

# **Hegel's *Aufhebung***

**Hammam ALDOURI**

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## Abstract

This thesis explicates what I term the 'productive disunity' of Hegel's philosophy: the dialectical permeation of the 'dialectical movement' of *aufheben* and the 'speculative self-movement' of *sichaufheben*. It begins by examining the abstract positing of the 'task of philosophy' as it emerges in Hegel's early Jena writings via an analysis of the development of the concept of *aufheben* in a constellation of texts from the years 1795-7. Special attention will be paid to Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795) and Novalis' *Fichte Studies* (1795-6). I argue that through Schiller's conception of *aufheben*, Hegel grasps an initial 'model' of *aufheben* as the internal structure of the speculative whole, a whole that is, in the early Jena writings, comprehended within the strict coordinates of epistemological opposition in terms of the unity of subject and object. From this, I provide an exposition of the two central philosophical forms of conceptual movement in Hegel's philosophy: first, the phenomenological form – through a detailed explication of the concept of experience as it unfolds in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*; and second, the logical form – through an explication of the movement of speculative thinking in the *Science of Logic*. It is through an exposition of the logical movement of speculative thinking that the delicate conceptual distinction between *aufheben* and *sichaufheben* is retroactively determined and comprehended. In the final chapter, this distinction is complicated through an examination of the temporal forms that articulate spirit in its self-comprehended, absolute form: the form of the perfect present (spirit qua 'always already' actual) and the form of the future anterior (spirit qua 'not yet but will have been' actualized) as expressed in the relation between the movement of philosophy, 'time' and history. It is through the dialectical reflection of the inter-relation of the two temporal forms of spirit that the third form of speculative temporalization of philosophical *reconstruction* is yielded. The delicate distinction between dialectical *aufheben* and speculative *sichaufheben* of spirit provides the basis for a transformation of Hegel's philosophical enterprise and its relation to the philosophical problem of the comprehension of the speculative whole of the present.

*For my darling Nora*  
*s, h, l, h and d*



## Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	1
<b>List of Bibliographic Abbreviations</b>	3
<b>Introduction</b>	5
<b>1</b>	
<b>'Aufhebung' and the Need of Philosophy</b>	
1.1 Introductory Remark	31
1.2 Aesthetics in the Age of the 'Committee of Public Safety'	35
1.3 The Limit of <i>Aufheben</i>	42
1.4 Novalis and the <i>Aufheben</i> of the Romantic Subject	53
1.5 The 'Mythology of Reason' as Social Regeneration	64
1.6 Love as a 'Model' of Social Unity	70
1.7 The Two Forms of Diremption	76
1.8 The Division of Principle and System	87
1.9 The Task of 'True Philosophy': Hegel's Project Abstractly Stated	96
<b>2</b>	
<b><i>Aufheben</i> and Experience</b>	
2.1 Introductory Remark	103
2.2 Experience as the Limit of Philosophical Knowledge	105
2.3 Aphorisms of the Everyday: An Experimental Model	112
2.4 Defamiliarization as 'Method'	121
2.5 The Immanent Split of Consciousness	131
2.6 Experience as 'Dialectical Movement'	139
2.7 The <i>Aufhebung</i> of Experience/The Experience of <i>Aufhebung</i> (I)	146
2.8 The <i>Aufhebung</i> of Experience/The Experience of <i>Aufhebung</i> (II)	155
2.9 The <i>Aufhebung</i> of Experience/The Experience of <i>Aufhebung</i> (III)	161
2.10 Experience as Initial Movement of Speculative Thinking	166
<b>3</b>	
<b><i>Sichaufheben</i> and Speculative Thinking</b>	
3.1 Introductory Remark	175
3.2 The Word 'Speculation'	178
3.3 Hegel's <i>Logic</i> , or, the Task of Speculative Philosophy	186
3.4 Speculative Philosophy and Metaphysics: The Concept	191
3.5 The Expression of the Speculative Proposition	200
3.6 Speculative Thinking	208
3.7 Dialectics, the Speculative and Speculative Thinking	218
3.8 The Presentation of the 'Subject'	226
3.9 The Living Form of Speculative Thinking	234
3.10 The Philosophical System as the Presentation of the Whole	238

3.11 The <i>Aufhebung</i> of Dialectical Movement: <i>Sichaufheben</i>	245
<b>4</b>	
<b>The Productive Disunity of <i>Aufheben</i> and <i>Sichaufheben</i></b>	
4.1 Introductory Remark	255
4.2 The Actuality of Absolute Spirit (I): Phenomenology and Time	257
4.3 The Actuality of Absolute Spirit (II): The Transition from World History	267
4.4 The Actuality of Absolute Spirit (III): Philosophy and 'Return'	273
4.5 The Three Temporal Modes of Spirit	278
4.6 The Speculative Infinite and the Present	284
4.7 The Productive Disunity of Hegel's Philosophy: On Reconstruction	294
<b>Bibliography</b>	315

