THE SUBSTANTIAL SUBJECT:

THE LOGIC AND APPEARANCE OF FREEDOM IN HEGEL

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ABSTRACT

While it is widely agreed that Hegel's philosophy is a philosophy of freedom, the significance and scope of Hegel's theory of freedom is disputed. Most scholarly work on this topic has been devoted to the socio-political philosophy of the *Philosophy of Right*. But Hegel also speaks of freedom in a way which extends beyond the concerns of his socio-political thought. This dissertation demonstrates how Hegel's theory of freedom is more fully grasped when it is understood as a comprehensive philosophy which also involves an ontology (a logic of being) and a phenomenology (a direct experience of this logic). The free state which Hegel outlines in the *Philosophy of Right* is still only a limited manifestation of a freedom which also pervades other aspects of human experience. A way of thinking which is "free" (in the sense that it does not restrict itself by assuming false methodological limitations) is itself essential to our capacity for rational self-determination. Moreover, this "speculative" perspective has only been achieved through the gradual cultivation (*Bildung*) of the free personality throughout history.

This dissertation therefore investigates why Hegel thinks that freedom is at issue in abstract philosophical thought (in his logical works) as well as in concrete historical phenomena (in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*). This logic and appearance of freedom explicates Hegel's statement in the Preface of the *Phenomenology* that the absolute is not only substance, but also subject. Having shown that both the ancient freedom of the "social substance" and the modern freedom of the "pure I" are untenable on their own terms, Hegel advances a logical and phenomenological theory of freedom in which these one-sided truths are reconciled with each other. The "substantial subject" of Hegelian freedom more fully actualizes the purely subjective freedom of the Enlightenment, enabling true individual self-determination. Freedom appears not just as the right to make arbitrary choices, but as substantial thought and conviction.

Chapter 1 describes how Hegel thinks of freedom as true self-determination in three senses which continually appear throughout his work: as inner necessity, as being-at-home-with-oneself (*Beisichselbstsein*), and as the development of self-consciousness.

Chapter 2 relates these three senses of freedom to Hegel's statement that the absolute is both substance and subject. I then explore how Hegel's own theory of freedom takes up Spinoza's philosophy of substance and Fichte's philosophy of subjectivity. Finally, I consider how Hegel understands the development of freedom in history to be a movement from substance to subject.

Chapter 3 considers the logic of substance as Hegel describes it in his logic of essence, demonstrating how Hegel understands substantial necessity to ground the freedom of conceptual subjectivity. I then consider the appearance of this logic in Hegel's account of ancient Greek ethical life as a "social substance." The polis offered its citizens the freedom of membership but, when this "ethical life" broke down, it also first unveiled the truth of subjective moral freedom.

Chapter 4 traces how Hegel's logic of negation is operative in the formation of the "I" which abstracts itself from all particularity. In negating every external restriction, the freedom of the individual is now understood as an expression of what Hegel terms the "bad infinite." I then consider how this logic has appeared throughout late antiquity and modernity, finally culminating in the Enlightenment before destroying itself in the Terror of the French Revolution.

Chapter 5 describes the substantial subject which can now be realized in our own time. The substantial subject thinks systematically, achieving the freedom of rational self-determination by satisfying the inner necessity and inner purpose of self-conscious thought. The substantiality of subjectivity appears more immediately in moral conviction, where we paradoxically experience our freedom as what "must" be done. It is also present in the phenomenon of forgiveness, where we freely accept the finite limitations inherent in both action and judgement.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I employ abbreviations for the following Hegelian works:

AS *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*

DS *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy* (Differenzschrift)

EL *The Encyclopedia Logic*

LHP *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*

LL *Lectures on Logic*

PH *The Philosophy of History*

PR *The Philosophy of Right*

PhilS *The Philosophy of Spirit*

PS *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

SL *The Science of Logic*

Non-specified references to "Hegel's logic" refer collectively to *SL*, *EL*, and *LL*, which I take as three expressions of the same body of thought.

See the Bibliography for the translations which I have quoted throughout. I translated *Geist* as "spirit" in my abbreviations and titles even though the translations I have consulted often render it as "mind." I likewise amend translations of *Begriff* as "notion," changing it to "concept" for the sake of internal inconsistency.

I have not capitalized German nouns which have been arbitrarily capitalized in English translations (Spirit, Being, Idea) even where the original translator has done so.

INTRODUCTION

Hegel's account of freedom is as diffuse as it is difficult. As Will Dudley argues, political freedom as it is manifest in the state (the freedom of objective spirit treated in the *Philosophy of Right*) is just one limited aspect of an idea which pervades all of Hegel's work.[1] For Hegel, freedom also appears more abstractly as the interrelation of distinct concepts in a living system of thought. For example, in the *Science of Logic*, even apparently final and fundamental concepts like "being," "essence," and "concept" show themselves to be only moments "taken up" (*aufgehoben*) within a larger system.[2] But freedom, quite noticeably, is not treated in this way at any point in the *Encyclopedia*, where, despite its clear importance for Hegelian philosophy, it never appears as a distinct topic. It is never just a moment, but rather belongs to the system itself. If we try to locate it anywhere, we notice that it is most apparent in the "absolute spirit" of art, religion, and philosophy, appearing only at the conclusion of the *Encyclopedia*.

But our appreciation of the broader, non-political meaning of freedom in Hegel's philosophy remains quite thin if we only look for it in the concluding sections of the *Encyclopedia*. While absolute spirit is a more complete manifestation of freedom than objective spirit (freedom in the socio-political sense), it is still only the final development of an underlying ontology of

[1] Will Dudley, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and Philosophy: Thinking Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69.

> Discussions of Hegel's account of freedom often focus exclusively on the *Philosophy of Right*. Although everything Hegel has to say in the *Philosophy of Right* concerns freedom, such an exclusive focus is a serious mistake, for not everything Hegel has to say concerning freedom can be found in the *Philosophy of Right*. The *Philosophy of Right* considers the freedom available to spiritual beings through the activity of willing; it presents a detailed account of what Hegel calls objective spirit. Objective spirit, however, constitutes but one-third of Hegel's philosophy of spirit, and we have seen that the entirety of the philosophy of spirit is an attempt to determine what it means to be free. Understanding Hegel's account of freedom therefore requires not only interpreting the *Philosophy of Right*, but also situating it within its larger systematic context.

[2] I express *Aufhebung* as "taking up" throughout this work.

freedom implicit in the system throughout.[3] Even in the abstract categories of logic, freedom already appears as the "truth of necessity."[4] It is not a topic unto itself, but arises through the movement of thought, appearing in the transition between the objectivity of substance and the subjectivity of the concept. In addition to the discussion of freedom at this crucial transition, Hegel's logic generally supports the freedom of philosophical thought. He claims that thinking grounds itself in the circular structure of his logic, which frees philosophy from foundationalist presuppositions so that it thereby achieves the self-sufficiency of "being purely with itself."[5]

Moreover, the themes of Hegel's later work on freedom already emerge in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where they are treated as they arise for self-consciousness in its direct experience of the world. Whereas the system of the *Encyclopedia* presupposes the philosophical perspective which Hegel terms "absolute knowing," the *Phenomenology* traces the propaedeutic lessons from which his "speculative" philosophy first emerges. Pre-theoretical, "natural" consciousness supposes itself to be free in a certain way (believing, for example, that its own freedom is proven in the domination of another person). Yet each of these self-concepts breaks down in experience (as when masters are shown to be unfree and dependent upon their "servants"). Phenomenology investigates how this mismatch between the expectation and reality of human freedom has repeated itself under different guises throughout history: the appearances of freedom (the *phenomena*) cohere into a more general account of the world, a logic (a *logos*). Greek tragedy, the French Revolution, and the world renunciation of "beautiful souls" each articulate some aspect of human freedom while also showing its limitations. While this historical approach may be

[3] Although he does not use the term himself, I will be using the term "ontology" and not "metaphysics" to describe Hegel's thoughts on the fundamental nature of being because he takes pains to dissociate his system from "metaphysics," which he associates with early modern rationalist philosophy (Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza).
[4] *EL* §158.
[5] *EL* §31.

prefatory to the conceptual philosophy of the *Encyclopedia*, it is worthwhile to return to these initial appearances if we are to understand Hegel's theory of freedom in its most basic origins.[6]

In this dissertation I will therefore support the concept of freedom presented in Hegel's mature philosophy of *Geist* (i.e., the last third of the *Encyclopedia* and the *Philosophy of Right*) by investigating how Hegel considers freedom from a logical and phenomenological perspective.[7] In adopting this approach, this investigation aims at what truly distinguishes Hegel's account of freedom as unique. Most modern socio-political philosophers, whatever their differences, are eager to claim the mantle of freedom, and so, in his philosophy of objective spirit, Hegel is contributing to an already extant discourse, however different his perspective may be. Likewise, when Hegel presents art, religion, and philosophy as moments of absolute spirit, he is not the first to think of these pursuits as especially free (consider, for example, Luther and the freedom of the Christian, or Plato and Aristotle on the freedom of the philosopher).

The most original aspect of Hegel's theory of freedom, then, is that freedom is already a concern for him in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*. These earlier works describe a logical and experiential ground of freedom which is implicit in any theory of the free

[6] In this approach, I am, to some extent, participating in the recovery of the early Hegel which Jean Hyppolite associates with Theodore Haering and Jean Wahl's attempt to unearth "phenomenological origin of the system." Hyppolite writes that Hegel, as a phenomenologist, took the "*supraindividual* reality [of] a spirit of a people or a spirit of a religion" as "historical totalities" which are the "fundamental experience." It is this "thought of history from which Hegel started." Jean Hyppolite, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of History*, trans. by Bond Harris and Jacqueline Bouchard Spurlock (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 4-6.

[7] My project can be considered a further elaboration of Dudley's work in which he presents the freedom of the Hegelian system as existing on a spectrum which he presents in a chart. As we move from abstract logic to objective spirit (morality and politics) and on to absolute spirit (art, religion, and philosophy), we arrive at "increasingly comprehensive conceptions of the freedom of spiritual beings." Dudley, 26. These more comprehensive forms of freedom are, in the present project, being traced back to their logical and historical roots.

state or the free human being.[8] As the owl of Minerva takes flight in Hegel's mature political philosophy, it looks back upon the logic and appearance of freedom Hegel has already laid out.

The Practical Freedom of the Will in *The Philosophy of Right*

But before beginning this study of the logic and appearance of freedom, it is worthwhile to first describe the more narrow, practical concept of freedom presented in the *Philosophy of Right*. Hegel opens *PR* with an extended discussion of free will. Since freedom is generally understood as an individual's capacity for willful decision-making, this section contains some of Hegel's most clear, relatable discussion of freedom.

The moral and socio-political concerns of *PR* rest upon free will as their foundation (*Boden*).[9] For Hegel, it does not need to be demonstrated that the will is free because to speak of the will is already to speak of freedom. The will must be free for it to be a will at all.[10] But as with everything in Hegel's philosophy, the free will does not appear immediately. It only expresses the truth of its freedom through a course of development. It first expresses itself as the "I" which abstracts itself from all particularity and so becomes the "pure I," an "I" beyond the limitation of any empirical determinations.[11] But such an abstract will is conceptually incoherent, as the will

[8] While it is significant that *SL* and *PS* both predate the *Encyclopedia* project, I do not confine myself to a study of Hegel's earlier texts. I see the later *Encyclopedia Logic* and the *Lectures on Logic* as clarifying and condensing *SL*, so they will also make appearances in this work. Sometimes I will refer to the thought contained in all three of these texts collectively as "Hegel's logic." In some cases, *EL* and *LL* are especially valuable resources because they further clarify the brief and undeveloped remarks on logic and freedom in *SL* with insights from Hegel's later philosophy.

Since Hegel's philosophy emerges from his reading of the history of philosophy, and since he often assumes his readers' familiarity with historical texts to which he only obliquely refers, I also will occasionally discuss relevant sources outside of the Hegelian corpus to further develop and contextualize Hegel's remarks. Modern sources which have appeared after Hegel's lifetime are also employed when their affinity to Hegel's philosophy is especially striking.

[9] *PR* §4.

[10] *PR* §4.

[11] *PR* §5.

always acts in the finite, particular world.[12] In its fully developed form, the will does not remove itself from the particularity of worldly engagement but it also does not identify particular choice with freedom itself; freedom is more than the ability to simply will A over B.

Such particular choices are rather mediated by a more universal perspective, belonging to a "rational system of volitional determination" in which ultimately self-limiting choices (choosing, for instance, to spend one's entire life savings on an evening of entertainment) are seen as incompatible with true freedom.[13] Stated more abstractly, the will which maintains and extends the scope of its own activity is, in Hegel's enigmatic phrase, "the free will which wills the free will."[14] Since its own flourishing is the ultimate aim of its decisions, the truly free will chooses particular ends not for their own sake, but because they aim at the objective conditions under which its freedom can be maintained and advanced. Choices which apparently restrict my agency, like deferring to the guidance of a personal trainer, restrict the scope of my particular decisions but ultimately cultivate a greater capacity for free action.

Those familiar with the wider project of *PR* will already recognize the most notable themes of Hegel's political philosophy in this theory of will. Hegel critiques Enlightenment liberalism because it elevates the caprice of individual subjectivity over the "ethical life" (*Sittlichkeit*) through which the individual exists as a concrete person belonging to a society. The link between the later arguments of *PR* and its initial exposition of the free will is laid out very clearly by Hegel: right is the concrete existence (*Dasein*) of the free will, its manifestation (through customs, laws, and institutions) in the ethical life of a people.[15] The free society is the society which recognizes the freedom of the will and provides the social structures (courts of law, schools, family support)

[12] *PR* §6-7.
[13] *PR* §19.
[14] *PR* §27.
[15] *PR* §29.

which enable individuals to exercise their personal autonomy. Just as the free will "wills the free will," the free society wills the freedom of the individual. For this reason, the questions of right discussed in *PR* will belong to "objective spirit" in the *Encyclopedia*, the part of the system which treats *Geist* as it is manifest in the finite world of individual actions and social institutions.

Yet the practical treatment of freedom Hegel presents in *PR* should not be considered exhaustive. As Alan Patten writes, every key concept in Hegel's philosophy "can be properly appreciated only in the context of an understanding of his idea of freedom."[16] Yet some Anglophone commentators deny any meaningful relationship between the concrete existence of the system of right and Hegel's wider philosophical project. In commenting on the *Philosophy of Right*, Allen Wood exemplifies this tendency, dismissing *PS* as "utterly unconvincing" and describing Hegel's logic as "based on shallow sophistries." Rather than considering Hegel's theory of freedom to be linked to the "dialectical" methodology laid out in these earlier works, Wood instead approaches Hegel as a "philosophical historian, a political and social theorist, a philosopher of our ethical concerns and cultural identity crises."[17]

It is precisely this prejudicial dismissal of the logic and experience of freedom which I aim to correct in this dissertation. Before we can pronounce any judgement on Hegel's wider concept of freedom, we must first do the difficult work of understanding it in its systematic integrity. We have good reason to presume the interconnection of abstract and practical freedom, as it is quite simple to notice that every system of right proceeds from a wider philosophical methodology which supports and justifies the concrete existence of that system. Surely the differences between the government of modern France and the government of Confucian China are correlated with the differences between their respective philosophies.

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[16] Alan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4
[17] Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4-5.

Hegel himself insists upon this systematicity of philosophical thought and even suggests that thinking systematically is itself an expression of "the freedom of the whole":

> The science of [free and genuine thought] is essentially a system, since the true insofar as it is concrete exists only through unfolding itself in itself, collecting and holding itself together in a unity, i.e. as a totality. Only by discerning and determining its distinctions can it be the necessity of them and the freedom of the whole.[18]

This systematic approach is both more modest and more ambitious than Wood's deflationist interpretation of Hegelian freedom. It is more modest in that, by beginning with only the appearances of freedom, it suspends judgement on the claim that the bourgeois democracy Hegel endorses in *PR* constitutes a final, perfected system of freedom. Where we may find issue with a concrete detail of Hegel's political philosophy (for instance, in his insistence that a free state must be a constitutional monarchy), these details can be understood as specificities which are not as integral to Hegel's philosophy as his more fundamental claims about the nature of being and the general course of history.

On the other hand, Hegel's logical works are primarily oriented to the technical exposition of ontological concepts. Unpacking their dense, abrupt references to freedom is an ambitious task which I deem worthwhile even though it is proscribed by much of the current scholarship.

Prior Commentary on Freedom as Logic and Appearance

Before I further explicate the approach to Hegel I am proposing, I will briefly indicate some comments made on the possibility of understanding freedom in this way in the prior scholarship. While Wood strongly dissociates Hegel's theory of freedom from his wider philosophy, Neuhouser contrasts his research into Hegel's social philosophy with a hypothetical study of how Hegel's

[18] *EL* §14.

account of freedom is related to his ontological and phenomenological projects in *SL* and *PS*. This project would involve examining the "deepest metaphysical foundations of Hegel's social theory" as well as reconstructing the *Phenomenology*'s "meta-justification of the social and political norms Hegel thinks are authoritative for the modern era." While he does not attempt this project, he notes that both projects are "worthy of attempting" and have not "yet been satisfactorily carried out."[19]

Paul Franco likewise does not confine himself to a study of *PR* and comments that Hegel also makes remarks about freedom in *PS* and *SL*. While *PS* does not arrive at a stable, fully actualized concept of freedom, this is precisely the point of tracing the flow of its unstable appearances in history, a project Franco describes as "an inventory and critique of all the various and inevitably unsuccessful strategies adopted by consciousness … to secure freedom apart from, above, or beyond the empirical self and the actual world." Franco also notes that Hegel employs his formula for freedom in *PR* as "being-at-home-with-oneself" throughout his more abstract discussion of Aristotle's definition of "first philosophy" as "thought thinking itself."[20]

Robert Pippin also notes the logical aspect of Hegel's theory of freedom. In an article on the role of self-consciousness in Hegel's logic, he concludes by describing how Hegel "waxes poetic over such 'logical' freedom." Although he declines to offer any further interpretation of this sense of freedom, he does suggest that freedom is somehow at stake in his reading of Hegel's logic.[21] Since Hegel describes freedom as the development of self-consciousness throughout *PS*, appreciating how the phenomenological standpoint of self-consciousness is operative in Hegel's logic is crucial to understanding what Hegel means by "logical freedom."

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[19] Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 1-3.
[20] Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 155.
[21] Robert Pippin, "VII — The Significance of Self-Consciousness in Idealist Theories of Logic," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 114, no. 2 pt. 2 (2014): 165.

In his exploration of what he terms "the *Sittlichkeit* thesis," Alan Patten recognizes that Hegel's social philosophy cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of his philosophical system. He affirms the importance of the logic and appearance of freedom in his study of Hegel's theory of "what it is to be free (the 'concept' of freedom) and his account of the social and political contexts in which this freedom is developed, realized, and sustained."[22] Nonetheless, Patten adopts this approach to studying freedom specifically to contest the reception of the "*Sittlichkeit* thesis" as a "highly controversial and paradoxical" account of freedom in Anglophone scholarship.[23] He thus only explores the logic and appearance of freedom insofar as they can be immediately related back to the socio-political concept of freedom which is presupposed by his audience.

Two other American authors make quite explicit affirmations of the necessity of appreciating Hegel's logic in understanding his theory of freedom. Jensen Suther argues that the logic of the concept "provides the resources necessary for coming to grips with the logical status of the account of rational agency and for specifying the precise sense in which freedom is a metaphysical concept."[24] Suther insists upon the relevance of logic to freedom, but he narrows his focus to the logic of the concept (the completed development of this "logical" freedom), whereas I will be focusing on the movement of the logic as a whole, a movement which is likewise the "appearance" of freedom itself.

Will Dudley, whose approach is the nearest to that of the present work, commits to a treatment of Hegelian freedom grounded in Hegel's logic because it is "both necessary and rewarding" despite the difficulties involved in attempting such an interpretation.[25] Since the

[22] Patten, 3.
[23] Patten, 4.
[24] Jensen Suther, "Hegel's Logic of Freedom: Toward a 'Logical Constitutivism'," *The Review of Metaphysics* 73, no.4 (2020): 774.
[25] Dudley, 25.

"philosophy of spirit does use those logical concepts … our grasp of [it] is improved when we attend to that use."[26] Dudley's book mostly focuses on the distinction between freedom as "willing" and the "speculative freedom" which I will further elaborate in Chapter 1, and then goes on to briefly describe how speculative freedom exists in absolute spirit and how this sort of freedom has appeared in history.[27] But for Dudley, Hegelian freedom appears alongside Nietzschean freedom as only one topic in a more widely focused book; it is the concern of the present work to elaborate this outline in greater detail, especially in its still underdeveloped logical and historical origins.

There is also interest in reviving a more systematic approach to Hegel's philosophy of freedom in German scholarship. Klaas Vieweg decries the dismissal of logic by commentators on *PR*, citing Dieter Heinrich and Michael Wolff as realizing the importance of Hegel's logic for his philosophy of the state. Against the trend of *ad hoc* readings of Hegel's social philosophy, he pursues "a strategy of uncovering the *Philosophy of Right*'s systematic intentions, its logical foundations and thus the innermost core of Hegel's thought."[28] He proceeds to show how the forms of the state articulated in *PR* stand in a logical relationship to one another captured by the triadic "system of syllogisms" Hegel describes in his logic of the concept.[29]

Just as with Patten's work, however, Vieweg's overall interest lies in reuniting Hegel's logic with his practical philosophy. While the logical forms Hegel describes are certainly at work in his political theory, I am interested in the more elusive question of how this logic can *itself* be said to be "free" as compared with other systems of thought. For instance, at *EL* §31, why does Hegel describe the ancient Greeks as "thinking freely" in a way which has not been achieved by

[26] Dudley, 25-26.
[27] See Dudley, Chapter 4, "Freedom through Hegel's philosophy," 101-109. The question of how these ways of understanding freedom relate to each other and how they appear in history are treated in an epilogue at 109-119.
[28] Klaas Vieweg, *The Idealism of Freedom: For a Hegelian Turn in Philosophy*, (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 126.
[29] Vieweg, 127-143.

moderns because of our logical presuppositions? Freedom already belongs to the logical forms of thought prior to their application to a system of right; it is this freedom of logic *itself* that I mean when I refer to the "logic of freedom."

As this review of sources indicates, a study of Hegelian freedom which focuses on its logic and appearance can, in Vieweg's phrase, uncover the "innermost core" of Hegel's philosophy.

A Phenomenological Approach to Reading Hegel

In describing the abstract logic of freedom alongside its historical appearance, it may seem as if this project is heading in two conflicting directions, affirming both the "metaphysical" claims of Hegel's ontology as well as his "non-metaphysical" survey of human experience.[30] I now wish to demonstrate how both these pursuits proceed from what I term a "phenomenological" reading of Hegel. It is important to note that this approach does not imply the influence of 20th-century phenomenology on my reading. It is rather based in the aims of phenomenology as Hegel understood them. Whereas Hegel described *PS* as a "science of the *experience of consciousness*" (indeed this phrase was its working title),[31] phenomenology today tends to be understood as a description of experience opposed to logical abstraction. The emphasis in this contemporary approach to phenomenology lies on the *phenomenon* and not the *logos*, whereas I emphasize the *logos* (i.e., the logic) of the *phenomenon*, restoring phenomenology to a systematic science.

[30] In Simon Lumsden's division of these two camps, the metaphysical reading understands Hegel to be committed to the idea that "the world is an expression of some kind of quasi-divine spiritual substance," while the non-metaphysical reading rejects "any idea of the given" and so holds that Hegel's philosophy does not "disclose … a fixed and given reality." Simon Lumsden, "The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel," *Philosophy Compass* 3, no. 1 (2008): 52.
[31] *PS* §88. For a discussion of the original title of *PS* and Hegel's intention to build his philosophy upon this "science of experience," see Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 170-171.

The phenomenological reading can best be explained by looking to Hegel's theory of experience in the Introduction to *PS*. Hegel here differentiates his philosophy from the metaphysical, empirical, and critical currents of thought in modernity.[32] The problem with all these schools of thought (schools which continue to influence the interpretation of Hegel to this day) is that they see the mediation of subjectivity as an insurmountable obstacle to objective truth. Hegel identifies and critiques their shared assumption that the truth could somehow exist in a purely objective form, dispensing with the subjective process of knowledge acquisition entirely.

Limited by this presupposition, each of these philosophies elaborates only one piece of the comprehensive whole which Hegel intends to synthesize in his theory of experience. Rationalist metaphysics holds that reason itself arrives at the knowledge of things "in themselves," while empiricism claims that the truth is immediately "given" in our sensory experience of the world. Critical philosophy, in turn, shows the limitations of both these dogmatic positions. Kant demonstrated that "pure reason" (*reine Vernunft*) cannot ground itself, since its attempt to resolve the fundamental problems of metaphysics only results in irresolvable contradictions, or "antinomies." The understanding (*Verstand*) orients itself towards the external, perceptual world and so does not claim to be self-sufficient in the same way as reason, but since it only experiences the world as it exists "for consciousness," it also cannot claim to know things "in themselves."

Hegel takes up this fundamental insight of Kant's critical philosophy while still reaffirming the truth of metaphysics and empiricism. As will be further discussed below at 1.4.1, Hegel describes consciousness itself as necessarily entailing both "critical" and "dogmatic" moments. To have a conscious experience of something is to distinguish between a subject and an object, and

[32] *PS* §73. These modern philosophies are also described as the first and second "standpoints of thought towards objectivity" at the start of the *Encyclopedia* project. See *EL* §§26-60.

thus to recognize the object as it presents itself "for consciousness" (*für das Bewußtsein*) as well as the object as it exists separately of any such perspective, as "being-in-itself" (*An-sich-sein*).[33]

Any attempt to fully divorce these two moments only shows their mutual interdependence. If, for instance, we attempt to rescue empiricism and consider the sensory object "in-itself," we can only resolve the ambiguities of perception by establishing subjective criteria of truth, criteria "for consciousness."[34] Experience is precisely the interplay of these two moments which recognizes them in their unity.[35] Consciousness first interprets its experience as immediate truth, as the direct perception of how things are in themselves. But it then reflects that this experience is a perspective mediated by its own consciousness, and so cannot be considered "purely objective" in this way. It is only through this process of self-conscious reflection that we come to distinguish between truth and mere "appearances," and yet this distinction does not wholly invalidate the naïve first perspective. One aspect of the truth is still, in a limited, qualified sense, the truth "in itself."

Let us extrapolate from Hegel's rather dense presentation of these ideas and consider a more specific example. We experience objects as having consistent, predictable properties. Object permanence is the implicit "metaphysical order" under which we operate, an order which is given to us as the immediate reality of the world from infancy. This order is reaffirmed in empirical experience (a stone I left behind yesterday is still here), so that the regular predictability of objects becomes an explicit principle "for consciousness" and is formalized as "the law of identity."

But this formalization casts doubt upon the original "givenness" of the law: is the law of identity only a creation of subjectivity, a presupposition of regularity where none may in fact exist? In testing this law to see if it is truly universal, we now recognize that this metaphysical order is

[33] *PS* §83.
[34] *PS* §84.
[35] *PS* §87.

not, for instance, present in the experience of newborns. We may also look to the strange superposition of quantum particles or to the subjective phenomenon of "bittersweet" emotions in questioning the general validity of the law of identity.

As is typical in the modern philosophical milieu, we now suffer from a kind of cognitive dissonance: what once seemed obvious in our experience is now subject to critical scrutiny when it is formulated as a universal truth. The modern philosophical schools which Hegel critiques ask that we now make a hard choice between theory and experience. We either dogmatically affirm what appears to us as the self-evident truth, or else we adopt an agnostic, critical perspective and admit that we have no knowledge of things "in themselves."

But for Hegel, the critical perspective does not wholly negate the earlier truth of object permanence; it only relativizes it to the set of experiential conditions under which it arose (the experience of solid, inanimate objects). In the maturation of subjectivity in *PS*, the critical stance is taken up in further experience, informing and directing our future interactions with the world. We now realize that identity is not always as fixed as it seems in the case of simple objects. The critical perspective which refuted the prior metaphysical order is now seen as a constitutive part of things "in themselves." Yesterday's counterintuitive discovery becomes tomorrow's comfortable assumption. Fixating on only the dogmatic or critical aspects of human experience precludes the growth which is essential to arriving at a robust comprehension of the truth.

The same mutually reinforcing relationship exists between logic and phenomenology in Hegel's own philosophy. When the two are seen in their unity, logic only arises from phenomena and yet phenomena only acquire philosophical significance through logical abstraction. The modern opposition between the universality of reason and the specificity of empirical data — an opposition between form and content — resolves itself when each is taken as a moment of a single

experiential process. Kant's demonstration that neither rationalism nor empiricism can claim the truth for itself only requires that we stop thinking of them as *a priori* constructs, as methods assumed in advance of the act of thinking. Hegel therefore understands the universal science of modernity (the project of a philosophical *Wissenschaft*) to be "itself an appearance [*Erscheinung*]" which arrives at the truth through its very process of "appearing on the scene."[36]

Phenomenology should thus be considered in a dual sense, as a science (*logos*) of appearances (*phenomena*) but equally as the appearance of science — as a "logico-phenomenon," a universal form which emerges through specific experiential content. While the phenomenal content of phenomenology differentiates it from pure science, there is no strict division between the two enterprises. The *logos* cannot be separated from its appearance, since to know the *logos* while forgetting its appearance is to comprehend it at only the most abstract, empty level. Every logic proceeds from a phenomenological standpoint, while every phenomenology is already a logic "coming-to-be."

My phenomenological reading of Hegel thus approaches his philosophy in this interplay between transcendence (the *logos*) and immanence (the *phenomenon*). This reading is key to his philosophy of freedom because Hegel maintains that we can never achieve rational self-determination if we assume that the truth always evades the operation of reason, as if punishing a cheap trick.[37] Liberation from this methodological self-restriction is a crucial aspect of Hegelian freedom. Since the truth only exists for an actively engaged subject, Hegel personifies it in the opposite way, as eagerly awaiting its discovery and freely *wanting* to reside "with us [*bei uns*] … of its own volition."[38]

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[36] *PS* §76.
[37] *PS* §73.
[38] *PS* §73.

I. CHAPTER 1: THREE SENSES OF FREEDOM IN HEGEL

1.1 Speculative Freedom and True Self-Determination

Freedom in the modern world is most readily understood as a property of a self or social group which has "freed" itself from external dependency and control. "Independence," "autonomy," and "self-determination" are ready synonyms for freedom which pertain to individual prerogatives (as in "the independence of judgement" or "the bodily autonomy of all persons") as well as social conditions (as in "the self-determination of democracy"). Despite being almost universally recognized as desirable, freedom is commonly understood as an absence, so much so that Allen Wood, building on Isaiah Berlin's concept of "negative freedom," writes that "in ordinary speech, "free" pretty much means the same as 'without.'"[1] It can be further added to this observation that this negative concept of freedom is the cancellation of an undesirable state of affairs, a kind of double negation. Freedom is freedom from external influences which, for a variety of reasons, are understood as repressive. As Hegel will bring out in his genealogy of modern freedom in *PS* (discussed below at 4.2) the negative valence of our ordinary understanding of freedom emerges from our modern criticism and distrust of established institutions.

Hegel takes up this Enlightenment discourse of freedom as self-determination while also indicating where this concept of freedom still requires further articulation. As Dudley writes, the self-determination of the practical will "rests on yet another kind of freedom, without which willing fails to be genuinely self-determining."[2] True self-determination involves something more than the exercise of free will over and against an indifferent world. As Hegel argues in the Introduction to *PR*, every self-determination of the free will "contains the theoretical within itself"

[1] Wood, 37.
[2] Dudley, 7.

since the will necessarily conceptualizes the object of its desire.[3] Even if I am practically free to accomplish something, I still must decide if it is something worth accomplishing. I do not just act upon the world, but also think about the kind of world I am creating through my action. Neuhouser recognizes this theoretical aspect of Hegelian freedom as the "most complete form of self-determination possible," the self-determination achieved through thinking itself — the freedom of philosophy or "speculative freedom."[4]

When Hegel describes the freedom of "absolute spirit" (art, religion, and philosophy), he indicates the special character of this speculative freedom, describing how this unique form of self-determination has elaborated itself throughout history. At the Introduction of *LHP*, Hegel describes the freedom of philosophy as the historical process of spirit (*Geist*) coming to know itself. The ancient Delphic imperative to "know thyself" (*gnothi seauton*) fulfills itself across history as spirit achieves the self-determination of philosophical self-knowledge:

> This being-at-home-with-self [*Beisichsein*] or coming-to-self [*Zusichselbstkommen*] of spirit may be described as its complete and highest end: it is this alone that it desires and nothing else. Everything that from eternity has happened in heaven and earth, the life of God and all the deeds of time simply are the struggles for spirit to know itself, to make itself objective to itself, to find itself, be for itself, and finally unite itself to itself; it is alienated and divided, but only so as to be able thus to find itself and return to itself. Only in this manner does spirit attain its freedom, for that is free which is not connected with or dependent on another. True self-possession and satisfaction are only to be found in this, and in nothing else but thought does spirit attain this freedom.[5]

Hegel's theory of freedom requires that spirit lose itself in externality in order for it to reclaim itself, as freedom is this very act of self-repossession. Consciousness itself indeed implies such an external focus in its most basic structure. It cannot know itself; it knows only objects which oppose

[3] *PR* §4.
[4] Neuhouser, 20.
[5] *LHP* I, 23.

it as a "subject." The challenge of freedom, then, is for such an outward-looking consciousness to "become objective to itself," to relate to itself in such a way that it becomes an object for itself.

As Edward Jeremiah has shown, the somewhat convoluted pronominal grammar of this passage (the repeated phrases describing spirit as acting upon itself) describes a movement from a transitive logic (in which a grammatical subject acts upon an external object) to a reflexive logic, or one which describes self-contained, self-sufficient activity.[6] But just as a reflexive statement still distinguishes between the subjective and objective aspects of the person (I, as subject, observe myself, as object), Hegel shows that such reflexivity only develops by first undergoing the separation inherent in consciousness. As the providential orientation of this passage suggests, the story of how consciousness overcomes this separation and becomes objective to itself is a generational process which cannot be discussed separately from an interpretation of history. As Neuhouser writes, Hegel does not think that it is even "*possible* for something to be — purely and immediately self-related" and so true self-determination is mediated through our historical and social relationships with other people.[7]

In this same passage, however, Hegel also offers a more immediate, concrete example of how the same process of self-recognition appears in an individual's everyday experience:

> In sense-perception, for instance, and in feeling, I find myself confined and am not free; but I am free when I have a consciousness of this my feeling. Man has particular ends and interests even in will; I am free indeed when this is mine. Such ends, however, always contain "another," or something which constitutes for me "another," such as desire and impulse. It is in thought alone that all foreign matter disappears from view, and that spirit is absolutely free.[8]

[6] Edward Jeremiah, "The Development, Logic, and Legacy of Reflexive Concepts in Greek Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74, no. 4 (2013): 508.
[7] Neuhouser, 18-19.
[8] *LHP* I, 23.

There is no freedom in the immediate act of sense perception, but there is freedom in the *self-consciousness* of this perception, in knowing the given sense datum not just as "this" but as "this *my* sense perception" — "I am free when I have a consciousness of this my feeling." There is no freedom in the simple act of looking at a tree, but there is freedom in *knowing* that this is what I am doing. The self-awareness of my own objective perception implies my own subjective possibilities — I may doubt the existence of the tree, or choose to look away, or cut it down. In being self-aware, I resituate the objective world within my subjective context of willful action.

But this externality of objective perception is no longer present when thinking becomes its own object in the self-consciousness of philosophical reflection. For this reason, Hegel regards philosophy as the paradigm of free self-determination, the completion of "absolute spirit." But while such a purely mental form of self-sufficiency may suggest an image of philosophical freedom as the isolation of a hermit, the autonomy offered by philosophy can never be so crudely abstracted from its painstakingly slow appearance in history, in which spirit is "externalized and emptied out into time."[9] The history of philosophy is like a mirror through which the mind can become objective to itself, so that, against all misconceptions of a meager, insular self-sufficiency, philosophical self-consciousness only emerges through a radical sense of participation in a conversation that began long before one's birth and will continue long after one's death. Moreover, our participation in the ongoing story of philosophy also depends upon the social conditions of our present society. As Dudley argues, speculative freedom does not supplant socio-political freedom as a form of world-renunciation. It rather exists as the potential for the perfection of freedom in the philosophical life available in a more generally free society.[10]

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[9] *PS* §808.

[10] "In other words, there is a theoretical or cognitive component to freedom, but it is only a component, and the most comprehensive freedom simply cannot be had in the absence of certain social and political conditions. Freedom, that is, requires both the theoretical comprehension of the world, and its practical transformation." Dudley, 111.

This presentation of speculative freedom in the Introduction of *LHP* has introduced a central theme in interpreting the logic and appearance of Hegel's theory of freedom. True self-determination involves spirit's "being-at-home" (what Hegel terms *Beisichsein*) with itself, but this is only possible after we have gone beyond our immediate perspective and then returned into ourselves (what Hegel terms *Zusichselbstkommen*). In the speculative freedom Hegel describes in this passage, the philosopher is free when she leaves herself behind in thinking of those most universal concepts which have developed over centuries. True self-determination entails true self-comprehension, and true self-comprehension involves reaching within oneself to unroot the deeper, still unarticulated assumptions behind the ego's immediate opinions and desires. Simply asserting what one wants or thinks is a lesser degree of freedom than being able to interrogate, and so potentially amend and refine, those desires and convictions. This apparent renunciation of the will to gain a more profound form of self-determination will appear in different forms throughout this dissertation. Liberating oneself from the self-imposed constraints of one's own naïve self-certainty is the ultimate freedom, the self-determination not just of our actions, but of our own selves at our deepest core.

Having established Hegel's complex engagement with the more common understanding of freedom as self-determination, I will focus on three particularly Hegelian, "speculative" senses of freedom for the rest of this chapter. Following Hegel's Aristotelian method, in which the universal, as the ground of all intelligibility, is the first in the order of explanation, I will begin with the most abstract, logical formula for freedom and successively develop my thoughts to conclude with its

most concrete, phenomenological appearance.[11] First, inner necessity (1.2), is the formula for freedom which is discussed in the transition from the logic of substance to the logic of conceptual subjectivity. Next, freedom is described somewhat more concretely as a state of "being-at-home-with-oneself" (*Beisichselbstsein*) (1.3). Finally, "being-at-home" occurs through a process of reconciliation with the world which appears in the specific historical development of self-consciousness. Freedom can thus also be described as this process of the maturation of self-consciousness in history (1.4).

It should be noted that, while these three senses of freedom will be discussed here in their "speculative" aspect, the following analysis also enriches Hegel's account of the freedom of objective spirit (which he provides in *PR* and in the section on objective spirit in *PhilS*). Since the present analysis is dedicated solely to articulating the logic and appearance of freedom (the account of freedom which has been neglected in the present literature), it remains for a future work to reassess Hegel's social philosophy as a part of this broader project.

1.2 Freedom as Inner Necessity

The freedom of inner necessity resolves what Hegel frequently describes as the "abstract opposition" of freedom and necessity, i.e., the understanding of freedom which sees it as a purely negative escape from external restrictions. In critiquing this opposition, Hegel analyzes the natural scientific understanding of necessity and shows its limitations. In the mechanical logic of cause

[11] Beiser suggests the profound influence of Aristotle (see *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1/1.5, 1094a/1997b) on the order in which Hegel presents his thought. At the start of any course of thought, it is at first only pure generalizations which are intelligible, but this is *not* to say that this abstract beginning holds any ontological priority. The beginning is only a beginning, and later forms of thought are more developed because they approach the particularity of real existence. Because the particular is "prior in being," the later, more developed forms of thought are more adequately articulated. See Beiser, *Hegel*, 56.

and effect, everything is governed by the causal force of something else externally acting upon it. This logic is oriented towards the control and manipulation of objects — if an engineer discovers a cause which can produce a consistent effect, they can take command of the chain of necessity and manipulate the objective world towards their own ends.

But here arises the paradox of the modern scientific worldview, as it offers the freedom of total dominion over the material world while at the same time subjecting the human being to this very system of causal determination. Either this master of the universe is removed from the general deterministic order of things (as in dualism) or else is left without any freedom at all (as in determinism).

For Hegel, this persistent philosophical problem is in fact the pathway to a more profound understanding of "necessity" so that it is reconciled with, and indeed itself grounds, conceptual subjectivity, where the "kingdom of freedom is disclosed."[12] This transition between "substance" (the conclusion of the objective logic) and "concept" (the start of the subjective logic) is very difficult and dense, but it is the moment of Hegel's logic which most directly addresses freedom as the interiorization of necessity. In 1.2.1, I will provide a broad outline of how Hegel inverts the common understanding of modality, with "inner possibility" turned outward and "external necessity" turned inward.[13] This section will prepare the more extensive logical examination of the transition between substance and subject in Chapter 3.

Inner necessity also has a less prominent but equally important phenomenological sense which is crucial to Hegel's understanding of free subjectivity. Inner necessity here refers to the substantial subject's appropriation of external necessity into its own system of subjective self-

[12] *SL* 12.16, 513.
[13] Textually, the logical discussion of modality also occurs just prior to Hegel's transition between substance and concept. See *SL* 11.380-11.392, 477-488; *EL* §§142-149; *LL* §§142-149, 155-164.

regulation. Necessity at first presents itself as a restriction upon the subjective will, the world which is as it is because it *must* be so. In inner necessity, free action incorporates these external requirements into a trajectory of action which has its *own* demands. To develop as a painter, for instance, I must attend to the objective discipline of painting. In recognizing the inner necessity of my initiatives, freedom no longer remains an "abstract and untrue determination."[14]

Unlike external necessity, inner necessity is only relative to my purposes and allows for spontaneous interpretation. We learn the principles of any art or science so that we can freely adapt them to our own ends. Grammar does not seem like an imposition to an accomplished writer since the laws which were once experienced as external impositions become the tools of self-creation.[15] This sense of inner necessity will be briefly explored in 1.2.2 and will form the basis for the discussion of the inner necessity of the substantial subject at Chapter 5.

1.2.1 An inverted modality: external possibility and inner necessity

Hegel's discussion of modality is the section of his logic most directly relevant to understanding this logic as a "logic of freedom." The modal categories are directly relevant to any ontological discussion of human choice, as the problem of free will demands that we further examine the meaning of possibility, contingency, and necessity. Hegel's account of the precise interrelationship between these modes will be more closely explored below in 3.1, but for now I will focus on the more general implications of this logical doctrine.

The common concept of freedom is grounded in modern philosophy's modal opposition between possibility and necessity. Descartes opposed free self-consciousness (*res cogitans*) to the

[14] *EL* §35.
[15] Hegel uses this example at *PhilS* §410.

external world of necessary relationships (*res extensa*), the substantial existence which Spinoza later described as one in which "things could not have been produced … in any other order than is the case."[16] Kant's third antinomy in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is perhaps the most thorough and complete articulation of this opposition between an inner, self-conscious realm of free possibility and an external, natural realm of mechanical necessity. For Kant, these two conflicting domains each "take place without being disturbed by the other,"[17] providing a space for freedom but only by reaffirming the dualism of modern ontology.

For Hegel, freedom turns these domains inside out so that there is an external side to possibility and an inner side to necessity. In describing inner necessity, Hegel shows its essential operation within free self-consciousness so that inner possibility is no longer understood as the sole modal category of freedom. There is more to freedom than the capacity to say "I could." For Hegel, possibility always remains *only* possibility, the inner hypothetical that is "merely posited" as an "external inner," a "mere abstraction" which "pertains only to subjective thinking."[18] In its purest form, possibility is only a subjective application of the abstract law of identity, since anything can be regarded as possible if it is merely internally consistent.

This purely hypothetical standpoint, however, naturally gives way to one with some basis in external reality. Pure possibility is untenable because the possible always references the actual. While possibility at first appears as an inchoate indeterminacy, it acquires a concrete meaning within the specific circumstances of a given case.[19] This externalization of pure potential inverts the dualistic modal order. Potentiality is always abstract (and therefore unreal) except in relation

[16] Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, in *Spinoza: Complete Works*, trans. by Samuel Shirley and ed. by Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2002), Part I, Proposition 33.
[17] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 545.
[18] *EL* §143.
[19] *EL* §145.

to the determinate conditions under which it could be actualized. Inner possibility, if it is to become anything at all, must become external in the process of its actualization.

While Hegel does not speak of external possibility as frequently as inner necessity, this modal critique is implied in the problems of human freedom as they present themselves in *PS*. The stoic living under the unfree conditions of imperial Rome, for instance, takes solace in the unlimited potential of the will to separate itself from its external conditions. However influential this historical appearance of freedom has been in the modern West, Hegel contends that it is only a limited, one-sided appearance (a criticism examined below at 4.2.1). Modernity's equation of inner possibility with free self-determination has resulted in a degraded concept of freedom which disregards the external social structures required for the individual will to be actualized.

On the other hand, inner necessity, the corollary of external possibility, is central to Hegel's discussions of freedom. The interiorization of necessity occurs at the crucial transition between the "objective" logic of substantial necessity and the "subjective" logic of the concept. The result of this transition is the logical freedom of the concept as well as the appearance of freedom in subjective experience. Hegel describes this connection between conceptuality and subjectivity at the start of his description of the logic of the concept in *SL*. The structure of conceptuality is also the structure of subjectivity itself (this is why I sometimes refer to both together as "conceptual subjectivity").[20] Just as the system of right in *PR* is the "concrete existence" (*Dasein*) of freedom, the "I" of first-person experience is the *Dasein* of conceptuality:

> The concept, when it has progressed to a concrete existence which is itself free, is none other than the "I" or pure self-consciousness. True, I *have* concepts, that is, determinate concepts; but the "I" is the pure concept itself, the concept that has come into *determinate existence* [*Dasein*].[21]

[20] Clark Butler similarly attempts to show this relationship between subjectivity and conceptuality in his translation of *LL* by rending *Begriff* as "self-concept."
[21] *SL* 12.17, 514.

While the precise structural analogy between conceptuality and subjectivity will be explored more in later chapters, for now it is important to explain why Hegel goes on to claim that freedom emerges in this transitional moment. The external, causal necessity of substance is "consumed" within the interiorized sense of necessity belonging to conceptual subjectivity:

> But this consummation is no longer the *substance* itself but is something higher, the *concept*, the *subject*. The transition of the relation of substantiality occurs through its own immanent necessity and is nothing more than the manifestation of itself, that the concept is its truth, and that freedom is the truth of necessity.[22]

The "truth of necessity" which is freedom is a transformation of the necessity which had first shown itself as the causal determinism of substance, a form of necessity which Hegel ultimately shows to be limited in its mere exteriority. The logical steps by which such "untrue" necessity shows itself as the inner necessity of conceptual subjectivity are the steps towards freedom itself. Not surprisingly, they are also some of the most difficult moments in all of Hegel's logic, as he himself describes it as the "most difficult transition."[23]

One may here object that there is a certain form of external necessity which pertains to substantial objects and another, different form of inner necessity which pertains to subjectivity, and that these two kinds of necessity are wholly unrelated. For this reason, such critics could further object that Hegel has not truly solved the problem of dualism, the irreconcilable opposition of free subjectivity and necessary objectivity. While Hegel can claim to have shown the role of a special kind of "inner" necessity in our understanding of subjectivity, he has still not shown that such inner necessity derives from the common, mechanical sense of necessity. In what sense does deterministic necessity transform into inner necessity so that the two are, in some sense, one and

[22] *SL* 12.14, 511.
[23] *EL* §159.

the same? How does subjectivity actively take up and recast the conditions of objectivity in its own way, rather than simply lying beside it as an opposed system?

Hegel's answer to this question lies in his own logical methodology. Necessity is internalized when thinking encounters the restriction of objective limitations in conceptual thought. Concepts have a substantial necessity which compels us to think of them in a certain way, just like blocks only fit together according to their definite shapes. The interior sense of necessity appears in the necessary flow of thought from concept to concept throughout Hegel's logic, so that the translation of exterior necessity into inner necessity, the crucial movement from substance to subject, emerges from our engagement with the substantiality of ideas themselves.

The necessity at work in formal logic, by contrast, remains external to its content because its rules of logical procedure do not develop from the demands presented by a conceptual content. As Richard Dien Winfield writes, such conventional logical concepts have "nothing dynamic about them. They do not order or develop themselves in any fashion … [formal logic] cannot generate any content, because there is no content inherent in its thinking."[24] Hegelian logic, by contrast, interiorizes the necessity of logical rules through a conceptual examination of the content which inheres in concepts. Concepts have their own necessity, which philosophic thought identifies and extrapolates along their course. Extrapolating this determinate content manifests itself in a dynamic body of thought that is, in Winfield's words, "self-emerging and self-ordering."[25]

The precise movement of this inner conceptual necessity is different in the case of each determinate concept (e.g., "being," or "substance," or "purpose") but in each case the concept demands that it move outside of itself, as it can only fulfill its inner truth in another more fully

[24] Richard Dien Winfield, *Hegel's Science of Logic: A Critical Rethinking in Thirty Lectures* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 35.
[25] Winfield, 35.

articulated concept. Like individuals, concepts are not immediately self-sufficient and are only fully articulated through other concepts. Each concept requires that we consider it in relation to other concepts for its meaning to be at all cohesive.

For example, "being," the first concept which appears in Hegel's logic, demands that we equally speak of "nothing" because one only arrives at a positive concept of being by abstracting away (i.e. negating and nullifying) all specific particulars. Thinking of "being" necessitates that we think of "nothing" at the same time. As Hegel writes in *SL*, "being, the indeterminate immediate is in fact *nothing*."[26] As this example shows, the logic internal to one concept necessitates its correspondence with other concepts. Stephen Houlgate describes this unfolding of concepts into each other as the "immanence" of Hegel's logic, an inner movement driven by the "tension intrinsic to the initial indeterminate thought of being."[27]

What, then, is the specific "immanent necessity" of the logical movement from the external necessity of substance to the inner necessity of conceptual subjectivity? A detailed account of this movement will be found below at 3.1, but the answer can also be seen more immediately by considering what sort of philosophy would result if such external necessity was taken as a final, self-sufficient truth. If causal necessity were the fundamental truth of ontology, we would understand the world as a system of causes and effects which remain external and indifferent to one another. Later in his logic, Hegel describes this system of mechanism as one in which "objects remain equally self-sufficient, resistant, [and] external to one another."[28] This system of externality is only sufficient to describe the "completely abstract relationships of matter" and does not even encompass all the phenomena of nature, since it is unable to describe the emerging scientific

[26] *SL* 21.69, 59.
[27] Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's* Logic: *From Being to Infinity* (West Lafayette :Purdue University Press, 2006), 45.
[28] *EL* §195.

discoveries of the 19th century, "the phenomena of light, heat, magnetism, [and] electricity."[29] These phenomena involve the interrelationship of nature, its deeper unity and incorporation within a field of forces. They therefore cannot be explained as the external action of one object upon another, as in the mechanical accounts of "pressure, impulse, [and] displacement of parts."[30]

Mechanism intends to describe nature and yet it fails to do so, since a reductionist analysis of the world as a system of discrete parts only shows us the ultimate systematicity and interrelationship of those parts. This self-subverting of mechanistic philosophy shows why Hegel claims that external necessity must, of its own accord, become internal. A science which proceeds from the principle of the externality of all objects can only maintain itself as a science insofar as it internalizes this indifferent aggregate, converting its discrete parts into members of a single systematic science.

This inversion of modality confirms Hegel's claim in the logic of essence that "inner" and "outer" are only relative designations dependent on a specific frame of reference: "The outer is thus, *in the first place, the same content* as the inner is. What is internal is also on hand externally and vice versa."[31] Free thought, like free living, recognizes the ultimate permeability of such divisions and converts the necessity of unrelated objects into the internal self-cohesion of a system, the "freedom of the whole" ultimately manifest in the systematicity of philosophy itself.[32]

1.2.2 The internalization of necessity in life and free will

[29] *EL* §195.
[30] *EL* §195.
[31] The categories of "inner" and "outer" appear in the logic of essence, in which Hegel dissociates himself from theories of essence which posit an inner essence somehow distinguishable from its outer manifestations. *EL* §139.
[32] *EL* §14.

The internalization of necessity also appears in our everyday practical engagement with the world. Insofar as our spirit and will remain disengaged from our actions, we live mechanically, relating to the codes and norms by which we act like valves pressed upon by external pressures. Such forms of mechanical imposition have their role in the formation of habit, such as when a coach demands the repetition of drills to train our muscle memory, but Hegel argues that this way of functioning is still subordinate to the will, which can reject such external impositions.[33] Nonetheless, the individual who incorporates such initially imposed external activity into her own regime of self-discipline has become free in a full and robust sense, expanding her capacity for action by subjecting herself to an initially alien pursuit. The rote activity gradually becomes incorporated into the repertoire of skills through which one can act freely — external necessity becomes inner necessity.

Just like the parts of a scientific or philosophical system, the actions of a free person only acquire their full meaning within a wider nexus of interrelated desires, goals, and initiatives. This interrelation of what seems external and distinct to mechanical analysis (or, in Hegel's terminology, to "the understanding" (*Verstand*)) begins with the systematic natural sciences, which take up the world as an integral whole. Like many 19th-century thinkers, Hegel sees biological life as the science which most completely manifests the systematicity of nature; he even discusses it as a moment of the logic of the concept. Like a conceptual system, a living being is a system of organs which have their independent existence and yet function with reference to the whole. The system needs these organs as a condition of its being (they are internally necessary), and yet it can sometimes survive the loss or damage of these organs, replacing or adapting its functions in response (e.g., neural plasticity after a stroke, prosthetic devices, transplants).

[33] *EL* §195.

Hegel therefore claims that the organs of a living system cannot be described through an abstract distinction between causes and effects, or between ends and means, because "all of [a living system's] members are reciprocally momentary *means* as much as momentary purposes."[34] Beginning at the level of the semi-permeable cell membrane, life confounds the inner and outer — it reaches outward in its purposive activity and yet the very instruments of achieving those external ends are, at the same time, internal members of the organism and therefore also ends in themselves. An organ is not just a tool; if my arm breaks while lifting a heavy bag, I am not upset only because now I will need to find another way to transport my groceries.

For Hegel, the inner systematicity of life is perfected in human knowledge (*das Erkennen*), broadly construed in both its theoretical and practical aspects.[35] In considering how inner necessity appears in the practical exercise of free will, let us return to the enigmatic phrase from *PR* mentioned above in the Introduction: "the free will which wills the free will."[36] In willing itself, the free will is analogous to the living organism whose actions ultimately refer back to itself. A free will is both a subject and an object, an instrument and a goal, an act and a purpose. It has an internal necessity which derives from this dual nature: the free will (as the subject of its actions) wills itself when it wills whatever supports the conditions under which it exercises its capacity to will (as the object of its own actions). The free will does not act from immediate impulse but rather contextualizes its actions within a "rational system of volitional determination," a system which, although a product of the will, nonetheless demands a certain course of action.[37]

The free will which exists within this system of self-imposed necessity results from the development of will as Hegel describes it in *PR* §§11-23. The will first takes the form of an

[34] *EL* §216.
[35] *EL* §225.
[36] *PR* §27.
[37] *PR* §19.

immediate desire or inclination which has not been fixed upon any specific object. The immediate feeling of hunger, for instance, can exist without resolving upon a particular food. The common conception of the will develops past this level of generality, instead understanding free will as the capacity to fix upon and choose one of several alternatives. But how is such a choice made? If it is simply made out of immediate inclination, this will remains just as undeveloped as a general desire, however much more specified it may be.

Such arbitrariness is contingent in the sense that it does not derive from any of the internal necessities recognized in the truly free will. As Hegel argues in *PR*, the sheer groundlessness of arbitrary desire does not amount to true self-determination. Taken in isolation, this freedom (the ability to pick X over Y) is only a dependence on the vagaries of one's own inclinations:

> It is inherent in arbitrariness that the content is not determined as mine by the nature of my will, but by *contingency*; thus I am also dependent on this content, and this is the contradiction which underlies arbitrariness. The common man thinks that he is free when he is allowed to act arbitrarily, but this very arbitrariness implies that he is not free.[38]

Moreover, drives and inclinations always overlap and contradict one another in what Hegel terms a "dialectic of drives."[39] If freedom is identified with the ability to resolve upon one course of action to the exclusion of all others, this fluid "system of drives" is disturbed when the human being neglects the universal scope of free activity in favor of one isolated, particular pursuit.[40] In modern psychological terms, we may say that a concept of freedom which is reduced to a single course of satisfaction becomes a pathological fixation, a drive towards the fulfillment of one purpose without a sense of its contextual relevance.[41]

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[38] *PR* §15.
[39] *PR* §17.
[40] *PR* §17.
[41] See 5.2.1 below for further discussion of how, in moral fanaticism, moral freedom undoes itself when it believes one finite moral commitment to have an infinite significance.

In a free individual, the will mediates the system of drives from within, identifying with some desires as its own while disowning others. There is no external yardstick by which the drives should be ordered, and the attempt to find one mistakenly interprets inner necessity as external.[42] The necessity which presents itself when we must make a finite choice between two incompatible inclinations is a necessity imposed from within, from our own resolution upon a course of action, and can never be given by a deductive formula, a general plan of action. Only a course of education (*Bildung*) can "purify" the drives of their particular content and enable an individual subject to acquire the universal perspective in which their inclinations can be contextualized.[43] The inner necessities of freedom demand an inner cultivation of the person so that they attain a broader perspective from which to choose freely.

