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The Logic of Negation and Its Application

After his encounter with Hölderlin's nascent system, Hegel developed his conception of a higher form of moral behavior. His first system of 1800 reflected the structure underlying this form, which he had isolated and generalized. Its highest concept is the notion of "life." In his analysis, Hegel conceives of life as a structure of two elements: the first is a self-referential totality that disallows any particular element that is not fully incorporated into it; the second both requires and, according to Hegel, generates individual lives. These elements exclude one another, but they are also internally organized wholes. And they are capable of reciprocal surrender to each other. The moral aspect is this reciprocal surrendering in which individual lives make exchanges and amalgamations.

The process of life occurs *in* the generation of the individuals and the withdrawal of life from them. Outside of individual living beings, there is no life. Growth and self-preservation, amalgamation and death, occur within individual living beings.

Hegel states explicitly that this universal world process is beyond the capacity of the understanding of reason. The outcome of thinking further about the method of philosophy and about the implications of criticizing the potentialities of rational discourse, however, was the draft of a new first philosophy. In Hegel's view, this new philosophy would be able to construct, and to interpret rationally, the structure and the phenomena that he had previously called "life."

For this to be possible, we would have to find a formal procedure that permits the derivation of a structure that corresponds to what Hegel had described as life. According to the prevailing ideal of what a philosophical system should be, Hegel would have to found this procedure on one single

term.[1] In turn, Hegel's 'term' would have to fulfill three conditions: (1) it would have to be acceptable as a basic term of rational discourse; (2) it would have to be the sole basis for building comprehensive logical structures; and (3) its issue in a logical structure would have to incorporate (a) complete self-reference, and (b) the relationship between opposites so that they might, in some theoretical sense, amalgamate. Complete self-reference and the relation between independent (although opposed and amalgamating) individuals *is* the basic structure of life.

Hegel believes that the term that can fulfill these conditions is "negation." In whatever distinctive way he might have us look at it, negation will nevertheless carry an exceeding weight in the construction of a philosophical system. The way in which Hegel would use negation bears only remote resemblance to its role in truth-functional logic. For instance, Hegel wants negation to be independent from acts such as asserting or disasserting, and from propositions and the form of propositions in general. He also wants it to be the *only* basic function, despite its requirement, after a few steps, of introducing at least one more. I cannot here go into the gravity of the problems that such a view of negation raises. Needless to say, the gravity is as momentous as the problems are numerous.

I want, instead, to present the 'key' to Hegel's *Logic* in the same intuitive way that he presented his system. I think we are bound to proceed in this way, because Hegel never developed a second-order discourse that could interpret what he was doing. I believe that without the key I am offering to you, the system remains ultimately inaccessible. Indeed, even if we proceed in this intuitive sense that Hegel followed, we cannot move within the system without this key. With it, however, it is possible to make movements, even though we do not fully understand them. If we had to understand every logical movement in Hegel before doing it, no thinking would be possible.

Let us take our beginnings with negation alone. In this sense, negation is isolated, and so *autonomous* negation. Starting only with negation means having *nothing but negation.* Now in order to have nothing but negation, we need negation more than once. For, in Hegel's view, negation is *relational* in the sense that there must be something it negates. But inasmuch as there is nothing that negation could possibly negate—owing to the assumption that we have *only* negation—negation can only negate *itself.* Ac-

1. See the Reinhold and Fichte discussion in Lectures 5, 8, and esp. 14.

cordingly, *autonomous* negation can only be a negation *of negation.* This means that autonomous negation is originally self-referential: in order to have only negation, we have to have negation twice.

We come now to a typical Hegelian step: to have negation as *self*-referring means to have even *more* than what we have so far said. Thus far, we have said that negation is relational. The relation of negation to itself, therefore, is not a stable, static, logical state. It becomes dynamical to negate negation, which means to arrive at the logical state of having no negation at all. This amounts to saying that the negation of negation is *not* having negation. So understood, autonomous negation apparently eliminates itself at the outset.