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## List of Bibliographic Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this study. The references from the 20 volume collected works and their English translations are signalled by three Arabic numbers following the abbreviation: the first number refers to the English translation pagination (abbreviations are followed at times by Roman numerical – in parenthesis – to indicate volume number); the second number refers to the volume number in Hegel's *Werke*; and the third number refers to the German pagination from the *Werke* (unless otherwise stated). (Note that the first number in the references noting the *Phenomenology of Spirit* refer to the paragraph number as provided in the Miller translation.) In the context of references to the *Briefe* and *Jenaer Systementwürfe*, the first Arabic number (noting English pagination) will be immediately followed by the abbreviations set out below, and then the German pagination given.

### English Translations

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| A        | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art</i> – 2 Volumes, trans. T. M. Knox, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.  |
| D        | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy</i> , trans. H. S. Harris, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977.                  |
| EL       | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Encyclopaedia Logic</i> , trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris, Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991.                     |
| Enc. I   | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Logic</i> , trans. William Wallace, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.   |
| Enc. II  | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Philosophy of Nature</i> , trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.   |
| Enc. III | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Philosophy of Mind</i> , trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.   |
| EPR      | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Elements of the Philosophy of Right</i> , trans. H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.  |
| ETW      | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Early Theological Writings</i> , trans. T. M. Knox, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975.  |
| FK       | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Faith and Knowledge</i> , trans. H. S. Harris, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977.   |
| IPH      | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Introduction to the Philosophy of History</i> , trans. Leo Rauch, Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988.                                    |
| JS       | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>The Jena System, 1804-5: Logic and Metaphysics</i> , trans. John W. Burbidge and George di Giovanni, Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986. |
| L        | G. W. F. Hegel, <i>Hegel: The Letters</i> , trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.   |

- LHP G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* – 3 Volumes, trans. E. S. Haldane, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955.
- LPR *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* – 3 Volumes, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987.
- M G. W. F. Hegel, *Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart, trans. various, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2004.
- PH G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree, New York: Dover, 2004.
- PP G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- PS G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- PW G. W. F. Hegel, *Political Writings*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- SL G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller, London and New York: Routledge, 2010.
- SS G. W. F. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit*, trans. H. S. Harris, Albany: State University of New York, 1979.

#### German Texts

- 1-20 G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke – 20 Bänden*, herausgegeben von Eva Moldenhauer und Karl Markus, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.
- B (I-IV) G. W. F. Hegel, *Briefe von und an Hegel* – 4 Bände, herausgegeben von Johannes Hoffmeister, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1961.
- JS (I) G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe (I)*, herausgegeben von Klaus Düsing und Heinz Kimmerle, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986.
- JS (II) G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe (II)*, herausgegeben von Rolf Peter Horstmann und Johann Heinrich Trede, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986.
- JS (III) G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe (III)*, herausgegeben von Rolf Peter Horstmann und Johann Heinrich Trede, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1986.

## Introduction

[T]he task nowadays consists not so much in purging the individual of an immediate sensuous mode of apprehension, and making him into a substance that is an object of thought that thinks, but rather in just the opposite, to supersede determinate thoughts from their fixity so as to give actuality to the universal and impart to it spiritual life.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis is a philosophical study of *aufheben* in the thought of G. W. F. Hegel. As a *philosophical* study, it tries to situate itself at the inner most centre, the *sanctum sanctorum* as Hegel liked to put it, of the fundamental claim to truth of Hegel's philosophy: the import, structure and movement of *aufheben* as the process of the speculative unity of the subject with its own ethical, historical and ontological substance – that is to say, a unity comprehended 'not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*.'<sup>2</sup> This 'speculative unity' of truth qua substance-subject renders intelligible the sense of *spirit* (*Geist*) as the speculative *result* of Hegel's philosophy. Put another way: it is the truth of the unity of subject and substance as a unity achieved through the dissolution of their assumed opposition that gives sense to spirit as the *subject of the process of its own unification*. Hegel gives us a conceptually abbreviated articulation of the unity of subject and substance from which the truth of spirit determines and comprehends itself as its own truth: 'spirit is alone the *true*.'<sup>3</sup> This thesis finds its most general orientation in relation to the attempt to comprehend the *movement of aufheben* that makes this proposition ontologically and historically true. It does this, however, not with an eye to defend Hegel's philosophy against his critics, but rather, by trying to *exaggerate* certain hairline cracks that run across it.