This development of the will can be summarized in the following set of first-person narrations of how the will articulates its desires:

> 1) Immediate, unresolved will: I want to relax. I also want to work late so that I can take Friday off for Theo's baseball game. I also want something sweet.
>
> 2) Determinate, resolved will: I want a chocolate bar with almonds. I am going to get up and buy one from the snack machine.
>
> 3) Free will: I have a lot of work to do, but I cannot complete this work without an evening off. I am craving sweets right now, but is this because I am still working when I am tired? If I leave early today, I will have to miss Theo's baseball game on Friday. Maybe I could make it up to him by playing catch with him when I get home. I would also find that relaxing for myself. I will go home, order dinner, and play catch with Theo.

[42] *PR* §17.
[43] *PR* §§19-20.

Only the free will successfully mediates the "dialectic of drives" which at first presents itself as a set of contradictory initiatives.[44] If we consider these desires in their individual isolation, as external necessities, they are all making demands which cannot be met. The inner necessity of free will resolves the situation by seeing these initiatives in their complex interrelationship, as part of a "rational system of volitional determination."[45] I do not will any of these desiderata "in themselves," but only insofar as they contribute to my overall flourishing. Only in free will are the inclinations truly recognized as *my* inclinations, as necessities which can be adjusted, substituted, and rearranged in my creative response to a situation. As Hegel argues in his treatment of ends and means in the logic, every means is itself an end (the tool used for one purpose is itself the goal of another course of action) just as every end is itself a means (what seems to be a final end is only a means within a wider system of purposeful action).[46] This fluidity of inner necessity is what makes the art of living truly an art and not a mechanical process.

Perhaps the free will's resolution is entirely wrong. Maybe I am only procrastinating by quitting early, my blood sugar is low, and Theo doesn't want to play catch today. Many common bromides could have compelled me to do otherwise: "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today," or "Your health is always your first priority," or "Never break a promise to a child." Such ethical injunctions, however, can never resolve the contradictions of a concrete situation in which they inevitably conflict.[47] The displeasure many people experience upon receiving such "tedious platitudes" (as Hegel describes them at *PR* §17) is the natural displeasure of having their freedom, their process of inner necessity, reduced so that it only responds to an externally given

[44] *PR* §17.
[45] *PR* §19.
[46] *EL* §211.
[47] This point will be explored further below at 3.2.4 in the context of Hegel's analysis of Greek tragedy.

universal principle. The "free will which wills the free will" owns its own decisions and wills this way of deciding even when it finds itself in error.[48]

While this example shows inner necessity at work in practical decision-making, inner necessity appears in its most exemplary form in moral conscience, where the freedom of moral choice and the inner necessity of a moral imperative belong to one and the same phenomenon. The inner necessity of conscience will be discussed below at 5.1.2.

1.3 Freedom as "Being-at-home-with-oneself" (*Beisichselbstsein*)

Hegel also speaks of freedom as *Beisichselbstsein*, a phrase typically translated into English as "being-at-home-with-oneself." It is important to note that Hegel himself typically does not speak of "being-at-home," a phrase which would be expressed in the German as *Zuhausesein*. *Beisichselbstsein* has been rendered into English in this way to reflect the common German idiom *bei sich zu hause*, "to be with oneself at home." While I believe that English translators have been correct in expressing this phrase with this domestic metaphor in mind, it is also important to note that there is a wider sense of being *bei sich* which can be concealed if it is reduced to this one interpretation. In 1.3.3, I will indicate how being "*bei sich*" also suggests a state of composure — a calm, collected self-awareness only indirectly suggested by the idea of being "at home."

Moreover, it is also important to recognize that the term *Beisichselbstsein* occurs within a wider Hegelian linguistic project. It is just one expression in the set of prepositional neologisms Hegel uses to describe ontological relationships: there are also terms for "being-in-itself" (*Ansichsein*), "being-within-itself" (*Insichsein*), and "being-for-itself" (*Fürsichsein*). Like the question of freedom more generally, all these terms have both logical and phenomenological

[48] *PR* §27.

implications. For instance, "being-for-itself" (*Fürsichsein*) appears as a category of being in Hegel's logic, yet the same phrase is also used in the phenomenological description of abstract self-consciousness.[49] Belonging to a set of descriptors which appear across Hegel's corpus, *Beisichselbstsein* involves the practical, logical, and phenomenological dimensions of freedom.

But despite its distinctly Hegelian overtones, Hegel sometimes employs "being-at-home-with-oneself" in *PR* in a way which seems to suggest a more conventional idea of willful individual self-determination, one in which the will is freed from "every relationship of *dependence* on something *other* than itself."[50] While *Beisichselbstsein* can be understood in part as the independence typically associated with freedom, this self-determination does not involve a disengagement from everything "other." As Michael Hardimon explains, the true meaning of "being-at-home-with-oneself" is that one remains in a relation with otherness in such a way that removes its externality. "Being-at-home-with-oneself" is really a shorthand for "being-at-home-with-oneself-in-another," a longer version of the same formula which Hegel occasionally employs:

> As Hegel uses it, *Beisichsein* is an abbreviation for *Beisichselbstsein in einem Anderem*, 'being with oneself in an other' (see *EL* §158). This longer expression encapsulates the Hegelian thesis that the only way in which the self can truly come to be 'with itself' … is by relating to something other than itself. The idea that being with oneself presupposes relating to an other flows from the idea that in order to be genuinely with itself the self must develop its potential, actualizing itself in the external world … The only way in which one can attain freedom is by coming to be with oneself in the other to which one must relate. The characteristic way in which one does this is by coming to 'find oneself' in the other. And the characteristic way in which one comes to find oneself in the other is by coming to see the other as sharing or being an expression of one's essence.[51]

The ethical and political structures discussed in *PR* provide the framework within which an individual encounters society, the external "other" to which she is subject, as harmoniously

[49] *EL* §§96-98; *PS* §186.
[50] *PR* §23.
[51] Michael Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 114.

integrated with her own individual initiatives. Nonetheless, the question of what it means for a person to see something outside of themselves as "an expression of one's essence" is a question of the logic of freedom. It requires an ontological analysis of alterity which demonstrates precisely how it can be reconciled with the self-determination generally assumed to constitute freedom.

For this reason, Hegel relates this discussion of the will to his wider logical and phenomenological concerns about the nature of true self-determination. Touching on the logic of freedom in *PR*, Hegel says that both theoretical reason and the practical will remove the otherness of the external world so that one becomes freely "at-home" (*bei sich*) through thought and action:

> The distinction between thought and will is simply that between theoretical and practical attitudes. But they are not two separate faculties; on the contrary, the will is a particular way of thinking – thinking translating itself into existence [*Dasein*], thinking as the drive to give itself existence. This distinction between thought and will can be expressed as follows. When I think of an object [*Gegenstand*], I make it into a thought and deprive it of its sensuous quality; I make it into something which is essentially and immediately mine. For it is only when I think that I am with myself [*bei mir*], and it is only by comprehending it that I can penetrate an object; it then no longer stands opposed to me and I have deprived it of that quality of its own which it had for itself in opposition to me. Just as Adam says to Eve: 'You are flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone', so does spirit say: 'This is spirit of my spirit, and its alien character has disappeared.'[52]

When the will acts upon the world, it is the *Dasein* of thought, the "concrete existence" of intellectual comprehension. The theoretical and practical attitudes together remove the "otherness" we encounter in both intellectual and daily life. Just as the institutions of objective spirit facilitate the practical activity of making oneself at home, a free way of thinking overcomes not only the otherness of external objects (in the practical cognition described in this passage) but also the alienation from action which arises due to theoretical impasses. A dualistic philosophy, for instance, is unfree in part because it undercuts my capacity for practical engagement. As a separate form of existence, the world retains its "alien" character despite my tangible interaction with it.

[52] *PR* §4.

In acting, I am implicitly claiming that I have some knowledge of the world in which I operate. While a skeptic may claim to act without believing that his act is based on any form of knowledge, Hegel sees such pure action as ungrounded and therefore as lacking true self-determination. The freedom of being-at-home-with-oneself involves more than just the bare capacity for willful action. It also entails the self-recognition of affirming my actions as my own, of finding my theoretical commitments in my practical deeds, seeing them as the "spirit of my spirit." Locating the theoretical within the practical is one form of what Hegel means by the freedom of recognizing one's own essence (one's own philosophy) within the external world (in one's actions). To act upon the world while maintaining a theoretical distance from it is like trespassing and stealing from a stranger's home. The thief fulfills her immediate desire yet cannot be self-possessed in a place where she does not belong. Freedom always remains incomplete in an alien, inexplicable world. True self-determination involves the solidity of conviction only possible when the theoretical and practical attitudes mutually recognize and embrace each other.

Understanding self-recognition in this way demands that we also reconsider the contours of the self. The free "I" is not just the simple unit of individuality but the sphere in which that "I" subjectively recognizes itself as being at home, a sphere which is not identical with the immediate self. The individual expands or contracts her world insofar as she feels at home in it; she may feel freely at home in celebrating the achievements of a friend yet also may disown her own desires, which she experiences as external compulsions.[53]

In Hegel's social philosophy, he is also concerned with the individual's recognition of her own freedom as a member of her society. As Hardimon writes, Hegel maintains that the modern individual generally does not recognize herself in the institutions which govern her society even

[53] Wood suggests that the will may or may not be freely at home with its "own determinations." Wood, 49.

though they attempt to establish the objective conditions of her freedom.[54] Yet to be free is necessarily also to experience oneself as free, an experience which depends upon how we think about ourselves in relation to the world. Just as a pen does not make me a writer, participation in a free society is only an external appendage if I do not see myself as belonging to its social and institutional life.

This idea of freedom as the overcoming of an inner, subjective sense of alienation is also explained through personal experience. In the Introduction of *PR*, Hegel goes on to offer a more personal example of this recognition of the self in the other by showing how we fulfill the abstract condition of "being-at-home-with-oneself" in the familiar experiences of friendship and love:

> We already possess this freedom in the form of feeling, for example in friendship and love. Here, we are not one-sidedly within ourselves, but willingly limit ourselves with reference to an other, even while knowing ourselves in this limitation as ourselves. In this determinacy [*Bestimmung*], the human being should not feel determined [*bestimmt*]; on the contrary, he attains his self-awareness only by regarding the other as other. Thus, freedom lies neither in indeterminacy nor determinacy, but is both at once … Freedom is the will to something determinate, yet to be with oneself [*bei sich*] in this determinacy and to return once more to the universal.[55]

Freedom is best exemplified in phenomena which redraw the boundaries of the individual ego. The inversion of the inner and outer described above in 1.2.1 can be observed in intimate relationships. The beloved is separate from our person but also constitutes our very self. In love and friendship, we relate to the other in such a way that makes us feel more at home with ourselves than if we were left alone — the "determinacy," or concrete influence, of the other person is not experienced as an external "determination" of my actions.[56] They are an integral part of a robust, abundant self which survives and thrives in stepping beyond its apparent boundaries. The free self

[54] Hegel's explanation of this modern of self-alienation is elaborated below at 4.2.1. See also Hardimon, 119-122.
[55] *PR* §7.
[56] Hegel often invokes this dual sense of *Bestimmung* in making the point that freely determining oneself necessarily involves having a concrete existence, or "determination." See further discussion below at 3.1.4.

has not simply come to terms with the other as something to be dealt with; it has become a more complete version of itself only through this recognition of itself in the other, a recognition which "frees" the self in a transformational liberation from its narrow self-limitation.[57]

In this section, I will build upon these intimations of a logic and experience of *Beisichselbstsein* in *PR*. I will further explore the phenomenological and logical implications of thinking of freedom as recognizing oneself as "being-at-home" with one's loved ones, one's society, and even with one's own philosophy. First, in 1.3.1, I will extrapolate from the common English translation of *bei sich* as "at home" and consider what it means to have a domestic experience of freedom. In 1.3.2, I will turn to the logical side of *Beisichselbstsein*, considering how Hegel associates it with the circular, presuppositionless form of his own philosophy. Finally, in 1.3.3, I will briefly consider a secondary sense of *bei sich*. Taken outside of the socio-political context in which it is usually interpreted, "being-at-home-with-oneself" can also refer to the composure and serenity enjoyed in self-conscious contemplation.

1.3.1 A domestic metaphor for freedom

Rendering *Beisichselbstsein* as "being-at-home" suggests a metaphor which instructively distinguishes Hegel's theory of freedom from freedom as it is generally understood in 21st-century Anglo-American culture. When people in our society today think of freedom, it is rarely an image of domesticity which comes to mind. Rather, an image of public life is more likely to suggest itself, of the public sphere in which rights are disputed, defined, and ultimately determined through the process of political struggle. This participation in a mass movement takes people out of their homes

[57] Hardimon equates "being-at-home-with-oneself" with "reconciliation" (*Versöhnung*). *Versöhnung* has a stronger, more ontological connotation than English "reconciliation," implying a transformation of one's very existence in the encounter with the other. See Hardimon 85-86;115-116.

and into the streets. Likewise, the technological developments of the modern world tend to minimize the importance of the domestic sphere. American culture embraces the "freedom of the open road" found on highways which take us far away from home. The common sense of freedom is concerned with improving our access to the outside world, increasing the efficiency of our activity by eliminating or bypassing external limitations.

This sense of freedom is not wholly incompatible with the Hegelian metaphor. The ability to move back and forth into the larger world is a key component of domestic life. A home is not a prison shut off from the wider world. Indeed, the household can only survive by going outside of itself into the larger world to obtain the economic resources it requires. Nonetheless, the ability to easily access the external world is only one component of domestic life. Houses also have walls, doors, and locks. Although the immediate function of these implements is to restrict access to and from the outer world, they are essential to the freedom enjoyed by the occupants of the house. A house is defined by its boundaries, the division between inner and outer space. The creation of an inner domestic space liberates us from the weather outside in a climate-controlled environment and offers us a private realm free from the public eye. The freedom enjoyed within the system of the household arises through what is equally a system of limitation set upon the outside world.

The home may be considered analogous to the human body: an inner domain which mediates between itself and the conditions of the outer environment. As in any other organism, the life systems internal to the human body depend upon the external resources which nourish it. The home likewise establishes an environment which depends upon wider social structures, such as systems of water purification and the electric grid. The freedom of its inner space always depends upon the outer world: we are only free when we recognize it as distinct and thereby situate it within our context. Nobody would like to live in a house of fully transparent walls, and yet a dungeon

with no natural light is the classic example of an unfree environment. Freedom arises in relating to the "other" as a true "other," an external kept external by an intentional, selective openness.

The self is free when it is the successful architect of the home in which it resides. Like any architect, I work within already-established structures and the givenness of my situation to build in such a way which is nonetheless essentially my own. I am born into a time, place, and community which formed me, yet I am unique in my interpretation of these formative influences. And just as an architectural design involves a physical interpretation of a property's boundaries and entry points, human freedom involves a self-conscious interpretation of the ever-shifting boundaries of the self. What do I identify with as "mine" and what do I disown as "other" than me? How do I stand in relation to that "other" in such a way that complements my freedom? Freedom is not simply a state that is given when certain objective criteria are met, just as a home is not just a physical house. The self constructs itself in selecting what it assimilates to itself and what it rejects; it forms itself in determining where its home begins and ends.

Consider, for instance, two people who grew up under the objective conditions of life in a totalitarian regime. One rejects this life, disowning it and feeling like they are not living their "own" life under these conditions, while another has learned, however imperfectly, to feel at home in this world. Where one would feel liberated if taken to a more liberal, democratic country, the other would, at least initially, insist that they have lost the freedom they once enjoyed. Freedom is just as much a matter of individual interpretation as it is a matter of institutional forms.

But while the subjective recognition implied in *Beisichselbstsein* is a necessary condition of freedom, it alone is not sufficient. Hegel is not suggesting a radical solipsism about what constitutes freedom. True freedom requires that we feel at home with ourselves in what ultimately amounts to a true home. This mismatch between the initial perception of our own freedom and the

truth of its actualization is not a special case, and indeed drives the history of self-consciousness in *PS*. The ways of being human which seem to be the home of free self-consciousness continually show themselves to be insufficient to the requirements of true freedom.

The notion of freedom as being "at home" with what is familiar should also not be misinterpreted as nostalgic romanticism. For Hegel, the traditional community has elements of freedom which must be recognized and recovered in the modern world, but its freedom was ultimately insufficient because it did not recognize the freedom of individual subjectivity. The challenge of *Beisichselbstsein* in the modern world is the challenge of finding oneself at home in a world which no longer immediately presents itself as a home, which no longer has the tight cohesion of a traditional community.

1.3.2 Presuppositionless logic: Thinking at home with itself

As a more concrete expression of freedom, *Beisichselbstsein* lends itself more naturally to a phenomenological exposition. Nonetheless, Hegel uses the formula in a specifically logical context at *EL* §31, where he contrasts the "free thinking" of ancient Greece with the dogmatic presuppositions which restricted both medieval and early modern thought:

> This kind of metaphysics was not a free and objective thinking, since it did not allow the object to determine itself freely out of itself but presupposed it as something ready-made. – As concerns thinking freely, Greek philosophy thought freely, but not scholasticism, since the latter likewise took up its content as something given and, indeed, given by the Church. – We moderns, through our entire way of education [*unsere ganze Bildung*], have been initiated into representations [*Vorstellungen*] [of things], which it is exceptionally difficult to overcome because these representations possess the deepest content. Regarding the ancient philosophers we must imagine human beings who stand entirely within sensory perception and have no other presupposition than the heaven above and the earth around them, since mythological representations had been discarded. In this factual environment, thought is free and withdrawn into itself, free from anything material, purely with itself. This kind of being purely with itself [*reine Beisichsein*]

> is inherent in free thought, sailing off into the free, open space where there is nothing below or above us, and where we stand in solitude alone with ourselves.[58]

"Being-at-home-with-oneself" involves a specific method of thought which has been lost since Greek antiquity. Thinking cannot be "purely with itself" when it is given a presupposed object from which it must begin, starting from a "given" first principle which governs (and thereby restricts) all inquiry. Hegel elaborates a specific genealogy behind how this method of thinking became standard in the Western philosophical tradition. For medieval thinkers, the revelation of Church doctrine is given in advance (in *Voraus*-, as a pre-supposition [*Voraus-setzung*]). The activity of philosophical reason only confirms and supports this "first truth."

As reason began to assert its independence in the Renaissance, Petrarch still describes Christian scripture as "the highest stronghold of truth to which all must be referred; an unshakeable foundation [*immobili fundamento*] of true literature upon which human effort may safely build."[59] Petrarch's language evokes the link between medievalism and modernism which Hegel suggests in this passage. Modern foundationalism dispenses with revelation but continues to seek a "foundation" for all truth in a rational first principle from which all subsequent thought can be deduced. Such a rational principle is not wholly external to reason, and thus represents a freer way of thinking than medieval scholasticism. Nonetheless, this first principle is not itself derived through any process of thought. As a foundation, it is the precondition of the exercise of reason, and so cannot be investigated rationally, even where it might have shown itself to be overly abstract and therefore insufficient.

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[58] *EL* §31.
[59] Petrarch, *Francisci Petrarcae Epistolae de Rebus Familiarbus er Variae*, edited by Joseph Fracassetti (Florence: Le Monnier, 1859), 6.2.4. Translation is my own.

The "metaphysics of the understanding" is Hegel's broad classification of those modern systems which attempt to ground philosophy in an immediately given first principle.[60] These systems of the "understanding" (*Verstand*) share a common "perverted presupposition" that "the activity of thinking is only that of abstractly positing identity," a limitation upon thought which, in turn, prompts the romantic critique of reason's "one-sidedness, rigidity, [and] emptiness."[61] In tethering itself to the principle of abstract identity, philosophy confines itself to the geometric methodologies which predominated in this Cartesian period. Axiomatic definitions become the "given," the foundation upon which a philosophical system can be deduced.

As will be further discussed in 2.2.1, Hegel understands Spinoza to have been limited by this foundationalist methodology. Though he finds much truth in Spinoza's philosophy, it still rests on opening definitions which amount to little more than "assurances."[62] Even where these definitions approach the truth, they remain underived and are given dogmatically to reason, which breaks free of this imposed system of thought by critically engaging it in a "dispute about the correctness of definitions."[63] Such a critical examination often shows that these given definitions are little more than formulations of unthinking assumptions, the "ordinary conceptions" which Hegel's predecessor Christian Wolff later "translated into the empty form of determinations of the understanding," resulting in a set of "merely nominal definitions."[64]

Ancient Greek philosophy was free because it did not rely on such given definitions. As I have argued elsewhere, Socratic questioning showed the emptiness of the definitions of the understanding, refuting the *doxai* (the common presuppositions) which some sophists had elevated

[60] *LHP* III, 217-360.
[61] *EL* §115.
[62] *EL* §229.
[63] *EL* §229.
[64] *LHP* III, 354.

to the level of philosophical definition.[65] Philosophy could only begin when those presuppositions had been cleared away in the critique of received mythology undertaken by the first philosophers. This does not mean that Greek philosophy was, as a matter of principle, hostile towards religion and any form of received wisdom. It simply did not give foundational priority to any of these as a starting point, instead creatively adapting its mythological inheritance. The philosopher brought out the latent presuppositions and undeveloped potentials in the traditional myths.

For example, while the ring of Gyges myth is not Plato's invention, in his hands it becomes the starting point for a philosophical treatment of justice. Unpacking its presuppositions uncovers the deficiencies of the mythic tradition, which, as Adeimantus remarks, has presented justice exclusively in terms of the rewards it can offer.[66] While Hegel holds that Greek philosophy had other deficiencies in comparison to modernity, it remains superior in its methodological freedom, its remaining at-home-with-itself in critiquing and transforming the "givens" from which it proceeds, ultimately assimilating them to its own standards of rational investigation.

This freedom of a certain kind of Greek philosophical method is the freedom Hegel hopes to revive. The abstruse discussion of a "presuppositionless beginning" to a philosophical system in *SL* (the introductory essay "With What Science Must Begin") is also a discussion of how thought can liberate itself from a pattern of foundationalist dependency engrained over the course of a millennium. Since the freedom of a philosophical logic is its freedom from presuppositions, the question of how such a logic can be truly presuppositionless is a question of freedom.

Yet many critics of Hegel (including Schelling and Kierkegaard) have questioned his claim to presuppositionlessness, while others argue that Hegel was not wholly committed to this

[65] George Saad, "Hegel's critique of modern presupposition and Plato's aporetic moment," M.A. thesis, (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2020).
[66] *Republic* 366e.

standard.[67] While I reject both these claims, they arise from an understandable confusion as to the precise sense of presuppositionlessness which Hegel claims for his philosophy. After all, Hegel's logic does start with "pure being," a beginning which must depend upon some presuppositions about why a philosophical system should originate in this concept. Moreover, one wonders how Hegel can speak of free Greek thought as having the sensory world as its "only" presupposition; presumably it would have no presuppositions at all in being freely at-home-with-itself.

In "With What Science Must Begin," Hegel clarifies the sense in which his system is presuppositionless. The beginning of Hegel's philosophy is not an "objective beginning" — it is not "the beginning of all things," a "determinate content" (such as water for Thales or self-conscious thinking for Descartes) which is understood as the "absolute ground" of everything.[68] Such an objective beginning to philosophy is rejected by Hegel as the self-restricting way of thinking from which modernity must escape.[69] No moment in his philosophy is the foundational point to which everything else refers; every moment of the system grounds every other.

Hegel only begins with the abstract concept of "pure being" simply because it lacks all content and so imposes no prerequisites. It only "has priority for thinking" and so "appears first in the process of thinking."[70] When Hegel exposits his system, he is not laying out a sequential order of dependencies (as in a geometric proof) but rather following the natural course of thought from

[67] Houlgate, *Opening*, 29-30.
[68] *SL* 21.53, 45.
[69] While some of the examples Hegel gives of such "first principles" do come from Greek antiquity (such as Anaxagoras' *nous*, Plato's idea, and Aristotle's substance), Hegel makes it clear throughout *LHP* that such objective beginnings were treated very differently by the ancient Greeks. Rather than being posited as the starting-point of a system, they were either suggested on the basis of natural observation (as with the pre-Socratics) or else derived only at the end of a long process of thought (as with the Platonic forms and Aristotle's unmoved mover). While the pre-Socratic elements were taken as the origins or first principles of the world (*archai* in ancient Greek), they do not serve as the "foundation" of a system, and there is no attempt to deduce everything from them in a systematic way (at least in what remains of their fragments). Plato and Aristotle, on the other hand, do not arrive at their "first principles" by such immediate observation, instead following the course Hegel prescribes in deriving them through a course of thinking (Socratic questioning and the Aristotelian investigation).
[70] *SL* 21.54, 46.

abstract universality to concrete specificity.[71] This abstract beginning is, in turn, implied throughout the further development of his philosophy, since "the beginning of philosophy is the ever present and self-preserving foundation of all subsequent developments, remaining everywhere immanent in its further determinations."[72]

But while the exposition of philosophy demands a progression from the abstract to the concrete, a comprehension of the system requires movement in both directions. In the Introduction to *SL*, Hegel advises that we can only truly learn logic by seeing it fully manifest within the more concrete spheres of inquiry (nature and spirit):

> Only after a more profound acquaintance with the other sciences does logic rise for subjective spirit from a merely abstract universal to a universal that encompasses within itself the riches of the particular: in the same way a moral maxim does not possess in the mouth of a youngster who otherwise understands it quite well the meaning and scope that it has in the spirit of a man with a lifetime of experience. ... Thus logic receives full appreciation of its value only when it comes as the result of the experience of the sciences; then it displays itself to spirit as the universal truth, not as a *particular* cognition *alongside* another material and other realities, but as the essence rather of this further content.[73]

To grasp the content at the beginning, therefore, requires some trips around the entire circle of Hegel's philosophy. Unlike the foundationalist dependence on a first principle, the meaning of being is not given immediately but rather unfolds throughout the course of thought. By contrast, if one posits the law of identity as the foundation of a philosophical system, its meaning is grasped at once and does not require any further development. There is no content to unpack from such a fixed principle; we understand that A=A and have learned nothing new if we also learn that 3=3.

In Hegel's circular system, by contrast, we obtain a more concrete sense of "pure being" whenever its empty universality appears in his practical philosophy. Just as "pure being" shows

[71] For commentary about Aristotle's influence on this Hegelian method, see Beiser, *Hegel*, 56.
[72] *SL* 21.58, 49.
[73] *SL* 21.42, 37.

itself to be "nothing" at the opening of Hegel's logic, in *PR* Hegel describes the fanaticism of the Terror in the French Revolution "as one which wills only what is abstract, not what is articulated, so that whenever differences emerge, it finds them incompatible with its own indeterminacy and cancels them [*hebt sie auf*]."[74] History affords a vivid example of pure being turning over into nothing, as the universality of revolutionary sentiment demands the purification and, ultimately, the violent elimination of everything particular. Immanent in the movement of the entire system, the empty beginning reappears as the always present, increasingly more specified "universal that encompasses within itself the riches of the particular."[75]

Hegel's starting point thus has only a methodological role: it is not an absolute starting point, but only a "logical beginning." Moreover, this logical beginning is already mediated insofar as it is the result of the development of the scientific perspective from the state of natural consciousness. Hegel claims that the conceptualization of "pure being" at the start of *SL* could only be made "in the element of a free, self-contained thought, in *pure knowledge*."[76] *SL* thus builds upon *PS*, which concludes with spirit attaining this pure knowledge as "absolute knowing."

This phenomenological course of development is the only true presupposition of logic, affirming the affinity between the two disciplines. Nonetheless, it can only be considered a presupposition in the most minimal sense. Houlgate suggests that it is not the entire course of *PS* which is a presupposition to the logical beginning, but only the resulting perspective which is no longer trapped in the oppositions of everyday consciousness. A study of the history of philosophy or a course of critical self-examination could likewise suffice to obtain the perspective needed for a logical beginning. The only prerequisite for speculative thinking is the realization "that being is

[74] *PR* §5.
[75] *SL* 21.42, 37.
[76] *SL* 21.54, 46.

not simply something *objective* to which we stand in relation but exhibits one and the same logical form as thought itself and thus can be understood *a priori* from *within* thought."[77]

While I do not disagree with Houlgate that such alternative propaedeutics are possible, the problem with such a strictly philosophical prerequisite is that it obscures the importance of natural consciousness as the starting point of free thinking. The world as it immediately appears to us is the presupposition which is no presupposition at all. Recall that in *EL* §31, the free ancient Greek philosophers "stand entirely within sensory perception" and so their thought is free, "being purely with itself [*reine Beisichsein*]." The presuppositions which hinder thought are those principles which falsely pretend to the immediacy of sense-certainty, supplanting natural consciousness and constructing a narrower home for it by closing off the "free, open space" of sensory awareness.

At the start of *PS*, Hegel describes sense-certainty in terms analogous to those of the logical beginning in "pure being": it appears as the "*richest* kind of knowledge," one "of infinite wealth for which no bounds can be found" and yet it is for this very reason "the most abstract and poorest *truth*" which only tells us of a thing that it "is" and contains nothing but the "sheer *being* of the thing."[78] In both *PS* and *SL*, the emptiness of their beginnings is essential to their freedom, since thought can come to reside freely at home only in what has no prior determination of its own.

In presupposing a certain development of natural consciousness, Hegel's logic refers back to this still more basic state of presuppositionlessness, the natural freedom of being at home with one's own senses described so majestically at *EL* §31 as "sailing off into … free, open space." This connection is crucial to giving a more concrete sense to the sort of freedom enjoyed by presuppositionless thought: it is the theoretical equivalent of a primordial sense of being-at-home-

[77] Houlgate, *Opening*, 147.
[78] *PS* §91.

with-oneself: the free self-possession of seeing with one's own eyes, tasting with one's own tongue, hearing with one's own ears.

This natural simplicity is therefore present in the logical beginning, where it enjoys "the freedom that abstracts from everything and grasps its pure abstraction, the simplicity of thinking."[79] Only by starting in this way, from "what thought is minimally,"[80] can thinking fully actualize itself. Suspending every external presupposition clears out an inner space for thought to fully cohere with itself as its concrete home takes shape. Free thinking is quite literally at home with *itself* (as in *beisich-selbst-sein*) in that it operates only on itself, taking itself as its own content and following the course of its own inner necessity.

1.3.3 Being with oneself, self-composure, and self-consciousness

There is another sense of *Beisichselbstsein* which departs from the domestic metaphor for freedom and instead relies on a more psychological sense of the phrase *bei sich*. This sense of freedom has much in common with freedom as the development of self-consciousness, the topic of 1.4, and so it will be briefly considered as a transition into that section. Allen Wood offers a description of how the different senses of *bei sich* bring out different aspects of Hegelian freedom:

> In ordinary German, *bei sich* has two principal meanings when applied to human persons: It means to be awake or conscious, and it means to be in control of oneself. Freedom as *Beisichselbstsein* refers to the human capacities for self-awareness and self-mastery, but its meaning is still richer. The primary sense of the German preposition *bei* is to express spatial proximity, contact, or belonging. This suggests that a self "with itself" is unified, coherent, well integrated; its parts, elements, or aspects belong to and fit well into one another. The spatial metaphor also suggests that the free self has "arrived at" itself, that it has actualized or perfected itself, made itself its end and then attained this end - which is nothing external to itself.[81]

[79] *EL* §78.
[80] Houlgate, *Opening*, 31.
[81] Wood, 45.

While the primary sense of *bei sich* as expressing spatial inclusion and belonging is well expressed by rendering the term as “being-at-home,” there are two additional ideas which are not as clearly implied in this translation. First, it involves a sense of waking awareness, a state of mind that is serene, calm, and composed — naturally self-aware, comfortably self-conscious. Second, it implies a course of development through which a free self has "arrived at” this state and thereby “actualized or perfected itself.” For all the strengths of the domestic metaphor, it can falsely suggest freedom as a state of static comfort, lending itself to overly conservative interpretations (“freedom is being around what is familiar to me”). The sense of movement Wood suggests can be thought of as the activity involved in maintaining a home as a home, an activity which demands that we go out from ourselves and reckon with the other.

Being *bei sich* thus also involves reclaiming oneself from a state of being lost in an external preoccupation and restoring a sense of calm self-possession. “Fran was no longer seeking fulfillment in the slot machines, as she was now fully with herself following the disastrous loss of her fortune,” would be one possible way of construing the psychological journey towards self-possession involved in this sense of freedom. For Hegel, however, such a journey amounts to much more than the overcoming of contingent psychological circumstances. The externally oriented nature of subjectivity demands that it lose itself in this otherness and undertake a journey toward a more perfect, more fully actualized form of self-consciousness. This movement unfolds across history, with self-consciousness finding its contentment and composure in increasingly comprehensive, articulated ways.

1.4 Freedom as the Development of Self-consciousness

In its most concrete description, freedom is the development of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is what results when the self takes himself as the object of his own consciousness. Grammatically, statements of self-consciousness involve verbs of the head (subjective states of thinking, feeling, sensing, etc.) which act upon an object in the form of a reflexive pronoun: I value myself. You underestimate yourself. She trusts herself. As Edward Jeremiah has demonstrated, philosophy has long held a special interest in such reflexive constructions.[82] The Delphic oracle which initiated the Socratic quest of self-examination through philosophical dialogue was indeed inscribed with the injunction to "know thyself." Hegel picks up this tradition with his description of the struggles of spirit to know itself at the start of *LHP* (quoted above at 1.1), where self-knowledge appears as a gradually unfolding struggle for human freedom.

The first two senses of freedom are implied in this third sense. Self-consciousness is only possible if there is some substantial necessity to the self, if there is some sense in which I can be regarded as something determinate and therefore be made objective to myself. This self-consciousness of inner necessity is, however, very different from an external consciousness of the mechanical necessity of objects. If self-knowledge were able to be attained like an objective fact, subjective freedom would be entirely impossible: I would know myself as "someone who does Y" in this situation, a kind of knowledge that would reduce my actions to causally determinative laws. Self-knowledge is therefore not just an immediate awareness of my individual disposition. In *PS*, Hegel rather sees it as arising through our looking back upon the trials of human existence in self-contemplation. The life of spirit can only be substantially objectified in historical retrospection.

[82] Jeremiah traces Hegel's extensive use of the German reflexive pronoun *sich* back to the innovation of such reflexive constructions in the philosophical language of ancient Greece. See Edward Jeremiah, "Reflexive Concepts in Greek Philosophy," 508.

The attempt to make ourselves at home in the world also drives the development of self-consciousness. When we are not at home with ourselves, we experience the dissatisfaction of self-alienation and attempt to become who we truly are. We do not yet "know" this fully actualized self, but the inadequacy of our present situation is nonetheless apparent. Linguistically, one might say that the development of self-consciousness shows that *Beisichselbstsein* is in fact *Beisichselbstwerden*, a "coming-to-be-at-home-with-oneself," capturing the sense of an "arrival" also implied in *bei sich*. Self-consciousness emerges from our constant coping with the world around us, the negotiation between "self" and "other" in which subjectivity externalizes itself in action and thereby becomes objective to itself. This coming-to-be of self-consciousness appears in the historical struggles of *Geist* to find itself and make itself at home in the world.

Unlike the first two senses of freedom, the development of self-consciousness does not have any one especially concentrated locus of discussion within the Hegelian corpus. Whereas inner necessity is the fundamental issue in the logical transition from substance to subject, and whereas *Beisichselbstsein* becomes the formula for freedom in the later Hegel (across the *Encyclopedia* and *PR*), the development of self-consciousness is more of a general theme which can be traced across Hegel's works. It is a crucial aspect of the movement from abstract to concrete which pervades Hegel's thought. Self-consciousness continually integrates its present body of knowledge with its repository of previously elaborated content, and is therefore more adequately articulated than the immediate consciousness from which it first developed.

In 1.4.1, I will elaborate upon this crucial distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness in *PS* and demonstrate how freedom can never be fully actualized when self-consciousness is treated as if it were only mere consciousness. This discussion will contextualize the development of self-conscious spirit which will be explored throughout the rest of this work.

An analogous development of self-consciousness can be traced in Hegel's logic. The theoretical exercise of thought is ultimately inseparable from the practical will, so that logic is animated by the desire which Hegel describes as a basic appearance of self-consciousness in *PS*.[83] The movement of Hegel's logic is driven by a desire for comprehension. When a concept breaks down, self-conscious thinking does not stop at the theoretical impasse. What is apparently insurmountable for thinking are precisely those problems which thought pursues most vigorously, ignoring its own presentiments of failure in pressing forward. Self-conscious thought is free because it is animated by a living purpose. It thinks objectively, but not indifferently. It seeks an adequate account of the world which satisfies its own comprehension.

A self-conscious logic, then, has the following characteristics: 1) it has the character of a progressive movement because it retains and continues to think upon what has been thought before; 2) it assumes the circular shape of self-consciousness, since it progresses by continually returning into itself; and 3) it begins without any presuppositions, yet it arrives at a method through its self-awareness of its own concrete course of development.

The "absolute idea," the final moment of Hegel's logic, is the best section of the logic at which to observe these themes in their full maturity. They will be the focus of 5.3.2, where this conclusion of Hegel's logic will be discussed in the context of the fully developed, "substantial" subject. In 1.4.2, I will present a more limited discussion of how Hegel's logic proceeds from the self-consciousness of "absolute knowledge" at the conclusion of *PS*.

1.4.1 An inverted self: from consciousness to self-consciousness

[83] *PR* §4; *PS* §167.

Freedom depends upon the reflection of consciousness back into itself as self-consciousness. But before turning to Hegel's treatment of the distinction between these two standpoints of experience, consider the act of journaling as the quintessential example of the activity of self-consciousness. When someone keeps a journal or diary, they manifest their inner world through the written word, shaping their ineffable, pre-verbal impressions into the determinate linguistic form which Hegel describes as the "concrete existence [*Dasein*] of Spirit."[84] Such verbal expression is normally directed at another person, as in spoken or written communication. But journaling introverts the typical process of verbal expression, as the keeper of a journal presents herself in words, but only to herself alone. In the minds of those who do not journal, this identity between subject and object can reduce the practice to a strange redundancy. Why write to oneself? What could be the communicative purpose of such an activity?

Such objections regard writing as a tool which serves to objectify the content of one's consciousness so that it can be given over to another. But there is a presupposition in thinking of writing in this way that can be shown to be untenable. It is assumed that the content of a communication is predetermined in advance, that consciousness simply and automatically objectifies itself in language. But the task of writing challenges, refines, and shapes our thoughts and, in this very process, generates still more topics for further reflection. We cannot treat reflective, self-conscious writing like the issuing of an observational self-report, as if we internally observe some pre-given thought and simply translate it into an external form. Such an observational method is appropriate to describing the details of a landscape painting, but we would never regard this form of writing as one which presents *our* thoughts.

[84] *PS* §652.

Self-conscious thoughts are inseparable from the very process of their articulation. When someone journals, we can divide this activity into several distinct moments of subjectivity and its objectification: the unarticulated, still amorphous self (which we term S_1) begins to find the terms and phrases which describe its perspective (an objective account we term O_1). A new critical perspective (S_2) takes its own account in O_1 as its object and judges the extent to which it has expressed what was vaguely intended in S_1. At S_2, the writer may realize that her dissatisfaction with her day at the park perhaps had little to do with her leg injury and more to do with the poor state of her relationship with her sister. Her second account (O_2) can thus represent a change in topic entirely from O_1.

Still dissatisfied with this new account, her shifting perspectives may themselves become the object of scrutiny. S_3 dislikes the change of focus in O_2 and begins to offer a self-critique of this haphazard self-awareness. At O_3, our writer has now taken herself to task for her cheap psychologizing and constant scrutinizing of her relationships. To borrow the literary term, the "stream of consciousness" in such self-conscious writing is an apt metaphor, as the perspective and its expression are constantly flowing into one another.

This example shows how self-consciousness is distinct from consciousness. Unlike the intensive self-awareness of journaling, consciousness is a stance of receptivity towards the external world. It encompasses immediate sense-certainty, the perception of external objects, and the attempt to discover and articulate the fundamental laws which govern these objects (which Hegel terms *Verstand*, or "the understanding"). While these three forms of knowledge seem quite distinct, they all presuppose an external given, "something out there" entirely independent of the subjectivity which senses, perceives, or abstractly defines its fundamental rules.

Presuming this observational perspective of consciousness has, however, placed an artificial restriction on our concept of subjectivity. Try as we might, we cannot stand in a simply conscious relationship to the most crucial objects of inquiry. Like the hapless interlocuters in an aporetic Platonic dialogue, we cannot simply observe beauty, truth, and justice and then define what we have observed. These topics only make sense in the dialogue which self-consciousness has with self-consciousness, either individually or with others. Beauty, truth, and justice cannot be discussed separately from their arising within our own experience. They do not ask us to find "something out there," but rather to begin a conversation within ourselves, to tend to the seed of discourse Plato describes as taking root and spreading (like Hegel's *Geist*) across generations.[85]

At this point, one may attempt to maintain the presupposition of consciousness by conceding that certain humanistic discourses do not involve such strict objectivity, but this simply means that they are "subjective" matters which cannot be settled by any external datum. Being relegated to this side of the subject-object division always also implies the reduction of a discourse, as it becomes a matter of mere opinion. Since consciousness only recognizes what is given externally, the "inner space" of self-consciousness cannot furnish any compelling evidence in favor of one perspective over another. The standpoint of consciousness regards the subject as a passive recipient of objective facts and laws. Where the subject is active, or has withdrawn into an examination of itself, it has disengaged from the truth of pure observation.

This presupposition of consciousness characterized the Enlightenment embrace of natural science, which, despite the disagreements among its various schools, generally demanded external, verifiable evidence as the standard of truth. The refutation of this perspective does not begin with Hegel but rather with David Hume, who demonstrated that science depends on *a priori* principles,

[85] *Phaedrus* 276e-277a.

such as causality, for which there is no evidence in external experience. Induction assumes causality when it derives general laws from particular cases, but this is a move for which there is no empirical support. The supposed "laws" which govern our thinking cannot themselves be observed and are therefore only regarded as a matter of habit.[86]

In Kant's critical philosophy, he responded to Hume by affirming the active role subjectivity plays in the acquisition of scientific knowledge. The external data of empirical consciousness are no longer regarded as self-sufficient. Sense data is always mediated by the structures of consciousness, which converts the external "thing-in-itself" into an ideal content, the object as it appears "for consciousness."[87] In the wake of this "Copernican Revolution," the notion of pure scientific objectivity was now regarded as philosophically naïve. As an opposition between subject and object, consciousness also required a more developed account of the subject's relationship with the objective world.

As is generally the case with Hegel's relation to Kant, Hegel accepts the results of Kant's critique while also disregarding the limits he proscribes to reason which follow as a consequence. Instead, he pushes the Kantian critique of consciousness further and takes it as the basis of a new, more comprehensive system in which self-consciousness, at once a subject and object to itself, resolves the opposition of consciousness.[88]

But rather than being disregarded entirely, consciousness is shown to be a specific orientation of self-consciousness. Hegel presents this idea, implicit throughout his work, as a concise, explicit thesis in *PhilS*:

> The truth of consciousness is *self-consciousness* and the latter is the ground of the former so that in existence all consciousness of another object is self-consciousness;

[86] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford, Clarendon Press: 1777).
[87] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*.
[88] In this reaction to Kantian dualism, Hegel was also influenced by Fichte's notion of the "self-positing" subject, a debt which will be explored below at 2.3.

> I am aware of the object as mine (it is my representation), thus in it I am aware of me.[89]

I will unpack this passage with the help of an example. When we are conscious of something, we orient ourselves toward it in such a way that recognizes its independence from our own subjectivity. When we study meteorological patterns to forecast the weather, we submit ourselves to the sets of data which researchers have accumulated in the discipline of acquiring a sense of how an "object" as complex as a weather system tends to behave.

Yet our activity as researchers is equally necessary for such a body of knowledge to arise. Weather systems only became a theoretical "object" of knowledge because scientists set this "objective" for themselves: the act of scientific observation which investigates external phenomena as "given" to consciousness is not *itself* a "given." It is, in fact, an abstract construct which can only arise as a project internal to self-consciousness. The same given facts of the weather have been offered up to consciousness for millennia without suggesting such a science, instead being regarded as the results of the activity of animistic forces.

The objectification of meteorological data thus depends entirely upon a prior process of subjectification. When a meteorologist measures the jet stream and projects its future course on a map, she has appropriated nature by bringing it within the "home" of human rationality, translating the immediate reality of meteorological phenomena into a system of numbers, graphs, and formulae. This observational data is always a deliberate abstraction from the full richness of self-consciousness. Whereas the experience of being in a tornado will involve a practical and emotional element, the meteorological data of the same event will present a deliberate reconstruction of that experience. To use Hegel's phrase, consciousness takes the "reality of the world" and "crushes" it

[89] *PhilS* §424. Jean Hyppolite believes that this concise thesis summarizes the whole of German idealism. See Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 143.

into ideality, processing it into an abstraction which isolates the features relevant for the sake of an intentional scientific investigation.[90]

And while this activity of abstraction is more apparent in the case of scientific consciousness and mathematical modeling, it is equally present in basic sense-awareness. Simple sense-certainty is an awareness that is "*immediate* or *receptive*" and alters "nothing in the object as it presents itself," an *ap*prehension rather than a *com*prehension.[91] Yet self-consciousness is active even in this very limitation of its activity. If we suspend all other operations of self-consciousness and focus on the immediate present, on the "here" and "now," self-consciousness is nonetheless active in abstracting one "here" from the manifold of many possible "heres," one "now" from the succession of vanishing moments.[92] The selectivity of self-consciousness remains involved in orienting consciousness towards the content it passively receives.

While sense-experience may be common to all, the question of where to place one's focus is conditioned by the development of one's self-consciousness. The expert in meteorology spots a storm on the horizon more adeptly than the average person, since her eyes immediately focus on points of interest which remain invisible without prior training. As part of my wider experience, my sense-experiences only arise for me in my unique way of finding myself at home in the world. In receiving information about the world around me, I am already enacting the creative freedom of interpretation. I am free in seeing the world for myself, in my own distinct way.

And so, while we can speak meaningfully of an objectively oriented consciousness as distinct from self-consciousness, this consciousness remains grounded in self-consciousness. The consciousness that stands apart from its object and "takes it in" remains only a momentary isolation

[90] *EL* §42.
[91] *PS* §90.
[92] *PS* §§91-109.

of a particular standpoint of external receptivity, a standpoint which is entirely contained within self-consciousness. Nonetheless, this momentary perspective of consciousness has shaped many of the assumptions of the modern world insofar as it conceives of itself as based in scientific objectivity. For this reason, showing how the logic of consciousness necessarily implies self-consciousness is more than just a theoretical exercise for Hegel. When all subjective phenomena are interpreted as occurring in consciousness, the development of self-consciousness remains arrested and so human freedom remains theoretically, experientially, and practically restrained by this self-imposed limitation, this misinterpretation of self-consciousness as mere consciousness.

To recognize consciousness as self-consciousness is to undergo a critical shift in perspective, a liberation which Robbert Pippin describes as the "overcoming [of] consciousness."[93] In *PS*, consciousness is only overcome after it has attained its most complete development in the theoretical understanding. Unlike sense-experience and perception, the understanding does not take immediate appearances as reality, instead seeking the "unconditioned universal," the law which grounds the coming-to-be and passing-away of perceptible beings.[94]

But in seeking this law, the understanding finds itself within an "inverted world," a world in which the intellectual abstractions which are said to govern sensory phenomena are ultimately indistinguishable from the world from which they purport to be distinct.[95] For instance, if we take "mass" as the universal in which particular things with mass participate, this universal is still only defined through the sensory particulars with which it is associated. If it is rather defined "from

[93] Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 116-142.
[94] *PS* §132.
[95] *PS* §§157-159.

above," by its participation in a still higher form, we enter an infinite regress of transcendence, with each supposedly "higher" ontological plane only mirroring the world below.[96]

What the understanding intends to abstract from the world, then, only becomes an inversion of it, a different subjective perspective with superior explanatory value. Unfortunately, Hegel's language in Chapter 3 of *PS*, "Force and the Understanding," is quite difficult, especially since his examples rely heavily on his critique of Newton in light of the emerging sciences of the 19th century (such as electricity). Gadamer offers a somewhat more accessible example of Hegel's basic point in this chapter. Although they are posited as independent principles which explain phenomena, linguistic laws derive from and are ultimately identical with those same phenomena:

> The tautological nature of the process of explanation can be revealed by means of the example of phonetics: one speaks of the laws of "sound-shifting" to "explain" the mutation of a language. But these laws, are, of course, nothing other than the very thing which they explain. They have no other reality whatsoever. Every grammatical rule has the same tautological character. Here nothing at all is explained, but rather that which in truth is the "life" of a language is declared to be the laws which govern it.[97]

While consciousness fails to establish the ontological self-sufficiency of such tautological laws, it does, in formulating them, invert the presuppositions of consciousness. Consciousness presumes that the truth only exists as the external data of sensory perception, and yet those sensory phenomena can be equally rendered into an intellectual system of mathematical equations. When we see a leaf blowing in the wind, what we experience also participates in a second, mirrored system. Besides being perceived, it can also be *explained* as the activity of invisible forces — forces which we have come to know only through observing such phenomena. While the tautological character of this explanation may seem deflationary, the immediate identity of the

[96] This criticism of such abstract formalism is similar to the "third man" argument against the forms Parmenides advances in his eponymous Platonic dialogue. See *Parmenides* 132a-b.
[97] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Inverted World," trans. John F. Donovan, *The Review of Metaphysics* 28, no. 3 (1975): 411.

sensory with the intellectual means that there are, in fact, two sides to nature: an inner and an outer. The laws which were sought as transcendental universal principles lay within the world perceived by consciousness and were only waiting to be unpacked through rational investigation.

Inverting nature's initial outer appearance, consciousness finds its inner aspect, an aspect which remains latent until and unless it is discovered by consciousness. The inner world of force brought out by the understanding always existed (it is not a purely subjective creation of the mind), but it remained hidden until it was discovered by a certain method of observation and abstraction. Hegel compares this latency of the inner side of nature with the invisibility of something hiding behind a curtain:

> We see that in the *inner* world of appearance … the understanding experiences only *itself* … It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless we go behind it ourselves, as much in order that *we* may see, as that there may be something behind there which can be seen.[98]

The realization of this inner side to nature is the moment when consciousness locates itself in the world and becomes objective to itself. Hegel says that scientific explanation "affords so much self-satisfaction … because in it consciousness is … communing directly with itself, enjoying only itself."[99] The self-effacing discipline required in scientific research, the attention afforded to an external object, is rewarded when it results in a system of rational determinations which has added nothing to its object of inquiry and yet has presented it from the inside, which is to say, from consciousness' own point of view.

Having set out to understand nature on its own terms, I have turned it inside out and arrived back at myself, locating myself as belonging to the world through the very theoretical activity in which I initially set myself apart from it as an observer. The freedom I enjoy as self-consciousness

[98] *PS* §165. Cf. "Nature loves to conceal itself." Heraclitus, DK B123.
[99] *PS* §143.

is this reconciliation of the opposition involved in consciousness, the dispelling of the self-limiting standpoint which assumes that the truth always lies outside of me.

The content of this self-conscious knowledge is also qualitatively different from that of mere observation. Coming to the inner side of nature shows it in its living aspect (just as inner necessity was shown to belong to living systems at 1.2.2). While the inner system of nature uncovered by the understanding is not alive in the strict sense, the understanding has now located those elements of nature which are most fully actualized in living beings. An isolated object presents itself as a discrete entity, one which does not exist in any meaningful relationship with an environment and so must be regarded as lifeless. It is the self-relational, dynamic side of nature from which life emerges, the inner system of forces and transformations which become, in organisms, a system of drives and adaptations.

Seeing nature in this way is a critical moment for the development of self-consciousness because it means that there is no ultimate division between consciousness and self-consciousness. As Gadamer writes, self-consciousness has now discovered in nature the "relating-itself-to-itself" in which it is at home with itself:

> For it has been demonstrated that consciousness is self-consciousness, a form of knowing that is certain that nothing other than itself exists in the forms of knowing which sense and understanding mediate for it. This form of certainty overreaches all the prior ones. We have here the true penetration of the "inside" of nature, which alone grasps its essential reality: life. Life feels the pulse of life. That is, it comprehends itself from within just as it is. *Autokinoun* is, to express it abstractly, the relating-itself-to-itself of life, as knowledge is the formula of idealism, I = I, which is called self-consciousness.[100]

While this first appearance of self-consciousness remains abstract, its distinction from consciousness provides a critical contrast. Consciousness only came to relate to itself as self-consciousness by positing forces redundant to the "positive" evidence of the senses, adopting a

[100] Gadamer, 422.

"negative" relationship to the phenomena. As will be elaborated below in 4.1, this liberation from the given through such "negativity" will characterize self-consciousness from this point forward. As Hyppolite writes, "self-consciousness appears, in opposition to consciousness, as active consciousness. The positivity of consciousness becomes negativity in self-consciousness."[101]

To restrict oneself to the standpoint of consciousness is, therefore, to maintain an essentially unfree, dead perspective. The prisoners in Plato's allegory of the cave are an extreme example of the restriction involved in "holding fast to the evidence." They never realize the truth of their situation because they remain "fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them."[102] Yet they cannot comprehend what has been placed in front of them, as they cannot actively work to establish the relevant context. Their world cannot be tested by an experiment. It can only be looked upon. Without the freedom of self-consciousness — without the self-awareness gained by going outside of ourselves, without volitional, intentional perception — an objective standpoint becomes only a narrow, imprisoning illusion.

1.4.2 Absolute knowing as the basis of a self-conscious logic

Hegel understands logic to be self-conscious: it is thinking (as subject) about thinking itself (as object). This self-consciousness of logical thought has its roots in the phenomenological standpoint of "absolute knowledge" with which *PS* concludes. Hegel states this connection quite clearly at the start of *SL*:

> Absolute knowledge is the truth of all the modes of consciousness because, as the course of the *Phenomenology* brought out, it is only in absolute knowledge that the separation of the *subject matter* from the *certainty of itself* is completely resolved: truth has become equal to certainty and this certainty to truth. Pure science thus

[101] Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 146.
[102] *Republic*, 514a. Unless otherwise indicated, translations of Plato come from *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by John Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

> presupposes the liberation from the opposition of consciousness. … As *science*, truth is pure self-consciousness as it develops itself and has the shape of the self.[103]

Logic only begins when the opposition of consciousness has been wholly overcome, and this complete identity of "thought" with "what is thought" is the result of *PS*: pure self-consciousness is thought thinking itself. This "pure science" achieves the true self-determination of finding itself completely at home in its other, for its other is only another aspect of itself.

This internal self-differentiation of self-consciousness is also the logic of conceptual subjectivity. If I consider, for instance, the concept of a school, I am engaging the same concept whether I am thinking of schools in general (as the universal [*Allgemeinheit*]), of schools as a unique institution different from businesses (as the particular [*Besonderheit*]), or of this one school (as an individual case [*Einzelheit*]).[104] These aspects of the concept are moments of a "whole" in which "each is posited as an undivided unity."[105]

Hegel also understands self-consciousness to manifest these three moments of the concept. The "I" is present in all my particular experiences (it is, in Kantian terms, "apperceived") and yet it can also "withdraw into the freedom of unrestricted equality with itself," a dissolution of all concrete specificity — the I is equally pure universality.[106] As a form immanent in all phenomenal content, I am to be found in all of my experiences. At the same time, this same set of experiences is wholly unique to me. The "I" that is mine cannot be spoken by anyone else: I am also wholly singular, an "individual personality."[107]

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[103] *SL* 21.33, 29.
[104] Universality, particularity, and individuality are described as the moments of the concept at *EL* §163, and these terms appear throughout Hegel's treatment of the topics at hand. At times, the technical distinction between the particular and the individual is not closely observed by Hegel himself and these terms are used almost interchangeably. When necessary, I will indicate in what precise sense I am using these terms and take care to clarify their use through tables in Chapters 4 and 6.
[105] *EL* §160.
[106] *SL* 12.17, 514.
[107] *SL* 12.17, 514.

These phenomenal references to self-consciousness in Hegel's logic develop his remark (discussed above at 1.2.1) that the "I" is the "pure concept itself," the "determinate existence" (*Dasein*) of the concept, the concrete form in which it can be immediately experienced.[108] The internal self-differentiation which inheres in conceptuality has its perfect analogy in self-consciousness, the "pure concept" to which all other concepts ultimately refer. Conceptual subjectivity therefore perfects the freedom of *Beisichselbstsein*. In the freedom of practical action, we imperfectly try to establish the self-unity which we already experience in self-conscious, conceptual thinking. Hegel even personifies the concept by declaring it to be "the free" (*das Freie*) with each of its moments existing as "a free being" (*ein freies Sein*).[109]

The conclusion of *PS* further develops the profound relationship between the logic of the concept and the freedom of self-conscious subjectivity. In "absolute knowing," self-consciousness looks back on the previous moments of its own development. Hegel brings out the etymology of the German word for "remembrance" in describing this retrospection. Every remembrance is also a process of going inward (it is an *Er-innerung*, a "making inner"), since its history is retained and recalled only when it loses its external, tangible reality:

> *History* … presents a slow-moving succession of spirits, a gallery of images, each of which, endowed with all the riches of spirit, moves thus slowly just because the self has to penetrate and digest this entire wealth of its substance. As its fulfilment consists in perfectly *knowing* what *it is*, in knowing its substance, this knowing is its *withdraw into itself* in which it abandons its outer existence and gives its existential shape over to recollection [*Erinnerung*]. Thus absorbed in itself, it is sunk in the night of its self-consciousness; but in that night its vanished outer existence is preserved, and this transformed existence — the former one, but now reborn of the spirit's knowledge — is the new existence, a new world and a new shape of spirit. In the immediacy of this new existence the spirit has to start afresh to bring itself to maturity as if, for it, all that preceded were lost and it had learned nothing from the experience of the earlier spirits. But recollection, the *inwardizing*

[108] *SL* 12.17, 514.
[109] *EL* §§160-161.