Insofar as we have before us only the term "negation," we can characterize it as being nothing other than the state that is opposed to the state in which there is negation. We do *not* have, first, some particular proposition, and subsequent to this the negation of it, and, then, a further negation of the negation that might give us back the proposition. We have only a state that is opposed to the state in which there is negation. We are obliged, therefore, to register the following result: if we have *only* negation, which necessarily means *negated* negation, then we have also the opposite of negation.

In consequence of this, we have the relationship of *two opposites*—the state of negation from which we began and the state of not having negation. This is the place where Hegel introduces a second structure. He tries to describe opposition as a structure between these two states whose relation is *determinateness.* Hence, the one is what the other is not, and vice versa.

We can readily observe that it is possible to characterize the opposing state to negation only in negative terms. As we said, it is a state in which we have *no* negation. The meaning of "no" here depends on what negation is and enriches its meaning at the same time. This is a peculiar move requiring extensive discussion, which I cannot at present pursue. The upshot, however, is that this state of not having negation depends on the opposite state of the *not* not being had of negation in a strong sense. It is the equivalent of saying that it is *in itself* negative. As such, this state is not really the *exclusion* of the opposite state that we supposed it to be, on the grounds that an autonomous negation simply eliminates itself.

After Hegel makes this move, another question naturally appears, requiring another move: to what is the state that is the result of the self-

referring negation opposed? We have nearly given the answer: the state of not having negation is opposed to the state of having negation. *This* state—that is opposed to the state of *having* negation—*also* turns out to be negative, so what is opposed to 'having negation' is also a negative term. We are led unavoidably to the conclusion that the state that is opposed to negation is *with* the state to which it is opposed in the relationship of self-reference. Therefore, we are back at the very beginning. The outcome of the self-elimination of negation is the self-reference of negation.[2]

In order to *achieve* this outcome, however, we have to *move through* the relationship of determinateness. This means moving through the opposition between the state that was described as *not* having negation and the state of *having* negation. This movement turns out to be negation *again* in self-reference, although this negation is now built on determinateness.

This is the result toward which Hegel has been aiming. He wants to construct self-reference *and determinateness* as direct implications of one elementary, independent, and autonomous term: negation. Whether or not we can state such a meaning of negation is the eternal question that haunts the possible soundness of Hegel's position.

Such is the key to the *Logic.* We cannot find it in the *Logic* itself. We catch glimpses of it in the chapter on "Reflection" at the beginning of the "Logic of Essence." But the basic operation that I have presented here is not coextensive with the entire *Science of Logic.* Instead, it is the core and the key.

We might ask, "How could the *Logic,* which seems to be an entirely closed structure, contain more than this key?" Again, we might inquire "What is the sense in which this simple key—fallacious or not—can reconstruct and enrich the categories of all traditional philosophical theories?" We have to answer these questions in two steps, in accord with the fact that the *Science of Logic* has one discourse that precedes our treatment of negation and another that follows it. Both of these discourses are enormous, comprising many moves.[3]

Let me turn, first, to the discourse that precedes autonomous negation. Hegel does not think of his *Logic* as a deliberately introduced *construction* that permits a rational reconstruction of the structures of moral consciousness and of what he calls "life." The *Logic* is not a theory in the sense

2. Dieter Henrich, "Formen der Negation in Hegels Logik," *Hegel-Jahrbuch* 1974 (Köln, 1975): 245–256.

3. Dieter Henrich, "Hegels Logik der Reflexion. Neue Fassung," in *Hegel-Studien. Beihefte,* vol. XVIII, ed. Dieter Henrich (Bonn: Bouvier, 1978), pp. 103–224.

that the philosophy of science understands theory. Rather, the *Logic* is a semantic process. Hegel believes that this semantic structure of self-referring, autonomous negation underlies all possible rational discourse. No matter where we start, we will arrive at a structure of the type Hegel describes. In order to prove the claim that the *Logic* is not a deliberate operation, but, instead, the nature of all possible rational discourses, we have to start from the most elementary thought of which we can think. Then we have to show that "negation," in the sense in which we have described it, follows from the attempt to make this most simple thought consistent. Hegel starts from the term "being," which is more dubious than most of what we find in his *Logic.* Accordingly, I do not propose to refer to that move. In any event, what Hegel calls the discourse that has self-referring negation as its starting point and basic structure is the "Logic of Essence." The preceding discourse he calls the "Logic of Being."[4]

