political philosophy to

questions, which lack what might be termed the *metaphysical aspiration* of traditional philosophical thinking, and (maybe therefore) also lack a more profound critique of contemporary society.

As Axel Honneth has emphasized recently, one of the achievements of the Frankfurt School has been to open a new program, which programmatically subjects ‘the investigation of system transcendent conflict potential to empirical social research’ (Fraser & Honneth 2003, p. 138). This is a view of critical philosophy as an enterprise that must be ‘corroborated’ by empirical research (social or psychological), while metaphysical speculations on the World Spirit or the historical role of the proletariat have had their day. If we should employ Hegel in this context at all, he should be represented as something like a proto-pragmatist social constructivist (with an obscure metaphysical superstructure possibly belonging to his time, but not to ours). However, I believe there is good reason to hesitate in ascribing only benefits to the exploration of the concept of recognition as it is currently conducted. More specifically, the understanding of subjectivity that underlies a theory of recognition based on empirical psychology fails to recognize a fundamental aspect of the Hegelian legacy, which I consider crucial: the difference between recognizing an individual as a person and as an independent self-consciousness. ‘Hegelian recognition’ without the latter dimension is not Hegelian recognition, and the point of this paper is to make a case for a *more* Hegelian reading of the concept of recognition, even though – or rather *precisely because* – it includes an accentuation of subjectivity rather than inter-subjectivity, which otherwise seems to be the favourable focus of contemporary Hegelian scholarship. The concept of subjectivity I will employ is inspired by Lacanian psychoanalysis, and in particular by Slavoj Žižek’s use of it. Lacanian/Žižekian subjectivity is used to shed light on the phenomenon of an ‘independent self-consciousness’ in Hegel’s description of recognition in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.

I will start out by approaching the employment of the concept of recognition through a discussion of the status of the identity of the individual demanding recognition. This involves, in section 1, a look at

the discourse of multiculturalism and identity politics. In section 2, I will proceed by considering the status of the encounter on the basis of what I will later call a superficial recognition of personhood. Then, in the third section, I propose a reading of the concept of recognition in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, which should indicate a future path for a more radical concept of recognition. This path, which section 4 will address, will offer better means of dealing with the subject, the encounter between subjects, and the failed encounter between subjects. Finally, I will conclude by claiming that there is an important difference between Honneth-recognizing someone and Hegel-recognizing someone.

Although there are significant differences between Axel Honneth's theoretical framework and the agenda of multiculturalists like Will Kymlicka and Iris Young, in this paper I will try to focus more on two similarities between them: an orientation towards the empirical ambient (be it in the shape of mother-child relations, identity politics or new social movements) and the absence of a genuinely philosophical theory of subjectivity.

1. Multiculturalism

As Will Kymlicka, one of the most explicit proponents of the multiculturalist use of the concept of recognition, himself acknowledges, the language of minority rights shares some of its basic conceptualizations with racism, nationalism and the defence of apartheid (Kymlicka 1995, p. 6). The very definition of a group of people for political purposes by their sharing a set of characteristics, such as racial, ethnic or cultural background, implies defining the individuals of the group as those who are entitled to something, which non-members are not entitled to (e.g., affirmative action or religious holidays), and in some cases non-members as entitled to something, which the members *are not* entitled to (because they are bound by internal restrictions imposed by the group). Rather than simply being a member of the state through citizenship or a moral subject by virtue of her capacities for reasoning, the subject is first of all defined by her membership in the group.

In particular cases, group rights, affirmative action and insistence on political correctness can be tools for changing discriminating practices, especially considering the contemporary situation of globalization, migration and so on, as described in the introduction. Furthermore, in principle, multiculturalism encourages non-aggressive communication and sensitivity to culturally or religiously motivated taboos. However, the employment of tools to undo concrete injustices or conflicts between cultures is something quite different from engaging in a theory that defines cultural identity as a permanent quality to be considered in any context. Such a theory, namely, confers ontological validity on the identification of the subject as always already a subject-belonging-to this or that group. In some theories of group representation this has highly questionable consequences, such as when it is debated whether or not the legislating body of a country should always represent men and women in accordance with the gender distribution within the population (i.e., roughly 50–50), regardless of the outcome of the elections. Or when it is insisted that *any* oppressed group at a given point in time should be given guaranteed representation, which not only creates the immediate problem of defining what it means to be oppressed, but also might imply that most of the time the majority of a population turns out to be in need of minority group rights, such as in 1989 when Iris Young suggests that the groups in need of guaranteed representation in the US are:

...[w]omen, blacks, Native Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and other Spanish-speaking Americans, Asian Americans, gay men, lesbians, working-class people, poor people, old people, and mentally and physically disabled people (Young 1989, p. 261).

Young accepts the idea that in a society entirely without oppression, group representation would not be necessary, but she emphasizes that such a condition is ‘utopian’. What there is, is oppression, and, significantly, oppression of *groups*. The continuous relevance of the possible oppression of any group within society then encourages the political awareness of an

African-American worker or a lesbian senior citizen to become focused on whether or not he or she is duly represented *as an African-American worker or a lesbian senior citizen*. In other words, when multiculturalist discourse moves from concrete and contextually specific problem solving to seeing individuals as identified by their cultural background in a deep sense (such that they should, for instance, always be represented accordingly), the affinity with racist discourse becomes more than just superficial. Multiculturalism works in two steps, the second of which is the most troubling: the *identification* of the relevant *differentiae* of a particular group of people in a particular context and the *generalization* of those characteristics to identify the individuals of the group in *any* context. While it might be a relevant characteristic of a person that she is an African-American worker if she is oppressed as such – i.e., *at her work because* she is black – it cannot be what defines her in every context, such that she only and entirely *is* someone who belongs to an oppressed minority. If recognition of her roughly implies an appreciation of African-American workers in general, of *their* right to vote or be represented, their cultural and historical background and so forth, then the possibility for a sincere recognition of her as an independent self-consciousness, rather than merely as a person, is disregarded or even undermined. What this implies is the topic of the remainder of this paper. Let me first illustrate the limitation of multiculturalist recognition by staging an encounter.