> of that experience, has preserved it and is the inner being, and in fact the higher form of the substance.[110]

The "new world" in which spirit finds itself is the world of logic. Logic is a pure science in the sense that it "starts afresh" and frees itself from all external presuppositions (see 1.3.2 above), but this does not mean it has forgotten all the lessons of experience. Free thinking is substantial, having been formed out of "the entire wealth of its [historical] substance." In remembering, self-consciousness has "digested" the results of the journey which it has undertaken. The knowledge which first appeared in the *phenomena* of natural and historical consciousness have now been consolidated and essentialized in the *logos*, i.e., in the pure science of logic. As Quentin Lauer writes, the self-comprehension of spirit's own course of development "cancels out time and allows for a non-temporal elaboration in the *Logic*."[111] Rather than reducing philosophy to a kind of historicism, Hegel sees it as the freest pursuit because this recollection liberates the human mind from the presuppositions of its immediate time and place.

The pure science of logic carries forward this self-conscious recollection which concludes *PS*. Having reflected upon the flow of appearances which resulted in this standpoint of absolute knowing, we now realize that we never truly think of anything in pure isolation. When we think of being, we also are thinking of nothing; when we think of quality, we also think of quantity; when we think of conceptual subjectivity, we also think of substantiality. A self-conscious logic brings out these hidden simultaneities of thought, showing the interdependencies of concepts which are not immediately apparent. Just as the moments of the concept were distinctions internal to a single unit, concepts themselves participate in an interconnected whole as different moments of a single truth.

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[110] *PS* §808.
[111] Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Fordham University Press, 1993), 295.

Unself-conscious thinking, however, presupposes concepts to be discrete, independent, and unrelated to each other. Pippin, who has written extensively on the role of self-consciousness in Hegel's logic, warns that "concepts cannot be independently 'grasped' as determinate entities. Thinking that they could be produces what Hegel is forever calling 'dead', lifeless, static, 'untrue' concepts."[112] Self-conscious logic, by contrast, lives within the self-awareness of a thinking person. Just as organs of a body depend upon each other, every thought of an individual is, simultaneously, all their other thoughts which condition and inform that thought. Concepts do not exist individually, like isolated, tangible things, the mere objects of consciousness. Indeed, Pippin describes how these concepts each undo themselves when they take center stage alone:

> In the *Logic*, an array of concepts (or concept kinds) — being, nothing, becoming, something, other … make appearances like characters in some fast-paced drama, struggle to make a case for themselves, as if trying 'to say what they are', only to fail in some unusual way, and to give way to putatively more successful successors, which themselves give way in turn.[113]

Self-conscious thought occurs in a home it has built for itself in relating together concepts which failed to prove themselves as self-sufficient. It is free in this home only insofar as it does not mistake the part for the whole, just as a person is only free insofar as they do not regard their beauty or intellect as their entire personality. As the "shape of the self," logic is a self-relating system in which all three moments of the concept are together manifest.[114] The self-aware individual integrates their particular, isolated thoughts in the universal "freedom of the whole."[115]

1.5 A Summary of the Three Senses

[112] Pippin, "Significance of Self-consciousness in Idealist Theories of Logic," 162.
[113] Pippin, "Significance of Self-consciousness in Idealist Theories of Logic," 149-50.
[114] *SL* 21.33, 29.
[115] *EL* §14.

Each of these senses describes one aspect of the same concept of freedom. I shall conclude with a summary which shows how they develop from out of each other:

1) Inner necessity is the most abstract sense of freedom, one described in terms of modal logic. The mechanical logic of indifferent, unrelated parts exerting an external influence upon each other gives way to a logic which recognizes the internal coherence and "freedom of the whole" which arises within a self-related system. The advantage of this formulation is that it captures how Hegel's sense of freedom extends beyond the practical freedom of subjective choice. While the free will also makes decisions on the basis of its inner necessity, more abstract and less personal phenomena, such as a logical system or the progression of history, can equally be described as free in this way.

2) Inner necessity is concretely enacted in freedom as "being-at-home-with-oneself" (*Beisichselbstsein*). Making oneself "at home" inverts the exterior impositions of the world and internalizes their necessity. While this domestic metaphor engages the conventional sense of freedom as self-possession, it also suggests how this self-possession only results from a dynamic interaction with the external world. Like the delicate balance of making a home, freedom aims at an arrangement of the inner which is only possible through a creative adaptation of the outer.

3) "Being-at-home-with-oneself" showed itself to be "making-oneself-at-home-in-the-other." The primary "other" with which we must be reconciled, however, is our own selves. Insofar as we do not have the composure and self-possession of self-knowledge (i.e., insofar as we remain "other" to ourselves), we have no hope of reconciliation with an external "other." Through the development of self-consciousness, the inner space of subjectivity is turned inside-out and becomes an object for itself, an inversion already

suggested by the idea of freedom as inner necessity. Likewise, self-consciousness recognizes itself as emerging through its own historical development, building its "home" in recollecting and reflecting upon its concrete historical appearances.

II. CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORY OF SUBSTANCE AND SUBJECT

Chapter 1 has demonstrated how Hegel's unique account of freedom proceeds, in part, from his theory of subjectivity. Each of the senses of freedom involves an appreciation of how subjectivity is "concrete." The concrete subject does not act arbitrarily, but from her own inner necessity, knowing herself and what is required to become freely at home in her world. To further understand what Hegel means by the freedom of a concrete subject, Chapter 2 will consider one of Hegel's most well-known formulations of the absolute. In the Preface to *PS*, Hegel famously declares that the true is to be understood "not only as *substance*, but equally as *subject*."[1] The freedom of a concrete subject is the freedom of a subject which has reconciled itself with substantiality, a "substantial subject" manifesting both elements of this formula.

Substance and subject must be considered in their historical context. Hegel's understanding of substance is heavily indebted to his reading of Spinoza, while he takes Fichte's philosophy to be one of pure subjectivity. These terms are also integral to understanding Hegel's account of history as the development of self-consciousness. The absolute was first understood in ancient Greece as substance, yet the modern world (since Descartes) has increasingly privileged subjectivity, a one-sidedness that must now be corrected with the recovery of substantiality.

It is important to note that the readings of the history of philosophy in this section depend upon Hegel's own presentation of these figures. The fidelity of these interpretations is an independent question not at issue here, as the only goal is to present Hegel's history of philosophy insofar as it informs his understanding of what it means to be free as a substantial subject. While any philosopher can be said to pick up and adapt the vocabulary of her predecessors, Hegel's self-consciousness of the historical situation under which his philosophy emerges makes his

[1] *PS* §17.

engagement with his predecessors especially critical. When Hegel translates other philosophers into his own terms, we can enter his philosophy by taking these historical markers as a shared point of reference.

This concrete historical orientation towards Hegel's philosophy is especially critical in approaching this topic, one which has been identified by readers of Hegel as especially abstract. Hegel's discussion of substance and subject in the Preface of *PS* focuses on how substance shows itself to be equally subject. Yet this recognition of the subjectivity implicit in substantiality is not given all at once; it shows itself through the progressive process of "actualization" which is most completely apparent in the movement of spirit in history.[2] The subject which is inherent in substance, does not, as Rocío Zambrana writes, refer to a "single individual" but a process in which "things themselves articulate their rationality in light of conditions that produce, sustain, or call them into question."[3]

Zambrana, however, goes on to say that the problem with the Preface of *PS* is that Hegel explains the unity of substance with subject through a "very abstract logic of actualization" which does not unpack how this equation explains the uniquely Hegelian sense of freedom, among other things.[4] Hegel indeed gives us fair warning that this prefatory articulation will be unsatisfying, since it will only be justified later "by the exposition of the system itself."[5] But even with this disclaimer, this equation of substance and subject has remained cryptic to many readers of Hegel, leading Robert Wallace to term it "one of the great mysteries of Hegel scholarship."[6]

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[2] *PS* §25.
[3] Rocío Zambrana, *Hegel's Theory of Intelligibility* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 44.
[4] Zambrana, 44.
[5] *PS* §17.
[6] Robert Wallace, *Hegel's Philosophy of Reality, Freedom, and God* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 89.

Chapter 2 will provide the historical background needed to unpack this mystery as the logic and appearance of substance and subject. Chapters 3-5 will then interpret the reconciliation of substance with subject through the three senses of freedom already elaborated. First, freedom will be treated only as substance (Chapter 3) and then only as subject (Chapter 4) prior to their reconciliation in the substantial subject (Chapter 5). As will be discussed below in 2.4, the historical actualization of *Geist* is the living truth of this reconciliation, as the movement from antiquity to modernity is a movement from substance to subject which demonstrates the necessity and interdependence of both principles.

2.1 Substance, Subject, and the Senses of Freedom

The three senses of freedom are each an aspect of the unity of substance and subject:

1) The freedom of inner necessity is the freedom of a subjectivity which is no longer opposed to substantiality, as it recognizes the substantial within itself as the internalized system of necessity through which its free subjectivity is possible.

2) The freedom of "being-at-home-with-oneself" is the freedom of a subjectivity which has been reconciled with substantial existence. The subject recognizes that his capacity for self-determined thought and action requires that he reside within the concrete specificity of the external world.

3) The freedom actualized in the development of self-consciousness is the freedom of a subject which encounters itself as an object — as a determinate substance whose elaboration has had a necessary progression. It is, at the same time, "thinking" (a subject) and "something thought" (a substance).

Although we can relate substance and subject to Hegel's other articulations of the meaning of freedom, they cannot be interpreted solely through the resources of his own philosophy. The term "substance," for instance, has a definite historical provenance which Hegel adapts in a quite idiosyncratic way, even describing ethical life as a "social substance" in *PS*. The remainder of this chapter aims to prepare for the elaboration of this formula in Chapters 3-5 by investigating how Hegel interpreted the historical development of substance and subject.

2.2 Hegel's Reception of Spinoza and Substance Metaphysics

Just after describing the absolute as both substance and subject in *PS* §17, Hegel immediately addresses the legacy of Spinoza's substance monism. He claims that the reception of Spinoza as a controversial figure in the early modern period was at least in part due to an accurate perception of a crucial deficiency in his philosophy: its erasure of subjectivity in a substance in which "self-consciousness was only submerged and not preserved."[7] In *LHP*, Hegel elaborates upon and qualifies this criticism, first summarizing what he takes to be the essence of Spinozism:

> The simple thought of Spinoza's idealism is this: The true is simply and solely the one substance, whose attributes are thought and extension or nature: and only this absolute unity is reality, it alone is God. … With Descartes corporeality and the thinking 'I' are altogether independent beings; this independence of the two extremes is done away with in Spinozism by their becoming moments of the one absolute being, [which] must be grasped as the unity of opposites; the chief consideration is not to let slip the opposition and set it aside, but to reconcile and resolve it.[8]

[7] *PS* §17.

[8] *LHP* III, 256-257. While this section will confine itself to the aspects of Hegel's critique of Spinoza which are the most relevant for Hegel's philosophy of freedom, there is no lack of scholarship treating this topic more generally. For a complete listing of the references to Spinoza in *SL*, as well as a critical perspective on Hegel's reading of Spinoza, see Vittorio Morifino, "The Misunderstanding of the Mode: Spinoza in Hegel's *Science of Logic* (1812-1816)" in *Between Hegel and Spinoza* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 23-41. See also Pierre Macherey and Susan M Ruddick, *Hegel or Spinoza* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), Chapter 1: Hegel Reads Spinoza, 13-32.

However, Spinoza only overcomes dualism by positing an abstract concept of universal substance:

> Absolute substance is the truth, but it is not the whole truth; in order to be this it must also be thought of as in itself active and living, and by that very means it must determine itself as mind. But substance with Spinoza is only the universal and consequently the abstract determination of mind … It is therefore worthy of note that thought must begin by placing itself at the standpoint of Spinozism; to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of all philosophy.[9]

For Hegel, the standpoint of Spinozism has much to recommend it. Much like Hegel's own system (and in contrast to Cartesian dualism), it attempts to reconcile the subjectivity of thought with the objectivity of natural existence. Both thought and extension are attributes of the one substance, resulting in a unity that should be taken as foundational for all subsequent philosophy. Nonetheless, Spinozism remains for Hegel only a skeletal outline of the truth which must be infused with the living flesh and blood of subjectivity.

2.2.1 Spinoza's geometric method and his presupposed definition of substance

Hegel nonetheless criticizes the "geometric method" (*more geometrico*) Spinoza adopts in the *Ethics*. Like Hegel, Spinoza builds a system of philosophy, but unlike Hegel he derives this system from a set of axiomatic propositions. As the first principle of Spinoza's philosophy, substance is defined as "that which is in itself, and is conceived through itself," while a mode is a "modification of substance, or that which exists in, or is conceived through, something other than itself."[10] This substance is "prior to its modifications," a priority established as an *a priori* truth in these presupposed definitions.[11]

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[9] *LHP* III, 257.
[10] Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* in *The Complete Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. by R.H.M. Elwes (London: George Bell and Sons, 1887), Part I, Definitions III, V.
[11] Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition I.

Although Hegel's definition of substance is largely in agreement with Spinoza's, Hegel finds this deductive method inadequate to fully express the truth of substance. As will be explored further below at 3.1, Hegel's logic of substance involves a deconstruction of the precise meaning of substantial necessity. In the movement of Hegel's logic, the absolute necessity of substantial existence is developed in such a way that allows for its reconciliation with subjective freedom.

For Hegel, Spinoza cannot reconcile substance with subject in this way because his method prevents him from doing so. Spinoza's philosophy opposes substantial necessity to subjective freedom because it reduces the activity of subjective reason to the mere consciousness of substance as a "given," a presupposition it receives from outside of itself. In *LHP*, Hegel describes the *more gemetrico* as an example of how such an axiomatic method does not allow for the full engagement of the thinking "I":

> Thoughts form the content, but they are not self-conscious thoughts or concepts [*Begriffe*]: the content signifies thought, as pure abstract self-consciousness, but an unreasoning knowledge, into which the individual does not enter: the content has not the signification of 'I.' There is a rigid necessity in the proof, to which the moment of self-consciousness is lacking; the 'I' disappears.[12]

In contrast to Spinoza's mere consciousness of the given truth of substance, Hegel intends to think of substance self-consciously, through an intensive investigation of the concepts involved, a speculative look "from within." For Hegel, it is impossible to achieve the true self-determination of thought by accepting such a merely posited first principle. Since philosophical content follows from its methodological form, the subject cannot recognize herself as truly belonging to an absolute which she only deduces from received definitions. Because freedom is at stake in

[12] *LHP* III, 286. I have replaced Haldane's translation of *Begriffe* as "notions" with "concepts" for the sake of consistency with my own language.

philosophical method, Hegel concludes that Spinozism already, on this basis alone, lacks "infinite form, spirituality, and liberty."[13]

2.2.2 Hegel's dialogue with Spinoza on the universal dimension of freedom

Although Spinoza describes subjectivity as a "mode" of substance, for Hegel this does not capture the particularity and individuality of subjective life. In *LHP*, Hegel says that Spinozism describes subjectivity as a mere modification of an all-consuming universal and so involves

> an utter blotting out of the principle of subjectivity, individuality, personality, the moment of self-consciousness in being. Thought has only the signification of the universal, not of self-consciousness. … All that is particular and individual, my subjectivity and spirituality, has, on the other hand, as a limited modification whose concept depends on another, no absolute existence.[14]

Hegel then goes on to describe Spinoza's substance as an "abyss of annihilation"

> whose single form of activity is this, to divest all things of their determination and particularity and cast them back into the one absolute substance, wherein they are simply swallowed up, and all life in itself is utterly destroyed.[15]

This destruction of particularity is, for Hegel, the destruction of an essential component of free subjectivity. Hegel metaphorically describes Spinoza's concept of subjectivity as one which has emerged from an empty, universal ocean "dripping with the water thereof, i.e. never coming to absolute self-hood; the heart, the independence is transfixed — the vital fire is wanting."[16]

Hegel's philosophy, by contrast, emphasizes that living self-consciousness is inescapably the particular experience of *some*body at *some*place at *some*time. Subjective freedom is *my* freedom and not just freedom "in general." For Hegel, subjectivity is the ultimate truth of substance

[13] *LHP* III, 287.
[14] *LHP* III, 287-288.
[15] *LHP* III, 288.
[16] *LHP* III, 289.

because its universality only exists through a person's individuality and particularity. Self-consciousness is the universal which is embodied rather than abstracted; it cannot be separated from the "modes" through which it appears.

In his concept of *conatus* (Latin for "striving"), Spinoza explains how freedom appears in this substantial universality by describing how everything "endeavors to persist in its own being."[17] All individual things express the power of God (i.e., of absolute substance) and so strive to maintain themselves as self-sufficient beings. Everything exists in such a way that opposes "all that could take away its existence."[18] In Spinoza's account of human freedom, the will is only our consciousness of this universal striving for individual being.[19]

This universal striving is therefore not one which we individually enact. It is rather only something which we observe in ourselves as part of the general order of things, and therefore it is very different from the particularized desire which Hegel describes as the most basic manifestation of self-conscious freedom.[20] As Jason Beard writes, for Spinoza

> the problems of consciousness with respect to desire, of adequately grasping our mind and body, are not fundamentally different from the problem of the first kind of knowledge in general, of knowledge from the disorder of experience. This is because human desire is not radically different from the *conatus*, from the striving that defines everything: it is only different insofar as the human body and mind are capable of more relations, capable of memory and habit.[21]

This lack of differentiation between human freedom and the universal self-persistence of substantial existence is what Hegel means when he describes Spinoza's subject as having emerged "dripping with the water" of absolute substance. The subject cannot escape this ocean since he is

[17] Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part III, Proposition VI.
[18] Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part III, Proposition VI.
[19] Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part III, Proposition IX.
[20] See *PS* §§173-177, described below at 4.2.1 as the opening moment in the development of free subjectivity in *PS*.
[21] Jason Beard, "'Desire is Man's Very Essence': Spinoza and Hegel as Philosophers of Transindividuality," in *Between Hegel and Spinoza* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 47-48.

only a modification thereof. His individual being only replicates the substantial character of the absolute. Just as a substance perdures regardless of the modes which it may momentarily acquire, the finite person strives (and can only strive) to persist in this way. For Spinoza, there is no distinctively human form of free self-awareness. Everything, human or not, is free in precisely the same way: "A thing is free [when it] exists and acts solely by the necessity of its own nature."[22]

Although Hegel appreciates how Spinoza locates human freedom within the necessity of substantiality, this substantial freedom does not take up and transform this necessity into its own *inner* necessity. Free, inner necessity is only relative to willful purpose, a system of necessities which can be creatively managed in a self-determining way. The kind of recognition of necessity involved in Spinoza's account of freedom, by contrast, is simply the recognition of an inherent state of affairs, a realization of one's own place in an unchanging order. Since freedom is only the consciousness of actions already determined by natural, substantial existence, Spinoza says that a stone, if it were to become conscious, would perceive its movement as a kind of freedom, the enactment of its own desire.[23]

On this model, Spinoza's account of human freedom involves the recognition of an immutable order which frees us from our vain, contingent desires, removing the illusion of our particularity in a pure, universal sense of freedom which John McCumber describes:

> The remedy is, as much as possible, to know ourselves and other human beings for what we truly are: expressions of divine power. To the extent that we do that, we are able to act according to our true nature, rather than as driven by our passions. And to that extent we see that beneath it all, humans are in perfect agreement. To the extent that we see things correctly, we are wise; because we act according to our true nature, we are free; and because we agree with all human beings, we are

[22] Benedict de Spinoza, *Selected Letters* in *The Complete Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. by R.H.M. Elwes (London: George Bell and Sons, 1887), Letter LVIII.
[23] Benedict de Spinoza, *Selected Letters*, Letter LVIII.

> good. With this, Spinoza expresses what makes him a great philosopher: a moral vision of the world.[24]

Spinoza's account of freedom is thus somewhat similar to Hegel's in that freedom involves a development of rationality which culminates in a kind of liberatory self-awareness. This sense of freedom as a participation in a corporate whole is an element of Spinoza which also plays a role in Hegel's own philosophy, and indeed Hegel praises this aspect of Spinozism in his discussion of substance in *LL*:

> Here is the greatness of Spinoza. The oneness of his substance is the fire in which the soul cleanses itself of all particularity. That is liberation, but it is only formal freedom. In that Spinoza proceeds to the human spirit, he makes emancipation from bondage into his vocation. Bondage lies in human affects, since by such affects we posit ends. Human freedom lies in the love of God. Such freedom is the direction taken by spirit toward the one single substance.[25]

The purification and harmonization of particular human passions through the universal is indeed an element of freedom, an element which will be incorporated in Hegel's use of the language of substantiality to describe the universal aspect of freedom. As will be discussed below in 3.2.1, ethical life is continually described by Hegel as a "social substance." The social substance affords the freedom of membership within a whole, an expansion of one's own capacities through a participation in the universal life of spirit.

Spinoza's own description of this kind of freedom resonates with Hegel's account of the universality of ethical life:

> To man there is nothing more useful than man — nothing, I repeat, more excellent for preserving their being can be wished for by men, than that all should so in all points agree, that the minds and bodies of all should form, as it were, one single mind and one single body, and that all should, with one consent, as far as they are able, endeavor to preserve their being, and all with one consent seek what is useful to them all.[26]

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[24] John McCumber, "Hegel's Reconciliation With Spinoza," in *Between Hegel and Spinoza* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 123-124.
[25] *LL* §151, 165.
[26] Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part IV, Proposition XVIII.

Spinoza and Hegel agree that freedom necessarily involves the substantial participation of the individual in a universal community. Since Hegel associates substance more closely with Spinoza than with any other philosopher, in describing ethical life as a "social substance" he suggests the same sublimation of individuality in the universal.

But this substantial freedom remains incomplete for Hegel because it only achieves this unanimity of spirit by effacing subjective freedom. The Hegelian substance, by contrast, contains polarization and difference within itself, the tension between opposed yet mutually overlapping social spheres. As will be discussed below at 3.2.4, it is this internal tension in the social substance which necessitates that particularized individuality begins to show itself in free subjectivity. The substance of society erodes as these spheres dissolve in the tragic downfall of ethical life.

McCumber suggests that this shared recognition of a universal aspect to freedom is the grounds for a reconciliation of Hegel with Spinoza,[27] but the case should not be overstated. The passage in *LL* in which Hegel admits his debt to Spinoza's philosophy also describes it as "revolting" that in Spinoza's system "human beings are considered only as accidents."[28] Even where there is agreement between Hegel and Spinoza, this universal dimension of freedom takes a very different shape for each philosopher. The self-recognition of Hegel's absolute spirit is not, as it is for Spinoza, simply the recognition of the substantial nature of one's own individual subjectivity, the elimination of particular vanity through an appreciation of the universal of which one is but a subordinate part.

For Hegel, subjective freedom is also universal freedom because the universal substance is itself living subjectivity: the individual locates herself within the substantial history of spirit, yet

[27] McCumber, "Hegel's Reconciliation with Spinoza," 128-129.
[28] *LL* §151, 166.

this living substance is not characterized by the persistent "striving to be" of *conatus*. It rather involves the dynamic coming-to-be and passing away of a living person. As McCumber observes, the entire movement of *PS* involves the death of self-consciousness just as much as its life, a kind of "reverse *conatus*" loosely analogous to the Freudian "death drive."[29] For instance, self-consciousness asserts its freedom by dissociating itself from life in a struggle to the death (at *PS* §§185-188), a rejection of life which reappears in different guises throughout the history of spirit.[30]

For Spinoza, on the other hand, the divine substance is eternally complete and perfect, never having undergone the struggle of life.[31] Hegel believes that his integration of substance and subject is more complete because spirit is only at home in an absolute which undergoes all the finite travails of a nonetheless "imperishable" life.[32] The Christian theology of incarnation and resurrection indeed closely informs Hegel's understanding of the divine living substance in a marked contrast with the divine abstraction involved in Spinoza's thought.[33] To extend Hegel's oceanic metaphor, human subjectivity is no longer submerged in substance but is rather dignified through an individual baptism befitting a distinctly human personality.

2.3 Hegel's Reception of Fichte and Subjective Idealism

[29] McCumber, "Hegel's Reconciliation with Spinoza," 124-130.
[30] As further examples of this motif, McCumber lists the asceticism of the unhappy consciousness (*PS* §225-226), the role of ancestor worship in Greek ethical life (*PS* §452), and the "pining away" of the romantic soul which has rejected the commitments of life (*PS* §668). I would also add the "fury of destruction" unleashed by the universality of the Enlightenment in the Reign of Terror (*PS* §589).
[31] Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition XV.
[32] *SL* 12.236, 735.
[33] While both thinkers are not considered orthodox representatives of their respective religions, the disagreements explored in this section have theological overtones. Hegel's reconciliation of the individual and the universal echoes the incarnation of the universal deity in an individual person, a doctrine which has divided Christianity and Judaism for millennia. At the very least, Hegel himself interprets Judaism's concept of the divine as one of abstract universality. He speaks of Maimonides' philosophy as monistic (*LHP* III, 36) and sees Spinoza's readiness to abandon dualism as a product of his Jewish religious sensibility (*LHP* III, 252). See 2.4.3 below for further discussion of Hegel on the incarnation.

Hegel's critique of Fichte proceeds similarly to his critique of Spinoza.[34] He likewise objects to the foundationalist method of Fichte's philosophy as well its elevation of one moment of the absolute to the status of a first principle. However, Hegel nonetheless affirms Fichte's claim that his philosophy completes Kant's critical project, and indeed does so in a "more logical way."[35] Whereas Spinoza, quite uniquely for his time, rejects subjective freedom, Hegel holds Fichte's self-grounding subject to be the most complete articulation of modern subjectivity.

Against this historical backdrop, it can be further observed that Hegel's embrace of some of the key tenets of Spinozism stands in opposition to this modern elevation of subject over substance. Along with Schelling, Schlegel, and Hölderlin, Hegel viewed Spinoza as an alternative to the dualism of subject and object which was established in Kantian philosophy. The unity of God, humanity, and nature proposed by Spinoza formed the basis for an "absolute idealism" which rejected the division between nature and subjectivity maintained in Kant and Fichte's "critical" or "subjective" idealism.[36]

Whereas Hegel sees Spinozism as an underdeveloped, still abstract attempt at unifying substance and subject, his critique of Fichte comes down to a disagreement about the very possibility of such an integrated philosophical system. Hegel's goal of unifying substance with subject is explicitly proscribed by Fichte, who asserts the "absolute incompatibility" of idealism

[34] Like Hegel's critique of Spinoza, his engagement with Fichte on questions of freedom is well-studied in the secondary literature. See Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), Part II: Chapter 5 "Knowledge of Freedom," 273-306; Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom*, Chapter 1 "Autonomy and Politics: Rousseau, Kant, and Fichte," 1-32; Rocío Zambrana, *Hegel's Theory of Intelligibility*, Chapter 2 "Positing: Fichte," 26-35.
[35] *LHP* III, 479.
[36] See Fredrick Beiser, *German Idealism*, "Chapter 1: Absolute Idealism: A General Introduction," 349-374. Spinoza's influence on absolute idealism is treated at 361-364.

with any form of substantial metaphysics, describing the "continued passage from necessity to freedom," a passage which Hegel aims to build, as an impossibility.[37]

2.3.1 The unity of freedom and necessity in the Differenzschrift

Before considering the finer points of Hegel's engagement with Fichte, it is first necessary to establish just how fundamentally his early rejection of subjective idealism shaped his own philosophy of freedom. Hegel credits Fichte with creating a comprehensive science (*Wissenschaft*), advancing beyond the mere "cognition" (*Erkennen*) of Kant towards a systematic, "universal knowledge."[38] Nonetheless, his system is shaped by a fundamental opposition between free subjectivity and substantial existence. After establishing the "I" as the "self-positing" first principle of philosophy, he then derives the external world as that which opposes the subject (as the "not-I"). Since it is built upon this negative opposition between subject and substance, Fichte's philosophy does not attempt any reconciliation of freedom and necessity.

Schelling was likewise dissatisfied with the one-sided subjectivity of Fichte's system. In response, he developed a philosophy of nature which found an implicit subjective freedom at work in nature's self-creation, treating nature as the "transcendental philosopher treats the self."[39] In the 1801 *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy* (also known as the *Differenzschrift*), Hegel presents Fichte's idealism and Schelling's philosophy of nature as two halves of a greater whole. He ultimately favors Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* because it attempts

[37] J.G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge with the First and Second Introductions*, ed. and trans. by Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), §5, 13.
[38] *LHP* III, 485.
[39] F.W.J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of Nature*, trans. by Keith R. Peterson (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 14.

to locate the subject within the natural substance, while Fichte has not found anything of substance in the subject, and indeed regards them as opposed.

Reacting to his two predecessors, Hegel states his intention to build a passageway between these philosophies, an integration which will occur through his concept of freedom as inner necessity. He here presents one of his clearest articulations of this sense of freedom:

> Each of the two systems is both a system of freedom and a system of necessity at the same time. Freedom and necessity are ideal factors, so they are not in real opposition. Hence the absolute cannot posit itself as absolute in either of these two forms; and the philosophical sciences cannot be, the one a system of freedom, the other a system of necessity. A freedom set apart like that would be a formal freedom, just as a necessity set apart would be a formal necessity. Freedom is the character of the absolute when it is posited as something inner, something that remains unlimited even when it posits itself in a limited form, i.e., in definite points of the objective totality. … Necessity is the character of the absolute viewed as something outer, as an objective totality, hence as a [system of] externality whose parts, however, have no being apart from the whole [system] of objectivity.[40]

The opposition between free subjectivity and natural necessity undoes itself when they are together seen as the inner and outer aspects of a single system. The legal system, for instance, is both a system of necessity and a system of freedom. It compels citizens when they break the laws and so stand outside of it, yet it is the foundation of freedom when seen from within, from the perspective of the law-abiding citizen whose sphere of activity only increases in virtue of the guarantees of law. The freedom or necessity of the law is thus a matter of one's own perspective (these "ideal factors" are not in "real opposition"). It depends on if the law is viewed "from within" or "from without," whether it is "posited as something inner" or "viewed as something outer."

Even prior to writing *PS*, Hegel resolves this ontological opposition within a certain phenomenological standpoint, a self-consciousness aware of the incompleteness of both immediate, momentary points of view. Self-conscious, systematic philosophy recognizes that this

[40] *DS*, 167.

opposition is only an "idealization," the abstraction of a finite moment from the concrete interrelation of real existence.[41] The unity of freedom and necessity is therefore incomprehensible to immediate consciousness, which cannot integrate these two opposed perspectives.

Having established his own approach to resolving this opposition, Hegel gives an early statement of what he will later fully develop as the freedom of inner necessity. Already in *DS*, he claims that a practical freedom "wholly abstracted from necessity" amounts to little more than capricious whim and would reduce all choices to mere contingencies.[42] Prefiguring his later logic of freedom, Hegel argues that reducing freedom to an unlimited capacity for particular choice also implies a fractured view of reality. The will's liberation from the "objective totality" of finite existence means that it regards "single parts as if they were for themselves."[43] Just as baseless actions divorced from any sense of necessity do not amount to true self-determination, an ontology without any substantial self-relation only describes parts of existence in their immediate isolation.

2.3.2 The mere opposition (and therefore isolation) of the Fichtian subject

Fichte's idiosyncratic philosophical vocabulary divides all philosophical thought into two different camps: "dogmatists," who assert that objective, mind-independent "things" are prior to self-consciousness, and "idealists," who assert that self-consciousness must be taken as prior to objective beings. These terms roughly correlate to Hegel's own vocabulary of "substance" and "subject" as moments of the absolute. Just as Hegel takes Spinoza's substance metaphysics to be an inadequate articulation of subjective freedom, Fichte describes dogmatism as an unfree

[41] Hegel makes this point in *SL*: "The claim that the *finite is an idealization* defines *idealism*. The idealism of philosophy consists in nothing else than in the recognition that the finite is not truly an existent." *SL* 21.142, 124.
[42] *DS*, 167.
[43] *DS*, 167.

philosophy. The dogmatist begins to philosophize from "what is," taking existence to be primary, but for the idealist existence is

> by no means regarded as a primary and original concept, but is viewed merely as derivative, as a concept derived, at that, through opposition to activity, and hence a merely negative concept. To the idealist, the only positive thing is freedom; existence, for him, is a mere negation of the latter.[44]

Fichte understands the freedom of subjectivity to be its freedom from the limitations imposed by the determinate, concrete existence which the dogmatist regards as an axiomatic first principle. Yet from Hegel's perspective, Fichte has only locked subjectivity into the opposition of consciousness (described above at 1.4.1). While subjectivity is apparently free of all determination, it remains determined by this very opposition to objective being. To be free means only to be exempt from natural necessity, to stand outside of substance.

While both Hegel and Fichte affirm the centrality of self-consciousness, Hegel argues that what Fichte describes as self-consciousness remains stuck in the opposition of mere consciousness. Hegel arrives at the standpoint of self-consciousness in *PS* through an examination of the external world which ends up inverting itself (in force and the understanding), with consciousness returning into itself and therefore into self-consciousness. Fichte, by contrast, establishes self-consciousness through an immediate act of intellectual introspection:

> Attend to yourself: turn your attention away from everything that surrounds you and towards your inner life; this is the first demand philosophy makes of its disciple. Our concern is not with anything that lies outside you, but only with yourself.[45]

Fichte's subject becomes self-conscious by subtracting the external object of consciousness rather than engaging it. While this would seem to be a purer form of self-consciousness, Hegel contends that this subject has not objectified himself in the external world and so cannot truly recognize

[44] Fichte §7, 69.
[45] Fichte §1, 6.

himself. Since Fichte's subject only exists as a negation, he remains logically dependent on his objective counterpart. His apparently infinite reflection into himself is always opposed by an "other" which in fact constitutes his own finite limitation. As will be discussed below at 4.1.2, his infinitude is spurious and false (what Hegel will term the "bad infinite").[46]

One further consequence of having a concept of subjectivity stuck in the opposition of subject and object (the opposition of consciousness) is the limitation of subjectivity to an individual form. The universal, intersubjective life of spirit — the concrete history which constitutes its substantiality — remains inaccessible to the immediate reflection-into-self of Fichte's subject. Since her act of "subjectification" is only an act of separation, Hegel describes the Fichtian ego as "individual self-consciousness [which] simply signifies standing apart," with the result that the "Fichtian philosophy recognizes the finite spirit alone, and not the infinite; it does not recognize spirit as universal thought."[47]

Fichte's logic of freedom likewise appears in his individualistic social philosophy. Hegel describes Fichte's political philosophy as one in which the state upholds "the freedom of individuals" by balancing it against "the freedom of the whole" in defining individual rights.[48] On this basis, Franco describes Fichte's political philosophy as "one of the most thoroughgoing and uncompromising attempts in European political thought to deduce the political arrangements that correspond to the modern experience of individuality."[49]

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[46] Hegel associates Fichte with the bad infinite (*LHP* III, 499):

> For because the ego is fixed in its opposition to the non-ego, and is only as being opposed, it becomes lost in that unity. The attainment of this aim is hence sent further and further back into the false, sensuous infinitude: it is a progression implying just the same contradiction as that found in Kant, and having no present actuality in itself; for the ego has all actuality in its opposition only.

[47] *LHP* III, 499.
[48] *LHP* III, 503-504.
[49] Franco, 27.

And yet, despite setting up the state towards this end, Fichte advocates some policies which Hegel found quite illiberal, such as the institution of a police force which knows the daily routines of citizens and prevents crimes before they happen.[50] The subjective logic of freedom Fichte adopts paradoxically destroys individual freedom. Each individual requires the restriction of every other individual to exercise his pure freedom; the freedom of one turns into the subjugation of all. As will be explored further below at 4.2.2, Hegel similarly interprets the French Revolution in *PS* as evidence of how a purely individualistic account of freedom fails to universalize itself.

2.3.3 Fichte's "philosophy of striving" as the "liberation of fleeing"

For Fichte, practical reason is prior to theoretical reason in that we can solve the impasse of the Kantian antinomies by reframing them as normative questions. There is no compelling theoretical reason to choose idealism over dogmatism, since they are mutually exclusive, closed systems without a common point of comparison. There is, however, a practical basis on which to decide between them. If I choose dogmatism, I will see myself as a mere reflection of external circumstances, and so surrender my moral autonomy. But if I choose idealism, I am at the same time accepting ultimate responsibility for my character and actions. Fichte therefore concludes that "what sort of philosophy one chooses depends, therefore, on what sort of man one is."[51]

Yet such self-determination is always going to involve an engagement with an external other. For example, the sheer resolve to engage in productive labor will always be shaped and limited by factors external to the will: the resources at hand, the constraints of time, and the limitations of the body. Fichte cannot reduce the self to these external factors (this would be falling

[50] Franco, 27.
[51] Fichte §5, 16.

back into "dogmatism"), yet such externalities nonetheless must still be acknowledged in any meaningful practical philosophy of action.

For this reason, Fichte proposes that moral autonomy be conceived of as a kind of "striving" (*Strebung*) which asymptotically approaches but never quite achieves the full self-determination it intends. Externality is a kind of necessary evil which subjective freedom never completely overcomes. In *LHP*, Hegel describes this doctrine as a romantic pining for a realm beyond, an ideal world which motivates my actions even though it will never be fully actualized:

> Yearning, according to Fichte, is divine; in yearning I have not forgotten myself, I have not forgotten that I possess a superiority in myself; and therefore it is a condition of happiness and satisfaction. [Yet] the ego is merely an effort, on its side it is fixed, and it cannot realize its endeavors. … Self-consciousness determines the non-ego, but does not know how to make this beyond its own.[52]

For Hegel, Fichte's philosophy is one manifestation of the romanticism which has valorized the endless striving for the unattainable. Such yearning presents itself as a noble elevation above a pedestrian reality, but it is just as much an abdication of actuality. Goethe's Faust is the clearest personification of this striving, as he is forgiven for his pact with Mephisto in the heavenly "beyond." The chorus of angels cries out that "whoever strives with all his power, we are allowed to save."[53] The promise of such heavenly redemption seems to liberate humanity from its unsatisfied striving, but for Hegel it is only an entrapment in a consolatory, unreal idealism.

Hegel's critique of *Strebungsphilosophe* relates directly to his thinking about the logic of "the ought" (*das Sollen*) in *SL*. For Fichte, our freedom is essentially an expression of "the ought," our transcendence of the external circumstances presented in a given situation and our resolution upon how they "should" be resolved. But Hegel points out that whenever we say that something

[52] *LHP* III, 498-499.
[53] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe's Faust*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1990), Part II, lines 11936-7, 493.

"ought" to be, we are equally conceding that it is not the case: "what ought to be *is*, and at the same time *is not*. If it *were*, it would not be what merely *ought to be*."[54] In saying that something ought to be, we are, at the same time, claiming the falsity of the present state of affairs in which it is not the case, understanding it as a situation which could be resolved through morally correct action.

For this reason, the "ought" should be regarded as only a moment in the process of actualization. If something should be, but is not, Hegel holds that it will show itself to be the case in the fullness of time. Normativity has its own necessity, and therefore the romantic standpoint of a heroic yet unfulfilled striving is essentially vain and empty. In separating free subjectivity from the determinate conditions of moral action, Fichte robs normativity of its real efficacy:

> In the actual order of things, reason and law are not in such a sad state of affairs that they only *ought* to be (only the abstraction of the in-itself stays at this); equally, the ought does not perpetuate itself nor, which is the same, is finitude absolute. The philosophy of Kant and Fichte holds out the *ought* as the resolution of the contradictions of reason – though it is rather only a standpoint that remains fixed in finitude and therefore in contradiction.[55]

The apparent freedom of transcendence is only a deprivation of the actual order of things, a failure to see reason at work in their operation. This deprivation leaves us less at home in the world, never truly free. In transcending the world, we have only enacted the "liberation of fleeing," a liberation in which an abstract subject remains uncomprehending of how to accommodate itself to the concrete ways of the world.[56] The philosophy of striving is not true self-determination, but rather only a new form of dependency, a self-destructive need to set oneself above enacting real possibilities in affirming the nobility of the unattainable. When we dismiss the real conditions of our situation while exalting the hypothetical mastery of an unlimited ego, we only flee from the world with the result that we must endlessly struggle against it.

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[54] *SL* 21.120, 104.
[55] *SL* 21.123, 107-108.
[56] *EL* §94.

2.3.4 Fichte on the personality of philosophy and the independence of self-consciousness

Despite the points of difference between Hegel and Fichte, it is also important to note how Fichte positively influences Hegel's philosophy of freedom. Fichte's reverence for freedom is itself an important point of commonality with Hegel, as both take freedom to be the greatest conception of the human good.[57]

They also both understand philosophy to assume the form of an individual personality. While the relationship between philosophy and personality is not as central a theme for Hegel, he describes the absolute idea as attaining a "personality" (see 5.3.2 below).[58] This Fichtian influence is also implicit in how Hegel generally speaks about philosophy. Just as Fichte says that the philosophy we choose is a reflection of our character, Hegel's criticism of other philosophies as "one-sided" is a criticism which could equally well apply to personalities. Rather than dismissing these philosophies as simply false, Hegel treats them as if they were people who could attain a more complete development. Moreover, Hegel's discussion of the "freedom" of a philosophy only makes sense when we personify philosophy in the way Fichte suggests.

Fichte's phenomenology of self-consciousness is also valuable in understanding the role self-consciousness plays in Hegel's philosophy of freedom. While Fichte does not develop self-consciousness in the same way which Hegel does in *PS*, we can nonetheless gain phenomenological insight from his description of how the "I" intuits the "I" by abstracting itself from all empirical content. While Hegel describes this immediate form of self-consciousness as an

[57] On Hegel's elevation of freedom over happiness, see Wood, 69-71. On the primacy of freedom in Fichte's system, see Beiser, *German Idealism*, "Chapter 4: Freedom and Subjectivity," 273-288.
[58] *SL* 12.236, 735.

infinite "being-for-itself" (*Fürsichsein*),[59] his discussion of this logical category remains abstract and its relationship to self-consciousness is not clearly delineated. Fichte, on the other hand, gives a more concrete explanation of how "being-for-self" appears as the freedom of self-consciousness:

> The intellect as such *observes* itself; and this self-observation is directed immediately upon its every feature. The nature of intelligence consists in this *immediate* unity of being and seeing. What is in it, and what it is in general, it is *for itself* [*für sich*]; and it is that, *qua* intellect, only in so far as it is that for itself. … A thing, to be sure, is supposed to have a diversity of features, but as soon as the question arises "*For whom*, then is it to have them?" no one who understands the words will answer "For itself"; for we must still subjoin in thought an intellect *for* which it exists. The intellect is, by contrast, necessarily what it is for itself, and requires nothing subjointed to it in thought. By being posited as intellect, that for which it exists is already posited with it. In the intellect, therefore — to speak figuratively — there is a double series, of being and seeing, of the real and of the ideal.[60]

Just as understanding *Beisichselbstsein* required an analysis of the preposition *bei*, Fichte illuminates the ontology of self-consciousness by unpacking the precise sense of the preposition *für* in *Fürsichsein*. Something is "for" something in the sense that it becomes an object to it. A thing can become something for consciousness (it can be idealized as a subjective representation of that thing), but it cannot become something for itself. It has no such self-relation. The being of the intellect, by contrast, is always a being-for-itself. Every form of subjective existence which we may assume is, at the very same time, an observation of that existence. The being of the intellect is always also a perspective upon its being, a self-observation of its own existence.

This self-observation of the intellect is Fichte's own way of restating Hegel's insight that all consciousness is in fact self-consciousness (see 1.4.1 above). It also confirms the key Hegelian insight that self-consciousness has an ontologically distinct character from mere consciousness. The self which observes itself in this way cannot be regarded as a thing like any other. It does not

[59] *SL* 21.145, 127.
[60] Fichte §6, 17.

observe itself as something static and given, the sort of passive observation which would be contrary to freedom. The object of self-consciousness is rather, in Fichte's phrase, a fact that is at the same time a deed, a *Tat-handlung*. Whatever I observe about myself in self-conscious reflection are "facts" which are only the case because I myself am the one performing them.[61] The independence of self-consciousness as "being-for-itself" means that there is nothing to "who I am" prior to my becoming that person, no set starting point from which I must proceed in the observation of myself. Every self-observation is, at the same time, a self-creation.

Even though Fichte's "intellect" remains logically stuck in the opposition of mere consciousness, he nonetheless recognizes the special phenomenal character of self-consciousness. In Hegel's reception of Fichte, the distinction of "intellect" from "object" becomes a further distinction between two forms of subjectivity. The "intellect" is the self-consciousness which attains the independence of being-for-self, whereas the mere awareness of an "object" is only consciousness. In so incorporating Fichte's philosophy into his own, Hegel clarifies and specifies different modes of awareness in a way not possible in Fichte's more abstract treatment of subjectivity.

2.4 The Historical Progression from Substance to Subject

Although the dialectical relationship between substance and subject has only been fully elaborated in modern philosophy, Hegel claims that these two principles have a much deeper lineage dating back to antiquity. Indeed, the same general course of development from substance to subject expressed in *PS* and *SL* likewise applies to history itself. In *PS*, there is a progression from the external consciousness of objective being to increasingly adequate forms of subjective

[61] Fichte §4, 10.

self-consciousness. In *SL*, the objective categories of "being" and "essence" are ultimately unified in conceptual subjectivity. In Hegel's work on the philosophy of history (*PH*) as well as in his treatment of the history of philosophy (*LHP*), he demonstrates how this movement from substance to subject is also the movement from antiquity to modernity.

2.4.1 The progression of freedom as the inner necessity of history

Western intellectual history contains within itself several examples of this arc of development from substance to subject. In questions of practical freedom, it is clear from modern constitutions and discourses concerning personhood that modernity distinguishes itself from antiquity by recognizing individual autonomy as central to its understanding of freedom. Likewise, philosophy since Descartes has turned towards the "I" as its foundational principle, understanding freedom as the intellectual and moral self-determination of a free subject. Even the submergence of subjectivity in Spinoza's substance is only conceivable within a modern intellectual context in which the "I" has been identified and affirmed as an independent principle.

But while the contrast between ancient substantiality and modern subjectivity is relatively easy to demonstrate (and is by no means a distinctly Hegelian proposition), the difference between these eras remains only incidental unless it can be shown how subjectivity *necessarily* emerges from out of substantiality. In *PS*, the necessity of this course of development is driven by the insufficiency of every standpoint of experience which lacks the self-comprehension of absolute knowing. In *SL*, the same progression plays out as each attempt to define "being" necessitates a further, more self-comprehensive concept ultimately culminating in the philosophical self-consciousness of the absolute idea.

This progression is so ubiquitous in the Hegelian corpus that it can seem like a mere formalism imposed upon every topic which Hegel considers.[62] This criticism resonates most strongly with Hegel's attempt to understand history itself as such a process of development. Despite Hegel's predilection to find reason at work in human affairs, the endless variety of accidents which have shaped world history make it the perfect example of something which has no inner logic and only emerges from chance circumstances. What if Pangea had split differently into 15 smaller continents? What if the world's largest oil reserves were discovered in 19th-century Portugal, which used its wealth to reestablish the hegemony of Roman Catholicism? What if Genghis Khan had lived long enough to permanently establish Mongol rule in Europe? With such drastically different historical outcomes emerging simply by tweaking a single variable, it seems, at first glance, to be a fool's errand to assert any kind of necessary development in history.

Because it is such a difficult case to make, understanding Hegel's philosophy of history requires the most complete account of how Hegel understands necessity to be at work in even manifestly contingent, unrelated events. At the conclusion of *PS*, Hegel describes history as the "externalization" of "spirit emptied out into time."[63] As absolute knowledge recollects these

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[62] Nahum Brown describes this interpretation:

> One popular objection to Hegel comes from the assertion that his brand of systematization leaves little room for alternative histories, alternative logical transitions, and alternative courses of life and reality. With sharp necessity, the *Phenomenology* marches along its course from the shapes of consciousness to the shapes of self-consciousness, from the early stages of reason to the fullblown realization of spirit in the state, art, religion, and philosophy. Likewise, the *Logic* turns from topic to topic with urgency in order to uncover the shapes of thought thinking itself. So also, *The Philosophy of History* projects the linear trajectory of the history of the past, not as a disconnected jumble of accidental events that happen to occur contingently and without reason, but as an intelligently designed and rigorously directed developmental path through time and society. Many interpreters of Hegel have concluded from this that his vision of a grand, complete system also leads, as a by-product, to the marginalized exclusion of other spheres of life, of alternative courses that history could have taken, of seemingly 'lower' religious institutions, as well as forms of art that embody spirit to a lesser degree.

Nahum Brown, *Hegel on Possibility: Dialectics, Contradiction, and Modality* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 25.

[63] *PS* §808.

historical events, it attempts to discover the logic internal to them. This is not simply a matter of connecting one event to another in a purely external analysis. Because historical events could have been otherwise, they remain incidental unless viewed from the reflective standpoint of recollection — "the self has to penetrate and digest" them.[64]

Looking back on the general trajectory of history in this way, Hegel observes the spread of the consciousness of freedom. Although his cursory and prejudicial treatment of non-Western sources is a serious deficiency in his account of this progress, Hegel does not claim that the West has any special destiny to be free in a way other societies do not. In *PH* he indeed emphasizes that, while freedom incidentally arose in Western history, it necessarily universalizes itself:

> The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom; a progress whose development according to the necessity of its nature, it is our business to investigate. … The Eastern nations knew only that *one* is free; the Greek and Roman world only that *some* are free, while *we* know that all men absolutely (man *as man*) are free … *the final cause of the world at large*, we allege to be the consciousness of its own freedom on the part of spirit, and, *ipso facto*, the reality of that freedom.[65]

Hegel is clear that the actual events of history do not aways tend in this direction and are indeed "the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been victimized."[66] Yet freedom will continue to actualize itself through both its successes and failures. When any social project is successful at guaranteeing some aspect of human freedom, it builds a structure which establishes itself as part of the human experience.

Freedom progressively accrues and does not suddenly reverse itself because, as "being-at-home" in the world, it is established through these substantial, enduring structures. This legacy can be as immediately present as the traffic signal which enables free movement by regulating the

[64] *PS* §808.
[65] *PH*, 19.
[66] *PH*, 21.

flow of vehicles and pedestrians, but it can also assume the more idealized form of an intellectual inheritance, the ideas which motivated past societies and are still recalled today.

We also inherit the legacy of destruction and failure left behind by all the attempts of human beings to live freely. Indeed, Hegel's account of the development of the institutions of freedom in *PS* has a decidedly tragic bent, beginning with Greek tragedy and concluding with the failure of the revolutionary politics of the Enlightenment. In *PH*, Hegel notably employs a domestic metaphor to describe how the senseless passions which produce the sufferings of history are like materials which can be harvested to build a more accommodating home for our freedom. In the progress of freedom, human beings assemble social structures which protect us from the arbitrariness of any rogue initiative undertaken by those in power. The house of freedom is, paradoxically, a position we have built "against" our own selves.[67]

Our capacity for reflection is essential to the progress of freedom because it gives us the ability to digest these failures in subsequent attempts to create more accommodating, resilient ways of being-at-home in the world. The consciousness of freedom which arises through retrospective reflection can never be wholly detached from the particularity of present historical circumstances, which always demand our continued attention. As something which is initially inherited from the past, every home is also, to some extent, a prison. This dissatisfaction with the world we inhabit produces a new consciousness of freedom which will, in turn, produce new social structures.

This unfolding of freedom in history is only internally necessary to its own course of development. We may equally say that a frog has a necessary course of life, a way of developing itself as a frog, but this does not mean that the life of a frog is somehow guaranteed. The life of the frog is not necessary as such, but there is a necessary progression to existing as a frog — it

[67] *PH*, 27.

goes from being an egg, to a tadpole, to a frog. Similarly, a society does not "need" to be free, but it must somehow reckon with the impetus towards human freedom. Insofar as freedom appears at all in a society, it will, of its own nature, demand its own spread and further concrete manifestation.

As Stephen Houlgate writes, the inner necessity of freedom's historical development is an applied case of the inner necessity we have already encountered as a sense of freedom itself:

> [It is the] necessity that is *internal* to freedom itself - the necessity that there is because human beings have the *real* capacity for free self-determination. It is this internal necessity, rather than absolute necessity as such, that Hegel understands to be operative in giving structure to human history. It is also such internal necessity which is operative in Hegel's philosophy itself.[68]

Inner necessity is a necessity that does not depend on any single chain of causation. There are multiple paths toward the same inevitable result. If ancient Greece had never existed, the same movement towards a greater subjective self-consciousness would have occurred on a different timeline, and been articulated in a different way, but would have still occurred insofar as human history continued to play itself out.

The advance of freedom also should not be understood as a pre-ordained purpose for which events are deliberately manipulated by some external power. In Hegel's understanding of teleology, progress towards an apparently intentional end occurs without any deliberate guidance through "the cunning of reason."[69] In order for the truth of human freedom to show itself, it is only necessary to let the current situation show its own inherent limitations. Reason, "by letting the objects, in keeping with their own nature, act on one another and wear themselves out on one another, without meddling immediately in this process, achieves *its* purpose alone."[70] Freedom

[68] Stephen Houlgate, "Necessity and Contingency in Hegel's *Science of Logic*," *The Owl of Minerva* 27, no. 1 (1995): 48.
[69] *EL* §209.
[70] *EL* §209.

develops in history simply because unfree social arrangements have supressed a crucial truth about human beings, a truth which will emerge of its own accord.

I will conclude with a hypothetical example which more simply illustrates the internal necessity of the progression of freedom from "one" to "some" to "all" which Hegel articulates in *PH*. Let us suppose that we start with a single, isolated human society in which there is no explicit consciousness of freedom. One person exercises absolute rule which is never questioned or challenged. But such a situation can only be temporary, since, as Hegel argues in *PS*, the authority of such a ruler could only exist insofar as others recognize this ruler as freely sovereign.[71] Since every order is only an order insofar as it is received by a subordinate, even the most perfect tyranny already implies an implicit kernel of freedom waiting to express itself.

Even the transmission of orders from the ruler to his subjects already implies the active engagement of the subjects' own subjective will in the execution of these orders. Because nobody could interpret and execute the ruler's intentions with perfect clarity, some friction between them is bound to arise. While this issue will necessarily appear in some way, its resolution remains a contingent fact of history. The personalities involved could settle the dispute in different ways.

In the best-case scenario, the subjects would realize that their interpretation of the laws is evidence of their own agency and, recognizing their own freedom, demand a more reciprocal relationship from the sovereign. This reaction, analogous to the initial establishment of parliaments in Europe, would initiate the extension of freedom which Hegel says eventually culminates in the recognition of the freedom of all. A devolution of power like that which occurred in modern Western history would take place. After it is realized that the king is only the king because he is recognized as the king by the nobles, it is then realized that the nobles are only the nobles because

[71] *PS* §§185-188.

they are recognized as the nobles by the commoners. Finally, the commoners realize that they are not commoners at all but begin to recognize each other as equal citizens.

But this trajectory towards freedom only appears very slowly in the actual events of history. No society "must" be free — it only must somehow reckon with the truth of human freedom. In the course of history, reform results far less often than repression, yet even such a negative reaction is an attempt to reckon with the reality of freedom. The absolute ruler will likely seek to maintain the initial tyranny and may simply execute those who have misinterpreted their orders. This crackdown may prove to be fatal, as the mistrust and dysfunction which grows within the state results in its eventual destruction. The advance of freedom has been delayed, but also promoted, as historical observers take note of the fate of this type of society.

But if the state survives, the increasingly brusque enforcement of the ruler's edicts will only serve to further individualize those who carry them out. The frightened subordinate will only become more aware of their own agency by virtue of its suppression. When I am presented with an order, I am increasingly aware that there is an "I" which must respond to it and choose between different outcomes, between an obedience which recognizes the authority of the ruler and a refusal which does not. I have, minimally, the power to refuse the order. And if I have the power to refuse the order, I can also be more active in my disobedience, passing on my own contrary initiatives down the chain of command. The power to interpret must also be the power to decree.

Simply by recognizing the role I play in maintaining the order of things, I have acquired an immediate knowledge of the insubstantiality of the present unfree social arrangement. Because society is dependent on my participation, it could exist differently. Indeed, the present order of things must come undone because the conflicting imperatives which I receive will eventually come to an impasse. The commands given by the ruler, the orders of an aloof, disinterested

consciousness, cannot be actualized. In receiving them, I, as their would-be executor, attain a new consciousness of freedom. Even obedience now demands that I interpret these commands for myself. The "cunning of reason" is therefore at work in even the most unfree situation, since it poses to the individual a dilemma which prompts the self-recognition of her own freedom.