The basic feature of the Logic of Being is that all the conceptual structures there analyzed by Hegel imply, but never show explicitly, self-referring structures. As long as one remains in the Logic of Being, it is never possible to *derive* all that has to be said about these conceptual tools from self-referring structures. Determinateness, for example, always remains distinct from the self-referring aspect of these categories. Hegel's Logic of Being (i.e., the logic of determinateness) is a refined exposition of what Plato called *heterotês* (otherness). It is actually an attempt to resume the dialectics of Plato's Sophist within the context of modern philosophy.

We are here best served by considering two conceptual aspects in the structure of otherness. (1) In the relation of otherness, we have at least two elements that are dependent on one another. Each is only the 'other' of the other, and it is not conceivable that the one would be there apart from the other. (2) They are *also* conceived of as independent from one another, although, to be perfectly candid, there is a problem in the Logic of Being with this 'also.' If we are willing to bypass this problem for the moment, we could then say that each one of the two is *the one,* meaning by this that only the other is described as 'other.' Since, however, this is true of *both* of them, each one of them is 'the one' *and* only the other of 'the other.' Hegel describes this situation by saying that they display the aspect of existing only 'for the other,' and at the same time, display the aspect of having exis-

4. G. W. F. Hegel, "Das Seyn," in *WL*[1], pp. 33–232; *id.,* "Das Wesen," in *WL*[1], pp. 241–409; English: "Doctrine of Being," in *SL,* pp. 69–385; "Doctrine of Essence," in *SL,* pp. 389–571.

tence 'in themselves.' These two conceptual aspects are, of course, inseparable. This means that their *indifference* (their 'in-itself' existence) toward their 'other' ultimately turns out to be the way in which Hegel proves the dependence of the one on its 'other.' To claim that there is an existence in-itself is to claim another structure of otherness, in opposition to the being-for-another. So here we have a second-order otherness—the otherness of the being-for-itself versus the being-for-another.

Once this becomes fully clear at the end of the Logic of Being, the distinction between the two 'others' becomes untenable. Both of them appear as negatives, and as *nothing but* negatives. They are negatives in exactly the same sense, which is what makes the transition to the Logic of Essence legitimate. Now we have autonomous negation: nothing is left but negation. Since this means that negation is self-referring, the *self*-reference of autonomous negation remains, and we have the transition from "being" to "essence." So much for the discourse that precedes the Logic of Essence!

Let us now turn to the section that follows the Logic of Essence. Earlier, in our exposition of the self-reference of negation, we suppressed an important aspect. The self-reference of negation led to otherness, that is, to determinateness. We had two states—having negation and not having negation—and both states are negative and nothing but that. So the first big move was that negation leads to otherness. The second was that otherness turns out to be the self-reference of negation. This second move was, as well, a return to the original structure.

In a way that I think should be closely studied, Hegel shows that these two structural aspects of essence are in an unstable relation to one another. Each turns out to be the other, but we do not see clearly why and how. We only see that it happens and that it has to happen. Sometimes determinateness and self-reference seem to be independent from one another, and sometimes they seem to be identical. Hegel describes this theoretical situation by saying that both are immediately the opposite of themselves *(Das unmittelbare Gegenteil ihrer selbst)*—one of his favorite phrases in his early Jena period. This unstable structure attracted him greatly, because it seemed to fulfill the promise to provide a means for describing what *life* is—this continuous process of change, organization, and decay all at the same time.