2. The Encounter

If I encounter the other on the basis of her relevant differences to me, which I must respect insofar as they are not implicit violations of some fundamental human right, the encounter itself is relativized. Recognizing the other as an African-American worker means something entirely different from recognizing her as a subject that happens to be an African-American worker. I do not encounter ‘humanity in the other’ through her gaze, her actions or bare presence – I encounter a representative of a group with a generalized set of characteristics. Meeting another person like this, I might act politely and respectfully while nonetheless

remaining in a state of fundamental difference and hence indifference towards her. Isn't it the multiculturalist's polite gesture itself, which exposes his affinity with the racist? The careful consideration of any elements of his speech or acts that might violate the other makes the encounter impossible. Therefore, the Danish philosopher and theologian K.E. Løgstrup's claim that in an encounter one person holds the life of the other in her hands, becomes only relatively true: I encounter the other openly and directly to the extent that she does not differ from me in a relevant way. This logic has striking similarities to the one behind the recognition, which contemporary European racist parties are ready to grant ethnic minorities. In France, Jean-Marie Le Pen insisted in his 2002 presidential campaign that he merely claims the same right to self-government claimed by other ethnic groups in France. There might be differences, even radical differences, in our ways of seeing the good life, but as long as we don't force each other's convictions upon each other, we may live peacefully and well in separation. The logic is this: 'I know very well that the culture of the other is entitled to the same respect as my own... but nevertheless I despise him.' The encounter is crippled because the many considerations of possible cultural differences between us make it seem hazardous to try and open ourselves more than the objective necessities of peaceful coexistence require. I am inclined to pose as an empirical hypothesis that the lack of recognition in the shape of discrimination, contempt, and racist outbursts which ethnic minorities are currently experiencing in Denmark is a minor problem compared with the sort of recognition they actually meet. If recognition of persons is reduced to recognition of cultures, it remains nothing but a way of keeping our distance – a refined version of Apartheid.¹

In other words, genuine recognition must entail more than the absence of positively discriminatory acts – it must entail a way of transgressing polite cultural boundaries. My claim is that if I consider the other to be a representative, I suppress the possibility of encountering her as a 'naked' subject. Or to put this in more philosophical terms: to point beyond the realm of racism, a theory of recognition needs a more elaborate concept of

subjectivity than the unproblematic multiculturalist idea of an individual with a certain identity. In my view, such a theory should precisely seek inspiration from the history of metaphysics, which the contemporary theories of recognition to a large extent oppose.

Even in Axel Honneth's description of the structure of recognition in social relations, which is explicitly not limited to the absence of positively discriminatory acts, but rather culminates in the actual *appreciation* of the identity or accomplishments of the other, there seems to be a constraint on the encounter, which I think can be traced back to the basis of Honneth's considerations in empirical psychology. His phenomenology of recognition is an 'empirically corroborated reconstruction' of the tripartite structure of recognition, which he reads out of the young Hegel's writings.² In the post-metaphysical age, Honneth maintains, it is simply not possible to uphold *Vernunft* thinking, which begins with an individual self-consciousness and works out the relations between it and its surroundings. Honneth instead describes the formation of an individual self-consciousness as the result of intersubjective recognition. 'I' appears as the 'me', which is the object of ascriptions of identity and place by others (Honneth 1992, p. 120). Honneth goes through the sensitive conditions of a successful coming to maturity of such an individual, and he carefully describes the kinds of modes of violation, which are to be avoided in order to create a condition of subjects and groups mutually recognizing each other. This implies physical abuse (on the level of 'love'), exclusion and lack of rights (on the level of 'rights'), and offence and insult (on the level of 'solidarity') – hence the tripartite structure of Honnethian recognition (Honneth 1992, p. 211). What it does not imply is a way to encounter the other 'beyond the wall of language', as Žižek puts it (Žižek 1997, p. 25), and this is where I think Lacanian psychoanalysis offers a perspective, which remains unnoticed in the sort of empirical psychology employed by Honneth.

A child is initiated into a community of language users, is brought up to appreciate a set of moral standards, and gradually acquires its own identity by mirroring itself in others and discovering new sides of itself while giving up some others. What Kymlicka and Honneth share is

their insistence on the recognition of what the subject thus *has become* – the position, however independently attained, she has assumed in the ‘symbolic order’, to use the Lacanian term. Lacanian psychoanalysis agrees in seeing the symbolic and imaginary identification of the subject as what is *zunächst und zumeist* dealt with in intersubjective relations. However, to a Lacanian, this interpellation of a subject to what she has become is simultaneously a *traumatic* fact: I am me – but I am in a radical and crucial sense also *not* me; this context and this language were imposed on me, and insofar as I am a subject, I am always more than what I have become. This ‘more’ is not some eternal core or inscrutable soul (*a res cogitans*), but the very resistance to my identification. The subject, you might say, the ‘I’, is (nothing but) resistance to the ‘me’, to the identification of the subject as equal to what she has become. This distinction is spelled out by Lacan as regards the two levels of the subject: The subject of the enunciation (here: ‘I’) and the subject of the enunciated (here: ‘me’). The minimal split between these two subjects is the basis of Lacanian subjectivity. Consider, for instance, the sentence ‘I love to watch football’. The subject of the enunciated is the one who likes to watch football. The subject of enunciation is the one who establishes that the subject of the enunciated likes to watch football. ‘I’ is the secret distance to ‘me’. *Je est un autre*.