2.4.2 The discovery of subject in substance in ancient Greece

This highly simplified example of how freedom advances from the freedom of "one" to the freedom of "all" corresponds to how Hegel describes its actual historical development from antiquity to modernity. Just as the unfree society in this hypothetical example dissolved as its members became increasingly self-aware, the advance of freedom is equivalent to the ongoing

discovery and refinement of the subjective principle which Hegel finds lacking in antiquity.[72] The Greek polis is taken as the starting point of this historical progression because it explicitly concerned itself with the issues surrounding the emergence of subjectivity. As will be explored below in 3.2, ancient Greek tragedy wrestled with the problem of how the internal conflict within the social whole (or, in Hegel's language, the social substance) leads to its tragic dissolution and the emergence of the subjective principle. Because Greek life initiated this movement towards

[72] Hegel's thesis about the development of modern subjectivity from an unself-conscious ancient world has had a great influence over many thinkers. Even if these thinkers have little to no exposure to Hegel himself, the similarity of their approaches can be attributed to the wide-ranging influence of Hegel's philosophy of history.

These thinkers have, in turn, further researched the distinction between ancient and modern subjectivity which Hegel hypothesized, treating it from a variety of scientific, sociological, and linguistic perspectives. Their work has, in turn, offered broader evidence for Hegel's interpretation of history.

The following thinkers have all suggested that subjectivity only appeared in a still rudimentary form in ancient Greece, where it developed from Homer to Plato and has still been developing into modernity:

Bruno Snell traced the development of subjectivity in ancient Greece from Homer onwards. The Homeric world, populated by muses, gods, and oracles, does not exhibit the same self-contained subjectivity which emerges in the Platonic dialogues. See Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*, trans. by T. G. Rosenmeyer (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953).

Jean Gebser described history as the "evolution of consciousness." The ancient world was characterized by a fluid "mythic" consciousness, while modernity's "mental" consciousness resolves its ambiguities. Gebser makes his argument by appealing to a variety of historical phenomena, especially from art history. See Jean Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, trans. by Noel Barstad (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985).

Julian Jaynes approached the development of self-consciousness from the perspective of evolutionary science. He argued that the characters of the *Iliad* lacked self-consciousness since they externalized their executive cognitive functions in the Homeric gods. This externalization corresponded to a lack of communication between the left and right hemispheres of the brain and so is described as a "bicameral mentality." See Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

Christopher Gill closely follows Hegel in his work on the ancient self. The ancient self was an "objective-participant" self which defined itself through its membership in a community. See Christopher Gill, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). In a later work, Gill also observes that what he terms the "structured self" only emerges after the downfall of the Greek city-state, confirming the trend towards individualization which Hegel saw in Roman life. See Christopher Gill, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Edward Jeremiah takes a linguistic approach to this question in considering the development of the reflexive morpheme *auto* (English "-self") in the ancient Greek language. Jeremiah sees the development of selfhood as occurring within ancient Greece as reflexive language was adopted more widely, especially in philosophy. The conflict between Plato and the sophists gives rise to the now familiar opposition between perspectivism (the world as it is for my*self*) and objectivism (the world as it is in it*self*). See Edward Jeremiah, *The Emergence of Reflexivity in Greek Language and Thought from Homer to Plato and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

subjectivity, Hegel understands the historical progression of freedom to have begun at this point in history.

When he introduces Greek philosophy in *LHP*, Hegel echoes *EL* §31 in describing the cultural world of ancient Greece as one characterized by its being-at-home-with-itself. For Hegel, this Greek "at-homeness" (*Heimatlichkeit*) lies behind its development of philosophy.[73] Unlike the Romans, who expanded beyond their due measure and so found themselves alienated from the world, the Greeks stayed within themselves and so underwent an internal "spiritual development."[74] Their accomplishments in art, science, and philosophy cleared away the unfathomable mystery of the world and so allowed them to know themselves as free.[75] This Greek way of being-at-home was a being-at-home in the other, since the accomplishments of their neighbors became a stimulus for their own development.[76] This can be observed in how the Platonic dialogues reflect upon foreign mythologies, such as in the reference to the ring of Gyges (a Lydian story) in *Republic* or the appearance of the Egyptian god Thoth in *Phaedrus*.

The *Heimatlichkeit* of ancient Greece also influenced its understanding of political freedom. Hegel emphasizes that the Greek understanding of freedom is different from the modern because it locates freedom in the world of the polis, the world in which the individual is "at home" in the institutions and norms of Greek culture. Unlike the modern individual, whose abstract subjectivity "starts from the self [and] lives in the self," the self-consciousness of the Greek individual participates in a greater cosmic order.[77]

[73] *LHP* I, 151-152.
[74] *LHP* I, 150.
[75] *LHP* I, 150.
[76] *LHP* I, 150.
[77] *LHP* I, 152.

But, on the other hand, while Hegel will treat the Greek world as the prime example of the "social substance" in *PS*, its unique substantiality is only relative to the modern Western perspective. In comparison with their historical predecessors in the ancient near-East, Hegel recognizes the Greeks as the subjective-individualists of their era. Although they only understood subjectivity as a kind of "form-giving" which remained "devoid of measure,"[78] the Greeks tried to arrive at a golden mean which recognized both substance and subject and so inaugurated the history of freedom:

> The Greeks stand between both these extremes in the happy medium; this therefore is the medium of beauty, seeing that it is both natural and spiritual, but yet that the spiritual still remains the governing, determining subject. … For the Greeks, the substantial unity of nature and spirit was a fundamental principle, and thus being in the possession and knowledge of this, yet not being overwhelmed in it, but having retired into themselves, they have avoided the extreme of formal subjectivity, and are still in unity with themselves. Thus it is a free subject which still possesses that original unity in content, essence and substratum.[79]

For Hegel, ancient Greece was uniquely free because it recognized the natural together with the spiritual, the social together with the individual, the substance together with the subject.

The tension between these two principles brought about the need for philosophy in ancient Greece. The Greek movement from substance to subject begins with the pre-Socratics, who generally described the universal origin or principle of all things (the ancient Greek *arche*) as a material element (water, earth, fire, and air). This diversity of sensuous substances gives way to a purely ideal understanding of substance as "being" in Parmenides' philosophy, which Hegel compares to that of Spinoza.[80] With this abstraction from the physical world, Greek thought is beginning the difficult task of locating subjectivity within substantiality. Hegel's own philosophy

[78] *LHP* I, 152.
[79] *LHP* I, 152-153.
[80] *LHP* III, 257.

is indeed an explication of one of Parmenides' most enigmatic fragments, an equation of subject and substance in which it is cryptically asserted that "thinking and being are the same."[81]

In his unique reading of ancient philosophy, Hegel dignifies the sophists as the "teachers of Greece through whom culture first came into existence."[82] The freely argumentative world of sophism exulted human subjectivity and thereby corrected the impersonal dogmatism of Parmenidean ontology. Yet despite the sophists' contributions, Hegel describes their way of thinking as mere "reasoning" (*räsonierend*), a shallow chain of logical operations which did not attempt to ground themselves as a coherent methodology.[83] This indeterminate reasoning was only the tool of self-will, as Hegel describes the ethos of the sophistic movement in this way: "it is my desire, my pride, glory, and honor, particular subjectivity, which I make my end."[84]

We may consider this sophistic standpoint to have been the working understanding of subjectivity in ancient Athens, as the sophists both formed and appealed to popular conceptions in making their arguments. Reason was not seen as fully autonomous, but rather as only a particular initiative through which one could manipulate universal, socially sanctioned (especially legal) sources of validity. As philosophy moved from cosmology into the law court, tension arose between the subjective self-will of sophism and the Eleatic doctrine of universal being.[85] This was the opposition of substance and subject in Greek philosophy prior to the appearance of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

Socrates' turn towards questions of the ethical good through a dialectical examination of self-consciousness was a more substantial, universalized expression of this nascent subjective

[81] τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι. Parmenides, DK B3. Translation is my own.
[82] *LHP* I, 355.
[83] *LHP* I, 365.
[84] *LHP* I, 371.
[85] The sophist Gorgias satirizes Parmenides in his treatise "On Non-Being," suggesting an explicit conflict between these early approaches to philosophy.

principle. He did not orient his mind toward convincing juries, but rather exercised his reason in a way which established its own autonomous validity. Perplexed by the Delphic oracle, Socrates devoted himself to the care of individual self-consciousness (tending to the souls of his interlocuters) with the hope of finding another wiser than himself.

In so subverting this oracular pronunciation, Socrates also reinterpreted the Delphic exhortation to "know thyself." This moral injunction was originally not a call to self-examination but instead advised visitors to the oracle to know their place within the wider cosmic order.[86] This original sense of self-knowledge meant setting aside one's own reason and instead receiving the oracular guidance which Hegel sees as characteristic of the lack of subjective freedom in ancient Greece.[87]

Hegel describes how Socrates' practice of the "examined life" was a living reinterpretation of the maxim as encouraging an examination of one's own beliefs and perceptions, the contents of one's own self-consciousness:

> Socrates it was who carried out the command of the God of knowledge, "know thyself," and made it the motto of the Greeks, calling it the law of the mind, and not interpreting it as meaning a mere acquaintanceship with the particular nature of man. Thus Socrates is the hero who established in the place of the Delphic oracle, the principle that man must look within himself to know what is truth. Now seeing that Pythia herself pronounced that utterance, we find in it a complete revolution in the Greek mind, and the fact that in place of the oracle, the personal self-consciousness of every thinking man has come into play.[88]

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[86] *Apology* 20e-23c.

[87] One textual example of this interpretation of *gnothi seauton* appears in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, lines 308-310. See further discussion below at 3.2.4.

[88] *LHP* I, 435. Cf. *LHP* I, 423:

> This element, the fact that the people had not the power of decision but were determined from without, was a real factor in Greek consciousness; and oracles were everywhere essential where man did not yet know himself inwardly as being sufficiently free and independent to take upon himself to decide as we do. This subjective freedom, which was not yet present with the Greeks, is what we mean in the present day when we speak of freedom; in the Platonic republic we shall see more of it. Our responsibility for what we do is a characteristic of modern times; we wish to decide according to grounds of common sense, and consider this as ultimate. The Greeks did not possess the knowledge of this infinitude.

As Socrates' student, Plato understands this subjective self-examination to result in substantial, universal knowledge. Hegel says that "what Socrates began was carried out by Plato, who acknowledged only the universal, the idea, the good, as that which has existence."[89] In his theory of the forms, Hegel credits Plato with "opening up the intellectual world," the realm of ideas contained within subjective thinking.[90] To know oneself is also, at the same time, to know the truth in its essence, to appreciate ideas in themselves and thereby ground one's subjectivity in a substantial, universal truth. Plato's self-critical, dialogical philosophy investigates many of the difficulties involved in this new concept of subjectivity. He grapples with the precise relationship between the individual subject and pure ideas, often describing it as a "participation" (*methexis*) in the form, a metaphor Hegel criticizes as an "indefinite and inadequate expression."[91]

Nonetheless, Hegel also disputes the common "misapprehension" of Plato which takes the forms as "transcendent existences which lie somewhere far from us."[92] While Plato's forms have an independent, substantial existence — they are "the implicitly and explicitly universal [which] truly exists in the world" — they are also equally subjective, since "thought is the activity of the universal."[93] While the theory of the forms is today often read as positing a division between the ideal and real worlds, Hegel sees Platonic philosophy as more integrative than dichotomous, as establishing the substantiality of subjective reason.

Plato's social philosophy, on the other hand, affirms Hegel's distinction between the ancient Greek and modern understandings of subjective individuality. As de Laurentiis writes, "the virtual absence of a conception of universal individual rights in [ancient Greek] ethical and

[89] *LHP* II, 29.
[90] *LHP* II, 29.
[91] *LHP* II, 70.
[92] *LHP* II, 30.
[93] *LHP* II, 30; *LHP* II, 37.

juridical texts" supports Hegel's claim of a relative lack of recognition for individual subjectivity in ancient Greece.[94] Hegel ascribes the lack of individual freedom in Plato's *Republic*, in which individuals belong to castes and are not allowed to choose their course in life, to the general shape of Greek ethical life, in which the individual remains opposed to the universal "social substance":

> The want of subjectivity is really the want of the Greek moral idea. The principle which became prominent with Socrates had been present up to this time only in a more subordinate capacity; now it of necessity became an even absolute principle, a necessary moment in the idea itself. By the exclusion of private property and of family life, by the suspension of freedom in the choice of the class, i.e. by the exclusion of all the determinations which relate to the principle of subjective freedom, Plato believes he has barred the doors to all the passions; he knew very well that the ruin of Greek life proceeded from this, that individuals, as such, began to assert their aims, inclinations, and interests, and made them dominate over the common mind.[95]

For Hegel, the universality of the structures of Plato's ideal state does not allow for the independence of the individual who subordinates himself to them. While Plato's ontology locates the universal forms within the individual subject, his practical philosophy is more conventionally contained within the "Greek moral idea" which took the assertion of individuality to be a threat to the universal life of the polis. Hegel's commentary on the inability of the Greek state to account for the emerging individuality of its citizens is treated further below at 3.2.

This claim is also supported by *Crito*, where Socrates advances this same point of view by describing himself as a child of the Laws, one indebted to his parents and so not afforded a separate existence.[96] Similarly, when Socrates describes the just individual in *Republic*, he does so only by analogy to the just city.[97] This analogy does not recognize individuality in its own right, and so de Laurentiis finds in it "no attempt … to ground the purported kinship of individual city and

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[94] Allegra de Laurentiis, *Subjects in the Ancient and Modern World: On Hegel's Theory of Subjectivity* (Basing-stoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 114.
[95] *LHP* II, 114-115.
[96] *Crito* 50a-51c.
[97] *Republic* 368c-369a.

individual soul either logically or metaphysically."[98] Hegel's theory of freedom depends upon a further articulation of this kinship, one in which the individual is no longer a child but the adult who has, in Kant's phrase, emerged from her "self-incurred immaturity" and so relates to the society which bore her as an independent person.[99]

Hegel finds Aristotle to have been still more successful in reconciling the individual subject with the universal substance, and indeed his philosophy can be considered a model for Hegel's own speculative unity of substance and subject. In Hegel's reading of Aristotle, the universal is *energeia*, the process of actualization which is also "the principle of individualization" belonging to a "pure subjectivity, [which] is peculiar to Aristotle."[100] Unique among the ancient Greeks, Hegel takes Aristotle to have been the first philosopher who understood "pure subjectivity" to be self-sufficient. Individual subjectivity not only apprehends substantial ideas, but also thinks in a way which is *itself* substantial. The universal form is not grasped only at the end of a course of dialectical examination but is rather always already contained within the activity of thinking itself. With this move from transcendence to immanence, Hegel credits Aristotle with resolving the opposition of individual subject and substantial idea which perplexed Plato.

Hegel says that Aristotle was able to resolve this opposition because, whereas the Platonic form was "abstractly identical with itself," Aristotle understood the universal to contain "difference and determination."[101] His concepts of potential and actuality allowed for the universal to contain apparently opposed "moments" (to use Hegel's term) which resolve themselves in time. This temporal elaboration of the universal closely resonates with Hegel's own historically

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[98] De Laurentiis, *Subjects in the Ancient and Modern World*, 114.
[99] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld and trans. by David Colclasure (New Haven, Yale University Press: 2006), 17.
[100] *LHP* II, 140.
[101] *LHP* II, 140.

emergent philosophy. The individual subject can apprehend the substantial life of spirit only because this universal truth has momentarily, partially elaborated itself within her finite, particular existence.

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle returns to the Platonic metaphor and describes the activity of philosophical thinking as a kind of participation, but for him this participation is a self-participation in which "thought thinks itself through participation in the object of thought … so that thought and the object of thought are the same."[102] Like Hegel, Aristotle holds that the individual subject becomes substantial and objective to themselves through the circular return of self-conscious thought. The metaphor of ascent which Plato adopts in the allegory of the cave is replaced by one of self-returning circular motion. Through the self-reflective activity which Hegel describes as "thinking over" (*Nachdenken*), the thinking that previously occurred immediately, as the particular act of an individual will, cycles back upon itself and is now reflected upon in its more universal dimensions. The individual only apprehends the universal through these distinct, internally differentiated moments, separating herself out as both the subject and object of thinking.

In so recognizing that the substantiality of subjective thought depends upon its circular return into itself, Hegel says that Aristotle arrives at the "highest standpoint; nothing deeper can we desire to know."[103] In Aristotle, we find the best description of the substantial subject which the prior philosophical tradition has had to offer. Hegel even directly quotes this passage from the *Metaphysics* at the conclusion of his own *Encyclopedia*.[104]

Why, then, does Hegel believe that even the singular Aristotle lacked a full comprehension of the subjective principle which has only fully developed in modernity? Hegel claims that

[102] *Metaphysics* 1072b. All translations of Aristotle come from *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. by Jonathon Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
[103] *LHP* II, 150.
[104] *PhilS* §577.

Aristotle described the substantiality of subjectivity as if it were an isolated phenomenon to investigate, failing to appreciate its systematic implications:

> In the Aristotelian teaching the idea of the self-reflecting thought is thus grasped as the highest truth; but its realization, the knowledge of the natural and spiritual universe, constitutes outside of that idea a long series of particular conceptions, which are external to one another, and in which a unifying principle, led through the particular, is wanting. The highest idea with Aristotle consequently once more stands only as a particular in its own place and without being the principle of his whole philosophy.[105]

Aristotle knows the highest truth, but he does not self-consciously recognize the wider significance of what he knows. Although Aristotle describes self-conscious thinking as the "first principle on which depend the sensible universe and the world of nature," he understands it as a special, divine experience, as the eternal contemplative life which we "temporarily enjoy."[106] The "highest idea … stands only as a particular" because it appears only within the context of Aristotle's investigation into substantial being. Self-conscious subjectivity is shown to be the principle upon which sensible substantiality depends, but this is as far as the investigation proceeds. Hegel sees Aristotle as unsystematic because the result of this *ad hoc* investigation has no bearing on Aristotle's approach to logic, or politics, or ethics. Moreover, the truth of self-consciousness appears alongside other such first principles. Indeed, earlier in the *Metaphysics* Aristotle describes the principle of non-contradiction as the "most certain of all principles," the "ultimate belief."[107]

Hegel further believes that Aristotle lacked the modern concept of subjectivity which would have granted his philosophy the living personality of a unified system. He claims that the problem of the subject-object relation, a problem which appeared alongside the modern scientific worldview, was not yet an explicit concern for ancient Greek philosophy, in which the

[105] *LHP* II, 229. I have replaced Haldane's "Notion" with "concept."
[106] *Metaphysics* 1072b.
[107] *Metaphysics* 1005b.

"independence of the 'I' within itself" was still unknown.[108] The self-consciousness required for systematic philosophy only later emerges in response to the modern opposition of consciousness which sharply distinguishes between subject and object. Only after the self has been collected into itself and differentiated from the world of objects can philosophy become the integrated expression of an individual personality.

Hegel's own philosophy can thus be understood as a modern reworking of Aristotle's, as the attempt of our self-grounding reason to self-consciously integrate and organize his observation of the substantiality of subjectivity into a systematic science. In this modern philosophy, self-consciousness not only knows itself as an immediate phenomenon, as a moment of contemplative reflection, but finally recognizes the full implications of its circular self-return. Through this knowledge of self-knowledge (i.e., from the absolute knowing with which *PS* concludes), philosophy grounds itself and therefore achieves the true self-determination of thought.

2.4.3 The Roman and Christian origins of subjective freedom in modernity

As it is covered in *PS*, the development of the modern subject involves a much more disparate set of influences than the relatively self-contained philosophical life of ancient Athens, influences which include Roman legalism, Christian theology, and the individualism of the Enlightenment. Moreover, the currents of modernity are more complex and in tension with each other, as we have seen with the opposition of Spinoza and Fichte. For this reason, a more complete genealogy of how this modern subject arose will be explored below at 4.2.1. For now, it will suffice to briefly answer two more basic questions: why does Hegel claim that the individualism of

[108] *LHP* I, 48-49.

modernity first appeared in the Roman world, and why does he believe that this individualism has become the foundation of modern philosophy?

As was the case for many 19th-century German philhellenes, the Roman world is, for Hegel, a marked decline from the beautiful harmony of Greek ethical life.[109] The Romans imposed foreign legal structures upon the conquered, reconceptualizing the citizen's participation in society as their possession of explicit legal rights. Hegel writes in *PS*:

> The universal unity into which the living immediate unity of individuality and substance withdraws is the soulless community which has ceased to be the substance — itself unconscious — of individuals, and in which they now have the value of selves and substances, possessing a separate being-for-self. The universal being thus split up into a mere multiplicity of individuals, this lifeless spirit is an equality, in which all count the same, i.e. as *persons* [as] nothing else but the "I" of self-consciousness.[110]

In the social substance of ancient Greece, an individual only felt herself to be an individual when there was a breakdown in the regulative norms which governed society (this is discussed further below at 3.2). With the destruction of the social substance, however, individuals now appear entirely in their own right. The particularity of individual existence is abstracted away as individuality is now understood as universal citizenship within a vast empire. As if living in the aftermath of a Greek tragedy, the abstract person now inhabits an alienating world in which the freedom of being-at-home is apparently no longer possible, a sad condition which is clearly inferior to Greek ethical life.

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[109] For a general account of 19th-century German philhellenism, see E.M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958). Hegel follows this general trend in describing Roman philosophy as an abstraction imposed upon the original Greek ideas (*LHP* II, 234-235):

> In the bright Grecian world the individual attached himself more to his state or to his world, and was more at home in it. [But] in this [Roman] condition of disunion in the world, when man is driven within his inmost self, he has to seek unity and satisfaction, no longer to be found in the world, in an abstract way. The Roman world is thus the world of abstraction, where one cold rule was extended over all the civilized world. The living individualities of national spirit in the nations have been stifled and killed; a foreign power, as an abstract universal, has pressed hard upon individuals.

[110] *PS* §477.

Yet Hegel also claims that the full appearance of freedom was only possible through this loss of particular personhood, since the being-for-self of modern individuality first appears in the Roman world. The individual is no longer a mere representative of the wider social substance, a *persona*, but an actual, real person who has become self-aware of their independent existence in the abyss of social breakdown.[111] In a pattern which will be repeated throughout Hegel's story of how modern subjectivity developed, the individual attained an infinite, universal dimension through her removal from the specificity of her finite, particular social context. The destruction of a more limited sense of self was necessary for the modern self to first appear.

The individual citizen of Roman law, a social construction, finds a metaphysical basis for her being-for-self in the Judeo-Christian theological tradition. In Genesis, the individual soul is created in God's image, a soul which the Christian recognizes as being of infinite worth, not being able to be exchanged for even the entire world.[112] Hegel elaborates the Christian contribution to the development of modern subjectivity in *LHP*. This shift in religious feeling was necessary in the formation of the modern individual because even the Neoplatonists, the ancient philosophers whose philosophies were the most similar to a Christian metaphysics, did not conceive of a subjectivity which "draws all moments into one" in the systematic unity only possible for a subjective personality.[113]

Hegel further takes the Christian doctrine of the incarnation to be an improvement upon the anthropomorphism of the Greek gods. Though the gods of Olympus had human features, they only take up the "immediate qualities, forms, [and] actions" of the human being into the divine

[111] I have published on this appearance of modern individuality in the character of Aeneas in Vergil's *Aeneid*. See George Saad, "To Know Thyself in a World Undone: Apocalypse and Authenticity in the *Aeneid*" in *The 'Aeneid' and the Modern World: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vergil's Epic in the 20th and 21st Centuries*, ed. by Joseph R. O'Neill and Adam Rigoni (London: Routledge, 2021), Chapter 11, 211-229.
[112] Gn. 1:27; Matt. 16:26.
[113] *LHP* III, 2.

person.[114] Ancient polytheism thus only allows for a superficial, analogical connection between the human and divine. The ancient *numen*, or divine spirit, remains distant and fearsome to mortals, with the result that "man is not divine as man, but only as a far-away form and not as 'this,' as subjective man."[115]

In the Christian incarnation, on the other hand, Hegel sees the unity of the particular and universal through the living individual:

> The individual himself is laid claim to, is made worthy of attaining on his own account to this unity, which is to make himself worthy of the spirit of God — grace, as it is called — dwelling in him. … Not external nature alone, but the whole world pertains to the particular; above all must human individuality know itself in God. The interest of the subject is itself involved, and here it plays an essential role in order that God may be realized and may realize Himself in the consciousness of individuals who are spirit and implicitly free. Thus through the process these accomplish that reconciliation in themselves, actualize their freedom; that is to say, they attain to the consciousness of heaven upon earth, the elevation of man to God.[116]

The Christian soul knows herself as the seat of divine revelation and so the pagan fear of the numinous gives way to a theology of familiarity, a personal relationship with a God whom we can come to know within ourselves. As was explored above in 1.3.1, the freedom of being-at-home-with-oneself requires this subjective recognition of being at home, a recognition which remains incomplete if our earthly lives remain fundamentally detached from our heavenly home. Through the incarnation and its gift of an indwelling grace, the individual Christian soul reconciles these two worlds and thereby becomes the seat of all truth — the self has become the object of the highest kind of knowledge as well as the organ through which it is achieved.

Hegel understands modern philosophy to be, in large part, a secular elaboration of this theological truth. Just as the incarnation has located the absolute as dwelling within the self, the

[114] *LHP* III, 4.
[115] *LHP* III, 4.
[116] *LHP* III, 3.

modern philosopher takes the "I" as prior to the outer world. Descartes inaugurates this subjective trajectory in modern philosophy by taking "I think" to be the only proposition secured against radical doubt, while Fichte completes it in establishing the "I" as a uniquely self-positing first principle. Building upon his predecessors, Hegel describes self-consciousness in *PS* as the "native land of truth," a "native kingdom" in which we are freely at home with ourselves.[117]

However, as has been explored above in 1.3.2 and 2.3.2, taking self-consciousness as a foundational first principle means that it remains undeveloped as an ultimately constraining presupposition. It should be expected that an incomplete philosophy will find itself opposed by other philosophies which explain that which it has left unarticulated. Indeed, modern philosophy is certainly not exhausted by the Cartesian perspective. Hegel connects the subjective and objective currents of thought in modernity by showing that the assertion of the subject is, at the same time, a distinction between subject and object. This distinction gives rise to the objective, scientific standpoint which Hegel describes in *LHP*:

> To the finite and present due honor is accorded; from this honor the work of science proceeds. We thus see that the finite, the inward and outward present, becomes a matter of experience, and through the understanding is elevated into universality; men desire to understand laws and forces, i.e. to transform the individual of perceptions into the form of universality. Worldly matters demand to be judged of in a worldly way; the judge is thinking understanding.[118]

The elevation of subjectivity has thus led to the modern impasse between two equally revered yet apparently opposed principles: the freedom of subjectivity (typically understood as the freedom of the individual will) and the universal laws of natural existence.

In the same section of *LHP*, Hegel goes on to relate this modern dichotomy back to Christian theology. The separation of the subject from her world is like the "fall" in which Adam

[117] *PS* §167.
[118] *LHP* III, 159.

and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden and lost the primordial freedom of residing within their paradisiacal home. While the Christian believes that we have been reunited with the divine as a matter of faith, Hegel's attempt to reconcile subject with substance aims at accomplishing the same reunion through philosophical science:

> These matters occupy the attention of science, and they are of a completely different nature from the interests of ancient philosophy. The difference is this, that here there is a consciousness of an opposition … this consciousness of the opposition, this "fall," is the main point of interest in the conception of the Christian religion. The bringing about in thought of the reconciliation which is accepted in belief, now constitutes the whole interest of knowledge.[119]

That this reconciliation occurs "in thought" is an important point of emphasis for Hegel. Many thinkers have prescribed practical solutions for the ills of this modern opposition between the subject and their world, frequently proposing a return to pre-modern forms of social organization as an answer to the ills of atomized individualization. Hegel cautions against this reactionary impulse, criticizing Rousseau's enthusiasm for restoring ancient republicanism because such a restoration again results in the tragic self-destruction which befell the Greek polis.[120] The Pandora's box of modernity is a gift which cannot be returned. The attempt to simply reconstitute the ancient social substance in modern society fails because it is the product of a mechanical kind of thinking which only externally combines modern individuality with ancient community.

A different kind of philosophy is therefore needed to resolve the alienation of subject from substance in both theory and practice. Rather than simply being added together, substance and subject must both be found within each other: the reconciliation which occurs "in thought"

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[119] *LHP* III, 165.

[120] Franco briefly summarizes Hegel's interpretation of the fruits of Rousseau's philosophy (Franco, 10):

> What, in the end, Hegel rejects in Rousseau is the ancient republican ideal of patriotic citizens actively engaged in politics, completely consumed by the public business, and directly deliberating on the totality of public affairs. Such an ideal cannot be made to fit with the complex reality of the modern European state. And when the attempt is made to realize this ideal in the modern world, the result is the sort of violence and destruction seen in the French Revolution.

involves recognizing the substantial element in the subjective as well as the subjective element in the substantial. The fulfillment of modern subjective freedom demands that self-consciousness, which has come to interpret itself in the oppositional terms of mere consciousness, heal this division out of its own resources. Since it is no longer at home in the Greek polis or in pre-critical metaphysics, self-consciousness must use its newfound independence to make itself a new, modern home, one less brittle and confining and therefore amenable to the freedom of the "I." As Hegel further comments on the Christian "fall" in *EL*, what is required to overcome "the standpoint of division [exists] in thinking itself. It is thinking that causes the wound and heals it, too."[121]

[121] *EL* §24.

III. CHAPTER 3: THE LOGIC AND APPEARANCE OF SUBSTANCE

The general overview of Hegelian freedom established in the first two chapters will now be applied to the logic and appearance of substance and subject. Because substantiality develops prior to subjectivity in both Hegel's logic as well as in his reading of history, this chapter will begin by looking at "substance" as a fundamental ontological concept. Hegel inherits the tradition of substance metaphysics established by Aristotle, carried forth in medieval scholasticism, and further developed by Spinoza. Yet he radically departs from this tradition in a way that resolves the opposition between substantiality and subjectivity.

For Hegel, this logic of substance most notably appears in the ethical life of ancient Greece, as the social whole of the polis has a kind of substantial self-relation. Even as individuals arise and pass away, the community persists in its being. Society appears as a substantial whole which maintains itself as a self-related unit. Yet Hegel also shows how Greek tragedy brought out the internal tensions contained within this social substance. The tragic situation shows how this substantial universality always depended upon the implicit participation of individuals. The substance shows itself to be equally subject.

Understanding both the logic and appearance of substance clarifies each of the several senses of freedom Hegel discusses: 1) logically, substance is the self-relation of absolute necessity, a self-relation which is internalized in the freedom of inner necessity; 2) ethical life, or the "social substance," is the first immediate manifestation of freedom as "being-at-home-in-the-world" in *PS*; 3) the development of individual self-consciousness emerges from the fracture of the social substance, as is exemplified in Greek tragedy.

3.1 The Logic of Substance and the Freedom of Inner Necessity

3.*1.1 Arriving at "absolute necessity" from the logic of essence and the dialectic of modality*

In Hegel's logic, "substance" is the most complete articulation of "essence." Starting from the standpoint of "absolute knowing" (where *PS* concluded), the logic investigates "pure being" as a content devoid of all determination and therefore free of all presupposition. But the investigation into being shows its limitation as a concept. What simply "is" can only be understood immediately and so pertains to the determinations of quality and quantity, which are directly predicated in statements like: "A stone is solid," or "These stones are three." The immediacy of "being" precludes a more comprehensive articulation of reality as gradually unfolding itself in time, as the manifestation of an underlying ontological order (i.e., of essence) which is never immediately present all at once. Hegel describes essence as a second dimension which lies "behind" immediate being in *SL*:

> The *truth* of *being* is *essence*. Being is the immediate. Since the goal of knowledge is the truth, what being is *in and for itself*, knowledge does not stop at the immediate and its determinations, but penetrates beyond it on the presupposition that *behind* this being there still is something other than being itself, and that this background constitutes the truth of being. … Only inasmuch as knowledge *recollects* itself *into itself* out of immediate being, does it find essence through this mediation. – The German language has kept "essence" (*Wesen*) in the past participle (*gewesen*) of the verb "to be" (*sein*), for essence is past – but timelessly past – being.[1]

The role of self-consciousness in logical development can be observed here, as the logic of essence retains what is immediately present as "being" but recognizes it as only a moment in a greater ontological order. But the intellectual self-consciousness required to form such a concept of essence is not merely an external imposition of cognition upon the nature of things. The movement

[1] *SL* 11.241, 337. In noting that the German word for essence (*Wesen*) comes from the past tense of the verb "to be," Hegel is putting his own gloss on Aristotle's own past-tense definition of essence as *to ti en einai*, "the 'what' something was to be."

of thought is likewise "the movement of being itself" — it is "being's nature to recollect itself [so] that it becomes essence by virtue of this interiorizing."[2] The passage of time shows that the immediate presence of being is not a self-sufficient "hard fact."

The first movement of the logic from "being" to "becoming" has already shown that what presently "is" emerges out of "coming-to-be" (*Entstehen*) and "ceasing-to-be" (*Vergehen*).[3] In positing something which is "behind" the temporal progression of becoming, essence resolves the vanishing particularity of being by articulating the transcendental structure which governs its momentary appearance. In this sense, essence is "prior" to being — it governs the appearance of being — but this temporality should not be taken in a literal sense. Essence need not "happen" before being, nor does the logic of being derive from the logic of essence. This is why Hegel clarifies that it is "timelessly" past.

Hegel then goes on to deconstruct some misapprehensions of essence. Attempts to articulate essence often describe it as located in a transcendental realm which somehow governs the objects of immediate experience. The problem with this ontological dualism is that it only posits a second world without articulating precisely how it is distinct from the realm of being which it governs. Plato's self-criticism of his theory of forms in *Parmenides* rejects this understanding of essence, since the universal forms would be reduced to just an abstracted replica of the sensory world, with there even being forms for hair, mud, and dirt.[4] If essence is only "not-being," its content is only a shadow of being, a negative reflection of the original. As Hegel concludes in *SL*, this kind of essence is "not essence proper but … just another existence."[5]

[2] *SL* 11.241, 337.
[3] *SL* 21.93, 81.
[4] *Parmenides* 130a-e.
[5] *SL* 11.245, 341.

Converting essence into existence also lends itself to the modern misunderstanding of it as a "foundation." As Houlgate writes, what Hegel regards as true "essence does not constitute the *foundation* of real or apparent being, because to think of it that way is to confer on it a simple immediacy which it cannot actually have."[6] Hegel rather regards essence as a form of "sheer negativity," the absolute negation of immediate being.[7] As Houlgate further elaborates, essence implies "the utter dissolution of all simple immediacy: it reduces all immediacy to mere illusion and even negates the immediacy that initially attaches to essence itself as simple negation."[8] Just as Plato could only first articulate the meaning of essence through the visual allegory of the cave, essence is unavoidably regarded as another kind of "something" in its initial appearance, but the truth of essence is that it can never be reduced to any such existent being.

Hegel's general interpretation of essence as "sheer negativity" is evident in his later description of substance, the most concrete manifestation of essence which concludes its logical development. By recognizing substance in its negative form, as the pure activity of self-relation, substance is liberated from the solidity of being. When substance is no longer misinterpreted as an existent, its pure activity of relating to itself can be taken up in conceptual subjectivity. The reconciliation of substance with subject will depend upon a living, dynamic concept of substance just as much as a substantial concept of subjectivity.

As his logic moves on, Hegel critiques the various ways in which the metaphysical tradition has described essence. The simplest way to bring out what is "behind" being is to say that everything is grounded in its own identity, that things appear in the way they do because they are

[6] Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel's Critique of Foundationalism in the Doctrine of Essence," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 44 (1999): 41.
[7] Houlgate, "Hegel's Critique of Foundationalism in the Doctrine of Essence," 39.
[8] Houlgate, "Hegel's Critique of Foundationalism in the Doctrine of Essence," 39.

what they are.[9] The abstract formula A = A grounds being in its own reflection, establishing essence as an unmoving self-equivalence. This pure tautology cannot articulate the dynamic tension and internal difference involved in any process of change. Since an essence of pure identity reduces this processual concept to the stasis of being, Hegel concludes that what is instead needed is an understanding of essence which is "not of merely analytical but of synthetic nature."[10]

The logic of essence then moves forward to the idea of being as having a "ground" or "reason" (*Grund*), a metaphysical principle expressed by Leibniz as the principle of sufficient reason.[11] The immediacy of any existent is now mediated: something exists by virtue of something else. Various refinements of this principle have been put forth by metaphysicians: the thing grounds its properties; the whole grounds the part; the inner grounds the outer.

But Hegel counters this description of essence by showing how in each case the essential ground is equally grounded by that which it grounds.[12] Rather than standing in relation to each other as antecedent condition and consequent result, they each reciprocally condition each other because they are inconceivable apart from their mutual interrelationship. The thing is nothing separate from its properties; the whole arises only through its parts; the inner and outer must be posited together. Essence is not an external relation in which one term grounds another — it is a self-relation in which the essential and the accidental mutually ground each other.

Hegel now considers defining essence through the categories of modality. Modality belongs to the logic of essence since "behind" "what is" lies "what could be," "what might be," and "what must be." For both Hegel and Aristotle, actuality is "prior" to potentiality, although the

[9] *SL* 11.260, 356.
[10] *SL* 11.265, 360.
[11] *SL* 11.293, 388.
[12] SL 11.327, 423ff.

arguments they advance to support this claim are quite different.[13] For Hegel, this "priority" of actuality is its more complete development of the ideas implied in possibility.[14] Actuality is the truth of possibility; the concept of possibility is completed in actuality.

Taken in isolation, possibility is the empty, abstract beginning of modal thinking. Abstract possibility, or possibility in its most pure form, simply takes the law of identity as the guiding principle of actualization. So long at something is self-consistent, and therefore conceivable, it is admitted to be possible and therefore belongs to what Hegel calls in *SL* "the relationless, indeterminate receptacle of everything in general."[15] As has been discussed above at 1.2.1, this pure possibility arises within subjective decision-making where it remains only an inner possibility, a hypothetical will to "do otherwise" which separates itself from concrete actuality.

But as Hegel has demonstrated in the previous section of the logic of essence, what is inner cannot simply be abstracted away from what is outer. Pure possibility is the poorest description of actuality because it depends on such an untenable division of inner from outer. To separate the two from each other is to make actualization impossible, since, as Hegel says in *LL*, "actuality is the identity of [outer] existence with [inner] content."[16] In the process of actualization, the inner becomes outer and the outer becomes inner:

> Everything must be taken in interconnection with something else … As soon as we say of something actual that it is only logically possible, we at once recognize that we are dealing with a one-sided, defective form of the thing. Within whatever is actual, non-contradictory identity with itself is present, but it is present only as a single aspect [of an actual whole process], and is thus considered to be by itself something untrue.[17]

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[13] See Brown, 7-10 for a detailed discussion of Aristotle's arguments for the primacy of actuality in the context of Hegel's own modal theory.
[14] Aristotle likewise understands actuality to be a process, an actualizing activity. He even interchangeably uses the Greek words for "activity" (*energeia*) and "actuality" (*entelecheia*).
[15] *SL* 11.382, 479.
[16] *LL* §141, 155.
[17] *LL* §143, 156-157.

Actuality takes up and fulfills the abstract law of identity by applying it to the course of an entire process. It completes the logic of essence because it is only in the process of actualization that something can be seen in its essential character, as having a dynamic identity which expresses itself through its different manifestations. The whole-part relationship is likewise posited in this logic of actualization, as each manifestation of something is a part of a greater temporal process.

As the logic of essence moves from abstract possibility to actualization, Hegel demonstrates how each of the modal categories develop from out of each other. Contingency mediates between possibility and necessity because it contains elements of both. Seen from one perspective, contingent events do not have an absolute ground and so could have happened otherwise; they are only possibilities. But in saying that things could have happened differently in such an alternative world, we must also admit that there is a necessity to such contingency, since a specific form of concrete existence *must* result from these alternative conditions.[18]

When so grounded in the conditions of its actualization, possibility becomes "real possibility." The real possibility of a house, for instance, is conditioned by the actuality of all the materials and skills required to make the house. But if possibility is now understood as what results from a certain set of grounding conditions, it is "only *apparently* distinguished" from necessity, which likewise arises through the "circle of determinations" which condition existence.[19] Since "real possibility" and "real necessity" both imply each other, a more concrete treatment of these concepts does not see them as opposed to each other.

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[18] I am attempting to simply present the very difficult language Hegel uses to describe the transition from abstract possibility to real contingency (*SL* 11.385, 481):

> The contingent is therefore necessary because the actual is determined as a possible; its immediacy is consequently sublated and is repelled into the *ground* or the in-itself, and into the *grounded*, equally because its *possibility*, this *ground-grounded-connection*, is simply sublated and posited as being. What is necessary is, and this existent is itself the necessary.

[19] *SL* 11.388, 484; *EL* §147.

3.1.2 The primordial, unconscious self-determination of absolute necessity (or, absolute being)

The result of the dialectic of modality is that possibility, contingency, and necessity incessantly pass over into each other. For the logic to progress any further beyond this reciprocal codetermination, this "restless being-the-other-of-each-other," it must recognize the special kind of necessity at work in this very logical movement.[20] In *SL*, Hegel claims that this "absolute necessity" has "pervaded … all its distinctions [i.e., the different modal categories]" and so is "the truth in which actuality and possibility … as well as formal and real necessity return."[21] The separate modalities have shown themselves to be united through and governed by a kind of meta-necessity, the necessary shape of their own interrelationship.

This is a more universal kind of necessity than "real necessity," a necessity which is only relative to a set of conditions. Hegel terms this necessity "absolute necessity" because it pervades everything in being, the most universal category. An example will help explain the distinction between these two kinds of necessity. Consider a stone lingering on the edge of a cliff. The stone exists in this way because of the circumstances of its existence, the conditions of real necessity. Things happen to be this way, but they could obviously be otherwise — real necessity is also real contingency. Attempting to distinguish between necessity and contingency and uncover what grounds this situation, an observer wonders about the future of the stone. Will it fall over the cliff? Will it be eroded by corrosive wind? Will it be consumed in a lava flow?

These questions require an answer in the form of a principle which extends beyond the immediately given situation, but they can only be adequately answered by first looking to the

[20] *Das unruhige Anderssein*. This phrase describes the movement between actuality and possibility at *SL* 11.388, 484.
[21] *SL* 11.390-91, 486-7.

reality of the situation itself. There is no way to work out the conditional necessity or possibility of a hypothetical situation other than to look to what has actually happened in the past. This experience then becomes the basis for future projections about other situations — recall that Hegel describes essence as "timelessly past" being which lays out the general pattern of how events unfold, a pattern upon which any future projection must be based.[22]

Because all claims of real necessity derive from this immediate experience of the actual conditions to which they are relative, real necessity is only possible because *being itself* is the true ground of all necessity. It is, in Hegel's phrase, "absolutely necessary." Houlgate helpfully suggests that this idea can be expressed without Hegelian jargon in the Nietzschean aphorism that "occurring and *necessarily* occurring is a tautology."[23] Whatever exists has the force of necessity simply by the very fact of its existence.

In *SL*, Hegel further maintains that this absolute necessity is "absolute identity, it is the *absolute conversion* of its actuality into its possibility and its possibility into its actuality."[24] Possibility and actuality are now both "submerged" (recall Hegel's use of this term to describe Spinoza's substance) within universal being,[25] appearing as moments of a single process, the self-manifestation of being itself. What comes into being has shown its potential to be actual just as what passes away from being has shown its actuality to be only potential. The idea of a transcendental essence which externally grounds being no longer applies. Because nothing stands outside of the totality of absolutely necessary being, its grounding is a self-grounding.

Since this self-grounding removes the space between being and essence, Hegel speaks of absolute necessity using a strange visual metaphor in *SL*: it is "*blind*" and "*averse to light*," because

[22] *SL* 11.241, 337.
[23] Houlgate cites *The Will to Power* §639 at "Necessity and Contingency," 44.
[24] *SL* 11.391, 487.
[25] *PS* §187.

there is no "*reflective shining* in these actualities, no reflex – because they are grounded purely in themselves, are shaped for themselves, manifest themselves only to *themselves* – because they are only being."[26] The gap between being and essence through which the latter externally determined the former has been closed shut, the aperture between the two worlds eliminated. The wholly inner world which Hegel here describes (even metaphorically suggesting the self-observation of its own manifestation) is structurally analogous to what Fichte describes as subjective being-for-self (see 2.3.4 above).[27] Without an opening for light, however, this substantial existence still cannot become objective to itself like subjective self-consciousness.

This metaphor is further complicated when Hegel further describes the inner darkness of absolute necessity as involving a kind of modal freedom:

> On the one hand, the two different terms determined as actuality and possibility have the shape of *immanent reflection* as *being*; they are therefore *free actualities*, neither of which reflectively shines in the other, nor will either allow in it a trace of its reference to the other; grounded in itself, each is inherently necessary. … The *simplicity* of their being, their resting just on themselves, is absolute negativity; it is the *freedom* of their reflectionless immediacy.[28]

Hegel uses the same language he employs in discussing freedom to describe how absolute necessity has a primordial kind of unconscious self-determination. In closing the gap between being and essence, being is now self-enclosed: it is freely at-home-with-itself. By "resting only on itself," being has an "absolute negativity," a phrase Hegel also uses in *PhilS* to describe the abstraction of the self from the world in subjective freedom.[29] Absolutely necessary being is contained within itself like a person who has so thoroughly assimilated herself to the conditions of

[26] *SL* 11.392, 488.
[27] Fichte §6, 17. Clark Butler exclaims that in this self-manifestation, "being-for-itself, which went under with the abstract ground, is retrieved!" Clark Butler, *Hegel's Logic: Between Dialectic and History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 206.
[28] *SL* 11.391-2, 487-8.
[29] See *PhilS* §382, discussed in 4.1.1. below.

life (i.e., is so "at home" in the world) that they no longer seem to be alien impositions: they are simply extensions of her own being.

To term this self-containment of being its "absolute necessity" perhaps represents a crucial failure of Hegel's verbiage.[30] Absolute necessity suggests a necessity that is absolute in and of itself, a law which stands outside of and governs being. But Hegel rather intends this phrase to describe how being grounds itself in taking up all the modal categories in its own self-manifestation. Possibility, contingency, and necessity have been taken up into being and so now appear as what *must* be. Yet this "must" resides within being itself as its own free inner necessity. Being is freely self-determining — it is *absolute being*.

The "free actualities" Hegel describes are therefore "free" in the sense that their self-actualization is their free self-determination.[31] But absolute being does not only appear as actuality. Just as the ontological counterpart of being is nothing, the modal counterpart of actuality is possibility, the pure negativity which "breaks forth" as the "*otherness* which is just as *free* towards them as their being is free."[32] Absolute being is free in both a positive and negative sense: what it is, must be so, and yet this actuality is not inherently binding. Its "aversion to light" means that absolute being comes forth freely from within— it is the source of both what is and what could be and so is always freely at home with itself. In this immanent self-determination, actuality is freed from the external determination of a transcendental order and manifests itself in a way that is loosely analogous to the conscious, deliberate self-determination of free subjectivity.

There is, however, another sense of absolute necessity which governs the self-actualization of absolute being — the absolute necessity which results from the finitude of free actuality. Hegel

[30] Hegel concedes the limitation of his expression: "Absolute necessity is not so much the *necessary*, even less *a necessary*, but necessity – being simply as reflection." *SL* 11.393, 489.
[31] *SL* 11.391-2, 487-8.
[32] *SL* 11.391-2, 487-8.

says that the liberation of free actualities from the transcendental order also necessarily implies their ceasing-to-be: by "letting them go free as absolutely actual … the actualities now perish."[33] The self-sufficiency of these actualities means that they are, as it were, left to their own resources, and are not supported in their continued existence by anything outside of themselves. Hegel relates this sense of absolute necessity back to the logic of being. The self-manifestation of being ultimately tends towards its self-exhaustion: "this manifestation of what *determinateness* is in its truth, that it is negative self-reference, is a *blind* collapse into otherness … a *becoming*, a transition of being into nothing."[34] To further Hegel's visual metaphor, every self-sufficient being which does not "see" outside of itself cannot maintain its free being-for-self. Its process of determining itself, becoming "what it is" through itself alone, inevitably ends in "the *transition* of the actual into the possible, of being into nothing."[35]

A close reading of these very difficult passages shows that the interpretation of Hegel as a determinist overlooks the precise meaning of the forms of necessity which govern his thinking. Rather than a mechanistic concept of absolute necessity in which everything follows from some initially given set of actualities (actualities which actualize other actualities), absolute necessity rather demands the ceasing-to-be of actuality. As Houlgate writes, Hegel recognizes this absolute necessity of finitude as being at work in historical events, which always involve finite social structures which are destined to become nothing:

> Freedom may therefore develop to self-consciousness through its own internal necessity, but such self-consciousness is clearly not *utterly* and *absolutely* necessary like the being and ceasing to be of finite things, since it could fail to arise. One of the sobering, but overlooked lessons of Hegel's philosophy of history is indeed that, far from being absolutely necessary, self-conscious freedom in the state and civil society is itself ultimately subject to the *absolute necessity* of destruction.[36]

[33] *SL* 11.392, 488.
[34] *SL* 11.392, 488.
[35] *SL* 11.392, 488.
[36] Houlgate, "Necessity and Contingency," 49.

The passing-away of the finite, however, also makes room for subjective freedom as we generally understand it (as will be discussed further below in 4.1.1). Being-at-home in the world is not a permanent enclosure in absolute being. There is also contingency, novelty, and the potential for creative self-determination in the very operation of absolute necessity, which is in fact the absolute undoing of every fixed actuality.

As Hegel moves on in his logic to develop substance as the truth of this absolute necessity, the free interplay of the dialectic of modality has been located within the universal self-manifestation of being. Absolute necessity, better termed absolute being, is the showing forth of being from its inwardness, an unfolding which is also a self-determination. But its freedom is not yet true freedom, since it is only a finite self-determination and not infinite self-creation. To extend Hegel's metaphor of absolute necessity as being shut off from light, absolute necessity contains the seeds of freedom, but these seeds have not been exposed to the sun and so remain still contained within themselves, not yet fully elaborated in subjectivity.

3.1.3 Substance, causality, and reciprocity

Hegel now describes substance as this absolute being. Substance is "being that is *because* it is … [it is] the final unity of essence and being, it is the being in *all* being."[37] All the modes of essence — necessity, contingency, and possibility — are moments of substance. The copresence of these apparently opposed modes within substance is crucial because they allow for a more dynamic, actively self-forming concept of substance. McCumber explains how Hegel thus distinguishes himself from the metaphysical tradition:

[37] *SL* 11.394, 490.

> Substance itself is at this point nothing determinate over and above its accidents: it is merely the "inner of the accidents" and plays the philosophically familiar role of an unknowable substrate of knowable attributes. [But] it plays that role in an unfamiliar way, as itself dynamic. This is in contrast to traditional accounts of substance as a passive substrate in which accidents come and go, first articulated in Aristotle's *Categories*. It seems to be Hegel's critical response to a problem that arose in Aristotle's account, but which remained unsolved even by thinkers as subtle as Spinoza: how can something inert, a mere substantial substrate, produce or explain components (modes, attributes) which come and go in it?[38]

The answer to this problem should by now be quite familiar from the entire course of the logic of essence. The division between substance and its attributes or accidents is ultimately comparable to the division between whole and parts, or the division between inner and outer, or the division between necessity and possibility. Each side of these dichotomies can be abstracted from the other as an *ideal* moment, but this is only an abstraction from their real existence, one of alternating mutual dependence.[39]

In *SL*, Hegel likewise posits two such moments of substance:

1) Substance is the "*simple identity of being*."[40] This is the classical understanding of substance as an indescribable substrate underlying its predicable attributes. Hegel makes it clear that this substance exists only as an idealization, an isolation of the silent identity which persists beneath the accidental alteration between actuality and possibility. It is the "formless *substance of the imagination* for which the appearance [*Shein*] has not determined itself as appearance, but which holds on, as on an absolute, to this indeterminate identity."[41] The inert conceptions of essence which have appeared throughout the logic of essence (essence as a static law of identity, as a ground, as the

[38] John McCumber, "Substance and Reciprocity in Hegel," *The Owl of Minerva* 35, no. 1-2 (2003): 5.
[39] See 2.3.1 above, *SL* 21.142, 124.
[40] *SL* 11.395, 491.
[41] *SL* 11.395, 491. I have replaced Giovanni's "shine" with "appearance."

whole above the part) correspond to this understanding of substance as something exempt from the flux of becoming.

2) Substance is the "*flux of accidents*" which exists in actuality, an activity which translates the actual into "the possible, as *creative power*, and, through the possibility to which it reduces the actual, as *destructive power*; the creating is destructive and the destructing creative."[42] Substance is not just a passive site of alteration, but the power which mediates between the possible and the actual as a force of creative destruction and destructive creation. In Hegel's treatment of form and content earlier in the logic of essence, Karen Ng finds a basis for understanding substance as this activity of being's self-formation. Substance takes up the "activity of form" (*Formtätigkeit*), the form which acts to maintain its form through changes in matter and content.[43]

These two moments of substance correspond to the two aspects of absolute necessity. Substance is at first simply the absolute necessity of being itself (as pure being abstracted from the flux of change). But, as has already been established in the logic of essence, this purely inner side of actuality cannot remain so. Absolute necessity, in its second sense, is also the necessary finitude of substance's external actualization. A more concrete sense of substance results in this processual moment, where it is the process of change itself, the change which actualizes its self-identity by maintaining itself in and through its accidental determinations.

But a substance that is more than the mere "inner side" of its accidents must demonstrate itself in some form of outward effectivity. Its activity cannot only occur within an inner space

[42] *SL* 11.395, 491.
[43] Cf. *SL* 11.299, 394. "*Formtätigkeit* is therefore what makes a thing (an object or a subject) actual, what brings form to matter, what makes the indeterminate determinate, rendering sheer immediacy into posited being (*Gesetztsein*)." Karen Ng, *Hegel's Concept of Life: Self-Consciousness, Freedom, Logic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 128.

which "holds" unseen possibilities. Though the "activity of form" is more alive than the inert substrates of the metaphysical tradition, it has an ontology of freedom analogous to an undeveloped subjective will. Like the subject who understands her freedom as the ability to "do something else," in *EL* Hegel describes the limited self-actualization of a self-forming substance as "the power that *relates itself to itself* as only inner possibility."[44]

Just as this purely inner form of the practical will cannot be maintained in determinate action, this interior self-relation of substance is only tenable if it is not opposed by anything exterior. This is why Spinoza's substance metaphysics resulted in monism. In *LL*, Hegel argues against Spinozism in maintaining that the standpoint of substance monism necessarily gives way to a more particularized account of causality:

> In the Spinozistic system, the absolute is determined as the absolute substance, as the One from which the world falls away. … All figurations [in the actual world] are determinations, negations, vanishing [entities] … what is particular fails to be explicated as the self-movement of the substance itself. Spinoza did not proceed from his substance on to the correlation of causality.[45]

It is a defect of substance monism that it cannot account for the interaction between multiple substances. In Hegel's criticism, Spinoza understands any change in the finite world to be simply a passing away of the particular into the universal substance. Even if we think of substance as an activity of form, everything only participates in one such internally mediated activity unless we recognize that substance also acts outside of itself.

But this is untenable for Spinoza because it would divide the absolute substance against itself and recognize the effectivity of the individual, fracturing the one substance into a plurality of substances. Hegel's critique of substance monism is therefore also the logical ground of Hegel's

[44] *EL* §152.
[45] *LL* §151, 165-166.

critique of Spinoza's philosophy of freedom. Insofar as human freedom involves the causal efficacy of an individual will, it is a cause exterior to and separate from Spinoza's single substance.

The necessary dissolution of substance into many substances takes us out of the strange logic of substance and into the far more familiar world of causal relations. Instead of an absolute self-relation that is "averse to light,"[46] everything can now be illuminated and distinguished in the clarity of differentiation. Just as empiricism rejected the presupposed, unverifiable unity of substance monism in arriving at the modern scientific worldview, Hegel also recognizes that the substantial whole only exists through a multiplicity of finite causes. In *EL*, Hegel indeed comments that this transition to causality is one quite agreeable to the scientific understanding (*Verstand*), which "resists substantiality" and reduces it to the "relationship of causality."[47]

But while this recognition of the particular as conditioned by finite causes serves as a useful corrective to *a priori* metaphysics, Hegel does not recognize finite causality as the final ontological order which lies behind being (which would complete the logic of essence). While causality fulfills the logic of essence because it explains immediate being as a reflection of something else, as the effect of a cause, the method of identifying all beings as emerging from a set of causes leads to an infinite regress of causes. We explain the being of A with reference to B, but since B is now itself an actual, particular thing (and not the inward activity of substance), it must equally be regarded as an effect of causes C and D, which in turn have their own causes. Causality belongs to the discrete analysis of the understanding (the phenomenological standpoint of mere consciousness) which isolates and investigates things in their isolation. It cannot be taken as the essence of being as such, but only as the essence of a particular local set of relations.

[46] *SL* 11.392, 488.
[47] *EL* §153.