It is, however, easy enough to show that such an absolutely unstable structure is not suitable for describing what the structure of *mind* is. Moreover, such instability is certainly not suitable for providing a categorical

framework for interpreting institutions such as the state. For logical reasons, it seems to be necessary to develop this still ambiguous result of the analysis of double negation into a consistent logical structure free from these ambiguities, in which each element turns out to be the other. Therefore, in the same sense in which the Logic of Being *preceded* the Logic of Essence, what Hegel calls the "Logic of the Notion" *succeeds* the Logic of Essence.[5] The secret intention of the Logic of the Notion is to relate self-reference (as one structure) to otherness (as another structure) so that we may assert their mutual dependence, while simultaneously preserving their distinctive features. Hegel aspires to stabilize this relation and remove its ambiguity.

In order to achieve this, Hegel needs to make some moves that I cannot here mention. But what we can say is that at the beginning of the Logic of the Notion, Hegel adapts the familiar distinction between the general and the particular to fulfill this purpose. Naturally enough, this interpretation departs as far as imaginable from ones in which the general and particular function as logical quantifiers. On Hegel's reading, "Notion" shows these two aspects: (1) the general, or, in the terms of the *Logic,* the equality with itself throughout all differences; and (2) the particular, by which he means the differences, or the determinateness that Notion implies. Hegel opposes Notion to all other determinations; and, for this reason, it is a distinguishing mark of individuals (which applies equally to differing individuals) that they belong to one class. The equality of the general in the Notion is not without this particularity or determinateness, but there is not any determinateness that is not the determinateness of the general. Thus the two are originally inseparable, but they do not disappear into one another, as was the case with Essence.[6] They coexist, forming one single rational structure that we can describe as stable.

So construed, Notion is clearly not the name of a type of term that we use in sentences. Instead, Hegel uses it as a description of something that is the case, and introduces it in the same sense in which he introduces "negation" as an ontological term.

No doubt, some exemplification of this would help just now: Hegel's paradigmatic instance of the *existence* of Notion, as a structure of some-

5. G. W. F. Hegel, "Die Lehre vom Begriff," in *WL*[2], pp. 11–253; English: "The Logic of the Notion," in *SL,* pp. 575–844.

6. See Henrich's discussion regarding determinateness and self-reference in the structure at the beginning of this lecture.

thing that is the case, is the *self.* With Kant and Fichte, Hegel assumes that there is such a thing as the identity of the act 'I think,' as well as the ultimate form of the self-awareness of the thinker. This existing structure shows two aspects that correspond to what Hegel describes as the Notion. In a general sense, if one simply thinks the thought 'I think,' I think nothing particular, nor do I know anything about my nature. Because this is so, we concede—as it were, *a priori*—that all who refer to themselves in this way do so in *exactly* the same way. This means specifically that all who perform that act 'I think,' and are aware of the sameness of the structure of this act in different possible cases of performances, do so in precisely the same way. Whatever the differences between us, the way in which *you* think 'I think' does not differ in any sense from the way in which *I* think 'I think.' This act is not *accessible* for individualization. In this sense, it is 'empty,' general self-reference.

Paradoxically (and Hegel is tempted to present this as "miracle"),[7] the very act by which we differ in no sense from any other is the way in which every single self-conscious being *opposes* itself to all other selves. I say, "I think," and *by doing this* I am aware of *me* as one single individual being who differs from other beings. By performing an act that cannot be individualized, I gain an awareness of myself as a particular. By the very same act, the single self opposes itself to all other selves saying "*I* think." By saying "I think," the self asserts its distinctive existence; but the self also knows, with respect to the structure of this act, that it does not differ from other selves. We might well suspect that this identity and difference depend simply on the functioning of the "I" as an indicator, but we cannot pursue this problem at present.

For reasons that now may well be evident, Hegel says that the ontological constitution of the self is the structure of the Notion. But even in the Notion, Hegel detects a deficiency. The relation between generality and particularity, between self-reference and its corresponding determinateness, is *immediate.* In self-consciousness, these two elements—the general being-like-everybody-else and the performance of this being that grasps or even constitutes it as an individual—are in an immediate relation: both things are asserted at the same time. We do not see any transition from one element to the other. Furthermore, as Hegel says, the logical structure of determinateness in the Notion is *dominated* by generality. It is the perfor-

7. G. W. F. Hegel, *WL*^{2}, pp. 49–52; English: *SL,* pp. 618–622.

mance of this not-individualizable act that *also* generates the awareness of myself as an individual.