My point is that the ‘real’ encounter, *beyond the wall of language*, implies what you might call trespassing: a passing from the appearance of the individual embodied in, for instance, her social, cultural, personal context to her subjectivity as such, or – in Hegelese – to the recognition of her as an independent self-consciousness. The other is *other* not because of what she shows and says, but precisely because of what she *doesn’t* show and say – and maybe isn’t even aware of. Therefore, encountering the other ‘for real’ means encountering her secret distance to her public image or symbolic mandate – in other words, to that which she has become – which she herself reveals, for instance, in a slip of the tongue, when telling about a private fantasy or an intense fear and so on. If recognition is to be an ethical concept, it should therefore have something to say about trespassing, about ways in which I might recognize the other

as someone who is not *only* a person, a legal subject, and a bearer of a culture, but is also *not* all of this. In this sense, I think the *violation* of the expectation of (Honnethian) recognition from the other might actually play an important and constructive role. By trespassing the boundaries of the symbolic and imaginary identification of the other as the one who has become *that*, I might open up the possibility of recognizing her simply *as a subject* (who happens to have become that). The polite distance has to be overcome in order for an encounter to take place.

Consider the following example: Two Danish fishermen, Jensen and Andersen, are invited to a traditional dinner party in a fishing community near the Aral Sea in Central Asia. The Danes and their Kazakh colleagues are working together on an international project to revive sea fishery. Jensen is polite, careful, and obviously eager to show his appreciation of the local traditions, which include sitting on the floor, eating a boiled sheep with their 'five fingers' (which is the name of the dish), distributing the various parts of the head of the sheep among the guests, and finally saying a few prayers in gratitude to the animal as well as to the women who prepared it. He doesn't say much, but asks his interpreter about the symbolic value of the hierarchical placement of the guests, the meaning of some of the words spoken, and especially the deeds he himself is expected to perform at each step. He performs well and shows his recognition. Andersen, on the other hand, is playful and happy to be with his colleagues. He makes jokes and on a couple of occasions delays minor rituals because of a lack of attention to the procedures performed. He also makes two blatant mistakes. When he needs to go outside at one point, he crosses the table (which is a table cloth on the floor). This is an outrageous insult according to the local tradition, and Jensen vehemently insists that he (Andersen) apologizes. When the meal is over and the prayers have been said, a young boy brings in a kettle of water to assist the guests in washing off the grease from their fingers, and a small bowl to collect the dirty water. When the bowl reaches Andersen, he joyfully reaches down into it and washes his fingers in the dirty water before the boy gets a chance to pour in clean water from the kettle.

Which one of the two is most likely to build a lasting connection with the local fishermen – the one who shows his respect and appreciation or the one who carelessly violates a number of traditional values? The latter, in fact (the story is based on real events). Now, why is this so? It seems that the mere violation of the expectation of recognition is not in itself a hindrance to the encounter or to building a feeling of solidarity, as long as the violation is not committed with an openly malicious intent. On the contrary, it seems that the possibility of *detecting the intent* behind behaviour is much more real when the expectation is violated. Or to put it in another way: Which kind of behaviour gave the hosts a chance to step out from the role (which had been attributed to them on a number of similar earlier occasions) of the fascinating other who performs a series of mysterious rituals, which might be difficult to understand and appreciate but nevertheless require respect and recognition? The behaviour, of course, which exposed the guest as a ridiculous common fisherman like everyone else. Isn't it exactly when the expectation of recognition of a particular cultural identity is *let down* that the real encounter between people takes place? The friendly offence gives a possibility of relief: Okay, I know that you are different from me, but we share the ability to set aside our differences, be it in short moments of comic misinterpretations or in common work for common goals. In fact, comic misinterpretations or cultural offences of the sort described, I think, tend to further the possibilities of constructive, common work.

While at first sight the vastly increased contemporary attention to cultural differences seems to be based on an ambition of peaceful co-existence, and the refusal of exclusion, it could thus also seem to be based on another motive: the wish not to expose oneself to the vulnerability of the encounter. In other words, in identifying the other as the one who possesses such and such qualities, distinctions, and values, I at the same time identify myself as the one who is able to appreciate these specific differences from an external and stable point. Not only do I thereby refuse to 'hold the life of the other in my hand' in any absolute sense; I also reject the invitation, which the encounter gives: to question the

stability and neutrality of my own subjective position. To ‘understand the Other’, Žižek says, ‘means to pacify it, to prevent the meeting with the Other from becoming a meeting with the Real that undermines our own position.’ (Žižek 1996, p. 102). We will return to this point in the third section.

To coin a phrase in order to summarize the considerations in this section, it could be said that the ethical imperative to be followed should not be to respect, appreciate and recognize the other as the one she is, but rather to recognize the right of the other *not* to be who she is – and this not only in the sense, which Kymlicka carefully (and rightly) considers (that every subject should be ensured the right to abandon her faith or her cultural rules without internal restrictions). Rather, recognition in the sense I am trying to use it should be understood as the recognition of another person’s *subjectivity* (in the Lacanian sense), not of the concreteness of the multifaceted person she has become. The question, obviously, becomes how recognition of subjectivity in this sense can be actualized. While it is true that the multiculturalist recognition of personhood immediately displays respect and appreciation, it does not recognize the dimension of the subject, which lifts her *out* of her concreteness. Multiculturalist (and Honnethian) recognition can be actualized by following a relatively straightforward manual; Hegelian recognition is trickier: Self-consciousness, which seeks recognition, can only be recognized by *another* self-consciousness, and only in its virtue of *being* a self-consciousness. But how do two ‘self-consciousnesses’ perform *any* action at all? This will be the theme of section 4, but for now, suffice it to say that any recognition of ‘material’ concreteness would not constitute genuine recognition, which is why a certain direct passage must be envisaged from the individual to its recognition as an instance of the universal, or ‘spiritual’, dimension of self-consciousness. What I am in search of is something like the universalism, which was the great novelty in Christianity. When Jesus in (Luke, 14:26) says that anyone who comes to him that doesn’t hate his parents and his relatives and even his own soul cannot be his disciple, he is not, of course, preaching hatred as some

sort of perverted ethics of evil. Rather, he means that no one should give preference to her own inclinations, to the needs of her family, or to the ambitions of her community when considering an ethical problem or dilemma, which involves outsiders. To be a (Christian) subject means to be able to distance yourself from your tribe and your culture and even to be ready to sacrifice it for a higher purpose. Applied to the problematic of the inter-human encounter as described here, we should not identify the other as someone who is limited from what she has become either. Just as I am not only 'one of us', so is she not only 'one of them.' If I am a true believer, I am also ready to sacrifice the concrete existence of the other – i.e., to want something for her and from her – which goes beyond her own horizon even if it might immediately 'offend her'. Just as I draw a direct line from my subjectivity to the universal in 'hating myself', I should also draw a direct line from the other to the universal, which implies her direct relevance and importance to me, regardless of cultural differences. The peaceful (separate) co-existence of culturally different groups represents no aim for philosophy. The point of this section might then be summarized as the ethical imperative: 'Hate thy neighbour as thyself.'