Hegel's solution to this impasse is to take up the finite causality of the particular into the universal substance. The infinite regress of causality showed that every cause is equally the effect of another cause, but this is only problematic if we presume the existence of a pure cause "in itself." Hegel rather locates the particular cause within a universal circle of reciprocally codetermined causes:

> That first cause, the one which acts first and receives its effect back into itself as a reaction, thus comes up again as a cause, whereby the *activity* which in finite causality runs into the bad infinite progression is *bent around* and becomes an action that returns to itself, an infinite *reciprocal action*.[48]

Rather than endlessly extending the chain of causes, Hegel proposes a circular structure to causality because he sees every cause as *itself* an effect and every effect as *itself* a cause. A cause is a cause only insofar as it acts on something else which is receptive to its specific causal efficacy. For this reason, the effect's receptivity to the cause is that which determines the cause to be a cause: the effect is therefore *itself* the cause of the cause. Likewise, the "first" cause equally "receives the effect" of that which it acts upon: the cause *itself* becomes an effect of this reaction.

There is an experiential bias towards our own activity which tends to obscure the reciprocity of causality. We are generally unaware of this reciprocal structure to causality because we tend to immediately identify the cause of something as that which we manipulate in action, taking the other party to the interaction to receive our action only passively. It is clear that the swing of the ax is the cause of the cut of the wood, but conversely the position and composition of the wood causes the ax to become an instrument of cutting. When I push a cart, it is apparent that I cause the cart's motion, but it is not as obvious that the cart pushes back on me. Newton himself, the great exponent of the mechanistic worldview, saw that every action is equally a reaction. There is no primary substance that simply causes effects in another without being itself affected.

[48] *SL* 11.407, 503.

This logic of reciprocity is widely apparent in Hegel's practical philosophy. In Hegel's concept of ethical life, the causal relationship between the social whole and the individual must be understood reciprocally. My society has made me what I am, and yet, in whatever small way, I have also played a part in forming my society. Hegel's point is especially relevant here because much social analysis involves the attempt to isolate the cause of various social ills. This way of thinking often reaches an impasse which suggests Hegel's circular structure of causality. We may, for instance, say that poverty is the cause of crime, but it can equally well be pointed out that the effects of crime are a cause of poverty. The analysis of a complex, self-related system like a society can rarely locate any cause in isolation.

While reciprocity alone does not constitute free conceptuality, Hegel consistently describes reciprocal structures as fundamental to the logic and appearance of freedom. Ng details how Hegel describes reciprocity in both a logical and phenomenological context.[49] Besides resolving the infinite regress of causality in Hegel's logic, reciprocity also informs the circular structure of Hegel's entire philosophy. Whereas the logic of causality is implied in foundationalism (the first principle is a pure first cause, itself uncaused, from which everything else follows), the logic of reciprocity appears in how Hegel thinks of his system as containing codetermining moments which

[49] Ng notes this parallel structure between this section of *SL* and the self-consciousness section of *PS* (Ng, 160):

> The similarities between Hegel's argument here in the deduction of the concept and his argument in the *Phenomenology* for the constitution of self-consciousness are striking. In both cases, it is the determination of interiority, of the self-relation of inner difference, that allows consciousness and thought to arrive at the notion of infinity and 'infinite reciprocal action.' In the phenomenological context, grasping the unity and distinction of inner and outer allowed for the double constitution of self-consciousness in its essential relation to life; in the logical context, Hegel argues that with reciprocity, we have attained to the concept, determining the form of inner purposiveness and freedom. The parallel nature of these argumentative strategies becomes even more evident when, in the introductory section of the Subjective Logic, Hegel writes: 'The concept, when it has progressed to a concrete existence which is itself free, is none other than the 'I' or pure self-consciousness.'

do not claim any causal priority. Systematic science enacts the "freedom of the whole" in which no single moment is subordinated to another like an effect is subordinated to its cause.[50]

Phenomenologically, recognizing reciprocity as the truth of causality requires moving from the consciousness of the understanding (*Verstand*) to the self-consciousness of reason (*Vernuft*). From this integrating, synthesizing perspective, we recognize cause and effect as two moments of a single codetermination. Moreover, reciprocity is the truth of substance which appears in our intersubjective experience of freedom. In Chapter 4 of *PS*, Hegel shows that individual freedom is established only through a reciprocal recognition of the freedom of others. Being-at-home involves partaking in a social order of reciprocal equality in which the freedom of the individual is manifest in the universal experience of society.

McCumber further argues that this reciprocity is more perfectly achieved the closer a situation approaches the freedom of absolute spirit (art, religion, and philosophy). In contrast to the reciprocity present in familial, marital, and political relations (relations of objective spirit), "the porous boundaries, intermittent disposition, and incomplete initiative of the work of art make it capable of reciprocity, both internally and externally."[51] Because the idea behind a work of art "requires the activity of a spectator in order to function," art only comes into being by virtue of being recognized.[52] Whereas parents, spouses, and political leaders can (however unadvisedly) act while disregarding the input of others, the work of art only exists *as art* in being received, appreciated, and interpreted. McCumber concludes that "only in the 'ideal' world of art can Hegel's logical narrative of substance and reciprocity be told all the way to the end [since] absolute spirit is spirit coming to be reciprocal."[53]

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[50] *EL* §14.
[51] McCumber, "Substance and Reciprocity," 21.
[52] McCumber, "Substance and Reciprocity," 21.
[53] McCumber, "Substance and Reciprocity," 21.

The logic of reciprocity thus provides an ontological alternative to what has long been recognized as the hostility of mechanical causality to human freedom. Hegel's logic is a fundamental challenge to behaviorism since it offers a wholescale deconstruction of the natural scientific presupposition that all phenomena can be assimilated to the one-sided logic involved in manipulating and controlling physical objects. As can be recognized even in inorganic systems of sufficient complexity, one cannot alter a single variable as an independent cause without disturbing the delicate reciprocity of the whole.

3.1.4 Conceptual subjectivity and free individuality as the "truth" of substance

In *SL*, Hegel says that "necessity unveils itself" as freedom through the logic of reciprocity.[54] It is specifically the freedom of inner necessity which emerges when external causal relations are internalized within the mutual interdependence of a reciprocal system. Reciprocity is thus the specific moment of Hegel's logic that shows the unity of freedom and necessity which Hegel posits throughout his corpus: "necessity does not come to be *freedom* by vanishing but in that its still only *inner* identity is *manifested*" within an internalized system of reciprocal causes.[55]

This inner identity of freedom and necessity is, however, only expressed in the universal and particular dimensions of substantial existence. As was discussed above in 3.1.2, substantial freedom has a particular and a universal aspect:

1) Since substance's inner self-relation is free from all external determination, its particular moments are determined through themselves alone — this is the *freedom of the particular*.

[54] *SL* 11.409, 504.
[55] *SL* 11.409, 504.

2) But substance also determines itself through the universal activity of form (*Formtätigkeit*) despite the free self-determination of its accidental particulars — this is the *freedom of the universal*.

A more complete account of how substantial freedom contains both these moments is now possible through the logical development of reciprocity. The final truth of the logic of essence is the substantial existence which contains both the particular and the universal in their direct and immediate unity, each reciprocally existing through the other. The particular only exists as particular insofar as it is shaped by the universal, yet the universal also has no separate existence apart from the totality of particulars.

Fluid mechanics suggests an intuitive metaphor to describe the reciprocity of these moments of substance. Imagine that a splash at one end of the swimming pool ripples across it. What begins as an isolated case influences every other particular molecule of water. Particular actions have universal consequences simply through their own immanent interaction with the totality of other particulars.

But the universal is not simply the product of any one particular event. It exerts its own determinate influence on the situation. As its ripples reach the side of the pool and rebound back towards the center, the splash is no longer evident. Its freedom was also its finitude, its momentary being-for-self which was contained within substantial existence. The fluid body of water has a universal activity of form (*Formtätigkeit*) which absorbs the momentary disruption back within the steady equilibrium of the whole. But this universal form does not enact any prior restriction on the particularities contained within it. The universal maintains itself simply by letting the particular show itself for what it is.

Substance has thus achieved two kinds of ontological liberation: the particular has been freed from being determined by an external universality, just as the universal has drawn all particularity into itself and so has been freed from all accidental, external determination. This freedom arises reciprocally: particularity constitutes its own universal existence, just as universality contains all particularity. Each has been freed from the presupposition of exterior determination which has be deconstructed throughout the logic of essence. Because the reciprocal relation of the universal and particular has achieved this freedom, Hegel declares in *EL* that the "truth of necessity is thus freedom, and the truth of substance is the concept."[56]

But reciprocity alone still falls short of freedom. In *EL*, Hegel goes on to say that reciprocity stands on the "threshold of the concept," but to take reciprocity as equivalent to free self-determination is an "utterly conceptless way of behaving."[57] The reciprocal relation of the universal and particular is immediate and automatic. It can still be described as a mechanical relation, albeit one in which the external necessity of separate parts (the logic of causality) has been internalized in a cohesive whole.

Hegel therefore says in *EL* that conceptual subjectivity does not take up substance by "leaving the two sides of it as something immediately given, but instead … by coming to know them as moments of a third, higher dimension, which is precisely the concept."[58] The reciprocal self-relation which represents the most concrete development of substantiality only comes alive when a third term is introduced: the subjective individuality which interposes itself and mediates between the mutual determination of particular instance and general law.

[56] *EL* §158.
[57] *EL* §156.
[58] *EL* §156.

The individual (or, as *das Einzelne* is also translated, the singular) presents the possibility of growth, development, and life. Individuality is the living conceptual subjectivity of the "I," but it arises within the substantial world as its third term — not as a special supplement, but as the completion of what already exists. The reciprocal interplay of the substantial universal and particular which occurs unself-consciously is freely determined from within, but it is also limited. It does not develop but only alternates within itself. The introduction of individuality thus completes the self-determination of substance. In becoming conscious of herself as both particular and universal, the individual places herself in a position to become the author of their no longer predetermined destiny.

Returning to the analogy of the swimming pool, individuality is the introduction of a powerful, distinct stream within the pool flowing from out of a pool jet. The water no longer just splashes around on itself but acts with a certain directed purpose. The introduction of this jet reshapes the universal equilibrium of the swimming pool. Unlike the merely local splash, it alters the universal flows of water within the pool. While its particular, finite existence is also reabsorbed back within the universal, the entire pool has been substantially altered through its activity.

Social philosophy provides a further example of how individuality reshapes substantial existence. It was stated above in 3.1.3 that the individual and society have a reciprocal relationship — each determines the other. But even though this is true for what it is worth, it cannot be said to adequately capture the entire truth of human freedom. This back-and-forth does not just happen on its own, but is taken up within free, self-conscious individuality. Both the universal and particular aspects of my social existence present themselves to me for my evaluation and response. There is a moment of mediation between the two. I self-consciously deliberate as to how I have

been formed by the universal institutions of my society and my particular experiences, and then, as an individual, ask how I should react to these formative influences.

Stated in the theological language to which Hegel often refers in discussing the logic of the concept,[59] the individual is the living incarnation. As an incarnated being, the individual is contained within the finitude of particular existence but also self-consciously recognizes herself as belonging to the divine universal. In mediating between the universal and the particular, she is not merely an instance of the universal but attains universality within her own particularity. She forsakes the freedom of existing as a pure particular and reaches outside of herself, intending the universal. The individual thus sustains her life in a way which mere particularity cannot. She will die, but she will live on in the universality in which she has become a meaningful participant.

In *SL*, Hegel plays on the dual sense of the word *bestimmt* in describing this intentional action of the individual in the logic of the concept. Individuality is "the determinedly determined [*das bestimmte Bestimmte*]," which is to say that it determines (in the sense of an intentional action) its own determination (in the adjectival sense of a definite quality).[60] Like a stream rushing into a swimming pool, the independent individual's self-determination is also, at the same time, the reformation of the universal and the particular. The free personality is determined to redetermine the determinate world to which she belongs. The acts of an utterly singular individual are, at the same time, those which actualize our universal aspirations. Because Rosa Parks refused to

[59] Cf. *LL* §160, 177; *PS* §671.
[60] *SL* 11.409, 505. At *SL* 21.110-1, 95, Hegel describes the dual meaning of *Bestimmung* as both "determinant" and "vocation": "Determination is affirmative determinateness; it is the in-itself by which a something abides in its existence while involved with an other that would determine it, by which it preserves itself in its self-equality, holding on to it in its being-for-other."

In his later discussion of the moments of the concept at *SL* 12.49, 546, Hegel again refers to individuality as "self-referring determinateness, the *determinate determinate* [*die sich auf sich beziehende Bestimmtheit, das bestimmte Bestimmte*]."
[60] *LL* §159, 171.

relinquish her seat on the bus, the universal laws and norms of a society were changed and, with them, the lives of particular persons.

Substance is only at-home-with-itself, but conceptual subjectivity reaches outside of itself through this determinate action of the individual. In *LL*, Hegel describes how the third moment of individuality opens up the self-contained substance to the outer world: "true emancipation is to be and remain by oneself, at home with oneself, in all that is different from oneself. Emancipation is the I, the pure self-concept itself."[61]As a living process, conceptual subjectivity depends upon the novel incorporation of the other.[62] The inner necessity of living beings does not exclude or oppose external, contingent circumstances but rather incorporates them. When human beings happened to discover how to produce fire, we did not cease to be human beings even though fire radically changed our entire way of life. With an infinite openness to any particular determination, the living concept, the true universal, engenders itself through the creative adaptation of individual initiative.

3.2 The Appearance and Breakdown of the Social Substance

The logic of substance plays out in the history of self-consciousness in *PS*. Just as conceptual subjectivity is the truth of substantial necessity, the ethical life of ancient Greece at first appears as a "social substance" which breaks down and thereby unveils itself as individual subjectivity. To understand this social substance in its most original expression and not just through Hegel's own account, I will also consider how the themes of social substantiality appear in the Platonic corpus (an interpretation of Plato advanced by Hegel himself).

[61] *LL* §159, 171.
[62] In Hegel's logic, "life" is the immediate unity of the subjective concept with objectivity, the unity of the "idea." See *EL* §216-22.

3.2.1 The ethical life of ancient Greece as a social substance

The phrase "ethical life" can easily mislead English-speaking readers of Hegel. We tend to think of the ethical as that which concerns proper decision-making, as in the ethical standards which inform individuals when confronted with moral dilemmas. To speak of "ethics" is often just a convenient shorthand for "personal ethics," a phrase which implies reflective moral deliberation.

The Greek and German words which inform the Hegelian sense of ethical life, however, denote an absence of such subjective moral interpretation. Both the Greek *ethos* and the German *Sitte* are better translated as "custom," "tradition," or "habit."[63] Ethical life is the totality of those norms and customs which, to borrow a colloquial English expression, constitute the "fabric of society." The self-maintenance of a society as a society is the most vivid experiential manifestation of a substantial self-relation. Taken as a whole, such norms and customs maintain the self-identity and consistency of a society notwithstanding the transitory contingency of its component parts. Hegel expresses how a certain spirit dwells within a society across its generations through the abstract noun *Sittlichkeit*, a term which could be more directly rendered as a society's "ethicality."

The addition of the word "life" in the standard English translation of *Sittlichkeit* as "ethical life" emphasizes how the complex set of interactions between these norms are analogous to the life processes of an organism. *Sittlichkeit* is not a personal ethical code, or even a specific set of institutional laws, but the living embodiment of all the norms which have been historically encoded within a shared social life. The organicity of these ethical structures implies the self-relation of a living being.

[63] Lauer, for instance, renders *Sittlichkeit* as "immemorial custom." Lauer, 206.

To say that ethical life appears as a "social substance" is to describe its system of duties as appearing to have an absolute necessity.[64] As Kant showed, the categorical imperatives of ethics involve a different kind of necessity from the merely hypothetical imperatives of natural causality. Unlike nature, which appears under the guise of external contingencies, Hegel says in *PR* that the norms of ethical life have an "absolute authority and power, infinitely more firmly based than the being of nature."[65] Insofar as the social substance remains intact, there is no contingency recognized in the force of moral law, whose very existence is *in itself* necessary.

Just as substance is described in *SL* as "not *being* as such but being that is *because* it is,"[66] the laws of the ethical substance which Hegel describes in *PS* simply are "because they are" and so require no secondary justification:

> They *are*. If I inquire after their origin and confine them to the point whence they arose, then I have transcended them: for now it is I who am the universal, and *they* are the conditioned and limited. If they are supposed to be validated by *my* insight, then I have already denied their unshakable, intrinsic being, and regard them as something which, for me, is perhaps true, but also is perhaps not true.[67]

Ethical life is thus described as a social substance because it is the concrete appearance of absolutely necessary being (described above at 3.1.2). Like the inner self-containment of substance Hegel describes in *SL*, it is averse to the light of self-conscious critical examination.[68] But in being self-contained in this way, the social substance is a finite structure whose laws only appear to command an infinite respect. It cannot creatively mediate between its internal tensions. As it comes undone, it will become apparent that the self-consciousness of the free individual was submerged within it all along. Her mere

[64] Commentators generally do not associate the substantiality of the social substance in *PS* and *PR* with the treatment of substance in Hegel's logic, but this connection is partially elaborated at Wood, 196-7.
[65] *PR* §146.
[66] *SL* 11.394, 490.
[67] *PS* §437.
[68] *SL* 11.392, 488.

consciousness of a law which demanded to be followed gives way to her intentional mediation between the particular moments of the universal social substance.

Before further examining how ethical life is the appearance of this logic of absolute necessity, it is important to distinguish between different expressions of ethical life as they appear throughout the Hegelian corpus. In *PR*, ethical life is both substance and subject. It stands at the *endpoint* of a course of development which already assumes the forms of modern subjectivity (such as, for instance, individual conscience), and is therefore described as having "its knowledge and volition in self-consciousness, and its actuality through self-conscious action."[69]

The ethical life described in *PS*, by contrast, presents itself as purely substantial and so stands at the *start* of spirit's historical course of development from substance to subject.[70] This phenomenological account describes ethical life in its appearance in ancient Greece. Since such substantiality is less obviously apparent in the modern world, the account of ethical life in *PS* more purely manifests the logical forms of substance.

In reconciling these two very different accounts of ethical life, it helps to consider Hegel's later philosophy as the fulfillment of the journey of self-consciousness in *PS*. The treatment of ethical life in *PR* recalls the historical appearance of ethical life in the ancient Greek polis. As a recollection (and not the immediate historical experience) of this pure social substance, Hegel's exposition of modern ethical life corrects for the one-sidedness of its first historical manifestation.

The city-states of ancient Greece furnish the perfect example of how polities exist as substances, as well as how their substantial nature necessarily comes undone. As was described

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[69] *PR* §142.

[70] As will be explored in Chapter 5, conscience also plays a very different role in *PS*, standing at the endpoint of the development of *Geist*. There is a difference between the philosophical treatment of conscience as a concept of right in *PR*, where it remains limited and incomplete, and the phenomenological treatment of conscience as the direct experience of self-consciousness in *PS*, one which discloses the substantiality of subjectivity and points towards absolute spirit.

above at 2.4.2, ancient Greece inaugurates Hegel's history of the appearance of freedom because of the dynamic tension between traditional forms of society and those institutions (such as democracy) which prefigure a modern understanding of the individual. In the discussion of world history at the conclusion of *PR*, Hegel describes the substantial unity of the polis as "a mysterious substratum" which has been reborn "into individual spirituality and the daylight of knowledge" so that the "principle of personal individuality accordingly emerges."[71]

Sophocles' Antigone, a figure who will be central to Hegel's treatment of the ancient Greek social substance in *PS*, further describes this ineffable substance when she says the divine laws are "everlasting, though where they came from, none of us can tell."[72] But while such a recess of ancestral law is common to all traditional societies, the public life of Athenian democracy began unveiling these inner webs of necessity and showing forth the truth of conceptual subjectivity.

In *PS*, Hegel aims to enter ancient Greek life from the inside, describing the experience of being a member of the polis insofar as that experience has been recollected from its surviving cultural products. Hegel does not just look at the objective historical events of this era, or even its philosophical developments. The unique historiography of *PS* takes the self-understanding of Greek society as it was expressed in tragedy as having a greater importance. For Hegel, Sophocles' *Antigone* expresses the essence of the Greek spirit to such an extent that it focuses his entire discussion of ethical life in *PS*. The tragic spectator recognizes an inexorable force of necessity in the laws of fate, and yet their lamentation brings these laws to the clarity of self-consciousness.

3.2.2 Being-at-home and the freedom of membership in the polis

[71] *PR* §356.
[72] Sophocles, *Antigone*, 456-7. Quoted by Hegel at *PS* §437.

In *PS*, Hegel describes the individual who is freely at home within the ethical substance as having an "ethical perception." Hegel takes this ethical perception as having an "immediate certainty of a real ethical situation."[73] Just as any object of sensuous perception shows itself to have many properties, ethical perception recognizes the particular situation to be enmeshed in the substance of the universal ethical life, so that "a given action is an actual situation with many ethical connections."[74] This is a liberation from empty ethical maxims which invariably contradict each other, a perception of the whole ethical context in which action becomes binding. This universal complex of ethical life contextualizes the particular action, granting it a universal significance through which that action acquires real ethical force.

But this individual ethical perception is conditioned by the adoption of a particular role within society. For this reason, when I refer to the "individual" throughout the rest of this chapter, I mean the "individual" in a colloquial sense and not as the moment of "singularity" in the concept (*das Einzelne*). In the ancient Greek polis, the individual has not distinguished themselves as having a distinct existence separate from their participation in two opposed spheres: the domestic sphere, the family life presided over by the woman who observes the divine law (the role played by Antigone in Sophocles' play), or the public sphere of political and military life, presided over by male citizens (the role played by Creon). In the complex interchange between these two spheres, each reciprocally exerts its influence upon the other, thereby forming a universal whole which includes both as particular parts.

Even though the male family member will participate in the public sphere as an individual, Hegel says that "the individual who seeks the pleasure of *enjoying his individuality*, [only] finds it

[73] *PS* §446.
[74] *PS* §446.

in the family."[75] The capacities required to enjoy one's own independence are in fact molded within family life, which socializes its members so that they can then proceed to act on their own behalf. To take just one example, language is acquired in the family home, and it is only through the acquisition of language that individuals can begin to express and meet their own needs. The enormous personal agency acquired through the acquisition of language in a family context is also the individual's first exercise of his ethical perception in learning to distinguish between different listeners and contexts. Without being formed through these basic experiences, the individual would be helpless to engage the wider world and fulfill his personal desires within public life.

When the ancient Greek male family member is initiated into civic life, Hegel points out that he brings with him the same sense of duty which he acquired within the family unit. While the laws of the state are more abstract and ask him to acquire new roles as a citizen, soldier, and juror, he does not experience them as opposing his own individual enjoyment:

> It is in knowing that the law of his own heart is the law of all hearts, in knowing the consciousness of the self as the acknowledged universal order; it is virtue, which enjoys the fruits of its sacrifice, which brings … forth the essence into the light of day, and its enjoyment is this universal life.[76]

Just as he would have been helpless if he were exposed as an infant, a citizen's personal attainments mean nothing in a city that has fallen into corruption, or trembles before invaders at the gates, or lacks public funds. The transparent unity of the life of the citizen and the life of the polis is reflected in a maxim which Hegel quotes as an apocryphal Greek saying in *PR*: "to educate one's child in ethical matters, it is necessary that they be brought up in a state with good laws."[77]

The freedom of the polis is therefore the freedom to participate in one's own governance, to exist as a particular person completely at home within, and ultimately indistinguishable from,

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[75] *PS* §461.
[76] *PS* §461.
[77] Hegel alludes to this saying, which strongly resonates with Aristotle's thoughts in the *Politics*, at *PR* §153.

the universal whole of society. Arising most especially in ancient Athens, it is a democratic freedom, yet it also stretches beyond the freedom to participate in political processes. It is a freedom which is enacted in every public act which brings forth the spirit of family life into the light of the public sphere, thereby building and conserving the universal structures which support our private lives. Apparent sacrifices for the public good are undertaken with pleasure because the citizen wholly recognizes his own interests as being fulfilled through his polis.

Since the individual grows into the roles of ethical life over the course of a lifetime, the subjective consciousness of the social substance is never static. Ethical life presents itself as an immediate whole, but the individual relates to that whole in increasingly more sophisticated ways. It thus necessitates a commitment to education, the *paideia* which illuminated ancient Greece and so brought the determinations of the social substance to the light of self-consciousness. Such education is the generational bond which allows the particular person to participate more fully in the universal life of society, and so represents the substantial freedom of ethical life. As Hegel argues in his criticism of immediate knowledge in *EL*, education is a "development [which] is an essential requirement for bringing to consciousness" what is contained in "the ethical."[78]

The Platonic corpus offers some specific examples of how the Greeks understood education to be develop the freedom of the individual in and through the substance of the universal. The allegory of the cave in *Republic* refers specifically to "the effect of education and the lack of it on our nature."[79] Education removes us from the particularity of sensory experience, the content given over to a passive, imprisoned mind unable to explore what grounds these phenomena. The liberatory effect of education is so powerful that it produces an individual who is now freely self-composed (*bei sich*) and so spurns all the trappings of his former existence.

[78] *EL* §67.
[79] *Republic* 514a.

Yet Plato affirms the importance of the social substance for the Greeks in maintaining that even the most educated individual must also be reminded that his self-sufficiency remains illusory. Even though it may seem like the most highly educated philosophers would do best to keep to their own company, spurning the demands of the social substance, such self-sufficiency cannot be granted in a state which has made provisions for their education. There is no injustice in compelling them to rule and partake in practical affairs since the individual being-for-self of the contemplative life which the philosophers enjoy has now been established as part of the universal life of the ideal city.[80] The substantial freedom afforded by education cannot be divorced from the social substance which affords that freedom.

In *Crito*, the personified Laws of Athens claim that they have a right to demand Socrates' obedience because they commanded his father to provide him a physical and artistic education.[81] For Socrates to flee Athens when the verdict has gone against him would be quite literally the "liberation of fleeing" which Hegel criticizes in modern subjectivity, a repudiation of the freedom of membership which is, at the same time, a duty toward the laws.

3.2.3 The harmony of part and whole in the ethical substance

But Athens recognized the individuality of its citizens to such an extent that there now arose a crisis of individualism. The education of sophistic disputation undermined the simple immediacy of ethical life. With the dawn of philosophical reflection, Athenians began to deny what Hegel describes as the ethical laws' "unshakable, intrinsic being, and regard[ed] them as something which, for me, is perhaps true, but also is perhaps not true."[82]

[80] *Republic* 520a-d.
[81] *Crito* 50c-e.
[82] *PS* §437.

Acutely aware of this fracture in Athenian ethical life, Plato, quite similarly to Hegel, is concerned with how the social substance can incorporate the subjectivity of a more developed self-consciousness. In *Republic*, he attempts to recover what Hegel describes in *PS* as society's "stable equilibrium of all its parts … [in which] each part is a spirit at home in this whole."[83] This harmony appears in Plato's ideal state as the division of its citizens into three castes, with each playing a particular role within the social whole. Hegel therefore regards him as a representative proponent of the substantial understanding of freedom in *LHP*:

> Plato, in direct contrast with this [modern political philosophy], lays as his foundation the substantial, the universal, and he does this in such a way that the individual as such has this very universal as his end, and the subject has his will, activity, life and enjoyment in the state, so that it may be called his second nature, his habits and his customs. This moral substance which constitutes the spirit, life and being of individuality, and which is its foundation, systematizes itself into a living, organic whole, and at the same time it differentiates itself into its members, whose activity signifies the production of the whole.[84]

Hegel's view of Plato is confirmed by Socrates' statements in *Republic*, where he claims that the greatest evil which can befall a city is that its parts, i.e., its separate social classes and its individuals, should be released from their substantial unity into a fractured being-for-self.[85] This is a process of privatization (*idiōsis*) which "dissolve[s] the city" so that "such words as 'mine' and 'not mine' aren't used in unison."[86] The breakdown of a shared universal reference point unravels the substantial community in which each finds herself as belonging to the whole. Subjectivity which has wholly distinguished itself from substantiality is only a destructive force. Witnessing the troubling advance of such subjectivity, Plato designs his state so that it perfects the "being-in-common" (*koinōnia*) of the polis.

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[83] *PS* §462.
[84] *LHP* II, 93.
[85] *Republic* 462a.
[86] *Republic* 462b-c.

In explaining why he is examining the city as a whole, Socrates says that the whole-part relation can be described like that of a living organism. When a finger is injured, the pain radiates through the entire body, so that we say that it is not simply the finger that is hurt, but rather that "the man has pain in his finger."[87] He also describes how this natural whole-part relation of an organism appears in beautiful works of art, whose color schemes are not based on the beauty of a color "in itself," but rather on the role any single color plays in the composition of the whole.[88] The parts of living organisms and works of art are not determined "in themselves," but rather by their relative position within an internally coherent whole. Extending the metaphor to social life, Socrates says that the specialization of one's labor depends upon its coordination with other persons pursuing their own particular roles and contributing to society in their own way.[89] Harmony is an aesthetic ideal as well as a practical reality. The beauty of the whole emerges from the same part-whole relation which ensures that every socially necessary job is undertaken.

While Plato's *Republic* offers a solid foundation for appreciating the harmony of ancient Greek life as an ethical substance, some distinctively Hegelian aspects of substance must also be recognized. It remains to examine how Hegel saw this harmonious reciprocity of the part and the whole as it occurs between the two spheres of family and state, each contained within the ethical substance.

Recall from 3.1 that Hegel understands substance as a process of actualization. In *PS*, Hegel demonstrates how this actualization occurs through the family and the state. Substance begins as an ineffable interiority. The familial substance is governed by a divine law which is the "inner essence" (or, as it is described in *PR*, the "mysterious substratum") of ethical life, that which lies

[87] *Republic* 462c-d.
[88] *Republic* 420c-420d.
[89] *Republic* 420d-421a.

behind the public "concrete existence" of the state.[90] The ancestral law of the family compels its members into action without any explicit articulation, as the ghosts (*Geister*) of an immemorial past constitute an invisible force which shapes the activities of the living. This abstract substance forms through the passing away of family members from their concrete, living existence: its universality appears as "pure being, death."[91]

The law of the ancestors therefore concerns itself most prominently with the rites of burial, an intentional action which reclaims the individual from the sheer accidentality of a natural death: "the family thereby makes him the member of a community which prevails over and holds under control the forces of particular material elements and the lower forms of life."[92] Returning to the metaphor of darkness he developed in describing the self-containment of substance in *SL*, in *PS* Hegel says that the familial substance is turned inward and therefore is "not exposed to the daylight of consciousness."[93] It maintains itself as an invisible spiritual community which silently endures behind the coming-to-be and passing-away of accidental individuals.

But just as in the logical progression of substance, this "pure being" of the ancestral legacy cannot simply reside within itself. Hegel indeed refers to the externalization of an inner community spirit in public life as an example in his discussion of the relation of inner and outer in *LL*: "what a people is comes to be revealed in its existence, in its customs, in its acts, in its constitution."[94] In the establishment of laws, the inner bond of family life is externalized in what Hegel refers to in *PS* as "the upward movement of the law of the netherworld to the actuality of the light of day and to conscious existence."[95]

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[90] *PS* §§448-9; *PR* §356.
[91] *PS* §452.
[92] *PS* §452.
[93] *PS* §457.
[94] *LL* §139, 153.
[95] *PS* §463.

The interaction of these two spheres is the appearance of the more developed logic of substance, as Hegel describes how each sphere reciprocally engages the other:

> Just as the family in this way possesses in the community its substance and enduring being, so, conversely, the [public] community possesses in the family the formal element of its actual existence, and in the divine law its power and authentication. Neither of the two is by itself absolutely valid; human law proceeds in its living process from the divine, the law valid on earth from that of the nether world, the conscious from the unconscious, mediation from immediacy — and equally returns whence it came. The power of the netherworld, on the other hand, has its actual existence on earth; through consciousness, it becomes existence and activity.[96]

Just as Plato intimates, public life falls apart into an indifferent individuality if it lacks the internal binding force of a family relation. The "formal element" of family life is not just an inert structure, but the active "activity of form" which maintains the whole as a whole. In establishing the state, the citizens are only externalizing that numinous spirit which already exists within the home. Our shared life together has a deeper, unconscious origin. The domestic realm is the instinctive, substantial ground of community which is explicated in self-conscious political institutions.

But without the state, this natural unity of the family is also shown to be insufficient. The individual bears duties towards the family, which in turn affords him the privileges of membership and cares for him in his individuality. But in participating in the family and enacting these duties, he (and in ancient Greece, this was a solely male prerogative) must leave the household to acquire the resources needed to sustain the family, participating in "what is truly universal, the community."[97] Hegel describes the individual who transitions from family to public life as actualizing the still "unreal" inner essence of the family, "because it is only as a citizen that he is actual and substantial, [and] so far as he is not a citizen but belongs to the family, is only an unreal impotent shadow."[98]

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[96] *PS* §460.
[97] *PS* §451.
[98] *PS* §451.

This account of ancient Greek *Sittlichkeit* in *PS* plainly draws upon the social dynamics at work in Sophocles' *Antigone*.[99] The spheres of family and civic life, each overlapping with the other, manifest themselves in the brother-sister relationship in which the sister (i.e., the tragic heroine Antigone) "has the highest intuitive awareness of what is ethical."[100] The polarized spheres of the social substance which Hegel articulates become apparent in their fracture. Polyneices, Antigone's dead brother who fought with Eteocles for the crown of Thebes, has violated the laws of public life and so has been denied burial by the newly ascendant King Creon.

But Antigone heeds the unspoken, silent laws of the ancestors which come into conflict with those of the state; she looks to the unconscious insight of family life and disregards the explicit requirements of the civic law. The brother whom the household had reared and sent forth into the daylight of public life must now, in death, return to the substantial unity of ancestral being. And yet the prerogative of the state to deny a traitor the right to burial is equally necessary for the preservation of the civic law. The tragedy explores what happens when the multifaceted norms of the social substance cannot be reconciled.

[99] Though Hegel's references to *Antigone* are more allusive than direct, he cites the work at *PS* §§437, 457, 470.
[100] *PS* §457.

The several ways in which these two spheres exist as reflections of each other, together constituting the whole social substance, can be summarized in a table:

TABLE 1. *The two sides of ethical life, PS §§444-463*

Sphere of Ethical Life	Family	Civic Life
Logical form	Abstract inner essence	Actual substance
Legal form	Divine law	Human law
Particular Representative	Woman, sister (Antigone)	Man, brother (Polyneices)
Coming-to-be of the individual	Prepares the individual for communal life (through education, economic support)	Grants the individual being-for-self as a citizen
Passing-away of the individual	Raises the dead individual to universality in burial	Destroys the life of the individual in war
Concept of justice	The avenging fury of the dead who have been wronged (the Erinyes or Furies)	The curtailment and restraint of pure being-for-self, establishment of restrictions and parameters on individual initiative

Mediating this internal opposition within itself, the substance maintains itself in a state of dynamic tension. As if influenced by the positive and negative poles of a magnet, the lives of individuals are conditioned by both sides, as they actualize themselves in the light of public life but also invariably pass away into the dim shadows of familial memory. And each side also acts through the other: the process of publicly actualizing oneself begins in the family's loving care of its members, while the state gives the individual back over to the universality of the afterlife when it regards the individual as expendable (i.e., an accident in relation to its substantial being) in war.

Balanced in this way, these sides maintain themselves in harmony until there is a moment of crisis which draws out their inner tension. When the social substance fractures, the conflicted individual is forced to one-sidedly devote themselves to one sphere over the other — the kind of tragic situation (described in *Antigone*) which haunted the Greek imagination.

The individual relates to the entirety of the social substance with a similar reciprocity. For example, Charles de Gaulle may well be said to have embodied the spirit of the French nation, i.e.,

to have existed as a particular through whom the universal ethical life of France found a concrete expression. Yet it would be absurd to say that the spirit of France passed away with Charles de Gaulle (however estimable one may find him). A cultural identity cannot be reduced to the existence of any single person. It goes on appearing in different ways in the life of every French person, who, in turn, creatively reframes the idea of "Frenchness" over the decades. A universal culture forms individuals who, in turn, reshape the living direction of that culture.

One may indeed quite reasonably question if such a national spirit truly exists in any unitary sense, but here it is important to remember that ethical life contains internal tensions within itself. The particulars of the social whole do not simply appear as pure reflections of some single archetype. For instance, both Pétain and de Gaulle are manifestations of the French nation, which contains, mediates, and ultimately resolves their opposition within itself (i.e., through only one being honored in memory). The harmony of the part and whole is only maintained through the social substance's internal self-elimination of accidental particulars, a destruction which Hegel finds at work in Greek tragedy.

3.2.4 The appearance of the subject in the tragic collapse of the ethical substance

Hegel locates the appearance of the movement from substance to subject in *PS* in the breakdown of the polis, a phenomenon aesthetically captured in tragedy. At the conclusion of Sophocles' play, Antigone, with both of her brothers dead in civil war, is now herself sentenced to death by King Creon for burying Polyneices. After Antigone takes her own life, Creon also loses Haemon, his son and Antigone's fiancé, to suicide. Eurydice, Haemon's mother and Creon's wife, continues the chain of self-destruction in taking her own life upon learning of her son's suicide.

The alternating deaths of male and female figures, each conflicted between the domestic and political spheres, perfectly illustrates the internal tension which Hegel describes as underlying the social substance. Like other sequences of tragic events in Greek mythology (the events leading up to the Trojan War, for example), this string of tragic misfortunes is presented as occurring with an inexorable necessity. Since Creon's actions only bring destruction back upon himself, at the conclusion of *Antigone* he cries out his mournful surrender to the might of substance: "whatever I touch goes wrong — once more a crushing fate's come down upon my head!"[101]

Creon's focus on the cursed touch of his hands echoes Hegel's insight in *PS* that it is the deed (*Tat*) of the particular actor which upsets the harmony of the social substance.[102] The individual is always in danger of disturbing the delicate webs of substantial necessity when he enacts his own initiatives. The way in which tragic protagonists inevitably succumb to their fate demonstrates the necessary and inescapable tension between the particular act and the substantial world order (the Greek *kosmos*). In ancient Greek tragedy, the beautiful, static harmony of ethical life confronts the reality of particularized action. In his *Aesthetics*, Hegel frames this crisis of particularization within ethical life as the essence of ancient tragedy:

> The substance of ethical life, as a concrete unity, is an ensemble of *different* relations and powers which only in a situation of inactivity, like that of the blessed gods, accomplish the work of the spirit in the enjoyment of an undisturbed life. But the very nature of this ensemble implies its transfer from its at first purely abstract *ideality* into its actualization in *reality* and its appearance in the mundane sphere. Owing to the nature of the real world, the mere *difference* of the constituents of this ensemble becomes perverted into *opposition* and collision, once individual characters seize upon them on the territory of specific circumstances.[103]

[101] *Antigone*, lines 1464-5. Translation from Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. by Robert Fagles (New York, Penguin Books: 1984).
[102] *PS* §464.
[103] *AS* II, 1196.

A tragic situation is one which arises when someone pulls upon the chains of necessity in such a way which shows the deep interconnectedness of the whole through a chain reaction of death and destruction. The hubris of such one-sided action is contrary to the ethical perception which Hegel describes at the start of his discussion of ethical substance.[104] Individual initiative should be limited by the awareness that each particular person is contained within the ethical substance in multiple ways. Antigone decides to bury Polyneices in her role as a sister, but she is also responsible for maintaining the laws under which she will raise her future children. Creon decides to execute Antigone as the leader of the state, but he is also her future father-in-law.

But the necessity to act overrides this wholistic ethical perception. While the individual still perceives the multifaceted dynamics of ethical life, to dwell in this perception is, as Hegel suggests, ultimately just the prerogative of an Olympian aloofness.[105] Ethical perception must give way to ethical action, and action demands one-sided commitments which break up the ideal harmony of ethical life. When an individual resolves upon an action, she opposes her particularity to the universality of the whole.

The individual's tragic suffering is the vengeance of the injured universal which unveils the necessity at work within the social substance. The tragic outcome is, in a sense, fated twice over. First, it is fated that the individual, as a mere mortal, act one-sidedly. Second, it is equally fated that he will be punished for his particular initiative, since his finite act is cancelled out and reabsorbed back into the harmonious balance of things. Returning to the swimming pool analogy

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[104] *PS* §446.
[105] *AS* II, 1196:

> Only from this point of view can we be really serious about those gods who dwell in their peaceful tranquility and unity solely on Olympus and in the heaven of imagination and religious ideas, but who, when they now come actually to life as a specific 'pathos' in a human individual, lead, despite all their justification, to guilt and wrong owing to their particular specification and the opposition to which this leads.

from 3.1.4, the work of fate is like a body of water which always returns to equilibrium after a local disturbance. We pity Creon because we know that he cannot help but use his hands to violate a cosmic order which washes out everything which pretends to individuality: both the mortal person and their meager actions.

To consider another example: the tragedy of Oedipus, the father of Antigone and her brothers, is the immediate background of *Antigone*. After he had solved the riddle of the Sphinx, Oedipus' confidence in the Apollonian power of his own mind was shaken and destroyed when he learned of his true origins. His self-inflicted blindness is the renunciation of the light of conscious awareness in surrender to the dark mysteries of fate. In *PS*, Hegel addresses this tragedy as one in which "a power which shuns the light of day ensnares the ethical self-consciousness."[106] The case of Oedipus, who is not directly confronted by any other individual, shows that while the tragic situation often involves the opposition of particular individuals (e.g., Antigone and Creon), it is not this opposition as such which constitutes the tragic. The "power which shuns the light of day" does not simply take sides in disputes between particular agents, but rather destroys *any* individual who undertakes the hubris of determining the universal on their own behalf.

In *Antigone*, the maintenance of the reciprocal relationship between the social spheres requires that *both* particulars who align themselves on opposite sides of the social substance (i.e., with either the human or divine law) be eliminated. Both Creon and Antigone are undone. When an action is undertaken on one side of the social substance, it necessitates that an opposing reaction occur on the other side. Within the social spheres with which they identify, both the action and reaction are, despite their contradiction, wholly justified. Creon knows that he is justified in his

[106] *LHP* III, 289; *PS* §469.

political role of enforcing the civil law, while Antigone equally knows that her actions are justified in her role as a family member.

These tragic actors do not conceive of themselves as individuals making a decision, but rather as the immediate representatives of an ethical universal. Just as Hegel used an oceanic metaphor in *LHP* to describe the dissolution of subjectivity in Spinoza's substance, he also describes Antigone's conviction in *PS* as her drowning within the ethical substance:

> The ethical consciousness, however, has drunk from the cup of substance and has forgotten all the one-sidedness of being-for-self, of its ends and peculiar notions, and has, therefore, at the same time drowned in this Stygian water all essentiality of its own, and all independence of the objective, actual world. Its absolute right is, therefore, that when it acts in accordance with ethical law, it shall find in this actualization nothing else but the fulfillment of this law itself, and the deed shall manifest only ethical action.[107]

Both Creon and Antigone are thus so immersed in their own spheres that the action of the other seems wholly arbitrary. To Creon, the law of the family resides outside of the light of public life, and so, as Hegel says in *PS*, remains "locked up in the darkness of the nether regions."[108] Each tragic protagonist then destroys the other in a way which affirms the truth of their respective social sphere. Creon eliminates Antigone through the public retribution of legal justice, while Antigone's suicide disrupts Creon's family life. Legal justice, a necessity externally imposed upon the lawbreaker, is counterbalanced by an internal dissolution, as Creon's family self-destructs with the suicides of Haemon and Eurydice.

Through this mutual exchange of punishments, the unity of the substantial whole is reaffirmed. The reciprocal interplay between divine and human justice shows their ultimate inseparability. One cannot be upheld without violating the other; one cannot act without an equal and opposite reaction on the other side. This appearance of justice within the social substance is

[107] *PS* §467.
[108] *PS* §466.

laid out abstractly in the logic of reciprocal action. In *SL*, Hegel states that substance contains "forces in need of reciprocal solicitation" in which "one accident … drives out another."[109] In *AS*, he claims that the downfall of both individuals in an ancient tragedy is, therefore, the flourishing of the substance, since it is the elimination of "the one-sided particular which had not been able to adapt itself to this harmony."[110] In this creative destruction, the substance *appears* to have an intentional drive toward self-preservation. The inner "being-within-self" of substance prefigures the intentional "being-for-self" of subjectivity.

The Greek spectator, however, did not regard tragedy as a proof of the contradictory norms of the social substance, setting up the individual as the critic of the social whole. The mysterious balance which maintains the whole as a whole was not understood through the analysis of its component parts which Hegel, as a modern, provides. Tragic fate is rather what he goes on to describe in *PS* as "the negative power which engulfs both sides, that is, omnipotent and righteous destiny."[111] The complex inner workings of the ethical substance return back into their inner darkness and are regarded as the intentional expression of a fated destiny. It is the ethical substance which is understood to have a capacity for intentional action and not the subjective individual. When the taboos are broken, the gods enact a cosmic retribution upon the pitiable transgressor.

Where, then, can the seed of subjective freedom be located within the dark, fatalistic sanctum of substance? First, the experience of a conflict of norms in which one takes a stand already prefigures the subjective conviction of conscience. This is made clear in the text of the play when the chorus describes Antigone as having a "self-determined" disposition. In the first

[109] *SL* 11.395, 491.
[110] *AS* II, 1197.
[111] *PS* §472.

attested use of the term in ancient Greek, she is *autonomos*, self-regulating.[112] As Shannon Hoff explains, Antigone acts outside of the role which custom has "naturally" assigned to her:

> In various ways, Antigone disrupts the smooth operation of nature in ethical life; the events around her death challenge the idea that nature can be ultimately authoritative with regard to the ways in which human beings live together. First, she fails to develop into her "natural" roles as a wife and a mother — indeed, precisely because of the fact that she obeys the given, divine law that orders her to bury her brother. Antigone never becomes a wife, a participating member in the "syllogism" that unites male and female in the ethical world. Second, her death and the death of Creon's family members in fact leave Creon, the man, in mourning, a role that is not "naturally" his to fulfill. Third, she ends her life unnaturally, through suicide, thus withholding her ethical contribution as wife and mother from the society that has opposed her. Because of the misbegotten structure of this society, her fulfillment of one "natural" obligation leads to her failure to fulfill others, a tension that introduces the need for, and implicit presence of, human discernment.[113]

The result of the tragic situation is that the law no longer presents itself as "natural," which is to say that it is no longer taken as an inviolable rule of the cosmic order. The law depends upon our implicit participation and is therefore a product of human culture. The "must" of absolute necessity is no longer binding and has been weakened into a deliberative "should." The meaning of *ēthos* has shifted from self-evident custom to the faculty which weighs and assesses those customs (Aristotelian *phronesis*), from a participation in ethical life to an execution of ethical judgement. It is now impossible to speak of ethics without some minimal reference to the autonomous agency of moral agents.

Nonetheless, the scope of this discernment remains much narrower than for us moderns. Rather than grounding ethical judgements in the independent operation of subjective conscience, the ancient moral agent can only discern between the competing claims of the ethical spheres, navigating them in such a way that best preserves the harmony of the whole. In his work on the

[112] *Antigone*, lines 805, 821. Edward Jeremiah comments on these lines and notes that the chorus does not approve of this moral self-regulation, taunting her with "ironic praise." See Jeremiah, *The Emergence of Reflexivity in Greek Language and Thought*, 166.
[113] Shannon Hoff, *The Laws of the Spirit: A Hegelian Theory of Justice* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2014), 33.

Greek self, Christopher Gill emphasizes how this "objective-participant" self "participate[s] in shared forms of human life and 'discourse' about the nature and significance of those shared forms."[114] The tragic situation, however, restricts this path of communally engaged discernment so that it only involves selecting between different paths of destruction. If Antigone had heeded the civic law and forsaken the ancestors, she would have suffered a family dissolution similar to that which Creon suffered. The roles would have simply been reversed in the ruthless reciprocity of substantial ethical life. Or, on the other side, if Creon had made an exception in this case and pardoned Antigone, historians would lament the tragic decline of Thebes, the erosion of its public life as family favoritism diminished respect for law.

The individual caught within the tragic situation can only mediate between opposing determinations which, whatever her efforts, cannot be reconciled. The moderation espoused by Aristotle's ethics shows how the ancient moral agent enacts their ethical judgement as a kind of balancing. As opposed to determining and resolving upon the good in a universal and categorical sense (like a Kantian ethicist), the Aristotelian moral agent is always mediating between the opposed poles of the good life, weighing them against each other by trial and error. The delicate art of propitiating both sides of the cosmic order is more like learning to steer a boat through the murky waters of substantial ethical life than realizing for oneself a theoretically justified course of action.[115] The tragic situation stands out as tragic because it is the ill-fated scenario in which no such mediation is possible. But in the general course of things, circumstances determine the ethical course of action, shaping the contours of ethical choice but never affording the unqualified resolution of absolute moral conviction.

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[114] Gill, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy*, 12.

[115] Aristotle introduces his theory of virtue as a moderation between excess and deficiency by conceding that such determinations cannot be made on purely theoretical grounds. Ethical judgements require a "knack" similar to the art of navigation. See *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.2, 1103b-1104a.

But there also exists a second seed of freedom which extends beyond the limited agency of one caught between the opposing spheres of the ethical substance. While our subjective agency is limited within the tragic situation, reflection upon it results in the freedom of the further development of self-consciousness. From the first-person view of the tragic protagonist, their freedom remains very limited, but the tragic spectator becomes self-aware through the education which plays out on the tragic stage.[116] The chorus responds to Creon's final lament and concludes *Antigone* with an exhortation to the wisdom of a renewed humility:

> Wisdom is by far the greatest part of joy,
> and reverence toward the gods must be safeguarded.
> The mighty words of the proud are paid in full
> with mighty blows of fate, and at long last
> those blows will teach us wisdom.[117]

The difference between the tone of this conclusion and what we might expect from a modern moral interpretation of the same events is quite striking. The modern impulse towards criticism and reform interprets the play as a demonstration of an antiquated, dysfunctional social order which has ceased to promote the good life. But while the chorus of *Antigone* takes the tragedy as illustrating a lesson, it is a lesson still directed at the individual who must accommodate herself to the terrible power of fate. The viewer should come away with a kind of self-knowledge, but it is the self-knowledge of knowing oneself as a limited participant in a delicate cosmic balance.

The tragic spectator is thus encouraged to adopt the conservative interpretation of the Delphic dictum elaborated in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* when Oceanus advises his fellow Titan Prometheus to "know himself" in giving up his resistance to the Olympians.[118] Self-

[116] I am indebted to Edward Jeremiah's reflection upon a passage in Lucian's *De saltione* for this insight. At *De saltione* 8.1, "Lucian identifies the vicarious experience of the viewer as a lesson in knowing oneself. In this sense Greek theatre is a cultural manifestation of the Delphic dictum, whose aesthetic, defined as the way in which it is experienced, is the intellectual act of knowing oneself." Jeremiah, *The Emergence of Reflexivity in Greek Thought and Language*, 139-140.
[117] *Antigone*, lines 1466-1470.
[118] *Prometheus Bound*, lines 308-310.

knowledge involves a recognition of one's role within a wider cosmic order, most especially after the fracture of that order — both the Titanomachy and the conflict between Polyneices and Eteocles are civil wars. Disruptive events show us that self-knowledge involves the self-awareness of knowing one's own position relative to the gods (avoiding hubris) as well as within the social structures of ethical life.

Tragedy shows us how the self becomes objective to itself in art in a way which is impossible in practical life — in Hegel's philosophy, aesthetic experience affords a greater self-consciousness than ethical or political activity and so belongs to the speculative freedom of absolute spirit. The Olympian theoretical standpoint must be abandoned in the moment of action, but it returns in our contemplation of that same action on the tragic stage. In stepping outside of the immediate ethical situation, the tragic spectator observes the force of the ethical substance *from the outside*, seeing the restrictions it imposes not as all-encompassing constraints upon his action, but rather as imperfect barriers which only partially cohere.

But the self-objectification which occurs in tragedy is not just a product of its dramatic depiction. Whether in real life or on stage, anybody undergoing a tragic situation is, in this very process, stepping outside of himself, leaving behind the roles and norms which he thought to be embedded within his character. Because the tragic situation disrupts the stable identity which the individual enjoyed in the harmony of ethical life, it is itself a dissociative event. Hippolytus, for instance, wishes that he could join the tragic audience and weep at his own misfortunes.[119] Reflective self-awareness reorients the individual to a world in which his individual agency has become a reality. It is therefore not at all accidental that tragedies appeared on the ancient Greek

[119] See Euripides, *Hippolytus*, lines 1078-1079. Jeremiah comments on this passage as well as others which exemplify this "theoric gaze" in tragedy. See Jeremiah, *The Emergence of Reflexivity in Greek Language and Thought,* 158ff.

stage. Theatrical self-objectification lends itself to tragic situations, since the dramatic form requires a content in which characters arrive at a radically new awareness of themselves.

In *PS*, Hegel accordingly shifts his focus from an analysis of the tragedy on stage to a sociological account of how this tragic dissolution occurred within Greek society. While this account is largely intuitive and is not based on any definite historical research, Hegel provides a general sense of how the same tragic patterns can appear in the events of history.

The internal conflict between the two spheres of ethical life plays itself out in the social drama described at *PS* §475. First, the centralized authority of the state takes root when it intervenes within the family unit, establishing explicit laws for marriage, inheritance, and the rearing of children. But this action has an equal and opposite reaction. In removing the independence of family life, women now see themselves as the defenders of the domestic realm in opposition to the state. As in Antigone's resistance to Creon, women decry the loss of their husbands, sons, and brothers in war (a resistance to state initiatives comedically depicted in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*).

But this protest also induces an equal and opposite reaction from the state. Where the woman seeks to preserve the independence of the household by encouraging the young man to oppose the political elders, the establishment diverts this internal threat by sending him to war against another society. The young man now finds recognition in military glory even as the solidity of ethical life is placed on increasingly shaky grounds. The internal harmony of the social substance comes undone in foreign expansionism, since the self-preservation of society now precariously depends upon the contingent events of war.

The state now attempts to establish its hegemony, becoming the active social substance which determines the fate of its neighbors, whom it seeks to render passive. But the opposing city

resists and builds up its own army, resulting in an arms race. Just as at the end of the logic of essence, the causal efficacy of military force is shown to exist within a reciprocal system of alliances and rivalries. The city-state's illusion of an isolationist self-sufficiency falls apart as these conflicts become increasingly large and complex.

While Hegel is not specific about the events which he takes to be the historical appearance of this socio-political tragedy, the Peloponnesian War marked the end of the independent city-state. The social substance would now have to look outside of itself; its laws and customs were only one option among many. This fracture of the polis also occurred internally in the individualistic turmoil of 5th-century Athens. The rise of self-willed, traitorous demagogues like Alcibiades, the sophistic undermining of conventional morality, the Socratic examination of self-consciousness — all of these were expressions of the loss of "being-in-common" (*koinōnia*) in the Athenian experiment with democratic life. As Hegel comments in *LHP*, the death of Socrates was a real-life tragedy, but one in which the destruction of the individual failed to preserve the universal substance. Athenian ethical life had reached its finite limitations and would give way to the infinite self-examination which Socrates prescribed for his unwell city.[120]

This undoing of ethical life followed from the nature of substantiality itself. As has been established in the logic of absolute necessity, whatever grounds itself is also that which must cease to be.[121] But Hegel also maintains that the finite is reborn just as surely as it dies. Playing on the affinity between the German words for downfall (*Untergang*) and transition (*Übergang*), Hegel concludes his treatment of ethical life in *PS* by saying that the "ruin of the ethical substance" is

[120] "Socrates was "[individually] vanquished, but it is only the individual, and not the principle, which is negated in punishment, and the spirit of the Athenian people did not in the removal of the individual, recover its old position." *LHP* II, 44.
[121] By "letting them go free as absolutely actual [*frei als absolut wirkliche entließ*] … the actualities now perish." *SL* 11.392, 488.

also its "passage into another form."[122] The story of subjectivity begins after the communal cohesion of ethical life "has been shattered into a multitude of separate atoms."[123] The self-contained polis disappears and gives way to a larger, increasingly cosmopolitan empire whose fortunes in war are more secure. As will be examined below at 4.2.1, the Roman Empire is the new form of social organization in which the structures of modern subjectivity start to emerge.

[122] *PS* §476. The play on words is noted in a footnote at Lauer, 215.
[123] *PS* §476.

IV. CHAPTER 4: THE LOGIC AND APPEARANCE OF THE PURE SUBJECT

Modernity began with the discovery of the subjective realm, the private world of first-person experience liberated from substantial necessity. This subjective freedom is freedom as it has been most widely understood in the Western tradition. In the Roman world where Hegel says that modern subjectivity first took root, the orator Cicero advised a jury that "our thoughts are free, and so they consider whatever they wish."[1] By Hegel's era, this subjective freedom was so widely recognized that a popular student song also exclaimed that "thoughts are free!"[2] The persistence of this slogan is not accidental. The modern development of individual subjectivity and the modern embrace of freedom are, in essence, one and the same phenomenon.

But just as with substance, the full truth of subjectivity is not given at the outset. In *PS*, Hegel indeed describes the modern subject as developing across a very long historical arc which stretches from the Roman Empire to the present day. In this chapter, I will not investigate the complete actualization of subjectivity, the "substantial subject" which will be the topic of Chapter 5. I will first focus on the "pure subject," i.e., the subject whose development is driven by her attempt to purify herself of her substantial existence.[3]

I will first consider the logical structures at work in the pure subject. She tries (but ultimately fails) to establish her independence by showing that she is separate from the structures of necessity which govern substantial existence. She manifests the "negativity" of Hegel's logic

[1] "*liberae sunt enim nostrae cogitationes, et quae volunt sic intuentur ut ea cernimus quae videmus*." Translation is my own. Cicero, *Pro Milone* sec. 79.
[2] "Die Gedanken sind frei," The LiederNet Archive, last modified March 23 2010, https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=59851.
[3] Hegel himself occasionally uses the language of purity to describe this undeveloped subject, as in the "existence of the pure self [*des reinen Selbsts*] as self" at *PS* §508.

since she negates the logic of substance. Inverting the fatalism which appeared in Greek substantiality, pure subjectivity affirms its own boundless potential.