This determinateness, which is in no sense independent from the generality of the performance of this act, makes the Notion 'subjective.' Hegel uses this term in a sense that differs entirely from its ordinary meaning. He does not use it to mean simply the 'mental.' Instead, he uses it to refer to an ontological structure that permits us to interpret what the mental as opposed to the 'objective' is. In the mental (this refers to Fichte), everything depends on the basic structure of the generality of this performance of self-reference. For this reason, there is no independence of determinateness. The two elements are not in a reciprocal relationship. Therefore, the ultimate structure that Hegel wants to introduce is what he calls the *"Idea,"*[8] referring again to Plato, as well as to Kant. He builds this structure on the *permutation* between (1) the dominance of the general (that already contains determinateness), and (2) an independence of the particular that shows in itself the structure of generality. Thus we have the structure of the Notion *twice* in the Idea.[9]

Let me turn immediately to Hegel's paradigm of the Idea, in order to give you some idea of the way in which he uses and applies it. The paradigm is the *will.* In the self, we have this immediate coexistence of determinateness and generality: the 'I think' was both things at the same time—this individual and the general self-awareness. In the will, the situation differs. We see a *process* that leads from the general structure to the determinateness of the will, and we shall see the corresponding process in the second pair, for, as I just said, in the complete structure of the will as Idea, we have the Notion twice.

Now in what sense is will the paradigm? Unless I make *decisions,* there is no will. It makes no sense to say "I have a will, but I have never, nor can I ever, decide." This would be an empty assertion. To make this claim meaningful, or what is the same, to have a will, I have to decide. 'Resolution' is an example of what we mean when we attribute will to somebody. But what is a decision? We can describe it as a *self*-determination of the generality of the will. There is the will, which means that an infinite sequence of alternatives is available. Having a will means that I am not *already* decided.

8. G. W. F. Hegel, *WL*^{2}, pp. 236–253; English: *SL,* pp. 824–844.

9. Dieter Henrich, "Die Formationsbedingungen der Dialektik. Über die Untrennbarkeit der Methode Hegels von Hegels System," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie,* 36 (1982): 139–162.

When I am born, I have not yet made decisions; but they stand before me for me to make. Put in just this way, this empty generality of self-awareness means that it has to precede any single decision that I make.

Now, *making* the decision entails entering into a determinate state of mind. As is by now evident, this does not mean that I give up the generality. Any decision that I make does not mean that my will comes to an end. Rather, it is the other way around: in making decisions my will *becomes* what it *is.* This means that the generality has to *enter* the determinateness, or what is the same, my will *is in* the particular content that I have decided to intend. So, if there is an ontological approach to what a decision is, the structure that we need is Notion.

This step of the will as self-determination is only the first step. Thereby, it eliminates only the first deficiency of Notion. It provides a transition that we can understand from the general to the particular. In the abstract awareness of the self, we did not have this intelligibility of the coexistence of the general and the determinate.

To will something to be resolved, however, means *more* than deciding and intending. It is not the case that we would be satisfied if someone said, for example, that she is a philosopher simply because she decided that she wills to be a philosopher. It is not enough to determine one's practical self-awareness solely by intending. The will *can,* at least, bring about something. When the will intends, it implies more: to intend something already means, at minimum, to *try* to bring it about. We are not always successful, but the structure of the will requires this correlation between the will and the materialization or realization of its intentions. This is the second step.