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<sup>1</sup> PS, §33; 3: 37 (translation slightly modified).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. §17; 3: 23.

<sup>3</sup> A (I), 2.

The most prominent cleft of Hegel's philosophy, this study contends, is the division between, on the one hand, the dialectical movement of truth's unfolding (the process of the becoming of truth) and, on the other hand, the speculative, spiritual self-movement of truth that retroactively comprehends its unfolding as a process determined by itself, thus suspending the process at the point of its self-comprehension and self-manifestation (the truth as the result of the unity of the process and itself). I initially understood this tension between dialectics and speculation in terms of an 'undeveloped unity.' This expression has connotations of a certain will to unify. This, however, essentially transgresses the philosophical aim of this thesis, that is, to exaggerate the schism in order to properly ascertain the core philosophical movement of Hegel's philosophy and its central speculative claim.

What has emerged from out of the study instead is what I call the *productive disunity* of Hegel's philosophy. The central nerve of this expression is the following: the tension of dialectics and speculation raised to the level of its dialectical contradiction articulates the inner dynamic of Hegel's philosophy as a pre-eminently *speculative* project. Thus, the speculative core of Hegel's philosophy is to be properly comprehended as *productive* in that what it generates and manifests from out of itself is the status of Hegel's philosophical project of the articulation of the speculative whole (subject-substance qua spirit) in its own thought; and *dis-unified* in the sense that the speculative whole is expressed only on the basis of a deeper dialectical relation between its dialectical unfolding and its speculative self-expression and self-determination.

This productive disunity of dialectics and speculation is comprehended in a more precise philosophical manner by way of a focus on two sets of conceptual and ontological movements: the *dialectical movement (dialektische Bewegung) of experience (Erfahrung)*



and the *spiritual self-movement* (*geistige Selbstbewegung*) of *speculative thinking* (*spekulative Denken*). At the core of these two sets of movement is, I will show, the structure and movement of *aufheben*. In order to begin to comprehend the dialectical contradiction between dialectical movement and spiritual self-movement at the level of their ostensible unity, I will attend to an ambiguity that has, in some sense, already been signalled.

In our opening remarks, the conceptual and ontological movement of *aufheben* is presented in a distinctively *twofold* manner: *it is simultaneously the name that gives sense to the process of the dialectical development of the production of the unity of the speculative whole and the expression that defines the structure and import of its result as a whole that retroactively produces its own processual development*. *Aufheben* is, consequently, *both* the unfolding of the unity of the truth of the speculative whole and the unity of its result as the speculative whole that retroactively determines the truth of the processual unfolding as a constitutive moment of the result's speculative structure (the deeper unity of 'process-result'). To put it somewhat tautologically, what *aufheben* names, from the standpoint of the general aim of Hegel's speculative philosophy, is a complex dialectical contradiction between *itself and itself*, that is, between its unity as process and its unity as result, comprehended as a whole unity.

To properly articulate the conceptual structure at the centre of the *unity of unity*, it will be raised to the level of a more precise immanent self-diremption of *aufheben* itself. I understand this immanent self-diremption in terms of the hitherto unexposed internal separation of *aufheben* and its self-reflexive form, *sichaufheben*. This diremption, I will show, is properly expounded in the examination of the internal relation between the only two books actually composed by Hegel as self-contained philosophical works (not pieced together

as collages of lecture scripts, philosophical drafts and student notes): *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Science of Logic*.<sup>4</sup> It is in these two works that the notions of experience and speculative thinking are properly expounded. An exposition and philosophical reconstruction of their structures will be the central philosophical aim of chapters 2 and 3 (respectively), thus taking up the main body of the study. It is from out of a basic presentation of these two chapters that the other two chapters, the first and the fourth, can be properly understood.

The second chapter, 'Aufheben and Experience,' will focus on the development of Hegel's concept of the *truth of experience* as the unity of 'result' and 'process' through a detailed exposition of the idea of experience from the earliest Jena writings to Hegel's first major philosophical work, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, via an exposition of the movement of experience in the collection of notes identified by the editors of Hegel's collected works as the 'Aphorisms from the Wastebook.' This chapter will show that the concept of experience constitutes the central philosophical expression of the structure and movement of *aufheben*, and that *aufheben* articulates the central dynamic of the movement of experience. That said, the *Phenomenology* offers a very particular kind of articulation of the structure of experience: it consists of the exposition of the truth of experience as an essentially *ambiguous* (*Zweideutig*) truth, that is, a structure of truth that is not identical to itself as truth as such, but rather consisting of a *doubling* of the truth in a contradictory form, a truth that appears both as itself and as distinguished from itself at the level of its appearance. This contradiction will be more precisely comprehended in the *Phenomenology* in terms of the contradiction of *truth and untruth*.