In its historical appearance in *PS*, the pure subject is the product of a complex course of historical development which has resulted in modern individualism. Hegel describes how several apparently unrelated phenomena — Roman stoicism, monastic asceticism, the Christian ethic of conversion, the hypocrisy of Renaissance courtly life — contributed to the formation of the modern subject. The Enlightenment and French Revolution were the most complete articulation of the freedom of pure subjectivity, a freedom which can now be seen in its inadequacy.

This diagrammatic overview shows how pure subjectivity negates the logic and appearance of substantiality in its universal, particular, and individual aspects:

TABLE 2. *Substantiality and pure subjectivity as the universal, particular, and individual*

	the universal is…	**the particular is…**	**the individual is…**
In the logic of substance,	the activity of form (*Formtätigkeit*).	the accidental content shaped by the universal activity of form.	only an implicit mediator between the universal and particular.
In the appearance of substance,	the whole of ethical life, or the "social substance."	the specific social roles contained within ethical life.	the nascent self-knowledge of the tragic protagonist which appears with the breakdown of ethical life.
In the logic of the pure subject,	the absolute negativity of the "I"; its capacity for pure abstraction.	abstracted away entirely.	the infinite subjective will which opposes itself to objective, finite being.
In the appearance of the pure subject,	the certainty of the self as the universal established in the Enlightenment.	destroyed in the individual's attempt to establish himself as the universal.	the critical modern personality looking to reform society through his own "pure insight."

In the ethical substance, the individual only knew herself as playing a particular role within the universal. The incompleteness of substance and the need for individual subjective discernment only emerged when ethical life broke down so that any individual action was caught between conflicting particular determinations.

The pure subject, by contrast, elevates the individual and effaces the particular. In another one-sided articulation of the three moments of the concept, the individual and the universal are now taken in unity, together enacting the same "absolute negativity" which abstracts itself from out of particular existence. The "I" has been purified of its particularity and has become a person with an independent faculty of reason, one no longer embedded within the world of ethical life. I do not form my perspectives based on my role as a citizen of Athens, for instance, but through the

pure exercise of my own mind. I know the truth as such, as it is in all cases, from within my own self. To contextualize my autonomy as existing within a particular context is to limit my freedom.

The freedom of the pure subject articulates different aspects of the three senses of freedom discussed in Chapter 1. The pure subject 1) distinguishes the subjective "inner realm" from the external world; 2) takes the external world as existing "for himself" (*für sich*), an object which he is free to shape so that he finds himself "at home"; 3) is the self-consciousness of the self as self, the pure "I" which has been abstracted from its particular situation.

4.1 The Negative Logic of the Pure Subject

Pure or "abstract" subjectivity is abstract because it has removed itself from substantial necessity, negating the objective world in affirming its own distinct subjective space. Hegel therefore indicates that the pure subject is governed by a logic of "pure negativity" whose freedom is the endless abyss of a "bad infinity." In this subchapter, I will explore this logic as a necessary pathway to subjective freedom which, ultimately, is reconciled with the logic of substance. Although these logical elements can only articulate subjectivity in its barest stage of development, they first establish the inner world of subjective freedom.

4.1.1 The logic of negation: a pathway to subjective freedom

The logic of negation is most evident in Hegel's description of the pure "I" as an abstraction which "negates" the objective world and even its own concrete existence. In *PhilS*, he takes conceptual subjectivity's "absolute negativity" to be the formal structure of its freedom:

> Formally the *essence* of spirit is *freedom*, the concept's absolute negativity as identity with itself. In accordance with this formal determination, spirit *can* abstract

> from everything external and from its own externality, from its very life; it can endure the negation of its individual immediacy, *infinite pain*, i.e. it can maintain itself affirmatively in this negativity and be identical for itself. This possibility is its intrinsic abstract universality, a universality that is for itself.[4]

My individual self-awareness has an "intrinsic abstract universality" in the sense that it continues to cohere with itself despite my momentary adoption and rejection of particular perspectives. The "infinite pain" which self-consciousness undergoes in *PS* can be understood as the way in which the ineffable "I" actualizes its negative self-relation. Only through the destruction of its particular manifestations does pure subjectivity prove its purity. It shows its independence from its own determinate existence and so "maintain[s] itself affirmatively in this negativity."

In the Preface of *PS*, Hegel describes how this "pure, *simple negativity*" of subjectivity first emerges as the negation of substantiality.[5] With the emergence of subjectivity, the formerly unopposed substance now has an "other," a "double" which sets up the "opposition" between subject and substance.[6] This other is, at first, simply a non-substance — the pure subject which remains itself indeterminate. Yet because the attempts of pure subjectivity to prove its complete independence from substantial existence will continually fail, it will become apparent that subjectivity is inextricable from substantiality. The later, more concrete development of subjectivity (substantial subjectivity) recognizes substance and subject as moments of a "self-restoring sameness, [the] reflection in otherness within itself."[7]

The relation between substance and subject can therefore be more adequately described as a double negation. The subject is initially opposed to substance (the first negation) but this

[4] I have modified Wallace and Miller's translation of *Geist* as "mind" to "spirit." *PhilS* §382.
[5] *PS* §18.
[6] *PS* §18.
[7] *PS* §18.

opposition is itself cancelled out (the second negation) as the relation between substance and subject is further elaborated.

Later in the Preface, Hegel further describes how the pure subject relates to substance like a point which stands outside a circle. The circle is the geometric representation of substantiality. It "remains self-enclosed" and "holds its moments together" in "an immediate relationship" through which each particular point partakes in the universal.[8] In this geometric representation, subjectivity appears as a "detached" point which, through the "tremendous power of the negative," attains "an existence of its own and a separate freedom," i.e., the being-for-self of subjectivity.[9]

This separation of subject from substance implies the division between subject and object which arises from the opposition of mere consciousness (see 1.4.1 above). It is from this phenomenological standpoint that pure subjectivity first appears. The subjective understanding (*Verstand*) is its "energy of thought" which externally takes apart the seamless whole of substantial existence and analyzes its parts in isolation.[10] This modern, mechanistic way of thinking thus undoes the beautiful harmony of part and whole which Hegel and Plato find in the social substance (see 3.2.3 above).[11] Hegel says that "beauty hates the understanding" because it interprets the harmonious self-relation of substance to be only the product of exterior, separable causes.

In *EL*, Hegel says that the subjective understanding engages in such causal analysis because it involves the same abstraction as the formation of the pure "I," the extrication of the part from the whole.[12] The negativity of the understanding kills the living integrity of that which it analyzes, reducing it to a mere object. It is the knowledge which comes only postmortem, a process of

[8] *PS* §32.
[9] *PS* §32.
[10] *PS* §32.
[11] Hegel describes ethical life is "beautiful" and "serene" at *PR* §356.
[12] *EL* §153.

dissection in which every organic content is shown to be finite and therefore not truly self-sustaining. Just as the tragic audience in ancient Greece first observed, substantial existence ceases to be "authentic substance" when it is seen from the outside.[13]

Back in the Preface, however, Hegel describes how a kind of resurrection occurs when we "tarry with" or "dwell on" (*Verweilen*) this reductionistic course of thought.[14] The full truth of subjectivity "only" appears when, "in [this] utter dismemberment, it finds itself."[15] The subject takes up within herself the organic unity which had previously belonged to the substance. In a second negation, the negativity of analytic thinking coheres into a substantial form when it is applied to itself as self-consciousness (and not mere consciousness). Since the pure subject has reconstructed the substance for itself as an abstract, ideal system, it has shown its own substantial self-relation. The universality of the "I" has a positive, integrating function, and is no longer merely just what remains when its concrete, particular situation is abstracted away.

Subjectivity is, conversely, required for the true self-determination of substance, since it grounds substantiality "by giving determinateness an existence in its own element."[16] A substance without the mediation of subjective discernment is only contingently self-related (see 3.1.4 above). Separate from subjectivity, the particular determinations of substantiality only appear in their "abstract immediacy."[17] Until and unless the understanding dissects the substantial self-relation, it appears as it did to the ancient Greeks, as the inexplicable, senseless work of fate. But in a modern, negative perspective (such as Kant's critical philosophy), the "I" which takes apart the substance has itself become the synthetic whole which grounds concrete experience.

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[13] *PS* §32.
[14] *PS* §32.
[15] *PS* §32.
[16] *PS* §32.
[17] *PS* §32.

The fractured substance is revived through the very subjective negativity which took it apart. As Hegel says in *EL*, thinking "causes the wound and heals it, too."[18] In the philosophical self-consciousness of substantial subjectivity, the circle of substance will ultimately be restored as what Hegel describes (also in *EL*) as a "circle of circles."[19] No longer a point which stands outside the circular self-relation, subjectivity now exists within the structure it took apart. As pure negativity, the self-conscious individual freely moves within the system he has built for himself. The static circle of substance has become a spiritual circularity which exists through the individual's own thinking activity.

The double negation in which the subject emerges from substance is, however, only the most paradigmatic instance of negativity in Hegel's logic. This negative methodology is immanent to the process of thinking itself, which shows that no appearance of the truth is self-supporting. Every moment of the logic is "negated," or opposed, by another moment which completes its meaning. This opposition is then itself "negated," or undone, as the two moments are seen in their unity. Logical thinking therefore "negates its own negation" and thereby comprehends the truth as a self-related, internally differentiated system. This process of distinction, separation, and reunification is analogous to the abstraction, analysis, and synthesis which formed the modern self.

This operation of double negation also underlies freedom itself. I began this work with Allen Wood's observation that Hegel departs from the ordinary sense of freedom as a lack of restriction.[20] Yet even in this typical understanding of freedom, the free person is described by a set of negative modifiers: I am free because I am without restrictions, unencumbered, liberated from oppression. Just as in classical logic, one negative modifier negates another, resulting in the

[18] See 2.4.3 above. *EL* §24.
[19] *EL* §15.
[20] Wood, 37.

positive condition of freedom.[21] This double negation at work in each of these formulae for freedom can also be clarified by expressing it with the symbol for negation in formal logic: freedom results from being without (¬) restrictions (¬), un (¬) encumbered (¬), liberated (¬) from oppression (¬). In Hegel's theory of freedom, this double negation appears as the removal of separation: our alienation (¬) is cancelled out (¬) when we are freely at home with ourselves.

Appreciating Hegel's logic as a logic of freedom therefore involves understanding how negation functions, in Dieter Heinrich's phrase, as its "basic operation" (*Grundoperation*).[22] Brady Bowman similarly reads Hegel as proposing a "metaphysics of absolute negativity" in which negation is the "dynamic or processual aspect" of the concept.[23] Since, for Hegel, conceptuality *is* subjectivity, negativity is the dynamic process of subjectification which occurs in both his logical and phenomenological works.

Yet the logic of negation which formally expresses the ontology of freedom is obscured by Hegel's often confusing use of the language of negativity. Just as with freedom, references to "negation," "the negative," and "negativity" appear at crucial moments throughout Hegel's logical works, but there is no dedicated topical discussion of this concept. Moreover, there are subtle shifts in the meaning of the negative at different points in the logic. Anton Friedrich Koch's distinction between the substantial form of the negative in the logic of being, ("nothing", *das Nichts*) and the

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[21] Brady Bowman argues that agreement of Hegelian double negation with the laws of classical logic does not compromise his unique ontological project:

> Hegelian negativity may be said to depend on classical logic as a medium for the demonstrations carried out in accord with dialectical logic, yet without for that reason compromising the metaphysical claim that thought and reality must be conceived as structured in ways that diverge from the categorial view and its associated logical forms.

Brady Bowman, *Hegel and the Metaphysics of Absolute Negativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25.

[22] Dieter Henrich, "Hegels Grundoperation," in *Der Idealismus und seine Gegenwart*. *Festschrift für Werner Marx*, ed. by U. Guzzoni, B. Rang, and L. Siep (Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1976), 208–30.

[23] Bowman, 48.

operation of negation in the logic of essence ("negation", *Verneinung*) shows that it is very difficult to arrive at a contextually independent understanding of what Hegel means by "the negative."[24]

The negativity of Hegel's logic can nonetheless be generally described as the presence of subjective freedom in his ontological project. The pervasiveness of the language of negativity through Hegel's logic, however, indicates that negativity does not only pertain to conceptual subjectivity. It is also a crucial point of commonality between subjectivity and the substantial existence which is elaborated within the same logical system. Contra Cartesian dualism and Kantian transcendentalism, the modern subject can come to be at home in the world if he recognizes how the subjective logic of the negative is also at work in objective existence.

In opening his logic with the concept of "being," Hegel challenges Parmenides' denial of negativity in the first formal ontology of the Western tradition. The pre-Socratic philosopher describes being as inert and indivisible, a solid substance which "stays in the same state and in the same place."[25] Moreover, he holds that the nature of being can be demonstrated through a rigorous application of deductive logic, since "necessity holds it in the bonds of a limit which restrains it all about."[26] Parmenides further claims that logic speaks only of "what is" and can have no account of "what is not." Any negation of being must be itself negated, since being "cannot not be."[27]

While Hegel ultimately agrees with Parmenides that negativity negates itself and returns to the positive, he does so by allowing the negative to develop of its own accord. The negative discloses the inadequacy of the positive (a first negation). It, in turn, shows its own limitations (a second negation), but only after advancing the course of thought past the limitations of its initial

[24] Anton Friedrich Koch, "Die Selbstbeziehung der Negation in Hegels Logik," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 53, no. 1 (1999): 9.
[25] DK 28b8, 29-31. Translation from Robin Waterfield, *The First Philosophers: The Presocratics and Sophists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 60.
[26] DK 28b8, 29-31. Translation from Robin Waterfield, 60.
[27] DK 28b2, 3-6. Translation from Waterfield, 58.

standpoint. Parmenides, by contrast, regards the negative itself as incoherent and so immediately cancels it out. Yet he does not realize that denying non-being is *itself* a form of negation. If someone posits non-being (a first negation), to deny it (a second negation) is to implicitly affirm the negative. Non-being, in effect, belongs to non-being. Thinking only of the positivity of being, he is not self-consciously aware of the negativity implied in his own methodology.

Parmenides' ontology is also a good illustration of how denying negativity results in a static atemporality. Whereas Hegel takes substance to be a process of actualization, Parmenides radically denies the reality of change. Since change involves a coming-to-be of "what is" out of "what is not," he discounts our entire lived experience as illusory.[28] While this conclusion may seem outlandish, Parmenides' separation of the phenomenal from the logical has held sway for millennia. His philosophy can indeed be termed an ancient form of "positivism" in that he arrived at his conclusions by holding fast to the positive and denying the negative. To coin a contrasting term, Hegel's logic is a kind of "negativism" because it acknowledges the negativity of temporal existence and incorporates it within the structures of logic.

As Stephen Houlgate argues, Hegel's fundamental disagreement with Parmenides proceeds from the ancient Greek's failure to recognize that negativity is in fact implied in his positive concept of being.[29] In Hegel's account, pure being is an abstraction from everything particular, and so it is indeed the most universal negation possible: as he writes in *SL*, both pure light and pure darkness are "voids that amount to the same thing."[30] Parmenides' concept of being is likewise without any content. If someone were to ask him what being is, he could not give it any concrete

[28] DK 28b8, 15-22.
[29] "Hegel's challenge to Parmenides is thus not that the latter clings to the illusion of pure being (as Nietzsche would argue) but that he actually fails to think pure being itself in its utter purity and indeterminacy." Houlgate, *Opening*, 281.
[30] *SL* 21.80, 69.

determination without some minimal reference to the phenomenal world which he sees as illusory. He could only say, with Hegel, that it is nothing. Ironically, Parmenides does not appreciate the radical negativity at work in his own philosophically groundbreaking abstraction.

Repudiating the abstract stasis of Parmenidean ontology, Hegel's logic proceeds from the experiences of natural consciousness explored in *PS*. As we take in the world as it appears to us, we must develop a way of thinking about appearances which accounts for their presence despite their limitation, their absence — their non-being. The world of experience is always only partially true. Our immediate, finite perspective is inherently inadequate to the absolute knowledge which it believes itself to possess, but this does not mean that it should be entirely divorced from logical, conceptual philosophy. The onus is on abstract thought to develop a way of thinking which learns from the failures of Western ontology and more humbly recognizes that the truth is not given to us all at once.

The philosophical method appropriate to human experience accepts and acknowledges becoming, which Hegel describes in *EL* as "the principle of all movement, all life, and all actual activity."[31] Both substance and subject partake in an essentially negative process of self-actualization. Just as subjectivity cannot be reduced to its concrete forms, the truth of things is absent as often as it is present. My car, for instance, has an "inner truth" that will only partially appear in its outward performance. While I could perform diagnostics to determine its health, it will, in time, freely "express" its ailments to me with or without my intervention. As Zambrana writes, the power of the negative appears "in the capacity of things to unfold in and through conditions that exceed them, thereby exhibiting their own rationality — their subjectivity."[32]

[31] *EL* §81.
[32] Zambrana, 43.

But this unfolding is not wholly predetermined in advance. The absolute necessity that all finite things pass away (discussed above at 3.1.2) is also their potential to reemerge in a different way. Even apparently solid matter only exists in its solidity through a certain process of existing, a dynamic way of maintaining itself as itself. Since everything and everyone shows who or what they are through their constant re-creation, free will is not a special supplement to an otherwise deterministic reality. Subjective choice only focuses and intentionally directs the constant rejuvenation of every positive state of being. The self-creation of self-determination is only the most fully actualized manifestation of a universal ontology of becoming.

4.1.2 The negation of finitude and the bad infinity of the pure subject

But despite his embrace of negativity, Hegel understands that negation first appears as a vicious falsehood, as both logically untenable and destructive of the good. It was, after all, the demon Mephistopheles who identified himself in Goethe's *Faust* as "the spirit that negates."[33] Through his pact with Mephistopheles, Faust commands the power of the negative, cancelling out every external limitation placed upon his own agency. He is the modern man whose liberation from substantial limitations is both aspirational and cautionary. The Faustian subject exemplifies an infinite striving for knowledge, a striving explored literarily by Goethe and philosophically by Fichte (in his *Strebungsphilosophie*).

Hegel enters this discourse with his contemporaries by proposing a logical reconsideration of the concept of infinity. The infinite is the negation of finitude — it is what is *not* finite (the *in*-finite). Hegel therefore approaches it is an applied case of his logic of negation. But he further claims that infinity's negation of the finite is, in fact, a double negation, since the concept of

[33] Goethe, *Faust*, line 1338, 160.

finitude already contains the negative within itself. In his discussion of finitude in *SL*, Hegel says that non-being constitutes the "nature" and "being" of finite things.[34] He goes on to explain how finite things both "are" and "are not":

> Finite things *are*, but in their reference to themselves they refer to themselves *negatively* – in this very self-reference they propel themselves beyond themselves, beyond their being. They *are*, but the truth of this being is (as in Latin) their *finis*, their *end*. The finite does not just alter, as the something in general does, but *perishes* [*vergeht*], and its perishing is not just a mere possibility, as if it might be without perishing. Rather, the being as such of finite things is to have the germ of this transgression [*Vergehen*] in their in-itselfness: the hour of their birth is the hour of their death.[35]

Coming-to-be and passing away is the truth of finitude, a process of becoming in which the finite thing's non-being is inseparable from its being. Finite things do not just contingently cease to be, but rather can inherently only be what they are for a limited period of time. To speak of the finite is, therefore, to speak of "what is not" just as much as to speak of "what is." Substance is the completion of this logic of finitude. A substance continues to exist (the moment of being) even as its accidental parts cease to be (the moment of non-being). As has been discussed above in Chapter 3, everything particular that appears within universal, substantial existence is destined to perish.

There is also another sense of negativity at work in finitude — the negativity of determination. In *SL*, Hegel praises Spinoza's proposition that "every determination is a negation" as one "of infinite importance."[36] For Hegel, finite things have definite determinations, but every such determination arises as a negative opposition to something else. In his treatment of the categories of "something" and "other" in *SL*, he shows how every "something" opposes another "something else" and thereby attains a concrete existence: the finite thing is *this* only by not being

[34] *SL* 21.116, 101.
[35] *SL* 21.116, 101.
[36] *SL* 21.101, 87.

that.[37] Without such an opposing contrast, the finite thing would have no distinct quality for itself. It would not be limited, but only because it would be unreal. We could not, for example, recognize the existence of color at all if we could only see one color.

This way of thinking about the finite also has implications for morality. For Hegel, moral action is always the particular action of a finite being. Hegel's logic, as it often does, here takes a cue from philology. Just as with the German *endlich*, the Latin *finis* has a dual sense: it is a limitation (as in a spatial boundary) but also an end (as in a desired outcome).[38] Hegel further develops this linguistic connection between finite limitation and normative evaluation. "The ought (*das Sollen*)," as Hegel terms it in *SL*, has "a restriction essentially" since "what ought to be *is*, and at the same time *is not*. If it *were*, it would not be what merely *ought to be*."[39] "Since it refers to something without a positive existence, "what ought to be" is an essentially negative concept.

The moral conflicts dramatized in Greek tragedy, for instance, would not exist if both sides of the social substance could be honored. Antigone must choose between one or the other. Normativity develops out of finitude. This connection is also suggested by Hegel's play on the word *Vergehen*. Like a tragic protagonist, every finite thing is destined to "perish" (*vergehen*) due to its inescapable "transgression" (*Vergehen*) of substantial boundaries.[40] Finite things necessarily overstep the very limitations which form their existence and pass away due to this violation.

The finite is, therefore, self-negating — in undoing itself, it is the true ground of the infinite. Every finite being has a negative self-reference, being what it is by opposing itself to other ways of existing. Yet finite structures inevitably give way. They have a determinate restriction (a first negation) which is then undone (a second negation) in the very process of their actualization. In

[37] *SL* 21.105-21.110, 90-95.
[38] This is also present in the Latin *finis*, a sense of the world Cicero uses in his treatise on Stoic ethics *De finibus*.
[39] *SL* 21.120, 104.
[40] Giovanni notes how Hegel plays on the ambiguity of *finis* and *Vergehen* at *SL* 21.116, 101, ft. 54-55.

the process of coming-to-be and passing away, a finite thing (as Hegel says in *SL*) "refer[s] itself to itself as restriction … and transcend[s] this restriction."[41] Simply put, every finite thing is destined to become something else. Objective existence continually transcends itself, albeit without any intentionality involved in assuming and discarding different finite forms.

It is this self-transcendence of the finite which Hegel regards as "good" or "true" infinity (discussed further below at 5.2.1). Just as substance was the completion of the logic of finitude, substantial subjectivity fully manifests this infinitude of the finite. As Hegel remarks in *SL*, spirit is "at home" in the infinite, where it enjoys "its universality, its freedom" through its "elevation [*Erhebung*] above restriction."[42] Later, in his discussion of "being-for-self" as a logical category, he says that self-consciousness is the "nearest example of the presence of infinity."[43]

The pure subject, however, does not see herself as ontologically grounded in finitude. Her freedom is therefore rooted in a common concept of the infinite, one opposed to the finite. This "bad" infinite is best introduced through the metaphor of elevation which Hegel consistently employs in describing it. This is the infinite of transcendence, of elevation, of *Er-hebung* (lifting over and above) as opposed to *Auf-hebung* (lifting upon, up to the same level). The discovery of subjectivity is, at the same time, the origin of many irresolvable dualisms: mind is elevated over body, theory is elevated over practice, normativity is elevated over actuality. This negation of the finite is equivalent to a separation — where the finite ends, the infinite begins. In *EL*, Hegel describes this separation as it arises in the everyday understanding of "idealism," in which an unattainable ought "looks down on actuality and the present in the name of a beyond."[44]

[41] *SL* 21.125, 109.
[42] *SL* 21.125, 109.
[43] *SL* 21.145, 127.
[44] *EL* §38.

Because it opposes finitude, no determinate account can be given of this purely subjective realm. In *SL*, Hegel says that the bad infinite of pure subjectivity is an "indeterminate emptiness."[45] The unknowability of the subjective has been recognized even in ancient philosophy, which anticipated the problems encountered in the modern embrace of the subjective principle. Heraclitus warns that we will never find the boundaries of soul (*psyche*), to which there belongs an ever "self-increasing" logic (*logos*).[46] The substantial ontology of antiquity recognized that the abstraction of the subject from the concrete nexus of ethical life risks falling into an infinite regress. Any articulation of the subject is itself an undue limitation upon it, a definition to which this subject, in the freedom of endless potential, may or may not conform. This engenders the need for yet another definition, which is once more surpassed, and then again, *ad infinitum*.

The geometrical representation of this bad infinite is a tangent line extending off into space, with any endpoint being superseded by its further extension into the empty "beyond." In *SL*, Hegel says that the bad infinite stretches out beyond the "straight *line*," appearing "only at the two limits of this line" where it "*transcends itself* in its non-existence, that is, in the indeterminate."[47] This infinity is ungraspable because it is, by definition, that which lies outside of determinate existence. But it is also worth noting that Hegel's description of the bad infinite can be reconciled with his representation of true infinity as a "circle of circles."[48] The circular structure does endlessly stretch beyond any given point, but its extension is one that returns back into itself. Each finite point gives way, but only into another finite point. The "beyond" becomes domesticated within the finite.

[45] *SL* 21.127, 11.
[46] DK B45, DK B115.
[47] *SL* 21.136, 119.
[48] *SL* 12.252, 751-752.

In *SL*, Hegel argues that the bad infinite is not, in fact, truly infinite, but only non-finite (*Nicht-Endliche*).[49] Like the abstract subject which only declares that it is "not substance," this concept of the infinite is still defined by the finitude which it claims to transcend. Because it only arises as "the *limit* of the finite," the bad infinite is itself "only a determinate, *itself finite infinite*."[50] It has not truly escaped finitude. Even an endless line still has concrete, determinate endpoints from which it proceeds. Hegel concludes that the bad infinite and the finite are therefore "essentially *connected* with each other, through the very negation that divides them."[51]

In *EL*, Hegel associates this spurious infinite with the modern concept of freedom:

> A limit is posited, it is surpassed, then again a limit, and so on endlessly. So there is nothing here but a superficial alternation that remains stuck in the finite. If it is thought that through stepping forth into that infinity one liberates oneself from the finite, then this is indeed merely the liberation of fleeing. The one who flees, however, is not yet free, for in fleeing he is still dependent on what he flees.[52]

The pure subject attempts to position herself beyond all finite restrictions, but this attempt necessarily only results in another equally unfree situation. All that can be said of this purely negative concept of freedom is that it has separated itself from the binding necessity of finite existence. The pure subject's actions are not compelled by any external influence, but they also do not achieve true self-determination. A truly free person can give a positive account of how he determines himself which does not merely reference his non-determination by external factors.

In fleeing from finite restriction, subjectivity has failed to recognize its own inner necessity. It has not preserved the substantial and internalized it within the subjective realm. This

[49] Hegel makes the distinction between the types of negation occurring in different concepts of infinitude by colorfully describing them as "bad infinity" (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*) and "true infinity" (*wahre Unendlichkeit*). However, he also introduces the term "the non-finite" (*das Nicht-Endliche*) to emphasize how bad infinity results from a concept of the infinite in which it is merely opposed to the finite, with the result that "the unity of the finite and the infinite thus appears excluded from the start." *SL* 21.140, 122.
[50] *SL* 21.127, 111.
[51] *SL* 21.127, 111.
[52] *EL* §94.

conservation and inversion of logical elements is key to the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, a term which has been obscured by its translation into English. "Taking up" better captures how it stands in contrast to *Erhebung*, the transcendental "lifting up" which simply leaves behind the other opposed element. *Aufhebung* is a double negation, the distinction and its resolution, whereas *Erhebung* is only the first negation which stays in opposition. The pure subject lifts itself up into the "beyond" and believes that its freedom consists only in this elevation.

Standing above substantiality in this way, the freedom of the pure subject cannot be reconciled with the limitation of finite, particular existence. This freedom is unable to actualize itself in practice because it has already removed itself from the conditions of actualization in theory. As Hegel writes in *SL*, since "the bad infinite is the *beyond* [it] *ought not to be there*, it ought to be unattainable."[53] Freedom thus presents a dilemma for the pure subject. She may resign herself to this futility, or else she may strive for the impossible, accepting the Faustian bargain in attempting to actualize all her innumerable desires and convictions. Hegel identifies this indulgence of the will's particular inclinations with bad infinity in *PR*:

> Particularity in itself is boundless extravagance, and the forms of this extravagance are themselves boundless. Through their representations and reflections, human beings expand their desires, which do not form a closed circle like animal instinct, and extend them to false [*schlechte*] infinity.[54]

Hegel's logic of the infinite thus provides an interpretation of the predicament of Faustian modernity. Despite positing her freedom to be an unattainable transcendence, the modern subject approaches the finite world as if it could accommodate her infinite desires. Following the logic of the bad infinite, she mistakes the finite exercise of the will with infinite self-determination. She is not at home in the world in theory and yet treats it as if it were her personal property in practice.

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[53] *SL* 21.136, 199.
[54] *PR* §185.

4.2 The Appearance of the Pure Subject in Modernity

This logic of the negative plays out in the historical appearances of the pure subject throughout *PS*, ultimately culminating in the "absolute freedom" of Enlightenment liberalism.

4.2.1 The genealogy of the pure subject in the Phenomenology of Spirit

The development of modern subjectivity as it appears in *PS* involves the circular return and repetition of several historical themes.[55] Crucial manifestations of the pure subject appear throughout *PS*: 1) first, in the abstract self-consciousness which produced the "unhappy consciousness" of the late antique and medieval worlds; 2) second, in the modern development of the thinking reason which finds itself in the lawful operation of the world; 3) third, in the specific sequence of historical experiences of Western spirit (*Geist*) since the downfall of Greek ethical life. The patterns established more abstractly in the first two iterations are further specified and historically contextualized in the history of *Geist*.

In this historical development of modern individuality, Hegel shows how the "I" has continually attempted to purify itself by abstracting itself from its concrete situation. Yet these attempts are as futile as they are logically incoherent. Just as an abstraction is still dependent upon the content from which it has been drawn out, the "I" which opposes its infinite freedom to finite

[55] When Hegel returns to a historical phenomenon in *PS*, it is from a different phenomenological perspective. As Lauer (7-8) explains:

> More often than not Hegel's is like the repetitiousness of a piano sonata: the trained ear can catch the variations, where they are present, or it can recognize that a theme repeated after the introduction of a counter-theme is not simply the same; the original theme, even if repeated verbatim, gains a depth, a richness, an intensity, even a meaning it did not have before; it is more response than restatement. In either case repetition is integral to the overall movement of the whole piece.

existence is continually chastened and reproved by that obstinate factual world. The slow, painful education of the modern individual is a process in which self-consciousness overasserts its independence and fails in this overassertion.

In *PS*, the "I" at first knows itself in only the most general terms. The "pure undifferentiated 'I'" which Hegel describes at the start of his treatment of self-consciousness is not yet described as the product of sophisticated philosophical reflection,[56] as in the Cartesian *cogito* or the intellectual intuition of idealism. It rather only knows itself as a biological specimen distinct from the world of objects. I, as a living being, enact a desire which negates the independence of the external world by assimilating it to my own purposes.

But for self-consciousness to be a living, desiring being is for it to already be limited. I am not an object, but since my living existence depends upon my environment, I can never be entirely free of the objective world. The requirements of life thus impose an external necessity upon the activity of subjectivity. Hegel indeed describes life here as a state of submergence, of "being sunken" (*Versenkt-sein*), a phrase which recalls the metaphor he employs to capture the erasure of subjectivity within Spinoza's substance.[57]

In my interaction with the world, I will also come to realize that there are other self-conscious people who do not respond to my manipulations in the same way as an object. The efficacy of my will over the objects of desire — an efficacy the abstract self-consciousness presupposes to be absolute — can only be established if other people do not oppose my initiatives. For this to happen, they must recognize my person as uniquely significant. Unlike physical objects, other people can see how my actions are intentionally directed and accordingly accommodate

[56] *PS* §176.
[57] *PS* §187. Reference to Spinoza's substance is at *PS* §17, discussed above at 2.2.

themselves to my will. Only in so having its perspective affirmed by another "living self-consciousness" does self-consciousness "*achieve its satisfaction*."[58]

Limited by both the conditions of his own life and the opposed perspectives of other people, this pure self-consciousness now finds a way to prove his independence from both these external impositions. He engages in a struggle to the death because such a struggle establishes two crucial existential points: 1) that he, as a subject, is beyond the objective existence of a living being and 2) that his opponent belongs to this objective existence, that the contrary perspective which declines to bend to his desires is perishable. In risking his own life and potentially ending that of another, self-consciousness demands to be recognized as "pure *being-for-self*."[59]

The abstract logic of the negative here appears in the phenomenon of honor, the willingness of human beings across history to stake their lives and risk destroying themselves to affirm their personal integrity. But while the struggle to the death certainly describes the actual violence which individuals and communities have enacted upon each other throughout history, it also can be taken in a more metaphorical, psychological sense. To be a pure "I" is to exist as a negative force which negates any perspective outside of oneself, to subordinate any other form of self-consciousness to one's own agenda and to attempt to minimize it in any way possible. Prior to its reconciliation with substantiality, subjectivity emerges as a selfish, adolescent attitude, an instinctively oppositional way of overcoming the externalities which threaten to kill our independence.

But after it encounters death in this struggle, self-consciousness recognizes its mortality and begrudgingly admits that it partakes in the finitude of all living beings. The independence of self-consciousness is equally its dependence on its body. Rather than recklessly wagering one's life in conflict, the pure "I" can relate to other people in such a way that supports its own "being-

[58] *PS* §§175-176.
[59] *PS* §187.

for-self." Instead of killing the opponent, the victor assumes the role of lord and master, placing herself "beyond" the slave, who is reduced to an objectified existence. The master is thereby apparently freed from the demands of the objective world, the external necessities which do not immediately respond to the whims of desire.[60] She entered the struggle of to the death aiming to prove her independence from other people and natural existence; she now uses another person as a tool to insulate herself from the external demands of physical labor.

Yet this attempt at independence ultimately proves to be self-defeating, since it is the slave who wins true liberation from nature as he "rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it."[61] The apparent servitude of work shows itself to be an essential aspect of freedom, a liberation from material circumstances won by dedicated labor. While the fruits of this labor can be transferred to the master, the skill cultivated through the labor cannot; the master is therefore only in possession of the effect and not the root cause of her material enjoyment. The "slave" has acquired a craft which is his own inalienable possession, yet it is also one on which the "master" depends.

The worker can be intimidated into working, but not into working well; possessing a kind of expertise, he may now withhold his full efforts and even sabotage the master. In establishing a master-slave relationship, the master has only replaced a direct dependence on nature with an indirect dependence on an embittered, hostile person. As in the struggle to the death, the concrete reality of the situation does not match the pure, exalted mastery which self-consciousness intended.

Having established the general problem of pure subjectivity in this non-specific allegory, Hegel now begins to gesture towards the historicity of self-consciousness in his ensuing discussion of the "unhappy consciousness." The contradictions inherent in the master-slave relation became

[60] *PS* §§189-190.
[61] *PS* §194.

increasingly exposed with the awakening of self-consciousness in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds.[62] Servitude was now seen, at least by some philosophers, as an affront to freedom. In contrast to the social substantiality of the Greek polis, freedom was now first being recognized as individual freedom, the freedom of the independent person incompatible with slavery.

Hellenistic and Roman philosophy therefore attempted to address the dissatisfaction of nascent subjectivity with the unfree empire in which it found itself. Stoicism, Epicureanism, and skepticism all tried to free self-consciousness from its anxious participation in an unequal social existence by presenting philosophy as a therapeutic exercise which results in a self-possessed serenity (*ataraxia*). In Hegel's interpretation, this period in Western history involved an uncanny tension between an oppressive state and individual education, and so its philosophies "could only appear on the scene in a time of universal fear and bondage, but also a time of universal culture which had raised itself to the level of thought."[63]

Stoicism preserves the independence of self-consciousness by abstracting the person from the coercive situation in which they find themselves. However oppressive a situation may be, my will is fundamentally my own. As both a philosopher and a slave, Epictetus is exemplary of the historical situation from which stoicism emerged. He achieved the inner freedom of an enlightened self-awareness and yet was unfree in the external world. His philosophy is borne of this practical necessity, so that, as Charles Kahn remarks, it does not concern itself with "the good" in general "but with the practical application of reason in selecting his commitments, in keeping his emotional balance, his serenity, by not extending himself to goals and values that lie beyond his control."[64]

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[62] I will use the term Hellenistic in the following paragraphs because both stoicism and skepticism were, strictly speaking, Greek inventions, although they flourished in the later Roman Empire.
[63] *PS* §199.
[64] Charles H. Kahn, "Discovering the Will: From Aristotle to Augustine," in *The Question of "Eclecticism,"* ed. by J.M. Dillon and A.A. Long (University of California Press, 1988), 253.

Already the modern understanding of freedom is suggested in this focus on the sphere of personal action, since freedom is now narrowly construed as the power of the will to separate itself from its external situation. As this dialogue from Epictetus' *Discourses* demonstrates, stoicism affirms the inner freedom of the will which exists even when external conditions prevent its actualization:

> "'But suppose I choose to walk, and someone obstructs me?' What part of you will they obstruct? Certainly not your power of assent? 'No, my body.' Your body, yes — as they might obstruct a rock. 'Perhaps; but the upshot is, now I'm not allowed to walk.' Whoever told you, 'Walking is your irrevocable privilege'? I said only that the will to walk could not be obstructed."[65]

In stark contrast to the freedom of ethical life, stoicism maintains that the social conditions under which we act are irrelevant to our freedom. While it may seem strange that Hegel begins his genealogy of modern freedom in ancient Rome, the aloofness to the wider world which the stoic maintains has a strong affinity with the pure being-for-self of modern individualism. Like many German critics of his generation, Hegel believes that many of the ills of modernity are the products of its Roman legacy, a legacy which discards the social substantiality of ancient Greek life.

But stoicism is only one way to negate, and thereby cope with, unfree external circumstances. The subject can also assert their freedom by adopting a skeptical disposition and simply refusing to recognize anything as true. Hegel hypothesizes that there is a deep connection between these two philosophical approaches based on their simultaneous appearance in Western history. If I reject what is outside of me (as in stoicism), I must regard this external world as inessential, untrue, and unreliable (as in skepticism). When my will has been frustrated and I have retreated into myself, I have already, as a stoic, become a kind of implicit skeptic.

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[65] Epictetus, *Discourses* IV.1.72–73. Translation from Epictetus, *The Works of Epictetus: His Discourses, in Four Books, the Enchiridion, and Fragments*, trans. by Thomas Wentworth Higginson (New York, Thomas Nelson and Sons: 1890).

But skepticism ultimately undermines the self-contained solidity of the "I" which stoicism had sought to establish. By negating every proposition, skepticism "recognizes that its freedom lies in rising above all the confusion and contingency of existence," but "equally [occupies] itself with what is unessential."[66] The skeptical freedom of denial is still its dependence upon what it regards as falsehood. It is a form of the liberation of fleeing in that it depends upon that which it denies. The pure subject who negates every proposition cannot turn inward, since this would mean denying even her own existence, and so her thinking is directed only outside of herself. Her self-consciousness is degraded into a mere consciousness of an unreal, illusory world.

With this failure of Hellenistic philosophy to establish the independence of self-consciousness, Hegel says that the pure subject now becomes an "unhappy consciousness, or the "consciousness of self as a dual-natured, merely contradictory being."[67] This perspective is described as consciousness and not self-consciousness because it represents a partial return to the passive, merely observational standpoint of consciousness. Self-consciousness now recognizes that its freedom necessarily involves an external world which opposes and limits its willful desires. The broken self which emerged out of the tyranny of this age could not actualize his freedom, and so he now grounds himself in a higher power outside of his own self-undermining existence.

With the emergence of medieval Christianity, the unhappy consciousness accepts that the release of the "I" from its self-undermining misery can only happen through its communion with a transcendent spiritual order. The individual does not achieve this transcendence solely through their own capacity, but via the mediation of ritual repentance and priestly intervention. Discouraged by its attempts to become an autonomous "I," the unhappy consciousness turns to

[66] *PS* §205.
[67] *PS* §206.

devotional self-renunciation, converting its "immediate self-consciousness into a *thing*, into an *objective* existence" and depriving itself of "both inner and outer freedom."[68]

At this moment in history, the particularized subjectivity of antiquity (see 2.4.2 above) now acquires a substantial, universal dimension which it does not yet fully comprehend. Because the ascetic subject has renounced her desire and become like an object, she has, at least intuitively, reconciled subjectivity with substantiality. In bringing her will into conformity with the lawful necessity of the holy life (in fasting, prayer, etc.), the devotee actualizes the "*unity* of objectivity and being-for-self" even without comprehending it.[69] The penitent does not directly experience this "positive aspect of universal will," but rather consoles herself in the minister's assurances that her "misery is *in principle* the reverse."[70] The immediate experiences of self-consciousness are now contextualized as occurring within a universal spiritual realm.

Just as Christianity converts the cross, the mark of Roman domination, into a symbol of salvation for the dispossessed, the unhappy consciousness paradoxically preserves the independence of self-consciousness by abandoning its striving for a worldly form of self-determination. In another reversal of the master/slave relation, Roman mastery shows itself to be slavery to money and power. Forsaking the trappings of this mastery purifies self-consciousness so that it can be relocated within an eternal, unchangeable realm. Freedom must also involve some transcendence of finitude, a communion with some universal order which outstrips the finite will. The eternal liberation of the soul in the life of the believer is an infinitely greater expression of freedom than the particular whims indulged by temporal powers.

[68] *PS* §229.
[69] *PS* §230.
[70] *PS* §230.

Unlike the mere consciousness which appeared at the start of *PS*, the unhappy consciousness has taken up the living desire of self-consciousness. The self-renunciation of the will is not simply given (like the capacity for sense-certainty) but demands a disciplined effacement of the self, an effacement which is itself active. It self-consciously desires to eliminate its own desires. Self-consciousness now stands in the strange position of having willed its own subordination. Because it is motivated by the promise of eternal life, Christian humility is never entirely pure. Its outward devotion is, in a sense, a guise for its self-interest. In describing the subtle ethical and ontological inversions which appear with the historical emergence of Christianity, Hegel anticipates Nietzsche on the "transvaluation of all values" (*Umwertung aller Werte*) and the master-slave morality. This moment of the genealogy of the pure subject in *PS* is not at all far removed from the *Genealogy of Morals*.

But while Nietzsche would describe this devotion as a mere decline from the splendid pride of antiquity, for Hegel it was a necessary step for the subject to recognize herself as substantial. The worldly renunciation which followed antiquity was not in itself the truth, nor was it even necessarily an improvement upon Greco-Roman thought (Hegel is very critical of medieval philosophy in *LHP*). Nonetheless, it presented a striking paradox — the paradox of the self which is free by renouncing itself — which would be explicated throughout the coming centuries.

The dissatisfaction of the unhappy consciousness is resolved in modernity as the passive reception of divine revelation gives way to the objective observation of the world. Modern reason (*Vernunft*) is a way of seeing the world which develops out of this unhappy consciousness, since it grounds itself in external observational data but also involves the purposeful, active engagement of self-consciousness. When I reason, I acknowledge an external source of validity for my thoughts but nonetheless follow this reasoning for myself.

At the start of the division on reason (*Vernunft*) in *PS*, Hegel indicates how modern scientific objectivity has its origin in this transition out of ancient self-consciousness:

> Up till now [self-consciousness] has been concerned only with its independence and freedom, concerned to save and maintain itself for itself at the expense of the world [but] after losing the grave of its truth … it discovers the world as *its* new real world … the *existence* of the world becomes for self-consciousness its own *truth* and *presence*; it is certain of experiencing only itself therein.[71]

Roman freedom was the freedom of the master in that it attempted to maintain itself over and against the demands of the external world. This freedom goes to its "grave" in the inversion of master and slave which emerges in Christianity. Modernity likewise inverts the freedom of mastery when subjective reason finds its "truth" and "presence" in the objective world. The scientist sets her immediate desires aside as she attends to the object in its independent existence. In doing so, she assumes what was formerly the role of the slave in ancient society, yet she thereby actualizes her aims more effectively. The Greek freedom of being-at-home within a fixed cosmos becomes actively self-creating: modern freedom means finding one's own reason at work in objective existence and thereby changing the world so that it accommodates one's own desires.

In Hegel's development of reason in *PS*, reason purifies itself into the "pure reason" of the Enlightenment. The "observational reason" which only empirically investigates the world becomes self-conscious of its own methods in what Hegel describes as "self-actualized reason."[72] Yet even this more self-contained form of reason is unable to answer ethical questions, since it tests moral laws as if they were subject to empirical falsification. As a form without a content, the purity of pure reason is its very inadequacy. The pure subject's liberation from substantiality has

[71] *PS* §232.
[72] Observational reason is discussed at *PS* §§240-346; self-actualized reason is discussed at *PS* §§347-437.

once more shown itself to be incomplete. Ethics still depends on the substantial structures of normativity left behind in ancient Greek ethical life.[73]

The historical progression which began with the turn towards self-consciousness is now, as spirit, reset back to the unconsciousness of substantial ethical life, but this apparent retrogression is actually a progression in the concept (if not the chronological history) of self-consciousness. The universality of reason could not account for the particularity of historical life, the concrete shapes and forms which self-consciousness has assumed throughout the ages. As spirit, I am aware of history not just as an object of scholarly attention, but as a story in which I am also participating, a story which is also *my* story. When I consider the development of human culture, my consciousness *is* self-consciousness. Spirit is truly self-determining because exists entirely *within* itself in this way — it is the "individual that is a world."[74]

After the breakdown of Greek ethical life, a world in which subjectivity was only implicit, *PS* once again describes the pure subject as he appeared in late antiquity. The political structures built in this era stripped away the particularity of place and custom (the world of the polis) and replaced it with a universal realm of interchangeable individuals (the world of the Roman Empire). No longer regarded as an accident of the social substance, one individual (the Caesar) now creates and maintains universal social structures by denuding them of their particularity. Local customs are subordinated to the will of a foreign person who pretends to hold everything together simply through the force of his personality. The mediation of individuality appears in history as the god-emperor upon whom the fate of the entire world depends.

The Caesar can only maintain this composite community in the same way he built it — by force. The violence of foreign conquest is domesticated within the empire as the compulsion of

[73] *PS* §§429-437.
[74] *PS* §441.

law, resulting in what Hegel describes as a state of "right" (*Recht*), one of legally defined obligations. The law determines the boundaries of social existence among persons who no longer feel bound to the organic universality of ethical life, to unbroken ancestral lines and the civic virtue of native patriotism. The legal structures of ancient Rome established a person who was afforded rights *as a person* and not as a sister or as a father or a member of the nobility (as in ethical life).[75]

The universal legal equality of persons established under Roman rule is the outer form of community which Christianity will adopt and internalize. The promise of equality under Roman law only masked the reality of slavery and exploitation which governed the empire; the form of law was only just a form, one incongruous with the content of people's actual lives. The just community, "is, therefore, not the equality of the sphere of legal right," one which "accepts" and "justifies" every contingent accident of existence, but the spiritual community which demonstrates a more complete form of self-determination, "one that has made itself what it is and for that reason is *actual*."[76] With the natural harmony of ethical life having been fractured, we are now responsible for actively changing the very life of the society in which we find ourselves. Following the disenchantment of the Roman Empire, we no longer assume that the good is given in the present order of things. For Hegel, this sobering realization inaugurates a distinctly negative, critical era, one of "self-estrangement" in which individuals are "double, divided and self-opposed."[77]

In the ethic of conversion which first emerges with early Christianity, the world that is given to us as nature has proven that it is only the starting material for a complete renovation of all earthly things. Rilke summarizes this ethic with a single imperative: you must change your

[75] John Russon describes this state of legal equality as an "environment of indifference." John Russon, *Sites of Exposure* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 89.
[76] *PS* §488.
[77] *PS* §486.

life.[78] This ethic of transformation recasts the Greek idea of education (Platonic *paideia*) so that it fulfills a distinctly Christian imperative towards conversion. In 19th-century Germany, these historical concepts were taken up in the term *Bildung*, which appears in translations of Hegel as "formation," "morality," "culture," and "education." In its physical sense, the verb *bilden* is "to form" or "to shape." In the context of human development, this describes any attempt to shape the raw material of human nature, potentially encompassing everything from the cultivation of the finer points of etiquette to the forcible correction of a criminal's character within the penal system.

Since *Bildung* is the principle of development through which the freedom of self-consciousness is actualized, it is crucial to the emergence of subjective freedom.[79] While Hegel's history of spirit in *PS* is vague as to the precise period of "spirit in self-estrangement" during which *Bildung* plays its most crucial role, we may understand it to have been at work wherever we see a clear transformation from ancient to modern forms. Where ancient Greek freedom was given immediately, as the natural life of the polis, modern freedom is something which must be cultivated. The purity of the pure subject now matures from a simple rejection of external influences as it recognizes that its independence depends upon its own inner development.

The modern world of subjective freedom traces itself back, in Hegel's view, to the Christian doctrine of original sin, a doctrine which views the cultivation of the individual as a prerequisite to true self-determination. In *PR*, he says that freedom emerges from *Bildung*, since

[78] Peter Sloterdijk gives a similar genealogy of what lies behind modern notions of self-improvement as "human technology" (*Anthropotechnik*) in his book titled after Rilke's dictum. See Peter Sloterdijk, *Du mußt dein Leben ändern*, (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 2009).

In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche also somewhat parallels Hegel in describing what emerges out of antiquity in the modern world as a "morality of improvement." He takes this ethic to begin with Socrates' equation of goodness with the intellectual improvement of education. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*, trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 162-176.

[79] At *EL* §67, Hegel says that the mediation of the immediate is expressed through three roughly equivalent terms, "called variously 'development', 'education', 'formation' [*Entwicklung*, *Erziehung*, *Bildung*]."

the natural person "exists in an immediate and uncivilized [*ungebildeten*] condition … a situation in which he ought not to be, and from which he must liberate himself."[80] The Christian is not naturally at home in this world, and so the freedom of being-at-home is now the initiative of a subjective will which has been substantially formed, its appetites educated and cultivated.

But for Hegel, *Bildung* also involves an undercurrent of suspicion and doubt. In the late medieval period, the individual maintains an ambivalent relationship with this emerging world of personal formation (which Hegel terms "Culture and its Realm of Actuality"). Despite the ambition of feudal society to recreate the universal ethical community through a shared course of education, the disenchanted individual adopts what Hegel terms an attitude of "ignobility" (*Niederträchtigkeit*), asserting his free individuality and rejecting the hierarchies into which he is being educated. This ignoble consciousness "sees in the sovereign power a fetter and a suppression of its own *being-for-self*, and therefore hates the ruler."[81]

Yet this critical attitude is itself the product of *Bildung*. The education which is supposed to induct students into society in fact serves to point out the hypocrisy of their rulers and the inadequacy of their own formative experiences — education empowers its students to recognize it as miseducation. One is taught to use one's own mind, yet also to defer to authority. One is educated into the ways of the world, but also to prepare one's soul for heaven. One is, quite bizarrely, educated into despising the abuses of the very secular authorities who support and promote this very process of education. Where the ancient stage taught the harsh necessity of fate, the modern is still today more subtly entangled in this bewildering web of hypocrisy.

This "self-estranged" personality is also suspicious about the motivations of individuals even when they appear to be righteous. When nobles pledge their lives in service to their lord, their

[80] *PR* §18.
[81] *PS* §501.

chivalrous actions seem to aim at a good outside of their own individual gain, yet military service is also a way for nobles to further their own prestige and wealth. By themselves, the "deeds of honor … retain the ambiguity possessed by that private reserve of particular intention and self-will."[82] Unless the noble dies in the course of acting nobly, the gain attached to his deed necessarily throws his motivations into suspicion.

This inherent ambiguity of subjective intention explains why Hegel says that there is a new importance attached to language in the courtly world of this period:

> It is the power of speech, as that which performs what has to be performed. For it is the *real existence* of the pure self as self; in speech self-consciousness, *qua independent separate individuality*, comes as such into existence [*Dasein*], so that it exists *for others*.

As the modern subject forms, language becomes the concrete expression of an ineffable subjectivity. This is the philosophical meaning of the formalization of etiquette which appears in the Renaissance (like in Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*). A world in which each person proceeds from a world within, from the independent conviction of her own mind, is a world in which external proofs of that mind become crucial to social cohesion.[83] When the noble performs the language of flattery for her lord, it provides a direct proof of the intention behind her actions. The ambiguity of the external deed is now resolved through a cultivation (*Bildung*) of the linguistic practices which allow individual actions to claim a universal significance.

But this linguistic mediation remains imperfect and incomplete. The ignoble consciousness recognizes this language as hypocrisy, knowing that it disguises the speaker's being-for-self. The noble is, in truth, just as self-interested as anyone else. He speaks in bad faith, personally

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[82] *PS* §507.

[83] The fracture of this respect for custom appears in ancient Greece alongside the rise of philosophical self-consciousness, most famously in the outrageous social *faux pas* committed by Diogenes the Cynic. Nonetheless, Hegel references the inability of even Diogenes to escape being conditioned by the corruption of the world around him at *PS* §524.

unconvinced of the pious bromides he proclaims.[84] The emergence of a formal language of flattery is also the emergence of a second, negative language of critique. This pattern has repeated itself throughout the revolutions which have shook the modern world, as the language of the establishment circulates as the accepted currency of polite society even as the disaffected decry its insincerity, pointing to the riches and power accumulated by those claiming to have sacrificed themselves for the public good.

The ignoble consciousness now drives social change by exposing the positive language of the dominant social narrative to its own critical perspective. Just as the master/slave relation reversed itself, modernity will be the story of how the self-satisfaction of the noble consciousness is overcome by the misery of the alienated, ignoble consciousness. The outsider, exiled from the shared life of society, takes up the power of language to reshape the world, bringing its "universal power under the control of being-for-self."[85] Whereas previously only powerful political leaders could guide the course of society, this individual prerogative becomes increasingly democratized. One no longer needs a military to shape the world, since the common currency of language more powerfully reshapes its spirit, i.e., its universal self-consciousness.

But Hegel concludes this treatment of the early modern self in *PS* by also demonstrating the limitations of pure critique. Just as in his logic of the negative, he argues that a purely critical perspective is only a first, abstract negation of present circumstances. The pure subject who takes refuge in the freedom of critical awareness has a "pure personality [which] is absolutely not a personality."[86] This pure personality is pure in the sense that he so thoroughly rejects his society that he does not even attempt to reform it. Guarding the purity of his ideals from their inevitably

[84] *PS* §513.
[85] *PS* §513.
[86] *PS* §517.

imperfect manifestation, he does not try to actualize any positive convictions. Such engagement would amount to a second negation, the cancellation of the original critical perspective. But this critical perspective is the source of all "law, good, and right" and so cannot be compromised.[87] If he were to become implicated in the world's corruption, his every idea of the good would be "at the same time rent asunder."[88]

When the pure personality is overwhelmed by circumstances and forced to act, he is overcome by what Hegel describes as "the feeling of the most profound dejection."[89] This is the helpless despair which Hamlet expresses while considering suicide in the face of "th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely."[90] In *AS*, Hegel writes that the conclusion of *Hamlet*, a distinctly modern tragedy, turns on "Hamlet's personal character … full of disgust with the world and life, [which] perishes owing to his own hesitation."[91] With a clarity of perception impossible for the ancient Greek, Hamlet sees all the problems of his world, and yet his critical perspective only inspires self-ruin and not constructive action. To attempt to act in his situation would mean sullying the pure "infinite space" of his inviolate conscience,[92] ruining the last stronghold of righteousness in his corrupted world.

Trapped within the "prison" of a world he cannot escape,[93] the pure subject experiences the limitations of his finite individuality as a tragic flaw. In *Faust*, another modern tragedy, Faust requires otherworldly powers to effectively act in his situation. Hamlet is, however, left to his own devices, and so he avoids action because he sees the world as irredeemable, concluding that he could only truly free himself by taking his own life. Yet his intensive self-awareness prevents this

[87] *PS* §517.
[88] *PS* §517.
[89] *PS* §517.
[90] *PS* §517; *Hamlet* 3.1.79.
[91] *AS* II, 1225-1226.
[92] *Hamlet* 2.2.273.
[93] *Hamlet* 2.2.262.

recourse as well, as Hamlet's resolution crumbles "with the pale cast of thought."[94] While Antigone unself-consciously enacts the divine law, Hamlet's every action involves self-conscious intervention; he has no such core of conviction.

Less dramatically, the pure subject can also undo herself even under normal circumstances by commenting upon the world's vanities in a way that is itself vain. By pointing out the self-interest of everyone else, the critic unself-consciously forgets the self-interest at work in her own critique. Back in *PS*, Hegel describes how the ignoble consciousness only becomes "a self-centered self that knows … how to pass judgement on and chatter about everything … but has lost the ability to *comprehend* it."[95] With this blasé understanding of itself as the center of all reality, the pure subject rejects the substantial necessity of the tragic worldview in favor of satire. Where ancient tragedy expressed the real substantiality of social contradictions, the modern social critic only affirms her own ego in haughtily pointing them out, failing to appreciate the deeper underlying reasons for why these inconsistencies have appeared in this way.