This brings us straight to an important move for Hegel's *Logic,* as well as for his entire philosophy. We must now ask this: What is the realization of a will whose structure is the *Idea* (i.e., a self-reference that *contains* determinateness)? The Idea is that structure in which we have the harmonious relation of the general and the particular, but *twice.* In the first instance, the harmonious relation is under the dominance of the general, or what is the same, the subjective aspect of decision and resolution. In the second instance, the harmonious relation is under the dominance of the particular, the objective aspect. If, in what the will intends to bring about, we did not have at least *potentially* a structure that corresponds to the structure of the will, we could not have self-reference. The will would resolve to do something, but *what* it decides to do would have nothing to do with its own structure. For instance, the will might decide to strive for happiness

and to find it in the enjoyment of all imaginable kinds of sensuous pleasures. Unless there is an interpretation of this aim of happiness that would correlate its structure to the structure of the will, we would not have self-reference. The will *necessarily* points to some objective; and the structure of the will is the structure of the Idea, which is self-referring. But where in reality can one really find what corresponds to the structure of the will?

We can express the same connection in this way: the will, as long as it only decides to do something, is not in complete self-reference. It is not in complete self-reference if *what* it wants to materialize, or if what it accepts voluntarily (in light of an already existing aim), is not of a structure that corresponds to the will's own structure. Complete self-reference exists only if what it intends corresponds to the structure of the will as subjective. We know what the distinctive features of the 'subjective' and the 'real' are: in the ontological terminology of the Logic, self-reference is dominant in the subjective and the determinateness (the 'manifold') is dominant in reality. This determinate must remain integrated, however, into some general feature that corresponds to the will.

The state in which the will decides something—namely, to bring about, or to accept a reality that corresponds in structure to its own structure—is the *freedom* of the will. The complete self-reference of the will (even in its *object*) and freedom mean the same thing. As early as in Kant, freedom was independence from anything that differed from me. So freedom was complete *self*-dependence and *self*-determination. Never analyzing this, Kant simply accepted it for reasons we have already discussed. But Hegel tries to *say* what complete autonomy of the will is, and it turns out that he must say more than Kant said about it. Complete autonomy is not only accepting and following the will's own law, but also involves requiring that there be a reality that corresponds structurally to the will's own structure. This is an important extension of the idea of autonomy, which explains its peculiar use in Hegel's system. The intention of the will that wills itself is a reality that is of the will's own constitution.

This formulation brings to the fore a crucial question: If this is the structure of the will, what is its correlative structure *in concreto?* Hegel's answer is that it is the rational state whose good constitution respects the freedom of its citizens. This is the *structure* in reality that corresponds to the internal structure of the will. In the sense in which Rousseau or Kant would perhaps say it, Hegel cannot say that the state is *the* will, or an expression of *the* will. Rather, the will is the *comprehensive* structure that *in-*

cludes the subjective will and the objective constitution. Insofar as it differs from the will, the state is a complex institution that satisfies particular needs and in which determinateness is dominant. As distinct from the self, the state does not give the absolute integration of everything into everything. Indeed, Hegel is of the opinion that what originally characterizes the state is the differentiation of its institutions.

The state displays a harmonious relation between the universal and the particular in reality, because it is that structure in which we have not only independent determinateness, but also organization. This organization is the constitution of independent determinateness into a *whole* that corresponds to the structure of the will. Free will does not accept the state because it satisfies particular needs. To be sure, the state *does* satisfy particular needs and *has to.* The state has to ensure security, supply, control of antagonistic tendencies in the economy, and so forth. An uncontrolled economy would produce unresolvable antagonisms.[10] In effect, the state in which determinateness dominates has to function precisely as a controlling institution. But this is not entirely self-sufficient. The will does not accept the state *because* it provides for the fulfillment of all the needs of the natural individual. Instead, the will accepts the state because *only* with reference to it can the self-reference of the will's own structure be completed.

As is perhaps evident, Hegel's most famous and influential book, the *Philosophy of Right,* is simply incomprehensible without a projection of the *Science of Logic* and its ontological apparatus into the argument.[11] Karl Marx's criticism of the *Philosophy of Right* is an important example: Marx believed he could show that Hegel's program collapses because Hegel *describes* the state as actually the controller of the civil society, but he *defines* the state as autonomous, as the self-sufficient realization of the will. Because Hegel cannot carry through programmatically this definition of the state, he is obliged to describe the state *in concreto* as a controller of the civil society. The upshot of this is that bourgeois society, rather than the state, is ultimate. Therefore the specific society, rather than the state, is in control, and the specific society runs the state in a way that the state itself

10. Henrich observed that Hegel was among the first to say that the state has to control antagonistic tendencies in the economy. See G. W. F. Hegel, *GPR,* pp. 214–283; English: *PR,* pp. 155–223.