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<sup>4</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer reminds us of this striking historical fact. *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. Christopher Smith, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, p.76.

In order to comprehend this ambiguity, I will provide a reconstruction of *aufheben* from out of the introduction and first three chapters of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. There are two things to be noted regarding this textual focus.

First, I will show that the ambiguous movement of the truth of experience directly reflects the conceptual development of *aufheben* in the three chapters: *aufheben*, as the internal structure of the movement of experience, unfolds systematically from its initial expression in the introduction (in which the term *aufheben* is, importantly, wholly *absent* at the terminological level), to the positing of its self-reflexive form in the third chapter 'Force and Understanding: Appearance and the Supersensible World.' I will show that it is *in* the development of the description of the movement of experience through the modes of consciousness that *aufheben* finds its most comprehensive philosophical articulation. Thus, there is, I claim, no a priori schema that topologically fixes *aufheben* as a logical form external to Hegel's philosophy (a problem that Hegel scholars have difficulty in fully grasping), but rather its 'logic' finds its philosophical presentation in the conceptual movement of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A clear indication of this topological incertitude is represented in Stephen Houlgate's *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*, West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006. In his 'systematic' unfolding of the first sections of the *Logic*, Houlgate hits a strange difficulty in the exposition of the logical place of *aufheben* since it is conceptually presupposed from the very outset of the *Logic* even though, according to Houlgate's reading, the *Logic* is principally understood as a purely 'presuppositionless' science, which is to say, a science that begins only with itself. In order to placate the confusion (which itself reveals a subterranean confusion), Houlgate isolates the term, focusing its exposition in the space of its own sub-section. In a context that insists on interpreting the *Logic* as an 'ontological logic' (a logic that unfolds itself as itself), it is ironic that *aufheben* – the very structure of that unfolding – is understood and presented as an isolated 'category' of philosophical expression that is explicated out of the context from whence it emerges in Hegel's *Logic* – Houlgate exposes the logic of *aufheben* from within the context of the end of the second chapter ('Determinate Being'); see Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, pp.301-3. I would also like to note here that my own reconstruction of *aufheben*, focused by the attempt to formulate its movement in its philosophical unfolding, is distinct from two recent doctoral theses: Ralph Palm, 'Hegel's Concept of Sublation: A Critical Examination,' Catholic University of Leuven, 2009 and Ryan Krahn, 'The Sublation of Dialectics: Hegel and the Logic of *Aufhebung*,' University of Guelph, 2014. Although these two works are distinct in their philosophical orientation and aims, they are united in a basic structural sense in that both locate their most sustained exposition of *aufheben* from its presentation in the final section of the first chapter of the *Science of Logic*. The problem with this logico-centric restriction of

The dialectical relation of the movement of experience *in* and *through* the first three chapters leads on to the second distinctive part of our reconstruction, namely the suspension of the exposition at the end of the third chapter, that is, before its transition into arguably Hegel's most famous section of the *Phenomenology*, the fourth chapter in which the concept of *recognition* (*Anerkennung*) is declared and expounded.

Without doubt, the focus on the socio-political core of this well-trodden section of the *Phenomenology* has been remarkably productive. From the Lacanian conception of the 'desire of recognition/recognition of desire' as the basis for the expression of the constitutive lack of the other, to more recent liberal-progressivist notions of recognition as the fundamental ontological shape of mutual, intersubjective social relations, recognition forms the centre of Hegel's philosophy.<sup>6</sup> The concept is raised to its highest power, I believe, in Gillian Rose's still relatively under-discussed 1981 work, *Hegel Contra Sociology*.<sup>7</sup> Rose presents the most philosophically expansive account of recognition in that she makes it the central conceptual movement of the totality of Hegel's thought, which is to say, recognition as the *speculative* core of the comprehension of the whole (absolute knowledge).

It is the distinctive feature of Rose's Hegelianism that yields the philosophical problem of her work: the phenomenological exposition and philosophical centralization of recognition is, to put it rather bluntly, overburdened. One of the consequences of her expansion of the dialectic of recognition is that it comprehends *aufheben* as the abbreviated

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*aufheben* is that we do not have a sense in which it develops conceptually in Hegel's work. Rather, it becomes hypostatized at the conceptual level because fixed at the textual level.