As this critical tradition matured in the late 19th century, Dostoevsky's "underground man" echoes Hegel's critique of critique:

> Why do we fuss and fume sometimes? Why are we perverse and ask for something else? We don't know what ourselves. It would be the worse for us if our petulant prayers were answered. Come, try, give any one of us, for instance, a little more independence, untie our hands, widen the spheres of our activity, relax the control and we… yes, I assure you… we should be begging to be under control again.[96]

The self-righteous individual exercising judgment upon a fallen world has lost all self-confidence and now becomes an object of self-ridicule. The pure "I" which has avoided the ways of the world

[94] *Hamlet* 3.1.86.
[95] *PS* §526.
[96] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *White Nights and Other Stories*, trans. by Constance Garnett (London: Heinemann, 1918), "Notes from Underground" II.X, 154.

sits and stews in his own misery, directing his criticism against his own abstract emptiness and concluding that "every sort of consciousness, in fact, is a disease."[97]

As the 19th century's confidence in the advancement of freedom gave way to the early 20th century's outright rejection of it, Hegel stands vindicated in claiming that this freedom of critical self-estrangement is only a superficial liberation of fleeing. The "bad infinite" yearning for more and more of this type of freedom only deepens the dissatisfaction of alienation and eventually drives the pure subject to oppose freedom itself. The universality which arises through the purification of the subject is a self-elimination of his living particularity, so that the underground man is an "impossible generalized man" who is "oppressed" and "ashamed" at the thought of being a man with a "real individual body."[98] As he returns once more to the rejection of mere life which motivated the struggle to the death, the pure subject has been ruined by his own *Bildung*, removing himself from worldly engagement entirely in his cultivation of absolute purity.

4.2.2 The consummation and self-destruction of the pure subject in the Enlightenment

Hegel provides much more specific historical markers in his discussion of the appearance of the pure subject in the Enlightenment of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Although the phenomena described above in 4.2.1 as "spirit in self-estrangement" appear in this era as well, *PS* goes on to show how the incidental criticisms of the ignoble consciousness now begin to cohere into the unified, systematic worldview of the Enlightenment. The critique of worldly and religious hypocrisy advances into an alternative vision capable of actively remaking society. The pure subject now becomes the modern individual and citizen, achieving the positive recognition of

[97] Dostoevsky, I.II, 53.
[98] Dostoevsky, II.X, 155.

subjective freedom. Yet the purity of this modern subject will once again prove to be her undoing, as she will fail in her attempt to establish a society where the rights of individuality are universally recognized.

What Hegel terms "pure insight" (*reine Einsicht*) now opposes itself to religious faith (*Glauben*). As "negative being-for-self," pure insight lacks any content of its own and so reduces "objectivity [to] the significance of a merely negative content … that is to say, only the self is really the object of the self."[99] The independent self is reconciled with the world in the Enlightenment's realization that her independence also implies her universal presence within her every experience — a realization formalized as the Kantian apperception of the ego. Every perspective which I adopt is ultimately only an "object of the self." As a "merely negative content," it is my possession. My own "I" can be found in everything I touch, feel, and think. The subject who was removed from the world has now become a world unto herself.

The independence of the "I" is now experienced as self-grounding and absolute. In contrast to the mere criticism of external circumstances, pure insight is the location of all truth entirely within oneself so that it is blissfully unaffected by the ways of the world. This is the serene self-certainty which Petrarch described when he ascended Mount Ventoux, realizing that "nothing is wonderful but the soul, which, when great itself, finds nothing great outside itself."[100] This intuition of pure insight is further refined in the philosophical arguments of modernity, as Descartes, Kant, and Fichte each take up and further refine the precise meaning of this subjective autonomy.

Hegel describes the diffusion of pure insight through an olfactory metaphor:

> It is on this account that the communication of pure insight is comparable to a silent expansion or to the *diffusion*, say, of a perfume in the unresisting atmosphere. It is a penetrating infection which does not make itself noticeable beforehand as

[99] *PS* §529.
[100] Petrarch, *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters*, ed. and trans. by James Harvey Robinson (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1898), 317.

> something opposed to the indifferent element into which it insinuates itself, and therefore cannot be warded off. Only when the infection has become widespread is that consciousness, which unheedingly yielded to its influence, *aware of it*.[101]

Pure insight appears so suddenly in the 18th-century Enlightenment only because it was, in the centuries which preceded, indistinguishable from the established faith.[102] It did not suddenly crash on the scene but slowly "insinuated" itself like the spread of a smell. As the scent wafts through the room, I only later sense that my world has changed. The odor of Enlightenment — the smell of my own thinking reason — presents itself in everything I encounter.

Looking backward with the virtue of hindsight, we can now see how this smell had already been spreading for centuries. In the Lutheran Reformation, the dogmatic articles of religious faith became convictions which I hold as *my own* thoughts. The self-effacement of devotion in the unhappy consciousness was replaced by the self-affirming act of faith. Holiness lies not in the objective completion of rituals or deeds, but in the spirit of belief through which they are undertaken, a subjective disposition which is *my* faith. In the phenomenon of conscience (discussed further below at 5.1.2), the Christian life reclaims itself from the externality of obedience to the law, since the law only secondarily affirms what already resides within us as pure insight.

Even earlier, the rediscovery of pagan learning in the Renaissance also reformed the Christian faith in accordance with classical ideals. Secular culture adopted and appropriated this

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[101] *PS* §545.

[102] In the German Enlightenment, Lessing offers a further historical perspective on this unity of pure insight with faith. The Greco-Roman and Abrahamic traditions, which he takes to represent the two paths of education and revelation, both ultimately result in the same course of human development:

> Education gives to man nothing which he might not educe out of himself; it gives him that which he may educe out of himself, only quicker and more easily. In the same way too, revelation gives nothing to the human species, which the human reason left to itself might not attain; only it has given, and still gives to it, the most important of these things earlier.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *The Education of the Human Race* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1858), §4, 2-3.

given religious content so seamlessly that Hegel describes the Enlightenment as creeping up on the old authorities of faith, who can only react to a transformation which has already occurred:

> Consequently, when consciousness does become aware of pure insight, the latter is already widespread; the struggle against it betrays the fact that infection has occurred. The struggle is too late, and every remedy adopted only aggravates the disease, for it has laid hold of the marrow of spiritual life. … Therefore, too, there is no power in consciousness which could overcome the disease … it infiltrates the noble parts through and through and soon has taken complete possession of all the vitals and members of the unconscious idol; then 'one fine morning it gives its comrade a shove with the elbow, and bang! crash! the idol lies on the floor' … Memory alone then still preserves the dead form of the spirit's previous shape as a vanished history, vanished one knows not how. And the new serpent of wisdom raised on high for adoration has in this way painlessly cast merely a withered skin.[103]

The undefined historical timeframe of this passage is perhaps itself a product of pure insight's silent, imperceptible activity. Like the serpent which sheds its skin only to acquire a perfect replica of the original, the humanism which took root in the Renaissance and Reformation seemed to participate in the structures of the unhappy consciousness, which took human insight to be subordinate to divine revelation. Yet a crucial shift has occurred. The subjective form of modern knowledge would also necessarily entail a change in the content of belief.

The description of the idol as having "noble" parts shows how pure insight completes the work of the ignoble consciousness in overturning lofty beliefs. The result of this deconstruction of faith is only realized when the idol is already smashed on the floor, a quote alluding to Diderot and the 18th-century Enlightenment. With the identification of reason and faith in Enlightenment deism, the search for the "beyond" in the unhappy consciousness is now relegated to the memory of spirit, a period which it will look back upon, in Kant's phrase, as a "self-incurred immaturity."[104]

But there is a difference between pure insight and faith, a difference which Hegel describes through the terms of Kant's critical philosophy. Pure insight is immediate, and so does not

[103] *PS* §545. The quotation is from Diderot's *Nephew of Rameau*.
[104] Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?," 17.

appreciate the limitations which arise when it critically reflects upon its own operation. When pure insight develops into the self-conscious methodology which Kant terms "pure reason" (*reine Vernunft*), the modern subject realizes that self-reflective reason cannot attain the absolute knowledge which pure insight believes itself to possess. As Kant demonstrates in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, pure reason cannot ground *a priori* metaphysics. It instead becomes "antinomic," producing equally valid arguments on both sides of fundamental metaphysical questions.[105]

Since pure reason shows that it is unable to grasp the most crucial philosophical content, the Enlightenment now concludes just as suddenly as it appeared to the unsuspecting guardians of faith. In *PS*, pure insight is now chastened and tempered. Its true limitations have been shown — not through a return to traditional dogma, but from within the autonomous exercise of reason itself. An opposition between the knower and the "thing-in-itself" once more remerges as reason now understands itself to be only "the consciousness of the relation of what is in itself finite to an absolute without predicates, an absolute unknown and unknowable."[106] The "beyond" of the unhappy consciousness has returned, but this time it appears within the secular operation of reason itself. Reason accepts these limitations upon the scope of its activity and precludes any further metaphysical speculation — the Enlightenment is now "*satisfied*."[107]

Modern faith likewise arrives at the same concept of an absolute that is "unknown and unknowable," but it adopts a different attitude towards the unattainability of the highest objects of knowledge. Faith regards the satisfaction of the Enlightenment as only a self-satisfaction. Reason has met its own formal requirements and attained an internal methodological consistency, but it does not even claim to tell us about the world "out there" as it is in and of itself. Faith thus rejects

[105] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, "The Antinomy of Pure Reason," 459-550.
[106] *PS* §573.
[107] *PS* §573.

reason as a failed project which, for all its success in describing the phenomenal world, never meets its true goal.

A reason which stays pure by remaining within its own self-imposed limitations is now counterbalanced by an equal, opposed purity of belief, the "*sheer yearning* [*reines Sehnen*]" for the "truth [of an] empty beyond" which represents the rejection of reason in an "*unsatisfied* Enlightenment."[108] While this pure yearning also replicates the structure of the unhappy consciousness, it belongs to a distinctly modern form of faith in that it remains a subjective longing and does not attempt a union with "the beyond" through the practice of ritual.

With "the beyond" conceded to be unreachable by both reason and faith, they now appear as merely alternative approaches to the same agnostic dilemma. The conclusion of the Enlightenment thus presents a kind of choice to the pure subject: either make yourself at home in the finitude of the strictly phenomenal world, or else indulge your dissatisfaction with this inadequate reality in an infinite longing for the ineffable. Since only the former option attempts to further actualize the freedom of pure subjectivity, Hegel takes it as the positive result of the Enlightenment which moves forward the development of self-consciousness in *PS*. The subject who tries to be at home within a strictly finite world now attempts to reconcile herself to its limitations by physically changing it to meet her needs. In modern technological development, the infinite capacity of self-consciousness manifests itself in its mastery over the finite world.

For Hegel, this development was supported by the modern idea of "utility" which also appeared in the Enlightenment and is now briefly discussed at this moment in *PS*. The concept of objective existence radically shifts from one in which things have an independent essence (medieval Aristotelianism) to one in which they exist for self-consciousness. What an object is "in

[108] *PS* §573.

itself" is, at the same time, what it is "for another," i.e., for his manipulation and use.[109] Everything presents itself to the modern subject as a raw material which he can form in accordance with his subjective capacities and desires.

In a further development of pure insight, the objects which present themselves to the modern subject as a "merely negative content" are now actively engaged as inner subjectivity actualizes itself in the finite world.[110] Because all objects are "mine" in theory, I will treat them as such in practice. As lord and master of the natural world, the pure subject has become an "actual consciousness satisfied with itself" through the freedom of modern engineering. Having conceded that it cannot attain "the beyond" of religious consciousness, technology aims to make infinite spirit at home in the finite world, as "heaven is transplanted to earth below."[111]

But the manipulation of nature alone is not satisfactory for the freedom of spirit, even though this limited understanding of freedom still has many adherents in our present day. As impressive as modern technological advancement may be, it offers no insight into the problems of modern politics. A purely technocratic state would destroy subjective freedom. When the manipulation of nature is applied to human beings, we are ourselves reduced to objects.[112]

In the final development of the pure subject in *PS*, Hegel explores how modern freedom instead requires a political recognition of our capacity for individual self-determination. The newly emerging subjective individualism of the late 18th century sought its "*absolute freedom*" in political revolution.[113] This absolute freedom is "absolute" in the sense that each individual is fully sovereign. Individuality is now universalized, and so the "syllogism" of the Greek social substance

[109] *PS* §580.
[110] *PS* §529.
[111] *PS* §581.
[112] To further explore the link between Hegel's comments on utility in this section of *PS* and the political critique which follows, see Andrew Norris, "The Disappearance of the French Revolution in Hegel's 'Phenomenology of Spirit,'" *The Owl of Minerva* 44, no. 1 (2012): 37–66.
[113] *PS* §584.

has been fully inverted. I am not granted my being-for-self by the universal structures of the state; I am, rather, the ultimate authority who sanctions those structures.

This identification of the individual with the universal demands a revolutionary reconstruction of the state which erases the particularity of concrete existence. Hegel criticizes the French Revolution for not maintaining guilds and corporations, those component parts of the social whole which have their own special roles and interests. Through this form of mediation, universal freedom "would have separated itself … into its constituent parts and … made itself into an existent substance."[114] The revolutionaries instead attempted to translate the freedom of the pure subject, a universalized "I," into the freedom of a wholly generalized citizen, an "I" which becomes a "we" but only by laying aside its particular existence. Hegel's criticism of this approach to freedom is, at the same time, his attempt to retrieve the substantiality of the ancient polis. As was discussed above at 3.2.2, the Greek freedom of being-at-home allowed for particularized forms of participation in the universal. What is expected of and provided for a child is not the same for a parent; what is expected of and provided for a soldier is not the same for a merchant.

The citizen of the modern nation-state is instead an abstract person narrowly defined by their participation in the universal forms of democratic political life, those parliamentary institutions which express Rousseau's "general will." Various forms of participation in a national political project (party membership, voting, the ratification of a constitution) universalize the individual will and so are paradigmatic of modern freedom. While Hegel supports these structures of the modern state in *PR*, in *PS* he shows that citizenship alone does not amount to freedom. Thinking of myself first and foremost as an individual citizen of a universal state reduces my capacity to cultivate more local, particular political relationships.

[114] *PS* §588.

Although today's democratic state traces its origins back to the ancient Greek polis, Hegel's reading of the history of freedom implies that these experiences of citizenship are completely opposed to each other. This thesis is further confirmed by the alienation of the citizenry which has developed in the modern nation-state in the centuries since his death. Whereas Socrates saw distant exile as a fate worse than death, modern participation in the state has been reduced to casting a ballot every several years for people I have never met, endorsing a platform of abstract, marketable slogans while I neglect the possibility for local political action.

This is not, however, to imply that Hegel believes it is possible to revert back to Greek democracy. Indeed, in Hegel's account, the clumsy attempt to simply add the ancient together with the modern (exemplified in Rousseau's political philosophy) resulted in this failed experiment with absolute freedom.[115] As will be seen in Chapter 5, the substantiality lost with the decline of Greek ethical life must instead be located within the experience of modern subjectivity itself.

However implicitly, Hegel's critique of absolute freedom explains why liberal democracy remains so fragile more than two centuries after it first appeared. The failure of the modern nation-state to recognize and affirm the particularity of its citizens has had consequences which have only been fully recognized in the last several decades. Today, liberalism is concerned with the problem of how particular religious, gender, and ethnic identities can be accommodated within the state's universal structures. Opposing this trend, fascist movements oversimplify the complexity of particular existence by equating the customs and language of the majority ethnic group with the universality of the state.

[115] Franco writes that Hegel rejects what Rousseau embraces as "the ancient republican ideal of patriotic citizens actively engaged in politics, completely consumed by the public business, and directly deliberating on the totality of public affairs" because "such an ideal cannot be made to fit with the complex reality of the modern European state." Franco, 10.

Today's general orientation towards identity politics suggests that Hegel identified a serious deficiency in modern liberalism. The particularity which was supposed to have been swept away in the abstraction of universal citizenship is today a central concern of political discourse. It is now widely recognized that the universal freedom of the Enlightenment only pertained to one particular subset of humanity — white European males. Hegel's logic of freedom further predicts that the still narrow universalism of today's nation-state will only survive by more adequately dignifying and accommodating the particularity of human existence. Different people have different requirements for their freedom: the freedom of the young is not the freedom of the elderly; the freedom of non-disabled people is not the freedom of people with disabilities; men, women, and gender non-conforming people each feel at home in the world in different ways.

Hegel also explains why the freedom promised by liberalism often quickly and violently turns into its opposite. The liberal nation-state has appeared in the last few centuries in close historical proximity to totalitarian regimes which aggressively attempt to restrict all individuality. Their shared logic of freedom offers some explanation for their unsettling copresence: liberalism elevates the individual over the universal, while various forms of totalitarianism elevate the universal over the individual. Yet both refuse to reckon with the concrete complexities of particularity. Since the Enlightenment, both liberal and repressive governments have overlooked the differentiated ways of being human which contaminate their favored abstractions. Both the illiberal tyrant and the liberal merchant are uncomfortable with those who are exceptions and so cannot be assimilated within their universal realms — those who speak a different language or protest the all-encompassing universality of the marketplace.

This subtle commonality between liberalism and authoritarianism is vividly present in the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror which followed, a sequence of events in which the

modern ideal of freedom immediately devolves into the tyranny of ideological persecution. In *PR*, Hegel describes the Terror as

> a time of trembling and quaking and of intolerance towards everything particular [in which] fanaticism wills only what is abstract, not what is articulated, so that whenever differences emerge, it finds them incompatible with its own indeterminacy and cancels them [*hebt sie auf*].[116]

In *PS*, the French Revolution is the paradigm case of what occurs when absolute freedom attempts to actualize itself. Revolutionary politics is the final attempt of the pure subject to make herself at home in the world, finally resolving the dissatisfaction and alienation of the abstract person which began in the Roman Empire. But in its elimination of the particular, the Revolution "can produce neither a positive work nor a deed" and only results in the Terror's "fury of destruction," i.e., in the self-destruction of the pure subject.[117] The negativity of the pure subject (see 4.1 above), her removal from particular existence, is now manifest in a political program which understands her freedom to depend upon the destruction of every last concrete detail of the old political order.

As was the case in the self-destruction of the ethical substance, the Revolution did not fail because of the contingent actions of the people involved but from the logic of freedom at work. Absolute freedom finds the particular guilty for being the particular and so remorselessly employs the guillotine to cut down those who besmirch the perfection of the universal state:

> The sole work and deed of universal freedom is therefore *death*, a death too which has no inner significance or filling, for what is negated is the empty point of the absolutely free self. It is thus the coldest and meanest of all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water.[118]

This utterly empty death is the final world-historical manifestation of the connection between pure subjectivity and death already discussed above in 4.2.1. This instance stands out as especially self-

[116] *PR* §5.
[117] *PS* §589.
[118] Credit to Shannon Hoff for the phrase "finds the particular guilty for being the particular." *PS* §590.

destructive, however, because the revolutionary is executed in the fulfillment of what he understands to be his own freedom. Those who eliminated Robespierre were his comrades who identified with the same common cause.

In the absolute freedom they tried to enact, the revolutionaries attempted to eliminate all special interests, even though they, in their own inescapable particularity, would inevitably also be suspected of treason themselves. Like the nobles who could not prove the purity of their motives to the ignoble consciousness, every revolutionary is suspected of having hidden particular interests. This suspicion itself further isolates the individual as a particular person distinct from the universal. To be suspected is to be particularized, and particularity is itself a mark of guilt.[119] This "bad infinite" abyss of endless suspicion, persecution, and execution continues until a reactionary force intervenes and ends the experiment with absolute freedom, setting the precedent for the cycles of democratic freedom and totalitarian repression which continue to the present day.

The ever-spreading smell of Enlightenment which Hegel metaphorically describes at *PS* §545 has now spread to the whole room. The modern world is wholly immersed in the pure subjectivity which silently announced itself in late antiquity. The positive result of this purification is that individual subjectivity has been shown to exist in its own right. The logic of the negative — the logic of the abstract infinite — has attained a concrete existence in modern personhood. But in its very moment of consummation, this form of freedom has shown its true vacancy on the world stage. Like the Greek tragedy which presented itself for the contemplation of an audience, "absolute freedom becomes explicitly objective to itself" through the Terror as "*abstract self-consciousness*, which effaces all distinction and all continuance of distinction within it."[120] In this discomfiting closing act, the purification of the subject has run its course.

[119] *PS* §591.
[120] *PS* §592.

V. CHAPTER 5: THE LOGIC AND APPEARANCE OF THE SUBSTANTIAL SUBJECT

We, as moderns, face our future while reflecting upon two paradigmatic tragedies: the ancient tragedy of the individual drowning in the ocean of fate, her protests a mere tear submerged in a cosmic sea of sorrows, and the modern tragedy of the individual withdrawn into the infinitude of subjective space, destroying himself in his attempt to free himself from the limitations imposed by the external world. Antigone, Oedipus, Hamlet, and Faust are enduring literary representations of crucial turning points in the development of self-consciousness, just as the tragedies of Socrates and French *liberté* have appeared in the real history of the world. Hegel's phenomenology teaches the same lesson which Zeus ordained for mortals: *pathei mathos*, "wisdom comes by suffering."[1]

Reflecting upon these examples, we may come to the dispiriting conclusion that Hegel's philosophy only offers us the prospect of an endless alteration between these two forms of self-destruction. Hegel raises this as a possibility at the conclusion of his discussion of absolute freedom in *PS*. In this reading, the failed project of modernity

> would be thrown back to its starting-point, to the ethical and real world of culture, which would have been merely refreshed and rejuvenated by the fear of the lord and master which has again entered men's hearts. Spirit would have to traverse anew and continually repeat this cycle of necessity.[2]

But as he completes his account of spirit in *PS*, Hegel maintains that there is a way forward after the French Revolution. The absolute freedom it intended is, in truth, a spiritual freedom not bound to the finite structures of any socio-political arrangement.[3] Freedom now appears within

[1] Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, line 176.
[2] *PS* §594.
[3] Hyppolite correlates the movement from absolute freedom to morality in *PS* to the transition from objective spirit to absolute spirit in the *Encyclopedia* (*Genesis and Structure*, 462):

> Spirit is subjective spirit as well as objective spirit; it is self-certain spirit, the creator of its own history. We must now consider spirit as subjective spirit, for 'the absolute is not only substance but subject as well.' 'Absolute freedom' serves as the transition from substantive, objective spirit to creating, self-certain spirit, spirit that is self-knowledge.

"the moral spirit" which resides in an "unreal world [where] freedom has the value of truth."[4] At first, it seems as if this is precisely the movement into the "beyond" which Hegel criticizes in Kant and Fichte's moral philosophy. But while moral freedom first appears as transcendence, it develops into the true self-determination of substantial subjectivity. The phenomena of conscience and forgiveness correct the abstract moral universalism of subjective idealism and thereby disclose how substantial "being … is enclosed within self-consciousness."[5]

As will be further explored below in 5.2.1, Hegel treats the appearance of forgiveness in *PS* as the appearance of conceptuality itself. Forgiveness discloses the infinitude of finite beings, and so Hegel describes it as the phenomenon through which "God [is] manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge."[6] While this link between forgiveness and the absolute is not obvious and is only briefly indicated, Hegel generally thinks of the absolute as the "reconciliation" (*Versöhnung*) of substance with subject, metaphorically suggesting its connection with the experience of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the reconciliation, or mediation, of a particular deed with the universal judgement pronounced against it, the same mediation of finite substantiality and infinite subjectivity which occurs in Hegel's concept of the absolute.

It is the thinking individual who accomplishes the reconciliation which happens through conceptual subjectivity. To think conceptually, the individual subject must first adopt the humility of recognizing a universal order which outstrips her own finite ego. And yet this order is not entirely unapproachable. Although limited by the finitude of her perspective, the individual subject nonetheless attains universal knowledge in conceptual thinking. As Andrew Tebbutt writes,

[4] *PS* §595.
[5] *PS* §595.
[6] *PS* §671.

forgiveness grounds the "self-reckoning (that is, absolute) nature" of conceptual subjectivity.[7] The substantial subject continually reckons with her participation in a finite existence which she knows to be only momentary and incomplete. I must live and act in this world, but I do so while knowing that my actions are always inadequate to the good which I intend.

Art, religion, and philosophy (the moments of Hegel's absolute spirit) accordingly articulate the absolute truth only by forgiving the inadequacy of its finite manifestations. A painting does not express the truth itself but only a momentary perspective upon it; a religious rite does not express divinity in its entirety but only in one aspect; a philosophical concept is incoherent unless it is explicated by other philosophical concepts. These enterprises only arrive at the truth they seek by accepting the substantial limitations of the mediums they employ.

Through this understanding of how the absolute particularizes itself, the speculative freedom introduced in 1.1, the highest form of freedom in Hegel's philosophy, can now be understood in its most basic logic and appearance. Pure subjectivity was unable to achieve the freedom of true self-determination because of its uncharitable rejection of finitude. In admitting its own limitations, subjectivity is freed from the empty abstraction of a purely self-contained existence. Its forgiveness of the finite is ultimately the forgiveness of its own inadequacy. This self-forgiveness is its true infinitude, its ultimate freedom — the self-determination of self-release.

The logic of this freedom is, like its appearance in forgiveness, a setting aside of the finite ego to achieve an ultimately more self-determined way of thinking. Philosophical thought which remains aloof to the history of philosophy successfully preserves the freedom of pure individuality, but only by shutting itself off within the narrowness of a finite perspective. At the end of his logic, Hegel shows how the absolute idea reconciles the oppositions that have appeared throughout the

[7] Andrew Tebbutt, "The Divinity of Conscience: Forgiveness, Religion, and the Politics of Secularity in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," PhD. diss. (University of Toronto, 2020), 104.

history of philosophy by accepting how each side partially articulates an aspect of the truth. Rather than merely pronouncing judgement upon previous philosophies, the absolute idea forgives them in their particular limitations and thereby transcends their finitude, attaining a truly infinite form of knowledge.

While this reconciliation of substantiality with subjectivity is the overarching theme of this chapter, it cannot simply be derived from the logic and appearance of substance and subject as they have already been treated above in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 5 will therefore also elaborate how the concept of inner purposiveness and the phenomenon of conscience play a crucial role in substantializing subjectivity so that this reconciliation can occur.

But because the logic and appearance of the substantial subject have already been partially developed as the separate logic and appearance of substance and subject, this chapter is structured slightly differently from Chapters 3 and 4. Since the substantial subject most fully actualizes the three senses of freedom discussed in Chapter 1, this chapter contains three subchapters, each dedicated to articulating the completed logic and experience of one of Hegel's three senses of freedom.

5.1 The Inner Necessity of the Substantial Subject

The inner necessity introduced above at 1.2 has been developed in the logic and appearance of both substance and subject. Most generally, it can be said that the substantial subject has an inner necessity because subjectivity internalizes the necessary self-relation of substance (described above at 3.1). But the precise way in which necessity is internalized in this way remains to be further explored. In 5.1.1, I will relate the inner necessity of Hegel's logic to the inner purposiveness of thinking, a desire for comprehension satisfied in the absolute idea. In 5.1.2, I

interpret the inner necessity at work in Hegel's account of conscience in *PS* while also considering it in the wider context of the history of moral philosophy.

5.1.1 The satisfaction of the absolute idea: inner necessity as inner purpose

Self-consciousness becomes substantial by forming itself in accordance with its own purposes, purposes which shape its activity and mold the inner course of necessity it pursues. The restriction imposed by inner necessity is therefore unlike the external limitation which one finite object enacts upon another. It does not externally prevent actions in the way a wall blocks intruders, but rather informs them from within, like how a composer disciplines himself to find the correct note. The composer does not just pick a note randomly, but this is not because he is somehow prevented from doing so. His aesthetic vision guides his activity and ordains its own limitations. The criterion by which he judges if he has achieved this vision equally lies within himself. He is done with his composition not when something determines an objective endpoint to his labor, but when he has, in Hegel's language, achieved his own satisfaction.

Inner necessity is the necessity which proceeds from the requirements of an "inner purposiveness," an interpretation of teleology which Hegel adopted from Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. In *EL*, Hegel says that Kant himself "reawakened" this idea, which first appeared in Aristotle.[8] Aristotle held that the purpose of moral action could be found in one's own flourishing (*eudaimonia*), describing it as a "self-sufficient" (*autarkes*) moral end (*telos*).[9] Because *eudaimonia* is not the means to any other goal, the necessity it imposes on moral actions only arises from within. The things I do to maintain my well-being are freely chosen, yet they are not

[8] *EL* §204.
[9] *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b.

arbitrary. They are the definite requirements imposed upon me by the nature of my own existence. Their inner necessity proceeds from the inner purpose of my own flourishing.

But in Hegel's account of the history of philosophy, teleology was externalized in the unhappy consciousness of medieval Europe, which located the goal of finite existence in the "beyond" of the divine realm. In *SL*, Hegel associates this external teleology with an "*extra-mundane* intelligence" and says that it has "enjoyed the favor of piety" through the influence of medieval Thomism.[10] Aristotle's teleology was now understood transcendentally, as earthly action aims at the fulfillment of a heavenly purpose. Even when the Enlightenment tore down the remnants of scholasticism, Hegel argues that it still retained the same external teleology in Deism. God was now a "*higher nature* … an *intelligence* that *externally* determines" the purpose of human existence.[11]

In *EL*, Hegel opposes inner purposiveness to this "modern teleology which has only the *finite*, the *external purposiveness* in view."[12] External purposiveness is "finite" because it is just an applied case of the bad infinite. A purpose which lies beyond human actions seems to be infinite insofar as it lies beyond the natural world, yet it remains finite since it merely imposes external regulations upon those actions. The incoherence of this external teleology is recognized in the Gospel when Jesus is criticized for healing on the Sabbath.[13] The commandment is the false infinite, really an absolutized finite, which must be obeyed even when it manifestly opposes the realization of the good in finite action. Unless humanity recognizes the divine within,[14] we relate to the infinite only through such clumsy impositions of "the beyond" upon our finite existence. As

[10] *SL* 12.155, 652.
[11] *SL* 12.156, 653.
[12] *EL* §204.
[13] Matt. 12.
[14] For more on the hermetic influence on Hegel's thought, especially that of Jakob Böhme and radical Pietism, see Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 21-83.

Hegel writes in *SL*, the reduction of the divine presence to a set of externally imposed limitations is the "reason teleology has drawn the reproach of triviality so much upon itself."[15]

Nonetheless, teleology cannot simply be abandoned. Along with many other ancient ideas which have been rejected by modernity, it instead should be retrieved and reconsidered. While Aristotle lacked the modern concept of subjectivity required to fully elaborate inner purposiveness, it is suggested at moments in his philosophy. As Ng argues, Aristotle's teleology "operates on the model of organic production and life" (the Greek concept of *physis*) and therefore informs the inner purposiveness of living subjectivity which Hegel proposes. Its inner character is indeed highlighted because it stands in distinct contrast to the external purposiveness of "artifact creation and instrumental action" (the Greek concept of *technē*).[16]

In his discussion of the divine self-consciousness of the unmoved mover in *Metaphysics* ("thought thinking itself," discussed above at 2.4.2), Aristotle shows how the *telos* motivates action from within. The final cause "causes motion as being an object of love, whereas all other things cause motion because they are themselves in motion."[17] The inner necessity of the *telos* has the kind of causality which pertains to *physis* and not *technē*. It does not act upon objects from outside of them but resides within philosophers as the love of truth which motivates the contemplative life.

Hegel builds upon this Aristotelian account of the inner purposiveness of self-consciousness. The inner necessity which substantially forms his philosophical system proceeds from the inner purpose of satisfying one's desire for comprehension. Desire, which was the most basic appearance of self-consciousness in *PS*,[18] shapes the activity of philosophy by motivating it to resolve unsatisfactory conceptual impasses. At the completion of Hegel's philosophy in *PhilS*,

[15] *SL* 12.156, 653.
[16] Ng, 24.
[17] *Metaphysics* 1072b.
[18] *PS* §§175-176.

self-consciousness now simply "engenders and enjoys itself."[19] Throughout Hegel's logic, the substantial subject attains this satisfaction by resolving the false oppositions which impede the free movement of thought, including the "opposition between teleology and mechanism" which produces "the antinomy of *fatalism* … and *freedom*."[20]

While Hegel is also indebted to Kant's articulation of inner purposiveness, it plays a still broader role in his philosophy. As Ng argues, purpose serves, for Kant, only a "regulative, negative function" and never amounts to a "constitutive, positive concept."[21] For Kant, the idea of inner purpose was only applicable to aesthetic and teleological judgements, but, as Hegel indicates in *SL*, he understands the "movement of purpose" to ground conceptuality itself.[22] Ng further elaborates:

> What interests Hegel is the connection between living form and conceptual form, living activity and conceptual activity; in short, what interests Hegel is the horizon of meaning and intelligibility that emerges in the identity and non-identity between life and self-consciousness, and the real possibilities of freedom and knowledge this relation affords … Hegel's transformation of Kant's purposiveness theme illuminates life as the objective context that opens up the possibility of rendering things intelligible, one that fundamentally shapes the activities of self-consciousness and thought.[23]

Nonetheless, Kant's treatment of inner purposiveness still provides needed insight into the reevaluation of teleology which occurs in German idealism. Although inner purposiveness is crucial to the freedom of substantial subjectivity, Hegel does not treat it very expansively. He indicates an expanded role for the Kantian concept but also assumes his readers' prior familiarity with the third critique. A close examination of "heautonomy," a term Kant adopts to describe the

[19] *PhilS* §577.
[20] *SL* 12.154, 651.
[21] Ng, 24.
[22] *SL* 12.172, 669.
[23] Ng, 63-64.

faculty of judgement in his *Critique of Judgement*, can help clarify the distinction between internal and external purposiveness:

> Strictly speaking, one must call this legislation **heautonomy**, since the power of judgment does not give the law to nature nor to freedom, but solely to itself, and it is not a faculty for producing concepts of objects, but only for comparing present cases to others that have been given to it and thereby indicating the subjective conditions of the possibility of this combination *a priori*.[24]

In Kant's first critique, pure reason deduces the categories which ground the possibility of experience and "gives" this law to nature. In the second critique, practical reason determines the universal requirements of moral autonomy and "gives" this law to freedom as a regulative ideal. In both cases, to say that the law is "given" implies a separation between the subjective and objective realms. Pure reason and practical reason are therefore autonomous, but not heautonomous. In the power of judgement, however, a power which pertains to aesthetic determinations, there is no such distance between the objective and the subjective. If I say that a poem is beautiful, my point of reference for beauty is not an objective law, but simply the experience of beauty itself as it has arisen for me within my own subjective world. I give the law solely to myself, so I am heautonomous.

A philological examination further confirms this subtle distinction between autonomy and heautonomy. The Greek form *autos* can function like the English "self" morpheme and combine with other pronouns to form the reflexive pronoun (as in my-self, your-self, our-selves), but it can *also* function as the regular third person pronoun (he, she, it).[25] *Heautou*, on the other hand has a more specifically self-oriented use, since it functions *solely* as the reflexive pronoun.[26] Kant does

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[24] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, ed. and trans. by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 27-28.
[25] *Liddell, Scott, Jones Ancient Greek Lexicon* (*LSJ*), s.v. "αὐτός," https://lsj.gr/wiki/%CE%B1%E1%BD%90%CF%84%CF%8C%CF%82.
[26] *LSJ*, s.v. "ἑαυτοῦ," https://lsj.gr/wiki/%E1%BC%91%CE%B1%CF%85%CF%84%CE%BF%E1%BF%A6.

not expand on this neologism, only giving it a contextual definition as that special kind of self-sufficiency which pertains to the power of judgement.[27]

But drawing upon both the philological and philosophical resources surrounding this distinction, we may attempt to define both terms:

> **autonomy** – the freedom of the person to *act* from their own moral reasoning
> **heautonomy** – the freedom of the person to *form* their own aesthetic judgements

The difference between the autonomy of practical reason and the heautonomy of judgement for Kant is roughly equivalent to the distinction between objective spirit and absolute spirit in Hegel. When we autonomously undertake a moral decision, we act in response to the set of circumstances in which we find ourselves, i.e., the details of a moral dilemma. My decisions are my own, but they are informed by a situation outside of my control. As autonomous agents, our actions are *self-determining* but the situations which motivate those actions are not wholly *self-determined*.

Moral autonomy is therefore very different to the heautonomous freedom I enjoy when I sit down to write a poem, a scenario in which I do not need to respond to any pressing circumstances. But creative writing is not entirely formless simply because it is free of all external determination. My creative purpose still must provide for itself the form my work must take. Since I cannot look outside of myself for a criterion of beauty, the self-discipline of the poet is the most absolute: my freedom as a creator is inseparable from the exacting self-criticism which I enact upon myself, a law more binding than any general aesthetic rule.

Because there are no accidents in what I create, I will not be satisfied until I find the *mot juste*, the one word that makes it all work. I am free because I supply my own necessity, the rule which governs this set of words, structuring them like a body's skeleton. To accept a division

[27] Schiller, like Hegel, expands upon this Kantian concept. See Jörg Noller, "Heautonomy: Schiller on freedom of the will," *European Journal of Philosophy* 29 (2021): 339–353.

between the particular words I choose and the general idea I mean to convey would be to abdicate the very pursuit of poetry. Artistic boundaries are the scaffolds upon which I build my own world, experiencing the speculative freedom Hegel describes in *EL* as "the free, open space where there is nothing below or above us, and where we stand in solitude alone with ourselves."[28]

But while the artist's creative process is quite readily identified as "freedom," it is more difficult to demonstrate how the absolute idea is, as the final moment of Hegel's logic, also an expression of the inner necessity of inner purposiveness. Once again, Kant suggests the purposiveness of thought as a form of heautonomy in the *Critique of Judgement*. While he is careful not to impute such a purposiveness to nature itself, Kant observes that the scientific classification of nature is governed by a "principle of purposiveness" which "represents the unique way in which we must proceed in reflection on the objects of nature with the aim of a thoroughly interconnected experience."[29]

As Kant claims, the purposes of human cognition shape the way in which we conceptualize the world around us. We classify animals based on the number of legs they have rather than the exact number of hairs on their body because the first classification satisfies the needs of our own comprehension much more adequately. Moreover, we aim to systemize our knowledge because only an "interconnected experience" satisfies the inner demands of intellectual comprehension. Knowledge of something solely in its isolation is the barest, least helpful form of knowledge. Consider how it would be more difficult to understand the significance of just one element on the periodic table of elements rather than appreciating it as a complete body of systematic knowledge. The properties of helium only make sense when they are compared with those of neon and argon and contrasted with those of hydrogen and zinc.

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[28] *EL* §31.
[29] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, 71.

Hegel further develops this line of thought in Kant. In his introductory discussion of freedom in *PR*, he says that "it is impossible to adopt a theoretical attitude or to think without a will, for in thinking we are necessarily active."[30] Thought is inherently purposive since it always desires to know the object of its inquiry. Even when thinking does not aim at responding to a practical necessity, it is still driven on by its will to comprehension. Returning to the Kantian terminology, knowledge may be applied autonomously (as when I use my understanding of spark plugs to fix my car), but it is not only driven by external objectives. What Hegel describes in *SL* as "reason's highest and sole impulse to find and recognize *itself through itself in all things*" is the heautonomous pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.[31]

One may, however, object to theoretical contemplation on the grounds that it will fall into a "bad infinite" abyss of endless self-questioning. All knowledge proceeds from desire, but can the desire for knowledge ever be satisfied? The negativity of Hegel's logic (see 4.1 above) also lends itself to a possible skeptical interpretation in which concepts endlessly show their insufficiency. In *SL*, Hegel himself indeed expresses concern that his logic could potentially "roll on *forwards* to infinity."[32]

Hegel's answer to this problem lies in the systematicity of the absolute idea, a systematicity which perfects conceptual knowledge. The philosophical concept (*Begriff*) is, to emphasize its etymology, a "comprehensive" comprehension, a knowledge of something in all its aspects. Since the verbal form *begreifen* can also mean "to grasp," the translation into English as "comprehension" captures the original Latinate meaning of *comprehensio*, from which the

[30] *PR* §4.
[31] *SL* 12.238, 737.
[32] *SL* 12.249, 749.

metaphor for knowledge as a "grasp" first derived.[33] Substantial knowledge is analogous to the physical sense of a "grasping" touch, which, as Hegel says in *PhilS*, is the "most concrete of all the senses" because it pertains to the "solid reality of the corporeal."[34]

As Hegel announces at the very start of his *Encyclopedia*, the progress of philosophy is the movement of thought towards this concrete grasp (*Begreifen*).[35] There is an arc to thinking as it progresses to the increasingly adequate comprehension of the truth. The concepts which appear in Hegel's logic do not just enter and exit like passing phantoms, but substantially accrue. The prospect of an endless logic is dispelled when we understand knowledge as a comprehensive development and not merely a movement. Informed by its inner purpose of comprehension, thinking actively builds upon itself. As Nuzzo writes, the logic's "content becomes more and more concrete; no determination is left behind or lost. The linear progression is overcome in an organic structure (a sphere) that grows on itself."[36] As the sphere of thought takes shape, the subjective process of thinking achieves its own inner purpose when it has itself become a substantial, self-supporting structure.

As will be further explored below at 5.3.2, the goal of comprehension is fulfilled through the development of self-consciousness. Self-conscious comprehension retains and builds upon earlier more immediate ways of thinking. As Pippin writes, the final satisfaction of spirit lies in its self-conscious comprehension "of its own subjectivity, a comprehension possible only as a result of interconnected and ongoing attempts at self-definition."[37] In *SL*, Hegel describes the absolute

[33] The Latin term is itself a Ciceronian translation of the Greek *katalepsis*, the "grasp" of truth which the stoics affirmed and the skeptics denied. Zeno of Citium "pressed his fingers closely together and made a fist, and said that that was comprehension (and from this illustration he gave to that process the actual name of *katalepsis*, which it had not had before)." Cicero, *Academica* II, trans. by Harris Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 144.
[34] *PhilS* §401.
[35] *EL* §1.
[36] Nuzzo, 223.
[37] Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 247.

idea as the concluding moment of his logic because it is thinking which has become self-aware of its own methodology in this way, resulting in a self-enclosed "*system of totality*."[38] The bad infinite progress to infinity cannot arise within such a self-conscious system because its desire to know is directed back upon itself.

The point at which the system is gathered back into itself in this way is also the point at which conceptual subjectivity now recognizes itself in all the previous moments of the logic. As Hegel writes in *SL*, logic "has itself, as the *infinite form*, for its content."[39] Thinking will go on, but substantially formed by its self-awareness of its own method, the form which arises from the content. Just as "becoming" is the truth of "being," the ultimate truth of logic is not the static set of logical concepts but their activation in the ongoing process of thinking.

The course of purposeful thinking is now complete, but it does not stand still. In building a philosophical system, it has achieved the satisfaction of having formed itself into a living, sensate body, a body rejoicing in its own motion. Just as a body does not stop moving when it has grown into adulthood, philosophy does not stop thinking when it has formed itself into a system. The system itself presents new courses of thought which only appear from within, presenting problems and insights which will only be fully appreciated by future generations.

When we inherit this body of thought from history and dwell within it, we are reincorporated into the substantial freedom of membership, a freedom which had been lost in pure subjectivity. Philosophy is not just the reactionary stewardship of an immutable tradition, but it is also not a purely individual prerogative. Our freedom as philosophers is the freedom to give ourselves over to this body of thought, satisfying our own comprehension through attending to its inner requirements while bringing its memories to living self-consciousness.

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[38] *SL* 12.250, 749.
[39] SL 12.237, 736.

5.1.2 A genealogy of conscience and the appearance of inner necessity

Just as Hegel developed Kant's idea of heautonomy into the inner purposiveness which motivates his entire philosophy, in *PS* he also expands upon the freedom of Kantian moral autonomy. In Hegel's concept of conscience, the universality of Kantian ethics is reconciled with the inescapable particularity of moral action, a particularity which demands that the moral autonomy of conscience also recognize the necessity of forgiveness.

Hegel's development of conscience is different in *PS* and *PR*, although in both cases a pure form of conscience shows itself to be inadequate and dependent upon its mediation in a substantial community.[40] In *PR*, the individual conscience degenerates into moral vanity and so gives way to the substantial existence of modern ethical life, whereas in *PS* a more allegorical account describes how self-certain conscience encounters judgement and seeks forgiveness. This reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) is the "reciprocal recognition which is *absolute* spirit."[41]

These two different accounts of conscience perhaps relate to a change of thinking on Hegel's part, a later movement in *PR* towards a philosophy which was less enthusiastic about the

[40] Wood briefly summarizes the difference as follows (Wood, 174):

> In the *Philosophy of Right*, the emptiness of morality leads to ethical life and its system of substantive obligations. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* suggests an answer to emptiness *within* the moral standpoint. This is *conscience*, where the subjective will gives itself content through the immediate conviction that a particular act fulfills its duty.

He also attributes the different approaches in the texts to the different bodies of thought to which they are responding (Wood, 174-175):

> Hegel's treatment of conscience is correspondingly ambivalent. It involves a critique of post-Kantian moral thinking, following Fichte. The *Phenomenology* account, it seems, aimed at the German Romantics, especially Friedrich Schlegel, Schleiermacher, and Novalis, whereas the *Philosophy of Right*'s lengthy treatment of conscience looks like a sustained attack on the so called *ethics of conviction* (*Uberzeugungsethik*) developed by Jakob Friedrich Fries.

[41] *PS* §670.

self-sufficiency of moral action and more affirming of the objectification of freedom in the structures of government.[42] Yet the two forms of the substantial mediation of conscience they describe are not mutually exclusive. The lesson of personal forgiveness has political implications. As Hegel says in *PR*, the institution of the state restricts the fanaticism of revenge, putting an end to the bad infinite of endless reprisals in a definite system of justice.[43]

A brief genealogy and etymology of "conscience" will serve to set up Hegel's treatment of it in *PS*. Conscience only makes its appearance in ancient Greece with the breakdown of unself-conscious ethical life. Edward Jeremiah offers insight into how the tumultuous world of 5th-century Athens saw the emergence of an individualized form of conscience:

> The speeches of the Attic orator Antiphon provide a window into the developing discourse of legal rhetoric and the construction of the idea of conscience. In Greek this takes a specifically reflexive formulation, which already suggests that conscience is understood as an internalised equivalent, or metamorphosis, of an other-directed counterpart. … With the reflexivisation of *synoida* one becomes a witness to the actions of oneself. She becomes her own judge, and as such a second voice or perspective is created that evaluates the actions or thoughts of the first.[44]

Jeremiah goes on to criticize this understanding of conscience as providing a wholly other-directed account of morality, confirming Hegel's thesis about the relative absence of subjective conscience in antiquity. Conscience at first existed as the shame attached to violating the law of the community, a shame which became increasingly internalized as self-imposed guilt with the awakening of the subjective principle. Nonetheless, such guilt does not amount to the moral autonomy of modernity, in which reason gives to itself its own moral law.

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[42] Rosenzweig claims that Hegel's later philosophy (in *PR*) rejects his earlier criticism of the state (in *PS*). But, as Hyppolite correctly argues, the problem with absolute freedom in *PS* is not its exultation of the modern state per se, but rather the incomplete development of that state's understanding of freedom. See Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 462. Hyppolite cites Rosenzweig from Franz Rosenzweig, *Hegel und der Staat* (Oldenburg, 1920), I, 215.
[43] *PR* §§101-102.
[44] Jeremiah, *The Emergence of Reflexivity in Greek Language and Thought*, 127-129.

The development of the concept of conscience closely follows the development of the pure subject, with the idea becoming more prominent in the stoic philosophy which flourished in the Hellenistic era. As Don Marietta notes, in this period, *syneidesis* (the nominal form of the *synoida* which originated in classical Athens) increasingly referred to both a general state of consciousness as well as moral self-awareness:

> The Hellenistic concern for ethics and the individual's inner attitudes fostered the development of the concept of conscience. The term *syneidesis* and its cognates were used in reference to both ethical and nonethical matters. The Greeks did not distinguish between conscience and consciousness as speakers of English do. The ethical and non-ethical aspects (which are distinguished by the English word "conscience") were conveyed by the same word, and only the context indicated the moral quality of the object of the consciousness. This shows that *syneidisis* was basically a form of awareness or knowing.[45]

This etymological ambiguity suggests a profound link between moral self-knowledge, or "conscience," and the subjective self, or "consciousness." The Greek *syn-eidesis*, a "knowing-with" oneself, was translated into Latin as *con-scientia*. Hegel's interpretation of Greek tragedy parallels this etymology, since individualized *consciousness* emerges from the breakdown of harmonious ethical life, a crisis which demands the self-reflection of *conscience*.

Further confirming this interpretation, the Latin adjective *conscius* describes both conscience and consciousness. It denotes the fact of being "guilty" as well as the awareness thereof.[46] The Italian hero Turnus in Vergil's *Aeneid* exemplifies this dual sense of the word when he realizes the destruction he has wrought by making war on Aeneas. With the fall of his kingdom and the suicide of Queen Amata, his prospective mother-in-law, he experiences his courage (*virtus*), the bedrock of his warrior's ethic, as an isolating, painfully self-aware form of guilt:

> Turnus went numb, confounded by the changing image of things, and he stood with a silent gaze — a great shame burns in his lonely heart [*uno in corde*] alongside a

[45] Don E Marietta, "Conscience in Greek Stoicism," *Numen* 17, no. 3 (1970): 178.
[46] *Lewis and Short: A Latin Dictionary* (L&S), s.v. "conscius," https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0059:entry=conscius.

> madness interlaced with grief, a love spurred on by rage, and his guilty courage [*conscia virtus*].[47]

Since his proud martial courage has now become a source of guilt, Turnus has lost the naïve certainty of the pre-conscious "natural man" Hegel describes in *LHP* as "living quite unconsciously. . . in conformity with the morality of his town."[48] He now suffers the same moral perplexity which vexed the spectator of Greek tragedy, as he "immediately arrives at uncertainty as to whether his point of view or the opposite is wrong."[49] The confusing, contradictory emotions he experiences are both the tormenting pangs of a guilty *conscience* as well as a spur towards the development of reflective self-*consciousness* in this moment of alienation from ethical custom. As is shown in this description of its greatest poet, the Latin language confirms Hegel's understanding of conscience as a phenomenon which expresses the truth of self-consciousness.

The German language, however, breaks with Greek and Latinate etymologies in deriving conscience (*Gewissen*) from *gewiss*, an adjective or adverb which, when used alone, is roughly equivalent to English expressions like "certainly," "absolutely," or "without a doubt."[50] As Lauer notes, Hegel makes a clear nod to this etymology at the start of the chapter on spirit in *PS* when he introduces "conscience [*Gewissen*] as spirit that is certain [*gewisse*] of itself."[51] In the pure subjectivity which developed alongside the German language in modernity, the self-knowledge of moral duty is immediate, natural, and self-evident.[52]

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[47] *Aeneid* 12.665–8. Translation is my own, published along with a similar discussion of the passage at George Saad, "To Know Thyself in a World Undone: Apocalypse and Authenticity in the *Aeneid*," 222.
[48] *LHP* II, 355.
[49] *LHP* II, 355.
[50] *Duden*, s.v. "gewiss," https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/gewiss_zweifellos_immer.
[51] *PS* §442.
[52] "It might well seem purely accidental that the German for "conscience" (*Gewissen*) and "conscientious" (*gewissenhaft*) should have the same root as "certain" (*gewiss*) and "certainty" (*Gewissheit*). The note of "immediacy," however, is clearly present in both." Lauer, 249 ft. 70.

Developing this idea of moral autonomy which took root in German culture with the Lutheran theology of individual conscience, Kant declares conscience to be the "inner judge of all free actions."[53] For Kant, conscience operates like a court which resides within moral self-consciousness, an internalization of the legal process in which the person becomes a "doubled self" who is at once both the prosecutor and the accused.[54] Just as even successful legal proceedings rarely offer any positive happiness, "the blessedness found in the comforting encouragement of one's conscience is not *positive* (joy) but merely *negative* (relief from preceding anxiety)."[55] Kant's account of conscience recognizes the freedom of moral autonomy yet this freedom is still only understood negatively. Moral reason conducts a self-examination of its own beliefs, but this is different from actively resolving upon a positive conviction of the good.

An examination of Luther's own account of moral freedom furnishes a more positive interpretation of conscience nearer to Hegel's own. For Luther, faith demands that we adopt the humility of belief, yet this belief releases us to the freedom of personal conscience. He presents these two sides of faith as opposed theses at the opening of *The Freedom of a Christian*:

> The Christian individual is a completely free lord of all, subject to none.
> The Christian individual is a completely dutiful servant of all, subject to all.[56]

This copresence of freedom and servitude in Lutheran theology foreshadows Hegel's internalization of necessity. For Luther, faith frees us from the law by substantially shaping our convictions from within. Freedom exists alongside necessity when faith has shaped the believer's

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[53] Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §13, 234.
[54] Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, §13, 234. Marietta notes that this metaphor originally appeared in the Hellenistic era, particularly in Philo: "The nature of *syneidisis* and *syneidos* was indicated by various metaphors and similes, most of them related to the law court, e.g. judge, witness, accuser, and punisher. Other metaphors were inner watcher and child's nurse." Marietta, 178-179.
[55] Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, §13, 235.
[56] Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian 1520: The Annotated Luther Study Edition*, trans. by Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), §21, 10.

soul to have an immediate, uncompelled conviction of the good which the law only externally upholds. When it has been internalized in the subjective conviction of faith, the law is no longer experienced as a law. It has been absorbed within one's unconscious personality as the inner necessity of immediate moral insight.

In a Hegelian reading of the Kantian court of conscience, the internal duality between "accuser" and "accused" is taken up in the positive conviction Luther describes. Within one's own conscience, the prospect of committing an immoral deed (a negation of the good, a first negation) and the negative self-criticism which would attend such a deed (a negation of the immoral deed, a second negation) cancel each other out. Knowing "what I should not do" implies at least some minimal self-awareness of "what I should do." The autonomous faculty of self-judgment Kant upholds therefore also implies a capacity for positive moral convictions. For Hegel, conscience thus combines the self-sufficiency of Kantian autonomy with the immediate self-certainty of Lutheran faith. The law which the autonomous moral agent gave to herself permeates the soul in such a way that it ceases to be law at all — conscience is now absolute self-conviction.

Luther's refusal to recant his theology before the Diet of Worms is the archetypal example of conscience in the modern West. At the conclusion of his speech before the Diet, Luther is quoted as saying: "Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me. Amen."[57] J.H. Merle d'Aubigné describes how these works exemplify the inner necessity of Christian freedom:

> Luther, constrained to obey his faith, led by his conscience to death, impelled by the noblest necessity, the slave of his belief, and under this slavery still supremely free, like the ship tossed by a violent tempest, and which, to save that which is more precious than itself, runs and is dashed upon the rocks, thus uttered these sublime

[57] Translation is my own. The line in German is "*Hie[r] stehe ich* / *Ich kan nie anders* / *Gott helff mir* / *Amen*." Phillipp Melanchthon, *Historia de vita et actis reueren dissimmi uiri D. Martini Lutheri* (Frankfurt am Main: Dauiduem Zephelium, 1562), 50.

For a discussion of how this line has been treated in the intellectual history of the English-speaking world, see Samuel L. Young, "How Luther Became the Mythical 'Here I Stand' Hero," *Lutheran Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2022): 53–72.

> words which still thrill our hearts at an interval of three centuries . . . This is the weakness of God, which is stronger than man.[58]

Because its convictions are substantial, modern conscience remains free even in the face of overwhelming oppression. In adopting a position of obedience, the Christian soul trusts in "the weakness of God," a weakness which outstrips the power of subjective agency to overturn its situation. That "I can do no other" means that I have abdicated the empty freedom of endless potential but gained the freedom of conviction. This freedom is the inner necessity which, to use a term which arises in Heidegger's discussion of conscience, *resolves* (as an act of resolution, or *Entschlossenheit*) upon one course of action.[59] I only truly determine myself when I have the conviction that my action is what *must* be done.

As Hegel begins his account of conscience in *PS*, the transcendental moral law is taken up within the individual personality: "it is now the law that exists for the sake of the self, not the self that exists for the sake of the law."[60] In locating the law within the self, conscience now

> is free from any content whatever; it absolves itself from any specific duty which is supposed to have the validity of law. In the strength of its own self-assurance it possesses the majesty of absolute autarchy, to bind and to loose. This *self-determination* is therefore without more ado absolutely in conformity with duty. Duty is the knowing itself; this simple selfhood, however, is the *in-itself*; for the in-itself is pure self-identity, and this is in this consciousness.[61]

The self-determined "autarchy" of conscience is distinct from Kantian moral autonomy. Like practical reason, conscience gives the moral law to itself but is then still free to contextually interpret this law. Returning to Kant's own distinction between autonomy and heautonomy, the Kantian moral agent is free to autonomously act from rational moral principles but not free to

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[58] J.H. Merle d'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 2, trans. Henry White (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), 249.
[59] "Freedom, however, is only in the choice of one possibility that is, in tolerating one's not having chosen the others and one's not being able to choose them." Matin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1962), §58, 331.
[60] *PS* §639.
[61] *PS* §646.

heautonomously interpret their application in a specific situation. She obeys the moral law even when she has very good reason for disobedience, such as in Kant's refusal to admit an exception to the duty of honesty even in the case of lying to prevent murder.[62] With the freedom of conscientious interpretation, however, duty as such has no force of necessity, since conscience has the majestic power "to bind and to loose" itself from any specific duty.