11. Dieter Henrich, "Logische Form und reale Totalität," in *Hegels Philosophie des Rechts. Die Theorie der Rechtsformen und ihre Logik,* ed. Dieter Henrich and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), pp. 428–450.

cannot acknowledge or understand. The state, accordingly, is simply not the absolute, even though, as Marx understands him, Hegel claims this to be so.

Marx's criticism reflects more on his reading than it does on Hegel's theory. Hegel *defines* the state in a way that both enables and *requires* particulars to affect it. This definition requires that the antagonisms of civil society affect the state. Although this definition is not entirely clear in the *Philosophy of Right,* it is part of the way in which Hegel defines the state; but it becomes evident only when we connect the *Science of Logic* with the *Philosophy of Right,* which Hegel did not thoroughly do.

Hegel never defined the state as divine, nor did he define the state as the absolute Idea. What corresponds to his definition of the absolute Idea is the *structure* of the correspondence *between the will and the state, rather than the institution of the state alone.*[12] We become aware of the structure of the absolute Idea when we *grasp* structures to which the state also belongs. This kind of structural understanding occurs mainly in religion, art, or philosophical reasoning. By virtue of this, we understand that the state is *only* the objective correlate of the will, the fulfillment of its freedom. For that reason, Hegel is not troubled by the way in which he defines the relationship between civil society and the state. Had Marx been perspicuous in his criticism, he would have been led to wonder why Hegel did not discern such a far-reaching deficiency. Marx's rejoinder would be, of course, that this is because of the ideological function of Hegel's own theory. Such a response would presuppose that there is no consistent theory, and it gives evidence, as well, of an insufficient understanding of the status of that theory.

Marx depends on the conceptual apparatus of the *Phenomenology of Spirit.* In his early philosophical development, Marx does not develop a conceptual apparatus adequate for dealing with Hegel's real philosophy *(Realphilosophie),* which is built on the Notion and the Idea, and not on the relationship between subject and object. The relationship between subject and object is the much less rich structure that underlies the development of the *Phenomenology of Spirit.* As soon as one employs the conceptual framework of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a vehicle for interpreting the *Philosophy of Right* (of the objective Spirit), the theory of

12. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts. Die Vorlesung von 1819/20 in einer Nachschrift,* ed. Dieter Henrich (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983).

the *Philosophy of Right* collapses, and diagnoses of Marx's type become possible.

A Marxist analysis, accordingly, leaves the *objective* issue between Hegel's institutionalism of freedom and socialism (with its theory of spontaneity) entirely unsettled. Indeed, such analyses show only that we cannot settle the issue with the sorts of conceptual moves Marx tried to make when he was a young man. The conceptual apparatus of Marx's later writings was far richer than that which we find in the early criticism of the *Philosophy of Right.* At the same time, however, his later writing is much more removed from the detailed study and criticism of Hegel's work; so the way in which Hegelian structures and arguments function in Marx's *Das Kapital* remains virtually unknown.[13]

But we have wandered somewhat afield. To recur to the problems of the philosophy of mind, which quite clearly is what Hegel ultimately would have us to do, we can see that in his *Science of Logic* he is determined to provide categories not only for the description, but also for the logical construction, of the mental. Despite severe constraints of time, I think I can still show you that he could not succeed.