3. The Truth of Recognition as Recognition of an Independent Self-Consciousness

As I mentioned in the opening of this paper, recognition is predominantly seen as an ethical ideal of the relations between persons within a given context, say a state or a community. This entails focusing on the empirical questions of the parameters, which must be considered for a community to ensure a high level of mutual recognition between its subjects, or on the structure of recognition as a fundamental concept in the formation of the individual self(-consciousness). But the shift of focus from the metaphysical to the more empirical or empirically based investigations, also seems to imply a lower ambition for the scope and implications of ethical discourse.

As will be recalled, in Axel Honneth's book on the struggle for re-

cognition (*Kampf um Anerkennung*), he finds his inspiration in the philosophical works of the young Hegel. The priority of intersubjectivity over self-consciousness, so Honneth says, makes the young Hegel's work more valuable for understanding the phenomenon of recognition than the otherwise famous description of the struggle for recognition in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, where the story begins with an individual self-consciousness, which encounters a rival. Honneth's project is explicitly not to offer a metaphysical interpretation of the relation between subject and other, or between self-consciousnesses, but rather to provide an empirically founded investigation of the conditions of the possibility of creating a society in balance, with individuals who enjoy basic minimal proportions of recognition on each of the three levels in the tripartite structure (love, rights, solidarity).

This combination of the young Hegel and empirical psychology, I suggested, limits Honneth to maintaining a certain person-oriented conception of recognition. Let us try to articulate this point again from another angle, by moving from a reformulation of my Lacanian point on the relation between intersubjectivity and subjectivity to the dialectics of the master and the slave in the *Phenomenology*. I believe that a careful and concrete consideration of some of the central points of chapter IV of the *Phenomenology* points beyond the realm of what Honneth is ready to accept as relevant to a discussion of recognition.

Granted that intersubjectivity *is* in fact primary to human psychology, Jacques Lacan would proceed not by working out procedures for recognizing inter-personal relations within this community of language-users, but by focusing on the 'remainder', which is produced simultaneously with the initiation of an individual into the community of language users. To be sure, a subject only becomes a subject by being *subjected* to the language and life form of its surroundings.

But simultaneously, the subject experiences a certain lack: something is missing; this can't be all there is to me. This lack is the subject as the barred S: the product of the (traumatic) splitting of the subject, which I described earlier. The 'remainder' accompanies and never leaves the language user,

even if it remains repressed from the conscious mind. This can be put in (simplified) terms using Lacan's famous piece on 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I' (Lacan 1989, pp. 1-8): when a child sees its own reflection in the mirror (or reflects itself in the people around it), it creates an image of itself as *that* one – the one who looks just like me. This gives the child an identity, which it then gradually goes on to develop in continuous interaction with its environment. However, while the initial imaginary identification gives the child a starting point for developing its personality, it simultaneously marks a point of separation, or the *splitting* of the subject. Identification with the mirror *imago* results in the repression of the awareness that a mirror image literally cannot represent an entire organism: From whichever angle I look at myself in the mirror, something is always left out. This experience is not articulated, and remains unconscious, or rather: it *is* the emergence of the unconscious. In becoming a language-using person, the child not only represses 'some side' of itself – it represses the awareness of this very repression. Internalizing the norms and standards of its parents and later its teachers, friends and so on, the child might come to function well and be recognized as a good daughter, pupil, citizen, without dealing with the negativity of the lack, which these identifications have covered. Identifying entirely with the imaginary and symbolic identity one assumes in the symbolic order therefore means to 'give up' on one's subjectivity as such. It will be recalled that subjectivity in the Lacanian sense is not a 'forgotten true self', a core of authenticity, which has been repressed by societal norms; it is merely the possible awareness *that* I have become who I am *through* repressive societal norms. The subject 'returns' as the ability to distance itself from the symbolic mandate imposed by the community: 'Why am I who you say that I am?' This return of the subject might occur when something disrupts the order of things, forces the subject to question its subjective position, or even rearranges the whole set of facts and identities within which it moves. Subjectivity, then, consists not in *recalling* something or *claiming* something (like claims of recognition), but in the ability to doubt, question, step back, rearrange, and thus in *becoming* something

(new). Although Honneth endorses and emphasizes the human ability to change and become something new, it is precisely in this respect that there is a crucial difference between his view and the one I am trying to articulate by way of Lacan: according to Honneth, recognition is of *what* we have become by way of our ability to take on and develop an identity (the ‘what’ dimension); in Lacanian terms, emphasis should be on the *ability to become itself* (the ‘that’ dimension).

One example of a disruption that opens the path to the return of the subject could be an encounter as described in section 2: Taking the other not as a representative of some cult(ure), but as a naked subject, disrupts the stability of the personal identity of both of us and opens up new fields of identification and solidarity. Avoiding the encounter, on the other hand, keeps us from realizing the specifically human dimension of subjectivity. Therefore, when we reduce the subjectivity of the other to her position in the symbolic order, we simultaneously dismantle her potential as a reminder of our own inscription in this order. We avoid letting the encounter function as a subversion or recreation of our symbolic and imaginary identification. The quotation from Slavoj Žižek’s *For They Know Not What They Do*, which I made use of above, reads in a fuller version:

The fascinating “diversity” of the Other functions as a fetish by means of which we are able to preserve the unproblematic identity of our subjective position. [...] To “understand the Other” means to pacify it, to prevent the meeting with the Other from becoming a meeting with the Real that undermines our own position.