Conscience also does not arrive at its duties through the self-reflection of practical reason, since duty does not exist as a content separate from the form of conscientious knowing: "duty is the knowing itself." It is not aware of a moral principle which has an existence outside of itself (as in mere consciousness) but takes up the moral principle in its own self-awareness (as in self-consciousness). The modern moral agent has undergone a moral formation (*Bildung*) in attaining her independent personhood — the moral subject is substantial and therefore contains the law within herself. Hegel therefore equates "the content of the moral action" with "the doer's own immediate *individuality*."[63] Because the law has permeated the self, our subjective experience is itself morally significant. As in the dual sense of the Latin adjective *conscius*, the duties which we fix upon in our natural *consciousness* of a moral dilemma disclose the content of *conscience*.

This conscientious consciousness sees ethical actions as occurring within "a plurality of circumstances which breaks up and spreads out endlessly in all directions."[64] This wholistic perception of the ethical situation recognizes the concrete interconnectedness of an ambiguous moral situation. In contrast to the universal maxims of Kantian ethics, conscience forms its moral awareness with a sensitivity to the "multiplicity of duties" at work within a single moment of

[62] See Immanuel Kant, 'On a Supposed Right to Tell Lies from Benevolent Motives', in *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics*, trans. by T.K. Abbott (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1898), 361-365.
[63] *PS* §637.
[64] *PS* §642.

action.[65] Like the ancient "ethical perception" (discussed above at 3.2.2), it recognizes the substantial complexity of a "real ethical situation."[66]

But unlike the ancient moral agent, the conscientious individual actively mediates between universal ethical injunctions and the specifics presently at hand. While Antigone and Creon only one-sidedly follow the divine and human law, conscience sees many sides to the situation but also "knows that it has to choose between" conflicting duties "for none of them, in its specific character or in its content, is absolute; only pure duty is that."[67] Conscience has taken up duty and purified it of its content. Our true duty is not the general maxim (for instance, in Kant's example, to never tell a lie) but the contextually specific duty which presents itself here and now. Abstract duty pretends to be absolute duty but is only another case of the false infinite, a particular injunction which pretends to have a universal validity. In breaking up the concrete ethical situation into its various elements, conscience particularizes universal duties while also elevating the particular details of its situation to a universal significance. The individual of conscience mediates between the other two moments of the concept so that the structure of conceptual subjectivity, the true infinite, now appears directly within human experience.

But the person of conscience does not reflect upon this mediation. Since the moral law now dwells deep within "his unconscious natural being," he experiences an "immediate certainty" of his ethical perception as if it were in fact "sense-nature."[68] Although its self-determination seems to be the highest form of subjective freedom, conscience has the natural immediacy of moral awareness within ethical life. There is an analogous return to nature with the completion of

[65] *PS* §643.
[66] *PS* §446.
[67] *PS* §643.
[68] *PS* §643.

conceptual subjectivity in *SL*. Just as the absolute idea "*freely discharges itself*" into nature,[69] the substantial subject restores the simplicity of sense-certainty in his moral awareness. He has internalized duty to such an extent that he perceives the good in the same way he identifies the color green or smells the scent of grapes.

But this return to "unconscious natural being" seems to only pose as many questions as it answers. Will not the individual of conscience simply become a law unto themselves? Without any further development, the self-determination of conscience seems to be only a return to previous appearances of freedom which have proven themselves to be inadequate. Conscientious conviction is the self-certain pure insight of the modern subject, yet it also remains enclosed within itself, its moral reasoning unexplained like the dark, unfathomable work of fate in ancient ethical life.

In answering this objection, it is first important to note that because both substance and subject are taken up in the moral instinct of conscience, it can be described as an *acquired* reflex. While the call of conscience presents itself immediately, we can only perceive this call because we have first developed the capacity to hear it.[70] I can only have immediate moral insights because I first belonged to an ethical community whose precepts I have received and reflected upon for myself, absorbing them into my natural being so that they now exist as direct reactions to the dilemmas which I confront.

But even if we recognize how conscience is formed, it is still impossible to distinguish between merely contingent opinions and true ethical convictions — both appear in the moment as a kind of reflex. As he moves forward in the development of conscience, Hegel shows how true conscience proves itself in the process of its self-actualization. It must actualize its inner necessity

[69] *SL* 12.253, 753.
[70] Heidegger equates this receptivity to the call of conscience to our capacity for authenticity, our resolution of "wanting to have a conscience" (*Gewissenhabenwollen*). *Being and Time*, §54, 314.

in action. As was discussed in 1.2.1, the corollary of inner necessity is external possibility. Because the content of conscientious conviction itself derives from the ethical situation, it is incoherent as a merely theoretical standpoint. The reality of action alone distinguishes between arbitrary opinion and a resolution which can substantially manifest the good in the world. Conscience demands action, and action reorients it to the world outside of its own self-certainty.

Now looking outside of itself, conscience does not arbitrarily impose its will on the world, but rather *reforms* it, carrying forth the cultivation (*Bildung*) through which it arrived at its own moral standpoint so that it can become freely at home in its own society. The conscientious actor can only raise her individual ethical perception to a universal significance by registering it within society's wider self-awareness. She must act and have her action received by another person of conscience, the judge who holds her accountable and disputes her actions. In engaging with this other, someone else not immediately privy to the natural inclinations of her own conscience, the substantial inwardness of pure conscience unfolds itself. Both the moral actor and the judge become more fully aware of themselves through the moral discourse of the ethical community.

5.2 Being-at-home as the Reconciliation of Substance and Subject

Through the act of forgiveness which reconciles the finite deed with the infinite judgement, people of conscience build an ethical community in which we can be freely at home with ourselves. In 5.2.1, I will demonstrate how the allegory of judgement and forgiveness in *PS* is the appearance of true infinity. In 5.2.2, I will describe how the conscientious ethical community, the modern ethical substance, adopts the language of conscientious moral reasoning.

5.2.1 The allegory of judgement, forgiveness, and true infinity

Explaining how the immediate self-certainty of conscience can be reconciled with the incomplete partiality of moral action is the challenge Hegel faces in the rest of his discussion of moral spirit in *PS*. This challenge is quite considerable, and indeed has led some commentators to wonder if his philosophy contains any positive theory of ethics at all. At the start of his work on Hegel's theory of conscience, Dean Moyar notes that "there is no subfield of contemporary ethical theory known as 'Hegelian ethics.'"[71] Among the reasons which Moyar notes for the lack of attention to Hegelian ethics is the fact that it "does not offer a catalogue of duties or virtues" since Hegel "valorizes individual subjective freedom" yet "seems to provide little in the way of guidance for the ethical deliberation of individuals."[72]

While Moyar goes on to claim that Hegel offers a different type of ethical theory which lacks such clear proscriptions, Wood sees the freedom of individual conscience in Hegel as inviting a kind of moral anarchy which precludes any commitment to an ethical theory. Wood argues that the abstract individual reflection upon the good required in a modern theory of ethical judgement is, for Hegel, only the shadow of a vanishing ethical life:

> No matter how objective we take ethical truth and rationality to be, any judgment of the rationality of a course of conduct is always relative to someone's epistemic situation. … Moreover, as objective circumstances change, there may also be a change in the course of conduct that it is objectively rational to follow. When an ethical order is in its prime of life, it will be true that it actualizes spirit's freedom (according to the highest conception of itself that spirit has thus far attained), and it will be rational for people living in that age to display ethical virtue and do their ethical duties. As reflection deepens, however, spirit's conception of itself begins to change, and the old ethical order is no longer sufficient to actualize the emerging conception. Reflective individuals begin to realize this, and ethical duties lose their rational justification for them.[73]

[71] Dean Moyar, *Hegel's Conscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3.
[72] Moyar, 5.
[73] Wood, 235.

Wood concludes that Hegel's "amoralism" is a "dangerous doctrine," albeit one which sympathetically reflects the aspirations of human freedom.[74] His concerns are characteristic of the problem of reading Hegel without taking him seriously as a systematic philosopher. Having restricted the scope of Hegel's philosophy to objective spirit alone, Wood sees the individual stuck within a decaying ethical life as having an "epistemic situation" limited to the "objective circumstances" of his nation's moral and social development. Yet this merely self-referential conscientiousness is mistakenly cut off from the speculative sources of moral reflection — the aesthetic, religious, and philosophical traditions of absolute spirit which live on regardless of the present decay in the social order. That conscience gives way to ethical life in *PR* (Wood's chief point of reference for Hegel's ethical theory) does not mean that it is simply a pale reflection of the present order. While we are formed by the laws and norms of the society in which we live, we are not reduced to rudderless moral neophytes when social mores come undone.

In fact, such a period of decadence is the very circumstance under which conscience truly shines. The direct link between the individual and the absolute is found in the seemingly innate, wholly inviolable sense of the good which can remain aloof to the moral confusion which surrounds it. While Wood raises the prospect of a Raskolnikov arising in an era of moral confusion,[75] even such a negative example can only come about because conscience draws upon ideas from beyond ethical life. A Raskolnikov is motivated by philosophical conceptions which extend beyond his time and place, not merely by the complete absence of moral guidance in his society. Yet the moral examples of Socrates, Sophie Scholl, and Mahatma Gandhi also exemplify the creative moral genius which draws upon founts of ethical wisdom not presently manifest in their time and place.

[74] Wood, 236.
[75] Wood, 235.

In a harmonious society, there is little need for heroes of conscience, but there is great need for them amidst social chaos. The more often conflicts arise, the more frequently people are placed within the irresolvable situations depicted in Greek tragedy. The dying ethical substance requires the guidance of individual insight to heal this fracture. The conscience which has arrogated the role of moral regulation unto itself has assumed this responsibility, a responsibility which is also the highest expression of freedom. This is the freedom from conventionality which exercises for itself a moral imperative that outstrips any socially established set of expectations. Yet it is also the self-imposed duty to bring these moral insights into concrete existence so that humanity may be, here and now, more at home with itself.

In *PS*, Hegel now describes this wider social dimension of conscience. The conscientious individual takes a stand which objectifies their internal belief and presents it to other individuals, who will, in turn, have their own conscientious assessment of it. Just as the first appearance of self-conscious desire was only satisfied through the recognition of another person, recognition of the deed now confers a spiritual significance upon an act of conscience:

> Conscience is the common element of the two self-consciousnesses, and this element is the substance in which the deed has an *enduring reality*, the moment of being *recognized* and *acknowledged* by others. … The *existent reality* of conscience, however, is one which is a *self,* an existence which is conscious of itself, the spiritual element of being *recognized* and *acknowledged*. The action is thus only the translation of its *individual* content into the *objective* element, in which it is universal and recognized, and it is just the fact that it is recognized that makes the deed a reality. The deed is recognized and thereby made real because the existent reality is directly linked with conviction.[76]

Conscience demands that its immediate moral insight become objective in decisive moral action — as Hegel says earlier, "conscience has to be considered as acting."[77] When my conviction has been exercised, it is then received as an object of the conscientious ethical perception of others.

[76] *PS* §640.
[77] *PS* §659.

Yet my deed only becomes a true act of conscience when it is "directly linked" to my distinctive moral stand. For example, participating in a boycott is different from incidentally changing one's shopping habits. When I participate in a boycott, I receive praise and criticism not simply because of the practical effects of my individual action, but because my moral stand has attained the "element of existence" by announcing its intention and thereby disrupting, however minimally, the wider social awareness. My boycott is not just an abstract criticism of a company, but a definite action which receives "universal recognition" since it speaks to the conscience of those observing it and demands their own response in turn. Should they partake as well? The question must be answered. By focusing the attention of society's moral consciousness on this one act, my conscience is recognized and so acquires a universal dimension.

Hegel describes this reception of the act of conscience through a simplified allegory which describes the interaction between a conscientious actor and the judge of his action. This interaction is not one which has occurred in history but instead belongs to a timeless present. After looking back on the history of substance and subject, Hegel now looks ahead to the horizon of the future.[78] If the moral autarchy of conscience only fosters and excuses moral self-righteousness, he warns that it will devolve into "a consciousness which is forsaken by and which itself denies spirit."[79] Freedom will only be actualized to the extent to which we recognize the finitude of all moral judgement and so engage in moral discourse with a disposition towards forgiveness.

[78] "Unlike the earlier stories, this one outlines something that has not happened yet: a future development of spirit, of which Hegel is the prophet: the making explicit of something already implicit, whose occurrence is to usher in the next phase in our history." Robert Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2019), 584.
[79] *PS* §667.

The act of conscience is at first received by a judge who cannot accept it at face value.[80] From the outside, the claims of conscience seem like self-serving hypocrisy at best and pure evil at worst, the elevation of self-will above the universality of duty.[81] This appearance of conscience as a force of evil reflects the assumption of moral consciousness that the being-for-self of the individual is a rejection of communion with the universal good, a rejection which is in and of itself evil regardless of the moral reasoning the individual presents.

While this insistence upon the purity of duty is well-established in Kantian deontology, it remains a concern for his successors. Schelling, for instance, describes the separation of one's own will (*Eigenwille*) from the universality of the divine as the moment where evil first announces itself:

> Thus is the beginning of sin, that man transgresses from authentic being into non-being, from truth into lies, from the light into darkness, in order to become a self-creating ground and, with the power of the centrum which he has within himself, to rule over all things. For the feeling still remains in the one having strayed from the centrum that he was all things, namely, in and with God; for that reason he strives once again to return there, but for himself, and not where he might be all things, namely, in God. From this arises the hunger of selfishness which, to the degree that it renounces the whole and unity, becomes ever more desolate, poorer, but precisely for that reason greedier, hungrier, and more venomous.[82]

Schelling's discussion of the moral implications of pure being-for-self closely resonates with the problem of pure subjectivity discussed above in Chapter 4. For Schelling, the pure subject falls into a bad infinity of insatiable impulses which render any claim to moral conduct untenable. Whoever acts solely on his own behalf must, in his attempt to overcome his own finitude, consume and destroy everything outside of him. To the judge in the allegory, this manifest evil of the self-

[80] I will, following the allegory, speak of a single "judge" and a single "actor," although the allegory does not only apply to such an individual encounter. The perspective of the judge and the actor can also be assumed by collective groups, including society as a whole.
[81] *PS* §§660-662.
[82] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. by Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: SUNY Press, 2006), 55.

will is indistinguishable from what Hegel describes as the "moral genius" of conscience, the divine "inner voice" of the Socratic *daemon*.[83] When the conscientious actor claims that he is only listening to the *daemon* within, the judge hears the ancient Greek word in its modern adaptation and suspects that he has in fact been corrupted by a Faustian "demon," a self-willed Mephistopheles who promotes the idolatry of an absolutized individuality.

Yet even as the judge imputes hypocrisy or evil to the supposedly pure motives of the conscientious actor, she is likewise engaged in a spurious purification of her own moral standpoint. A harsh judge claims to be speaking objective moral truths, but in doing so she also implies the moral superiority of her own purely observational standpoint. The standpoint of pure judgment

> does well to preserve itself in its purity, for it *does not act*; it is the hypocrisy which wants its judging to be taken for an *actual* deed, and instead of proving its rectitude by actions, does so by uttering fine sentiments. Its nature, then, is altogether the same as that which is reproached with making duty a mere matter of words. In both alike, the side of reality is distinct from the words uttered: in the one, through the selfish purpose of the action, in the other, through the failure to act at all, although the necessity to act is involved in the very talk of duty, for duty without deeds is utterly meaningless.[84]

The actor is not fully recognized by the judge because the judge's criticism does not address the necessity of action itself. The judge has not actually taken a stand in this morally ambiguous situation, offering commentary without committed action. To the actor, the judge thinks only of the theoretically correct course of action, a universal code of ethics which is independent of the exigencies which presented themselves in this particular situation. Yet to the judge, the actor has abdicated morality entirely by presenting his self-oriented perspective as if it had the universal force of an ethical principle.

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[83] *PS* §655. Though Hegel does not make any explicit reference to it here, the idea of a divine inner genius has strong affinities with the ancient Greek *daemon*, the in-dwelling voice which Socrates claims offered him moral guidance. See *Apology*, 31c-d.
[84] *PS* §664.

When the judge and actor remain stuck in this opposition, they may adopt extremely one-sided standpoints to affirm their perspectives. Literary examples which belong to Hegel's own era and milieu afford some rich examples of this moral psychology. When the naïve actor cannot accept the limitations inherent in conscientious action, he may adopt the moral fanaticism displayed by Michael Kohlhass in Heinreich von Kleist's eponymous novella. Just as the person of conscience appears as both a moral genius (a *daemon*) and the very appearance of evil (a demon), Kleist introduces Kohlhass as "one of the most upright, and, at the same time, one of the most terrible men of his day."[85]

An honest horse trader, Kohlhass refuses to capitulate to the petty bullying of the Junker officials who harass him and seize his horses in an act of administrative extortion. In Kleist's fictional account of events in Saxony in the Reformation era, Kohlhass cannot abide the failure of the judicial system to recognize his complaints and so launches a campaign of terror so fervent that even Martin Luther himself, the hero of conscientious objection, encourages him to lay aside his moral crusade. After Kohlhass has destroyed both life and property, he is apprehended and willingly submits to execution when he learns that his mistreated horses have been rehabilitated and returned. In a deeply unsettling exposition of the limits of moral absolutism, Kohlhass finally achieves the finite moral goal to which he has assigned an infinite worth, inhumanely dismissive of any wider considerations.

On the other side of this actor/judge relation, the police inspector Javert in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* idolizes the legal code, enforcing it as if it were an end in itself. He pursues and hounds Jean Valjean for a petty crime despite direct first-hand knowledge of his heroic moral character. When Javert finally abandons his persecution of Valjean, he experiences it as the coming

[85] Heinrich von Kleist, *Michael Kohlhaas* in *The German Classics* vol. IV, ed. by Kuno Francke (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 308.

apart of his entire self-elevated personality, resulting in his suicide. He shudders at the irredeemable contamination of his pure being-for-self which he had believed to be above the corruption of the world:

> To be obliged to confess this to oneself: infallibility is not infallible, there may exist error in the dogma, all has not been said when a code speaks, society is not perfect, authority is complicated with vacillation, a crack is possible in the immutable, judges are but men, the law may err, tribunals may make a mistake! … That which was passing in Javert was the Fampoux of a rectilinear conscience, the derailment of a soul, the crushing of a probity which had been irresistibly launched in a straight line and was breaking against God … God, always within man, and refractory, He, the true conscience, to the false; a prohibition to the spark to die out; an order to the ray to remember the sun; an injunction to the soul to recognize the veritable absolute when confronted with the fictitious absolute, humanity which cannot be lost.[86]

The opposition of the "veritable absolute" to the "false absolute" is, if not directly inspired by Hegel, a striking coincidence.[87] For Hegel, the true infinite is likewise the infinite which appears when the false infinite of moral self-righteousness lays itself aside in the moment of forgiveness. Hugo elaborates this Hegelian point through a negative example of what results when that moment of forgiveness never arrives, when the heart remains hard. While Javert's diligent maintenance of the legal code seems to contrast with the moral grandstanding of Michael Kohlhass, his apparently impersonal judgement is only a guise for the same fanatical self-will.

[86] Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. by Isabel Hapgood (New York: Thomas Crowell & Co., 1887), V.4.1, 2479.
[87] The distinctly Hegelian echo of this distinction between a false and true absolute can be considered in light of the wider influence of Kant and Hegel on Hugo. See Stéphane Haber, "Échos kantiens et hégéliens dans Les Misérables de Victor Hugo," *Le Philosophoire*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2021): 69-99.

TABLE 3. *The initial moral standpoints of the actor and the judge (prior to confession and forgiveness)*

	Initial moral standpoint	**Limitation of the initial moral standpoint**	**False absolutization of this initial moral standpoint**
The actor	A self-evident ethical perception of the good actualized in deeds	The immediate moral awareness of conscience is necessarily limited and requires the critical perspective of another	Self-righteous moral fanaticism unmoderated by any contextualization of the principles involved; destruction wrought in the name of good intentions (Michael Kohlhaas in Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas*)
The judge	The purity of judgement uncontaminated by worldly engagement	Judgement is itself an underdeveloped act of conscience, a commentary without action	Legalistic imposition of the law without moral discernment; insatiable compulsion to punish the actor without recognizing that this punishment is itself an active commission of evil (Javert in Hugo's *Les Miserables*)

Returning to Hegel's allegory, the actor and judge will now attempt to mediate their disagreement through verbal engagement. Since her judgement is only verbal, the judge elevates language into a "superior kind of *reality*."[88] But the actor can also participate in the verbal discourse which the judge has elevated above his deeds. Although conscience first appeared as an unconscious impulse towards the good, it is now called upon to elaborate its perspective in response to judgement. By addressing the judge's criticisms and participating in explicit moral discourse, the actor now recognizes his action in its one-sided particularity. He explains that he was incapable of meeting all the conflicting norms in his moral dilemma and acknowledges the universal principles cited by the judge despite his failure to follow them. He now seeks forgiveness, humbly acknowledging that his actions will never perfectly accomplish the good which he intends.

[88] *PS* §666.

In seeking the judge's forgiveness, the actor now takes a step towards actualizing the mutual recognition of self-consciousness which has remained elusive since the first appearance of self-consciousness in *PS*. By entering into the linguistic interchange which the judge initiated, he

> expects that this mutual recognition will now exist in fact. His confession is not an abasement, a humiliation, a throwing-away [*Wegwerfung*] of himself in relation to the other; for this utterance is not a one-sided affair, which would establish his disparity with the other: on the contrary, he gives himself utterance solely on account of his having seen his identity with the other; he, on his side, gives expression to their common identity in his confession, and gives utterance to it for the reason that language is the existence [*Dasein*] of spirit as an immediate self. He therefore expects that the other will contribute his part to this existence.[89]

The actor admits the inadequacy of his action, but with the expectation that the judge will make a similar admission of the limitations of her own perspective as a judge. Each should acknowledge their own finitude, and yet, at the same time, find it overcome in recognizing the perspective of the other. In a reconciliation which seems miraculous to the self-preserving ego, the actor acknowledges and affirms the judge without forsaking himself. The general precepts upheld in the judgement are recognized as valid even as the actor maintains the moral validity of his action, admitting its shortcomings while also presenting the alternative interpretation of the good to which he was responding. Both perspectives can coexist within the broader ethical perception which arises in this confession. As one limited perspective on the good admits its limitations and recognizes another such perspective, the abstract purity of moral absolutism is overthrown.

The actor further recognizes that his situationally specific action is not fundamentally different from the judge's contextually limited assessment of that action. The actor and judge can forgive each other on the basis of this mutual acceptance of each other's finitude. This self-rejoining of the finite is precisely how Hegel describes the structure of the true infinite, which is the logical reconciliation of the finite with the infinite:

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[89] *PS* §666.

> This is the complete, self-closing movement that has arrived at that which made the beginning; what emerges is *the same* as that *from which the departure was made*, that is, the finite is restored; the latter has therefore *rejoined itself*, in *its beyond* has only *found itself again*.[90]

In the reconciliation the actor initiates, "the finite is restored" through his recognition of himself within another equally finite perspective. He is freely at-home-with-himself-in-the-other even though this process of reconciliation began with the judge implying his moral inferiority. When I encounter criticism of my actions, my absolute self-assurance is broken; my self-evident conviction in the universality of my perspective is shattered. But this criticism is *itself* just another finite act, another partial articulation of the truth of the situation. In being brought to recognize my own limitations, the limitations of the judgement enacted against me are also apparent. I am exposed to a perspective which pretends to exist "beyond" me, but in engaging with this "beyond" I find myself once more. The judge's attempt to set herself above the actor pushes the two apart (as in the bad infinite). But with the realization of their mutual finitude, he only circles right back around and rejoins her (as in the true infinite).

But while the confessor hopes for this reconciliation, his confession still must be reciprocated by the judge. Inspector Javert could not admit such a leveling of interpersonal distinctions without being driven to suicide. An intransigent judge may now criticize the confession of the actor as mere words, disregarding the fact that it was her judgement, a judgement of words without deeds, which elevated purely verbal acts into acts of the highest moral significance.[91] Hegel describes the recalcitrance of the "hard heart" who clings to a spurious moral superiority as the ultimate renunciation of freedom:

> But the confession of the one who is wicked, 'I am so', is not followed by a reciprocal similar confession. This was not what the judging consciousness meant: quite the contrary. It repels this community of nature, and is the hard heart that is

[90] *SL* 21.134, 117.
[91] *PS* §667.

> *for itself*, and which rejects any continuity with the other. As a result, the situation is reversed. The one who made the confession sees himself repulsed, and sees the *other* to be in the wrong when he refuses to let his own *inner* being come forth into the *outer* existence of speech, when the other contrasts the beauty of his own soul with the penitent's wickedness, yet confronts the confession of the penitent with his own stiff-necked unrepentant character, mutely keeping himself to himself and refusing to throw himself away [*wegzuwerfern*] for someone else. … It thereby reveals itself as a consciousness which is forsaken by and which itself denies spirit; for it does not know that spirit, in the absolute certainty of itself, is lord and master over every deed and actuality, and can cast them off [*abwerfen*], and make them as if they had never happened.[92]

Unable to exist in any relationship of reciprocal recognition with those over whom she enacts judgement, the "hard heart" is trapped within the confines of her own moral vanity. She "rejects any continuity with the other" and so she cannot be freely at-home-in-the-world. By forgiving the deed, she could attain the ultimate spiritual freedom of casting deeds aside as if they never happened (*abwerfen*), but the hard heart rejects this because she cannot look past how this would mean throwing *herself* away (*wegwerfen*).

Because she does not accept her own finitude, the guilt of her own actions, she sees no need to offer forgiveness just as readily as she herself requires it. She claims that forgiveness would be a violation of the moral law, but she in fact attempts to preserve her convictions because she regards them as her proud personal possessions. This is why she assumes that the reconciliation which the actor offers would imply a "tossing-away" (*Wegwerfung*) of the self.[93] Allowing the finite act to be set aside would mean disrupting the solidity of her own person. Her commitment to holding fast to her finite judgement denies the reality of becoming: as in Parmenidean ontology, "what is, is" and that is simply the end of the story.

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[92] *PS* §667.
[93] *PS* §666.

By refusing to forgive, the hard heart also weakens the universal ethical substance of conscientious individuals, a substance which exists as the still historically developing sphere of mutual recognition. Substantial freedom is now not merely membership in the polis, but participation in the ongoing life of human freedom which my act of forgiveness carries forward. In rejecting this community, the hard heart injures more than just the good will of the confessor; she also erodes the good faith which others rely upon to exposit their genuine conscience and confess their shortcomings. Her insistence upon her narrow being-for-self breaks the continuity of mutual recognition and so limits everyone's moral freedom.

With the diminishment of the ethical community, everyone must now hold ever more tightly to their immediate self-certainty. It was, after all, the cruel pitilessness of the law which occasioned the fanaticism of Michael Kohlhaas. Just as in the ancient Greek social substance, every individual initiative reverberates through the whole of society. As a form of mutual recognition, forgiveness compounds upon itself. When one person is freed from their guilt, they extend the recognition they have received to others over whom they stand in judgement. But when the continuity of the ethical community is broken, it is instead replaced by an increasingly strident, unresponsive moral fanaticism.

In the concluding paragraph of the section on spirit in *PS*, Hegel lays out how the moment of forgiveness is the appearance of the logic of conceptual subjectivity, in which the "pure continuity of the universal" and the "absolute discreteness" of the individual are reconciled.[94] Prior to their reconciliation, the egos of the actor and judge are absolutely discrete and deny the truth of their communion, their continuity. Restated in the three moments of the concept, the individuals cannot recognize their universal commonality because they hold fast to their interpretations of a

[94] *PS* §671.

particular moral situation. When forgiveness does occur, however, the imperfect deed and the uninformed judgement are allowed to pass away as the actor and judge break through this ultimate limitation and find themselves in each other:

> The reconciling *Yea*, in which the two 'I's let go their antithetical *existence* [*Dasein*], is the existence of the 'I' 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.[95]

The concrete existence (*Dasein*) of spirit as the individual ego has given way to an affirmation of a life of spirit which is greater than these finite individualities, a spirit which is now "manifested" in the complete recognition of the self in the other — the spiritual community which is itself the presence of the divine. This presence is described in *SL* as the "thereness" of the true infinite, the "affirmation of *existence*" which was lacking in the bad infinite, whose existence could only be negatively described as being "beyond" all finitude.[96] The phenomenon of forgiveness is the concrete appearance of what has been presented in Christian theology as the holy mystery of the Trinity, the living presence of the universal in finite beings, the infinite which is "there" in the finite.[97] In the words of the Gospel, wherever two or more are gathered in the spirit of forgiveness, which is to say, where they recognize each other as individuals of conscience, God is present in the flesh.[98]

The transcendence of the infinite is made present and actual in this ecstatic experience of spiritual release and renewal, the most profound freedom, a freedom which is no longer merely a

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[95] *PS* §671.
[96] *SL* 21.136, 118-119. Giovanni's translation of "thereness" has the virtue of bringing out the contrast between the "there" of determinate existence and the "beyond" of the abstract infinite.
[97] Hegel discusses the concept as the trinity at *LL* §160, 177.
[98] Matt. 18:20. While the inspiration for Hegel's theory of forgiveness clearly lies in Christian theology, forgiveness is not solely a Christian theme. Consider, for instance, the profound moment of forgiveness which concludes the *Iliad*. Achilles returns Hector's body to Priam who, in turn, kisses his hands. Perhaps the most obstinately self-willed hero in all Greek literature experiences the reciprocity of mutual recognition when Priam asks that he think of his own father. See *Iliad* 24.468-596.

property of the ego but is rather a freedom from the finitude of the ego itself. The modern subject who freed himself from external authority only finds himself burdened and trapped by the weight of his own autonomy, as the faculty of free will finds itself inevitably unable to meet every moral obligation. This is the psychological dilemma of the person who condemns all action as irredeemably partial, one who has fled from the necessity of action. This "beautiful soul," as Hegel calls them, cannot forgive themselves and so cannot act.[99] Without forgiveness, the promise of infinite freedom becomes the burden of infinite guilt. This burden can only be lifted by recognizing and embracing the finitude of our moral autonomy.

Forgiveness also solidifies the existence of the ethical community by affirming the membership of the one who has received forgiveness. I am not, as I was in Greek ethical life, an accident to be eliminated if I fail to conform to the universal law. Forgiveness acknowledges and dignifies my deeds within their context of action but does not absolutize them as an eternal, indelible mark on my character. With the finite deed now being recognized in its finitude and so being allowed to perish, I am now free to act while attending to the moral ambiguity of my situation rather than vainly concerning myself with my own moral purity.

Yet since the "reconciling Yea" is a shout of joyful affirmation, to forgive is not simply to repudiate the finite offence. It is a double negation — a negation of the deed as well as of our judgement against it — which yields a positive recognition of that to which we are opposed. The finite deed and judgement no longer exist as causes of blame and guilt, but this is not to say that their existence has somehow been willed away entirely. They have only disappeared because they have been dignified in their finitude, given their due measure but not elevated into a false infinitude. Forgiveness allows us to be freely at-home-with-ourselves because it requires that we

[99] *PS* §658.

stand alongside the evil we will inevitably encounter and see some of it in ourselves, turning a frightful world of moral monsters into one we can hopefully and optimistically engage.

Like the rest of his ethical theory, Hegel offers no practical account of forgiveness. The reason for this should be readily apparent from the course of its development in *PS*. Just as with conscience, we cannot formalize the criteria through which forgiveness appears in human experience. To say when and how forgiveness should be offered would rob it of its essential spontaneity. It must be offered *freely*. The forgetfulness of the deed which accompanies forgiveness cannot be willed any more than I can will myself to forget an unpleasant memory. We cannot simply choose to forgive, but rather we seek and offer forgiveness as the natural outgrowth of our wider moral awareness. It is not any specific act of forgiveness which indicates a morally developed person, but rather an appreciation for the finitude of human action and judgement which opens one up to its possibility.

In declining to offer such a practical ethical theory, Hegel sets no prior limitations on our interpretation of the future good. As Hyppolite writes:

> The Christian dialectic of forgiveness of sins is the symbolic representation of a tragic philosophy of history in which the finitude of acting spirit is always converted within the ascending movement of spirit, in which the past awaits its meaning from the future. It is in this *Aufhebung* that spirit grasps itself as absolute, not in consciousness of sin but in consciousness of pardon for sins.[100]

The moral genius can freely step outside the morality of her own time and place only because she has faith that the historical community of conscience will receive her actions in a spirit of forgiveness. The sheer arrogance of moral autarchy, of taking morality entirely into one's own hands, is, at the same time, the radical humility of realizing the particularity of one's actions. We therefore forsake any claim to a self-important canon of ethical injunctions, which would be

[100] Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 495.

nothing other than a set of judgements issued in advance, from outside of the substantial discourse of the living community of conscience. Now freed from false moralizing, we are fully at home with our imperfect selves and our imperfect fellows. The absolute has appeared as absolution.[101]

TABLE 4. *The mutual recognition of the actor and the judge (in confession and forgiveness)*

	confesses…	**forgives…**	**learns…**
The actor	the fallibility of his attempt to actualize the good in a morally ambiguous situation.	the moral vanity of the judge, knowing his own "moral genius" to be equally capable of self-righteousness.	to formally express his self-certain moral intuitions to others so that they may be tested and clarified in moral discourse.
The judge	the need for her abstract precepts to acquire a concrete existence in imperfect ethical action.	the imperfect deeds of the actor, knowing her own (merely verbal) act of judgement to be *itself* partial and incomplete.	to address her criticisms to another person of conscience as their moral equal, engaging in ethical dialogue rather than one-sided critique.

5.2.2 The language of conscience and the ethical community

The mutual recognition which occurs in forgiveness forms the basis of the ethical community which Hegel also describes in *PS* during his treatment of conscience and forgiveness. This ethical community builds upon the egalitarianism which accompanied the purification of the individual subject in modernity. The modern subject cleared away the distinctions of class and rank which were also taken to be indications of moral authority, so that the conscientious actor is a member of the "pure universal, the selfhood of all" in which "conscience stands directly in a relation of equality with every self-consciousness."[102] The sphere of universality which was

[101] The etymological coincidence closely follows Hegel's own thinking. From the Latin verb "to loosen from" (*ab-solvere*), the absolute is that which has been loosened from all restrictions and conditions, just as absolution is a release from the finitude of the deed.
[102] *PS* §647.

established as the political system of Enlightenment liberalism is now recognized and adopted in the moral freedom of conscience.

Freedom appears alongside equality in this way because freedom necessarily universalizes itself. Understanding freedom as being-at-home-with-oneself-in-the-other is not just a Hegelian idiosyncrasy, but something which can be observed in the gradual progress of individual freedom throughout modernity. Whenever I must oppose my freedom to another's oppression, I am myself limited whenever I engage their world. When I encounter an unfree society, I cannot openly exchange ideas and resources. Instead of being-at-home, I can only present myself surreptitiously as a co-conspirator.

The freedom of one therefore wills the freedom of all. While the political systems of modern life bring about this universal equality only imperfectly, it already exists as the moral community of conscience. There can be no inherent hierarchy in a world of conscientious autarchy. There is no longer any "beyond" to raise up some individuals over others as having inherently greater moral worth. Everyone has been freed to enact their own conviction, but this apparent lordship is the equality of self-certain individuals.

A moral community comprised of equals in conscience, can, however, become self-assured of its own collective righteousness. Hegel sarcastically describes this self-congratulatory community as one which continually engages in "the mutual assurance of [its] conscientiousness, good intentions, the rejoicing over this mutual purity."[103] In this crude manifestation, the substantiality of the moral community is reduced to a homogeneity without the inner distinction of moral disagreement. Without the living tension of inner difference, it becomes empty and sterile. Hegel describes the affected self-scrutiny of this community as merely performative, a "created

[103] *PS* §656.

world" formed by speech which "it has immediately heard and only the echo of which returns to it."[104] Since the community "lacks the power to externalize itself [and] to endure mere being," it only attains substantiality through acts of speech which communicate what is already known, the moral consensus which does not engage individual conscience but only assuages it. Since it is already certain of itself as wholly righteous, it rejects any potentially compromising engagements. Its "sinners" are shunned and so the community is deprived of the benefits of moral discourse.

The true ethical community faces up to the partiality of moral perspectives and therefore allows for meaningful moral discourse. The challenges involved in establishing this type of communication have already been foreshadowed in *PS*. Just as was the case in the conflict between the "noble" and "ignoble" attitudes earlier (see 4.2.1 above), our witness to the deeds of conscience is at first always plagued by an uncertainty about ethical motivation. When the conscientious actor acts, their deeds and their words are insufficient to wholly disclose their true inner motivation. They may claim that they are acting from ethical duty and not from ulterior motives, but the equally conscientious judge of this act is skeptical of this claim because she knows that conscience is never bound to any specific duty.[105]

To overcome this suspicion, the ethical community will have to more carefully consider how it uses language, which Hegel describes here as the "*Dasein* of spirit."[106] We have now observed Hegel's repeated use of the formula "x is the *Dasein* of y" at several key moments in his philosophy: the system of right is the *Dasein* of free will; willful action is the *Dasein* of thought; the "I" is the *Dasein* of conceptuality.[107] In each case, an ideal, unreal content appears within the real limitations of finite existence (*Dasein*).

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[104] *PS* §658.
[105] *PS* §548.
[106] *PS* §552.
[107] *PR* §29; *PR* §4; *SL* 12.17, 514.

To say that language is the *Dasein* of spirit, then, is to say that it is the concrete existence of spirit in the finite world. In acquiring a language, we are inducted into the universally shared standards of a linguistic community and thereby become capable of objectifying the particular content of our individual subjective reality. Language allows us to mediate between our inner world and other people's objective perception and therefore is the vessel through which spirit becomes at-home-in-the-world. But as the problem of ambiguity about motivations indicates, the mediation between finite verbal expressions and infinite spirit is always imperfect. Spirit is not merely its *Dasein*; even if I don't intend deception, my words may not truly convey my inner thoughts.

Language has, of course, existed for spirit since the very start of its history, but without adequately expressing the mutual recognition to which the ethical community aspires. The distrust which hinders the development of the ethical community demands that we adopt a new way of speaking in which we unreservedly acknowledge each other as conscientious beings. The language of ethical life was only that of "simple command and complaint," a one-sided injunction against which the individual could only register a futile protest, "shedding a tear about necessity" in the face of an inexorable fate.[108] In the emerging modern world, the individual found their own voice, but only as the ignoble consciousness whose individualistic language of criticism rejects another's claim of conscience as mere hypocrisy.[109]

The language of conscience, on the other hand, "is the *self that knows itself as essential being*," a "universal self-consciousness… free from the *specific action* that merely is."[110] Conscience most fully manifests the significance of language for spirit, since language ceases to

[108] *PS* §653.
[109] *PS* §653.
[110] *PS* §653.

be a tool used to communicate a separate content (as in an oracle, for instance, which communicates the otherwise unknown will of Apollo). Conscience is not simply conveyed through language but *itself* comes into being through the very act of moral communication; its content is inseparable from its form of linguistic expression.

For this reason, the language of conscience is not concerned with "the action as an existence" but with its *own attitude* towards that action, its "*conviction* that it is a duty."[111] This language focuses our attention not just on the content of the words spoken, but also on the personality who employs this language. In speaking conscientiously, I am expressing not only my interpretation of some moral dilemma, but also the concrete existence (*Dasein*) of my free individuality. The suspicion about my inner motivations is obviated because my language no longer mediates between inner thoughts and outer actions. The focus of language shifts from merely rationalizing my deeds to disclosing my own very self— here I stand, I can do no other.

In the ethical community, this expression of conscientious conviction is then received by another person of conscience, who, in turn, manifests her own moral individuality in reply. The spirit of forgiveness explored in the allegory of judgement overcomes the cynical suspicion which each initially adopts towards the other's claims of conscience. In a mutual recognition of moral authenticity, each person comes to accept that they can only exposit their conscientious beliefs insofar as they receive other such claims of moral conviction in good faith.

Participants in this community recognize each other as holding this attitude of conviction, and therefore speak to each other in such a way which recognizes and cultivates their freedom as moral agents. The independence and dependence of self-consciousness articulated earlier in *PS* now appears within the ethical community. Nobody can compel another's free moral conduct, and

[111] *PS* §653.

yet the capacity for moral self-determination only exists insofar as alternative perspectives broaden the ethical worldview. A “freedom” insulated from any criticism remains a mere reflex.

In this exchange, the moral autonomy of Kantian ethics is not overturned but given a living framework. In encountering the other, conscience remains only accountable to itself, but it must also recognize that the same is true for everyone else as well. From this standpoint of mutual moral autarchy, moral dialogue only remains meaningful insofar as each participant is prepared to consider the particularity of the moral question at hand. Universal formulae which cannot accommodate individual interpretation will no longer work. Conscience, whose self-certainty is akin to sense-perception, lays forth its moral reasoning like an art critic walking through the salient details of a painting. The person of conscience says, "Over here, in this situation, I acted from this interpretation of these particular circumstances and convictions," and receives a similar reply in turn, one which points out the particularities of the situation overlooked in their account.

Within the spirit of forgiving trust which grounds the ethical community, the ineffable subjective process of ethical perception now receives a substantial articulation in which it is criticized, amended, and ultimately expanded. The ethical community in which moral freedom has attained a concrete existence is also the community which develops moral self-consciousness and realizes the third sense of Hegelian freedom introduced above at 1.4.

5.3 The Completion of Self-Consciousness in the Substantial Subject

Although it has already been indicated in 5.1 and 5.2, in this subchapter I will briefly further highlight how this substantial subject represents the final development of self-consciousness. In 5.3.1, I will consider how the act of forgiveness emerges from the self-consciousness of one’s own

finitude. In section 5.3.2, I will describe why Hegel thinks of the absolute idea as having a self-conscious personality.

5.3.1 Forgiveness as the self-consciousness of finitude

The self-awareness of one's own finitude in the act of forgiveness can also be understood as an especially significant form of self-consciousness. Forgiveness requires an awareness of the self as being limited in its perspective (as a definite, substantial object) yet also as being capable of surmounting this limitation through its communion with the other (as a subject, or, more precisely, as intersubjectivity). In realizing the fallibility of my moral judgement, I submit my self-consciousness to another as an object of inspection. In this process, I also become other to that previous self, looking back upon it from a new perspective. Moral self-awareness arises through this circular self-return of self-consciousness. My inner conviction is externally exposited through moral discourse so that my moral position now becomes the object of my own awareness.

There is, accordingly, a subtle progression in the standpoints of consciousness which emerge in Hegel's allegory of judgement in *PS*. When the allegory commences, the actor's conviction of conscience is grounded in his "unconscious natural being."[112] The reception and critique of the act by the judge draws out the moral presuppositions embedded within this immediate conviction. The act is now an object of consciousness for the judge, who "maintains an attitude of *passive* apprehension."[113] The judge acts as if the good can be determined by a simple act of observation, an external awareness which is "merely one of judgement."[114] Judgement is a

[112] *PS* §643.
[113] *PS* §664.
[114] *PS* §664.

form of consciousness with everything that implies (recalling the distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness discussed above at 1.4.1).

Although the judge believes herself to have a more objective perspective on the moral situation than the actor, she is only pretending to have discursive knowledge of what is, in truth, an immediate perception. The act of judgement is only one step removed from the natural self-certainty of the actor. The actor looks within for immediate moral knowledge, whereas the judge looks outside of herself (to presupposed moral principles) to assess the act with equal immediacy.

Yet through the external elaboration of moral discourse, conscience and judgement become "self-conscious" and "existent" (*daseiende*).[115] Each becomes objective to themselves through the other and therefore acquires a real, determinate existence. The unconscious, natural conscience reflects upon and gives an account of itself, recognizing the fallibility of its immediate reaction. The judgement which has been pronounced against the actor demands a reply which shapes the content of his conviction into the determinate form of moral reasoning.

The judge, on the other hand, has reduced her self-consciousness to the mere consciousness of a formal moral principle. Her judgement only protests about what "ought" to be and is therefore inadequate to the universality to which it aspires.[116] So long as it remains only the object of moral judgement, the actor's deed has its own stubborn persistence which renders the judgement into a mere abstraction. The deed cannot be willed away simply by judging that it should not be so. Yet the deed is erased if the judge responds to the actor's confession and self-consciously recognizes the limitations of her perspective. Her judgment against the deed only attains a concrete existence when she offers the actor forgiveness.

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[115] *PS* §669.
[116] See the discussion of "the ought" at 4.1.2 above.

Taken as a whole, this entire complex of ways in which the actor and judge reciprocally come to know themselves through each other yields the ultimate truth of their mutual recognition — the truth that the actor is *himself* a judge, and that the judge is *herself* an actor. Looking forward, each will, at some point, be in the position of the other, either seeking or being petitioned for forgiveness. Our freedom means that we always advance beyond ourselves, that there is always a separation between the self which we have left behind as an object of self-contemplation and the self which renews itself in action, the self as subjective intention**.**

When we truly know ourselves, we know that this knowledge is not static, that self-knowledge is the knowledge of a being whose situation will change. In my unavoidable advance, I risk flying off and losing myself in self-righteousness unless I recognize my conviction and judgement as *themselves* belonging to this world of becoming, grounding them within the self-rejuvenating soil of forgiveness.

5.3.2 The absolute idea as self-conscious personality

At the end of *SL*, Hegel makes it clear in what sense the concept is self-conscious (i.e., as "conceptual subjectivity"). He describes the absolute idea as having a "personality":

> The concept is not only *soul*, but free subjective concept that exists for itself [*für sich*] and therefore has *personality* — the practical objective concept that is determined in and for itself and is as person impenetrable, atomic subjectivity — but which is not, just the same, exclusive singularity; it is rather explicitly universality and cognition, and in its other has its own objectivity for its subject matter.[117]

While Hegel does not extensively discuss precisely what he means by personality, its distinction from "soul" in this passage shows how it represents a fuller development of self-consciousness.

[117] *SL* 12.236, 735.

The absolute idea, as personality, is the blossoming of individuality which has become "for itself," i.e., fully self-conscious. As Hegel says in *SL*, "the individual" (*das Einzelne*), the moment of the concept which freely mediates between the universal and particular (see 3.1.4 above), "is the principle of individuality and personality."[118] The absolute idea forms the incidental developments in the history of thought into "universality and cognition" — it is the completion of the individual moment of the concept conceived of as a person who self-consciously reflects upon her experiences to tell her life story.

Since self-conscious subjectivity mediates between the particular and the universal in this way, the freedom of the absolute idea — speculative freedom — is the freedom of the individual personality in its particular and universal aspect. As Hegel says earlier in *SL* in his discussion of "the idea of the good," "self-determination is essentially *particularization*."[119] As true self-determination, the freedom of speculative thinking is the embodiment of thought within a particular time and place in history. Just as a free personality requires a body to exercise her freedom, thought is only self-*determining* insofar as it exists within real, *determinate* conditions. As Hegel says in the Preface to *PR*, every philosopher is a "*child of his time*," and so every philosophy is "*its own time comprehended in thoughts*."[120] Philosophical self-consciousness is possible only through thinking's worldly self-objectification. In seeing how ideas have already shaped the world around me, I attain a perspective from which to investigate thinking itself.

For this reason, the socio-political structures of objective spirit form the ongoing life of the absolute idea. In the Introduction to *LHP*, Hegel says that "free, philosophic thought has this direct connection with practical freedom" because it can only arise where "the subject has attained the

[118] *SL* 12.49, 547.
[119] *SL* 12.231, 730.
[120] *PR*, Preface, 21.

consciousness of personality."[121] The personification of the absolute idea is not merely a loose metaphor, since philosophy appears in history where the freedom of the individual personality is recognized and "free institutions are formed."[122] For Hegel, the history of philosophy is also the history of individuality. For example, the institutions of the Greek polis and the Roman Empire produced different ways of being an individual which were, in turn, expressed in the history of philosophy (see 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). The inner purpose of philosophical comprehension (discussed above at 5.1.1) is also the living purpose of understanding the ideas which govern one's own world.

But the personality of the absolute idea is not simply its worldliness. It proceeds from its immanent situation to the "universality and cognition" of abstract thinking.[123] Later in *SL*, Hegel presents the imposing claim that the universal method attained by the absolute idea is "the absolutely infinite force to which no object … may present itself as something external."[124] Despite its origins in the contingency of historical experience, the absolute idea has an inescapable universality: "nothing is conceived and known in its truth unless *completely subjugated to the method*."[125] In this description, the substantial necessity of the absolute idea (which is both "*soul and substance*") seems to erase the free personality of the thinking individual,[126] suggesting the interpretation of Hegel as an abstract metaphysician who drowns out the living particularity of thought.

But this claim seems much less lofty when we recall that the systematicity of the absolute idea is also simply the integrity of a personality, a simplicity more evident in the personal philosophical vocation of Socrates than in modern *Wissenschaft*. As Socrates explains in the

[121] *LHP* I, 95.
[122] *LHP* I, 95.
[123] *SL* 12.236, 735.
[124] *SL* 12.238, 737.
[125] *SL* 12.238, 737.
[126] *SL* 12.238, 737.

Platonic dialogue *Gorgias*, self-conscious thought is heautonomous in the sense that it imposes the discipline of systematic self-consistency upon itself:

> I think it's better to have my lyre or a chorus that I might lead out of tune and dissonant, and have the vast majority of men disagree with me and contradict me, than to be out of harmony with myself, to contradict myself, though I'm only one person.[127]

As in Socrates' more personal expression of the same idea, the "absolutely infinite force" of Hegel's philosophical method proceeds from the inner necessity of intellectual self-coherence. Rather than separating ourselves from the method as if it imposed an external necessity on thought, we are meant to approach it from within. As thinking individuals, we *are* the absolute idea. As a unified personality, I *am* a method of thought. Even if I never explicitly state my method, it is equivalent to my living desire to have a coherent account of the world and avoid suffering from cognitive dissonance. This is a personal need just as much as a theoretical requirement.

Simply by thinking about the world and reflecting on my thoughts with some degree of self-awareness, I am already participating in the exulted activity Hegel describes as "reason's highest and sole impulse to find and recognize *itself through itself in all things*."[128] The absolute idea calls for the self-recognition of personality within personality. I, as an individual thinker, recognize how my own thoughts develop and cohere in such a way that reflects the seemingly personal "attitudes," "developments," "concerns," and "tendencies" of the history of philosophy. The universality of my own reason is manifest in history as if it were a personal interlocuter.

The philosophical method which Hegel has discerned from the developments of history is therefore not some sort of special philosophical supplement. It is simply the most abstract, universal expression of personal self-consistency. Regardless of what judgement we pronounce on

[127] *Gorgias* 482b-c.
[128] *SL* 12.238, 737.

each moment of the Hegelian system, his general attempt at systematicity should not be interpreted as impersonal when it is directly described as the self-relation of personal self-consciousness. Universality belongs to the "I" just as much as particularity.

Likewise, universalization is just as much required for true self-determination as particularization. Systematicity is the "freedom of the whole" which appears in the absolute method as thinking's own self-coherence.[129] The relationship between self-determination and intellectual self-consistency can be seen from directly within personal experience. When my understanding of the world is fragmentary and disconnected from itself, my own thoughts are unclear to me. When I have not satisfied my own inner need for comprehension, I am not at home with myself, I am only partially, frustratingly self-conscious — I am not free.

[129] *EL* §14.

VI. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

I began by saying that Hegel's account of freedom is as diffuse as it is difficult. Throughout this dissertation, I have unpacked several of the complexities of Hegelian freedom and thereby articulated his general understanding of this concept. These aspects of Hegelian freedom are underappreciated in the current scholarship, which mostly focuses on his account of practical freedom in *PR*:

1. Hegel attempts to complete the modern project of freedom by demonstrating what is required for true self-determination. The basic structures of true self-determination can be observed both in Hegel's logical works (as "speculative freedom") as well as in the history of self-consciousness in *PS*. True self-determination involves
    a. an understanding of freedom not as a state of being unaffected by external necessities, but rather as having an "inner necessity."
    b. an understanding of freedom not as a removal from the external world, but rather as a reconciliation with it — as "being-at-home-with-oneself" (*Beisichselbstsein*).
    c. an understanding of freedom as the development of self-consciousness through which this inner necessity and "being-at-home" are fully actualized.
2. These three senses of freedom are intimately connected to the Hegelian definition of the absolute as "both substance and subject" since
    a. inner necessity involves the recognition of the substantiality of free subjectivity.
    b. "being-at-home" involves the incorporation of the individual subject into the substantiality of ethical life.
    c. self-consciousness is the process by which the subject becomes substantial to herself as the object of her own awareness.

3. Hegel's theory of freedom emerges from his close engagement with Spinoza and Fichte, whom he takes to articulate the meaning of substance and subject respectively. The progression of self-consciousness in history is modernity's gradual recognition of the subjective principle implicit in ancient substantiality, a recognition first made incompletely and unsystematically by Aristotle.
4. The three senses of freedom appear in three logical-historical moments: substance (antiquity), the pure subject (the development of modernity), and the substantial subject (the completion of modernity).

   Table 5 lays out this course of development:

TABLE 5. *The development of freedom in substance, the pure subject, and the substantial subject*

	inner necessity …	**being-at-home-with-oneself (*Beisichselbstsein*) …**	**the development of self-consciousness …**
In substance,	first appears as the substantial self-relation of the ancient Greek polis.	first appears in the life of the polis as the freedom of membership.	first appears with the fracture of the social substance as it is exemplified in Greek tragedy.
In the pure subject,	develops through the discovery of inner subjective space as a realm of infinite possibility.	develops through the individual who recognizes herself as universal and so actively changes the world in accordance with reason.	develops through the Roman, medieval, and early modern eras into the pure self-consciousness of the self as self.
In the substantial subject,	is fully actualized in the phenomenon of conscience and the satisfaction of philosophical comprehension.	is fully actualized in the phenomenon of forgiveness, which manifests the circular self-return of the true infinite.	is fully actualized in the self-conscious systematicity of modern philosophy.

5. These logical-historical moments each have a different interpretation of the three parts of the syllogism: the universal, the particular, and the individual. In the movement from antiquity to modernity, universality loses its social dimension and is relocated within individual self-consciousness, while particularity is increasingly eliminated in abstract, universal forms of thought. Having first emerged in the Greek polis, individuality develops alongside the history of freedom.

   Table 6 completes the course of development described above in Table 2 by adding in the substantial subject:

TABLE 6. *Substantiality, pure subjectivity, and substantial subjectivity as the universal, particular, and individual*

	the universal is…	**the particular is…**	**the individual is…**
In the logic of substance,	the activity of form (*Formtätigkeit*).	the accidental content shaped by the universal activity of form.	only an implicit mediator between the universal and particular.
In the appearance of substance,	the whole of ethical life, or the "social substance."	the specific social roles contained within ethical life.	the nascent self-knowledge of the tragic protagonist which appears with the breakdown of ethical life.
In the logic of the pure subject,	the absolute negativity of the "I"; its capacity for pure abstraction.	abstracted away entirely.	the infinite subjective will which opposes itself to objective, finite existence.
In the appearance of the pure subject,	the certainty of the self as the universal established in the Enlightenment.	destroyed in the individual's attempt to establish himself as the universal.	the critical modern personality looking to reform society through his own "pure insight."
In the logic of the substantial subject,	the absolute method of the absolute idea.	the historical background of the philosophical tradition.	the personality of the absolute idea.
In the appearance of the substantial subject,	the conscientious community of ethical discourse.	the specific situation of ethical concern in which definite action is required.	the moral agent who interprets ethical questions in a spirit of forgiveness.

The result of this reading of Hegel is an account of human freedom which has implications not just for our political institutions, but also for the very way we live. Although freedom depends upon substantial social structures which have withered away in modernity, Hegel does not suggest a return to the *ancien régime*. Modern freedom is an achievement of self-consciousness in which the law, which was previously externally imposed, is now located within the hearts and minds of autonomous individuals. Yet this radical self-determination can only exist through the mutual recognition of our individuality within an ethical community, and this community in turn depends upon a process of education or formation (*Bildung*) which allows us to meaningfully present and receive claims of conscience.

Such an education additionally demonstrates how thought itself is the paradigm of all freedom, since thinking is the very process in which finite, particular objects of inquiry are liberated from the limitations of their immediate manifestations and so attain universal significance. The self-aware, thoughtful appreciation of the finitude of our own momentary perspective allows us to cultivate the spirit of self-forgiveness necessary for philosophical self-examination. This intellectual standpoint is, in turn, the education of the person which enables their participation in a substantially free community. While a society may superficially retain the freedom of choice even as it falls into the unthinking fixation of fanaticism, in such a case the subject has been removed from her substance — the roots have been severed from the tree.

While this dissertation has focused primarily on giving an account of the speculative freedom which has been lacking in the literature, it should not be interpreted as a rejection of Hegel's social and political philosophy. In fact, understanding this ontology of selfhood is critical to adapting and applying Hegel's philosophy in building the institutions of the future. Appreciating Hegel's social philosophy at its deepest roots demands that we appreciate how modern institutions

can allow for the true self-determination of the individual by recognizing them as a substantial subject — as a concrete person whose individual choices proceed from a particular situation which should be recognized within universal social structures. I submit this dissertation as the theory of this kind of substantial freedom, a theory which I hope will be considered, applied, and refined in living practice.

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