We examined in great detail the problems of self-reference of the mind in Fichte, where we encountered the three paradoxes that we have to avoid if we want to interpret self-consciousness properly. Hegel's system is also founded on a self-referential structure—the structure of autonomous negation. But the distinctive problem of *mental* self-reference is the problem of self-*identification.* This problem has many aspects, but we can put its principal point most forcefully by asking: How do I *know* who I am? Hegel's approach is simply bereft of these issues. If we were to examine more closely the self-referential structure of negation, as Hegel tries to develop it, we would discover that it *differs* from the self-referential structure of the mental, and that it is not possible for us to interpret one of them in terms of the other. Therefore, we would not be able to avoid the paradoxes of mental self-reference by making use of Hegel's self-referential structures of negation. Hegel implicitly reduces the mental structures to the structures of autonomous negation. By doing so, he believes that he has avoided

13. When Henrich delivered these lectures, much of the world was still in the grips of the Cold War and 'Marxist' rule prevailed in a number of countries. For this reason, Marx's relationship to Hegel was of compelling interest to many in the Harvard course. Henrich acceded to their concerns, momentarily digressing from the broader course of his argument.

all the failures of the *Science of Knowledge.* He also has to believe that he has avoided the paradoxes of knowing self-reference.

By virtue of the manner in which Hegel's system evolved, which was, in no small measure, a response to Hölderlin's system,[14] Hegel never encountered the problems that Fichte was attempting to solve. Regrettably, Fichte utterly failed to make himself understood to his successors. If we could continue this undertaking, we might well expect to find not only the correspondence between the failures of Fichte and the merits of Hegel, but also that between the merits of Fichte and the failures of Hegel. I believe that we can summarize this part of our undertaking with a brief, but pointed, remark: without a proof of the *nonexistence* of Fichte's problems, we cannot defend the system of Hegel. For we would have to show that all these perplexities of the self-reference of the mind are illusory, or what is the same, that they are not real problems. If we could show this, we could mount a defense of Hegel's system. Such a proof, however, might point in an entirely different direction. Wittgenstein, for example, tried to show that these perplexities just do not exist and initiated an utterly distinctive conception of philosophy.

In spite of the claims that Hegel and the Hegelians made, there is no final, everlasting result of idealism. But the idealists enlarged enormously the stock of philosophical insights. They also contributed an analysis of some philosophical methods that we cannot eliminate from the learning process of philosophy. Even more important: they offered paradigms for the successful interpretation of basic features of modern, liberated consciousness in a comprehensive philosophical image of the world. In this respect, nothing that philosophers have written since shows either a comparable generality in its scope of application or a comparable depth in the penetration of experiences underlying the modern world.

Every achievement has a price. In this case, the idealists paid the price of an obvious lack of rigor in some of their individual arguments. Moreover, they incurred excessive risks in their theoretical moves, owing to their commitment to this kind of philosophy. As we have seen in Fichte's theories, these risks came at the cost of irreparable theoretical damage.

We would be remiss, however, if we were to forget *why* they took these risks. Their aim was the assurance of that particular sense of freedom that was vital to the founding of the modern world. For theirs was the time of

14. See the discussion of the Hegel's encounter with Hölderlin's system in Lecture 20.

the French Revolution, and theirs was a time, as well, of a far-reaching change in the intellectual world. Nihilism emerged, as did the political split between conservatism and a tendency toward superficial prosperity. Without a comprehensive philosophy, the idealists could not remain faithful to the experiences of their youth. They were ineluctably drawn to the message of Kant's philosophy—that freedom is giving ourselves the law and the capacity to fulfill it.

When he aimed for a position at Jena, Hegel wrote: "The idea of the youth had to be transformed into its reflexive form, into a system."[15] It *had* to be! And Fichte had an even deeper confession in which he invoked the biblical imagery of the Fall of humanity: "We began philosophy in wantonness. We discovered our nudity, and since then, we have been philosophizing in an emergency, for our salvation."[16] This quotation expresses the high spirit of the early years of the Revolution: freedom *can* be defended. It also expresses the diminishments of expectations and the discovery of the predicament. Above all, it expresses the firm belief that we cannot renounce the objective.

15. G. W. F. Hegel, "Hegel an Schelling," Frankfurt am Main, 2 November 1800, in *B,* pp. 58–60.

16. J. G. Fichte, "Fichte an Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (in Altona?)," Osmannstädt, 30 August 1795, ed. Reinhard Lauth and Hans Jacob, in *GA,* vol. III,2 (1970), pp. 392–393.