Žižek makes use of the Lacanian Real to describe what ‘undermines our own position’. The Real is related to the subject of the unconscious (the not-me, or the position of enunciation), while the two other registers of the subject (the imaginary and the symbolic) are related to the types of identification touched upon earlier (my image and my name). Without going into a detailed discussion of the concept of the Real, I

would like to indicate what it could mean to 'prevent a meeting with that which undermines our own position.' I will suggest that a common and apparently sympathetic reading of the chapter on recognition in the *Phenomenology* 'helps' us prevent this meeting rather than actually coming to the core of the problem of recognition. I will then suggest that such a reading of Hegelian recognition is literally not radical enough. It works at best to *diagnose* what kind of superficial recognition is in fact *zunächst und zumeist* at stake in late capitalist consumer societies. This implies that a lot of work on recognition today refrains from going all the way down the terrifying road of recognition, which Hegel actually presents to us, and I will therefore suggest a *more* Hegelian reading of the fourth chapter in section 4.

In the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, the problem of recognition appears at the stage where self-consciousness needs to objectify itself in reality. It has come to the conclusion that nothing outside itself could be taken at face value and that the only infallible truth possible to adhere to from the subjective position was the truth of the certainty of itself. In order to step out from this super-sensible beyond and into the 'spiritual day of presence,' self-consciousness needs to see itself in the presence or it needs to be recognized by a presence *as a self-consciousness*. It needs to be counted by another as the absolute. The struggle to reach this is the struggle for recognition. Let us, then, initially unfold this as a diagnosis of contemporary Western social and political reality. Isn't the subject of this reality in many ways, like the Cartesian ego, deprived of guarantees that the world outside itself is in order? The metaphysical reassurance that everything is structured rationally by a divine lawgiver has long since passed its expiry date, and the 'great stories' of the just and equal society that followed upon it already seem to be outdated as well. What is there to hang on to? When there is no supreme lawgiver to answer to, it seems that the strongest ethical imperative remaining is the one that urges the subject to stay 'true to itself'. What used to be socio-political questions proper have increasingly become purely administrative affairs, while questions of 'value', on the other hand (ethical standards, religion,

sexual orientation, clothing, etc.), become increasingly individualized. In this field, the subject is left with only her own judgment – nothing is strange enough or radical enough to offend the market; on the contrary, the new and provocative is the very fuel for its engine. While the subject therefore seems to be in a fantastic position exactly to be ‘true to herself’ and feel free and encouraged to do as she pleases (as long as it remains within the law), she paradoxically finds herself in a situation where *none of her actions* are recognized as morally good by the other (only as legal), which continuously frustrates her. This is the Lacanian reversal of Dostoyevsky’s dictum that when God is dead everything is allowed – no, on the contrary: When God is dead, *nothing* is allowed! Since values and convictions have become privatized, so to speak, there is no big Other (God or the Party) to approve of them. To confirm her presence in the world as an independent self-consciousness, therefore, the subject needs some kind of recognition of her identity and preferences such as esteem or appreciation from other subjects who have the same need. This is where the identification of the subject with her ethnic, religious or cultural group sets in. As Henrik, the displaced subject of post-modern confusion, I might have nothing much to offer for public approval, but as an academic Dane with roots in Viking history and the values and traditions of Lutheran Christianity and the Scandinavian welfare state, I embody a number of cultural peculiarities, which may not be ridiculed by members of other cultural or ethnic groups. Having ‘found ourselves’ in the group we belong to, we then proceed to the business of working out sustainable inter-group relations between us, which will enable us to mutually recognize each other as those-who-recognize. We become multiculturalists or Honnethians. This seems to fulfil the ideal, which Hegel indicates at the beginning of chapter IV of the *Phenomenology*: ‘They recognize each other as mutually recognizing each other’ (‘Sie anerkennen sich, als gegenseitig sich anerkennend’ (Hegel 1988, p. 129, my translation)). However, as indicated, I think this picture is too easily attained.

4. The Hidden Other

The question of how to differentiate between a 'genuine' recognition, which is actualized (merely) as the recognition of the subject as that which she has become, and the position, which Le Pen and his kindred souls take – 'I know very well... but nevertheless...' – is a significant one. Another important one is the question whether the mutual recognition between groups in a polyethnic society such as ours (the Western version) is performed on the background of a much more real and important *exclusion*, which has severe implications for what could be called the existential and ethical value of multicultural recognition. In the Hegel of the *Phenomenology*, the struggle for recognition is a struggle unto death. He explicitly says, 'The individual who has not risked life can very well be recognized as a person; but it hasn't reached the truth of this recognition, as of an independent self-consciousness' (Hegel 1988, p. 131). Risking life is a radical business. There is no shortcut to polite co-existence when the innermost part of my being is at stake. The end of the struggle is to establish the reality of self-consciousness beyond make believe and more or less sincere tolerance. I demand that the other recognize me, not just as a public person, but *who I really am*, or rather *that I really am* (an independent self-consciousness), and I will force him to do so. In order to get his recognition, I put everything at stake: I am ready to sacrifice everything I have become, my entire concreteness, in order to gain the recognition of self-consciousness as such: 'See, I am not all of this – it represents no value for me! I just want you to recognize me *as* a self-consciousness.' On the other hand, this recognition can only be granted by another self-consciousness, which is why I disregard *his* concreteness as well. In disregarding the concreteness of both of us, I literally put everything at stake. What remains is the pure, acting subject behind the stake. I demand that the other recognize me as a self-consciousness, but I will only accept the recognition *from* a self-consciousness, since I disregard any concretion in general, which includes gestures, speech, etc. The only way to pursue this impossible, spiritual act is to deny the importance of any material existence – putting it all at stake in a struggle

unto death. Since, however, this pure denial cannot be resolved in a positive recognition (any sign of it will just be another piece of material and not the 'real thing'), the procedure most likely ends up in a power structure of some sort, in which the stronger of the two continuously suppresses the other: 'Recognize me, you piece of dirt!', 'I recognize you!', 'Not good enough! I don't believe you!' The Hegelian hope is that the power structure might be worked through. Initially, one of the two consciousnesses, which seek recognition, will get the upper hand and be master, and the other slave. The master will dominate the slave in letting him do the objective work. In this process, however, the slave paradoxically comes closer to objectifying himself. The master continuously threatens to destroy him, which is why he fears for his existence, not only this trait or that concern, but at the same time he begins to realise his whole being as objectified in the moulding of the object, which he shapes on behalf of the master. The slave *has* everything at stake permanently, and he begins to see the results *of* this stake in the products of his labour. At a certain point, this enables the slave to present something concrete to the master and demand his recognition. I produced *this* bread *because* I had everything at stake. The dialectics of recognition has thus – through a struggle unto death – produced a new reality, which presents some-thing to be recognized as the outcome of the struggle: objectified spirit. The slave will 'explain' this to the master and re-structure their relation, and in the course of this explanation, the master will now, as the slave already did, experience a threat of destruction and the loss of his old privileged position. Suddenly, then, the two appear in front of each other with a possibility to recognize each other as those who had everything at stake. On *this* background, finally, is it possible to initiate the development of an objective spirit and its accompanying institutions, where mutual recognition can be sustained.³

Now, has the subject of multicultural society, who identifies herself with her ethnic or religious background, gone through this struggle? Well, maybe the refugee, who has entered a new country by escaping from very real persecution precisely due to her background. In other words,

she ‘paradoxically’ comes closer to realizing herself than the xenophobic nationalist who urges her to ‘go back’ or assimilate herself entirely to the indigenous culture. But apart from that, the recognition at stake in the multiculturalist ideal seems to be much more the recognition of someone ‘as a person, who has not reached the truth of this recognition as of an independent self-consciousness.’ The repressed ‘Real that undermines our own position’ in our contemporary context is therefore the absent equilibrium between the master, who enjoys the fruits of labour, and the slave, who produces them: the children in the sweat shops, the starving in the former colonies. Until now, the oppressed of this relation has not reached a position to ‘explain the objective situation’ to the master, but it is no coincidence that the events of the September 11th attacks in the US were quite quickly interpreted as the ‘return of the Real’ – a reminder to Western civilization of the desert of conflict and fatigue outside the ivory tower. In other words: Identifying the other in her cultural difference gives me the possibility of preserving the unproblematic identity of my own subjective position, but this has happened partly by reducing my self to the personhood of my cultural identification, and partly by excluding what might be termed the hidden other – as well as repressing the knowledge of his existence. As long as we do not dare confront this ‘desert of the Real’, none but a superficial recognition is possible if we read Hegel literally.⁴

In an important sense, this description does not conflict with Axel Honneth’s description of the ‘moral grammar of social conflicts’ in the light of (*bis* concept of) recognition. Honneth dismisses the dialectics of the master and the slave in any version close to the one just given, and does not pretend to speculate on the condition of the World Spirit, so to speak. It is possible, in other words, to agree with Honneth that children should be encouraged and loved, women should be allowed to vote, and individuals should be appreciated for their accomplishments, without touching the questions I have put forward here. If my description does conflict with Honneth’s, it would be in the sense that I would recognize and emphasize an additional level of recognition, or rather: I would

group Honneth's tripartite structure together at one level and add my interpretation of Hegelian recognition of an individual self-consciousness as a second. And I would claim that the latter is of crucial importance to human dignity and self-realisation. The difference in the two descriptions is structurally similar to the difference between empirical psychology and psychoanalysis. If recognition (of personhood) does not include the dialectics represented in the encounter and the hidden other, it is not *really* recognition (of an individual self-consciousness): It is Honnethian recognition, not Hegelian recognition. Hegelian recognition requires more than the mutual intersubjective appreciation of subjects within a socio-politically defined domain. It requires a very real struggle, and *if* we want to talk about Hegel and recognition in our current context (which I think we should), such a perspective immediately draws attention to the lack of equilibrium between the producers (the ones that mould the object) and the subjects of the states that are permeated by enjoyment (of the fruits of labour). While the Hegel of this radical interpretation could be said to offer a concept of recognition that seems impossible to fulfil, he nonetheless offers us an imperative, which demands higher aspirations and a hope of actually transgressing the boundaries of our separate existences, be it in sudden, momentary, encounters or actual accomplishments of solidarity. Or, indeed, it encourages us to consider the relevance of giving up some of what we most enjoy and identify with (consumerist privileges, abundance of choice, reckless energy consumption, etc.), *before* someone will 'explain' to us the objective unbalance of the world order. In this sense, then, the hidden other should be seen as the significant other: Without her inclusion, recognition is not recognition.

Closing remarks

My objection to the post-metaphysical employment of the concept of recognition in multiculturalism and Honnethian ethico-political discourse is that their horizon is too limited to come to grips with the second level of recognition – 'what it is really about', in my view, in Hegelian recognition. I might Honneth-recognize you immediately, but only after

encountering/struggling with you can I really Hegel-recognize you. My handshake means something more on the other side of the encounter/struggle.

Philosophy of recognition should reflect more on the more radical perspectives presented by the theories of subjectivity and self-consciousness developed in the history of philosophy (particularly in German idealism), and I suggest that psychoanalysis offers a productive way to approach this ambition in the 'post-metaphysical age.' The Slovenian reading of Lacanian psychoanalysis, represented by Slavoj Žižek in this context, enables us to engage with the traditional metaphysical quandaries on subject and other without being obliged to accept again the whole metaphysical package that has largely been rejected by and with the linguistic turn in philosophy during the 20th century. Without the ambition of such a productive rereading of (late) Hegelian recognition, however, I believe recognition ethics limits itself as regards the most profound aspects of recognition. It actually fails to acknowledge a 'spiritual' dimension to human life, and it carries with it a tendency to maintain a rather rigid understanding of differences and identity.

In any case, I believe the philosophy of recognition should incorporate the two imperatives, which could be said to follow from my considerations. With regard to the encounter, a concept of recognition must include the imperative to 'Hate thy neighbour as thyself' – i.e. just as the other should count as an equal in the distribution of love and welfare, she should also count as an equal in her ability to be someone other than the other of the relevant differences. With regards to the hidden other, a concept of recognition must acquire a global aspiration and a more concrete understanding of struggle to be more than just a superficial recognition of personhood.

Endnotes

1 The dramatic debate over the infamous Mohammad cartoons in Denmark in 2005–6 seems to contradict this. Were they not exactly an expression of intolerance and an outright mockery of the Muslim minority in Denmark? And isn't it true that many reacted with increased awareness of the need for respect, tolerance and recognition? Indeed, but this example just emphasizes the point. As Mehmet Yüksekaya (MA in Political Science from University of Copenhagen) has warned, 'respect' might very well, in the aftermath of the cartoon crisis, have become a catchword for any discussion that involves religion, foreigners, minorities and so forth in Denmark. But it is accompanied by an *increased* attitude of distance: Out of fear of stepping on people's toes by mentioning religious or cultural taboos, ethnic Danes tend to avoid talking to people from ethnic minorities altogether. 'The danger for integration,' says Yüksekaya, 'first of all stems from a tendency to withdraw in everyday situations, because you so carefully want to avoid offending the other. And then, everything goes wrong, the isolation will continue, and we will have even more conflicts on the public stage.' (*Ugebrevet A4*, 13.2.2006).

2 Hegel establishes a skeleton for the three levels of recognition which Honneth, inspired by G.H. Mead, develops further and combines with empirical psychology. See: (Honneth, 1992, I.).

3 We might recall the structure of the imperative to 'hate thy neighbour as thyself': Only *after* putting our concrete existences at stake, or disregarding them, can we encounter each other as (universal) subjects.

4 The term 'desert of the Real' is one employed by Slavoj Žižek in a number of essays, some of which are collected in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (Žižek, 2002). The title of this book is a quotation from the Wachowski brothers' 1999 film *Matrix*, where Morpheus greets Neo, who has just escaped from the '*Matrix*' out into 'real reality.'

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Abstracts

Robert Brandom: ‘The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution’

This article reconstructs Hegel’s notion of experience and self-consciousness. It is argued that at the center of Hegel’s phenomenology of consciousness is the notion that experience is shaped by identification and sacrifice. Experience is the process of self-constitution and self-transformation of a self-conscious being that risks its own being. The transition from desire to recognition is explicated as a transition from the tripartite structure of want and fulfilment of biological desire to a socially structured recognition that is achieved only in reciprocal recognition, or reflexive recognition. At the center of the Hegelian notion of selfhood is thus the realization that selves are the locus of accountability. To be a self, it is concluded, is to be the subject of normative statuses that refer to commitments; it means to be able to take a normative stand on things, to commit oneself and undertake responsibilities.

Henrik Jøker Bjerre: ‘Recognition of an Independent Self-Consciousness’

Hegel’s concept in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* of the “recognition of an independent self-consciousness” is investigated as a point of separation for contemporary philosophy of recognition. I claim that multiculturalism and the theories of recognition (such as Axel Honneth’s) based on empirical psychology neglect or deny crucial metaphysical aspects of the Hegelian legacy. Instead, I seek to point at an additional, “spiritual”, level of recognition, based on the concept of the subject in Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Arne Grøn: ‘Dialectics of Recognition: Selfhood and Alterity’

Taking its point of departure in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, this article aims to reformulate the dialectics of recognition in terms of selfhood and

alterity. What makes it into a dialectics is the fact that we encounter the identity of the other escaping and withdrawing from our grasp, so that it is an open question whether we actually recognize the other as (an)other. This re-opens the issue of dialectics and ethics. In search for a critical reformulation of the dialectics of recognition, this article focuses on the role of vision, the question of normativity and the problem of subjectivity, discussing briefly Sartre (dialectics of the gaze) and in more detail Kierkegaard (dialectics of vision). I argue for reformulating the dialectics of recognition in terms of two, equally radical, insights into alterity and selfhood: alterity of the other implies that her identity is beyond my grasp (exteriority), and selfhood means that I am myself as no other (interiority).

Ejvind Hansen: ‘The Hegelian Notion of Progress and Its Applicability in Critical Philosophy’

In this paper I discuss the relevance of the Hegelian notion of progress in relation to problems in present-day discussions of critical theory. I discuss Honneth’s attempt to maintain the Hegelian notion of progress without subscribing to its metaphysical foundations. I argue that Honneth’s strategies are not likely to succeed and that he does not actually need the robust notion of progress in order for his critical theory to have significant implications. It will, however, force critical theory to rearticulate its aims. Critical theory reveals norms for *locating* disagreement rather than *solving* conflicts.

Axel Honneth: ‘Justice as institutionalized freedom. A Hegelian Perspective’

The overall aim of the article is to discuss two fundamentally different conceptions of freedom, individual resp. social freedom, and the different conceptions of justice flowing from them. It is argued that dominating modern theories of individual freedom, whether building on a negative, a self-lawgiving or self-realising conception of freedom, tend to see social institutions as mere presuppositions or extensions of individual freedom.

ABSTRACTS

In contradistinction to this, Hegel's theory of social freedom understands the social institutions of mutual recognition as themselves integral part of human freedom. Following Hegel's concept of social freedom, justice is now determined as the sum of social institutions that are necessary for the realisation of rational social freedom. The article concludes by sketching how Hegel's rather static model of social freedom can be transformed into a more updated and process-based version of social freedom.

Jørgen Huggler: 'Hegel's Phenomenology of Rationality'

The aim of this paper is to elucidate Hegel's conception of rationality in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), and to defend the thesis that he is an author engaged in discussion with a wide variety of sources. He uses sceptical reasoning to form a line of argument with a necessary progression, although the various materials that he considers are not linked in a simple, compelling logical way. The paper discusses what Hegel aimed at and the methods he used to reach his goal (sect. 1). These considerations are then used to cast an eye on the development of the contents of the book (sect. 2). Last, the paper presents a metaphysical interpretation of the course of experiences and discusses why Hegel's sceptical method is adequate to the metaphysics of spirit with which the book concludes (sect. 3).

Anne-Marie Eggert Olsen: 'The Necessity of Dialectics according to Plato and Adorno'

The paper deals with the notion of philosophy as, on the one hand, an academic or scientific discipline and, on the other hand, something perhaps superior to the disciplines and in any case dealing with what is not a 'disciplinary' matter. Through an interpretation of Plato's concept of dialectics and Adorno's understanding of philosophy as expression (*Ausdruck*) it is proposed that this two-fold nature of philosophy is what makes dialectics necessary.

Asger Sørensen: 'The Inner Experience of Living Matter. Bataille and dialectics.'

The dialectical aspect in the work of Georges Bataille is often neglected. At the suggestion of Foucault and Derrida, Bataille is even taken to be a non-dialectical thinker. But Bataille's thought was expressed in Hegelian terms, and both his epistemology and his ontology can be considered a determinate negation of Hegel's position in the *Phenomenology*. This is shown, first, by analyzing Bataille's notion of 'inner experience', and, second, by showing how Bataille extends dialectics to the natural, non-human realm. However, once we see the dialectical nature of his theoretical stance, we are struck by a great vagueness in his practical conception of where society ought to be going.

Thomas Schwarz Wentzer: 'Exposition and Recognition: Preparing Subjective Logic in Hegel's *Science of Logic*'

In light of the Platonic dialectic and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* the paper presents the systematic ambition of Hegel's major work in metaphysics, the *Science of Logic*. It defends the view that the hermeneutical concept of 'exposition' (*Auslegung*), introduced at the beginning of the last chapter of the *logic of objectivity*, has to be understood as an important internal feature of Hegel's speculative logic, which paves the way for the *logic of subjectivity*, the major goal of Hegel's *Science of Logic*.

Contributors

Robert Brandom (born 1950), Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh, educated at Yale and Princeton, author and editor of several books and articles on subjects discussed within American pragmatism, analytical philosophy, and in the history of philosophy. Among the books are *Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism* (2008), *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (2002), *Rorty and His Critics* (2000) and *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (1994). His writings have been translated into several languages.

Henrik Jøker Bjerre (born 1972), doctoral student at the Institute of Philosophy and History of Ideas, University of Aarhus, with a forthcoming dissertation on Kant, entitled *Kantian Deeds*. Has published on Kant, Wittgenstein, and the relation between philosophy and psychoanalysis, and written an introduction (in Danish) to the work of Slavoj Žižek.

Arne Grøn (born 1952), Professor of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion, University of Copenhagen, as well as Professor at the Danish National Research Foundation's *Center for Subjectivity Research*. Among his numerous publications on theory of subjectivity, ethics, philosophy of religion, hermeneutics, and history of philosophy, are *Angst bei Søren Kierkegaard. Eine Einführung in sein Denken* (1999, forthcoming in English); *Subjektivitet og negativitet: Kierkegaard* (1997); co-author: *Philosophie im 20. Jahrhundert. Band 1* (1992) and *Philosophielexikon* (1991); co-editor: *Subjectivity and Transcendence* (2007).

Ejvind Hansen (born 1971), Ph.D., currently holds a post-doctoral appointment at the Department of Philosophy and History of Ideas, University of Aarhus, working on a project on digital communication and its implications for culture in general (funded by the Carlsberg Foundation).

Axel Honneth (born 1949), Professor at the Department of Philosophy and Director of the Institute of Social Research, Johan Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt. Numerous articles and books on social philosophy, ethics and philosophical anthropology. In English are *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (1996), *Suffering from Indeterminacy. An Attempt at Reactualisation of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. (2000), *Reification* (2007), and *Disrespect. The Normative foundations of Critical Theory* (2007).

Jørgen Huggler (born 1956), dr.phil. & mag.art., Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, School of Education, University of Aarhus, author of *Hegel's Sceptical Path to Absolute Knowing. An Analysis of Hegel's Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1999, in Danish, with English summary). He has published on German Idealism, Romanticism, toleration, theodicy, and on truth.

Morten Raffnsøe Møller (born 1961), Ph.D., Head of Institute, Institute of Philosophy and History of Ideas, Aarhus University. Former Fullbright Scholar at New School University, N.Y. and Research fellow at Goethe-University, Frankfurt. Author of books and articles on recognition, self-realisation and justice, and on Hegel, Habermas, Honneth and Taylor.

Anne-Marie Eggert Olsen (born 1956), Ph.D., associate professor, Department of Philosophy of Education, School of Education, University of Aarhus. Author of books on Plato's dialogues *Cratylus* and *Symposium* and articles on ancient and medieval philosophy, political philosophy, and philosophy of education.

Asger Sørensen (born 1960), Ph.D. & mag.art., associate professor, Department of Philosophy of Education, School of Education, University of Aarhus. Educated at Department of Philosophy, University of Copenhagen and Department of Ethics and Philosophy of Law, University of Valencia. Author of books and articles on ethics, political philosophy, history of philosophy, philosophy of science, and sociological theory, in particular relating French positivism and Critical Theory.

CONTRIBUTORS

Thomas Schwarz Wentzer (born 1966), associate professor, Department of Philosophy and History of Ideas, University of Aarhus. Educated at RWTH Aachen and University of Tübingen, got his Ph.d. with a dissertation on Walter Benjamin's philosophy (*Bewahrung der Geschichte. Die hermeneutische Philosophie Walter Benjamins*, Philo: Bodenheim 1998). Author of articles on the history of philosophy and phenomenology, especially Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, and Gadamer.

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