<sup>6</sup> This has perhaps reached its most direct expression in the politico-philosophical project of Axel Honneth. See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson, Cambridge: Polity, 1995. For a more textually expanded investigation into Hegel's so-called 'theory of recognition' (that is, one not restricted to the Jena *Realphilosophie*), see Axel Honneth, *The I in the We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*, trans. Joseph Ganahl, Cambridge: Polity, 2012. See also Sybil S. C. Anderson, *Hegel's Theory of Recognition: From Oppression to Ethical Liberal Modernity*, London and New York: Continuum, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> *Hegel Contra Sociology*, London and New York: Verso, 2006.

expression of the fundamental movement of recognition as such: speculative experience is, according to Rose, articulated from out of the recognition of the misrecognized forms of the absolute. What is completely lost in the topological focalization of recognition is the way in which *aufheben*, as its central structural articulation, is formed in the developmental dimensions of Hegel's thought. For Rose, recognition is comprehended as being the central dialectic of Hegel's *Phenomenology* from its very first page, thus overlooking the fact that recognition is only mobilized in the fourth chapter. Rose develops *only* a 'phenomenologico-centric' interpretation of Hegel's thought, thus reducing its other moments to strictly delineated phenomenological parts, a move that is at odds with Hegel's *systematic* claims (one could say that Rose's reading gives us a 'fourth-chapter-centric' understanding of *Phenomenology*, thus repeating, albeit with a different philosophical inflection, the same restriction Alexandre Kojève applies to his hugely influential reading of Hegel in the 1930s).

What is of interest for our study, apropos the reconfiguration of recognition, is the implicit presentation of the fundamentally *ambiguous* status of its movement. It is, because grasped phenomenologically, comprehended in the paradoxical sense of the 'comprehension of the miscomprehension' of the absolute. That said, Rose does not sufficiently explicate this internal aspect of recognition, since it would restore experience as the definitive movement of a project that tries to provide a way toward having a deepened understanding of Hegel's philosophy in terms of 'speculative experience.' Ambiguity does not, however, structure, at an explicit level, the philosophical movement of the unfolding of the notion of experience.

The incapacity to sufficiently raise and comprehend ambiguity at the level of its status as the internal truth of the movement of experience presents an obstacle to the comprehension of the *Phenomenology* as a whole, that is, to an understanding of its actual philosophical

status and import. Without a clear exposition of ambiguity, we cannot grasp in what sense the structure of experience is reflectively expanded into the reflexive form of the *Phenomenology* as the preliminary presentation of the immanent status of truth as contradictory in essence – contradictory between itself as the methodological path to science and a constitutive part of philosophical science as such (which is to say, the ambiguity of its status as introduction to the philosophical system and as the first part of that system).<sup>8</sup> The *Phenomenology* then consists of a dialectical exposition of the self-consciously reflected avowal of its own limits vis-à-vis the system of the philosophical science (the presentation of the truth of the absolute); what the *Phenomenology* knows, and knows *absolutely*, is that it *does not know* the truth of the absolute as spirit, and, more importantly, as spirit's retrospectively articulated self-identification and self-comprehension. Accordingly, the *Phenomenology* consists of the retroactive recoding of *itself* as the structure of the logical movement of the miscomprehension of the *Aufhebung* of subject and object in and as the speculative whole. This suggests the following: the *Phenomenology* is the reflected theoretical *model* of the structure of '*Aufhebung*' that does not actualize the *Aufhebung* of subject and object in and as the self-supersession of spirit itself; *a fortiori*, the *Phenomenology* is the most accomplished self-reflexive expression of the *incapacity* of 'philosophy' to raise itself to the level of its own historical consciousness of truth (Hegel attests to this in the very first sentence of the first preface of the *Science of Logic*). The outstanding task is, consequently, the articulation of that truth *in* the self-presentation of its own truth. This is, truth comprehended by itself and from out of itself.

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<sup>8</sup> Slavoj Žižek makes a similar point, but fails to explicate the reflective structure of experience and the *Phenomenology* as a whole; see *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, London and New York: Verso, 2000, p.85.

The exposition of the conceptual and ontological form of the movement of this ‘self-comprehension’ of truth is the principle focus of the third chapter, ‘*Sichaufheben* and Speculative Thinking.’ The central structure of the movement of speculative philosophy – of what will become more strongly associated as the system of philosophical science in its self-manifestation – is that of the ‘speculative thinking (*spekulative Denken*)’ of the *concept* (*Begriff*). Speculative thinking, I will show, consists of the most accomplished expression of the central and immanent character, at the level of the non-ambiguous presentation of the philosophical system, of spirit’s conceptual self-comprehension: spirit, in so far as it is the process of its own becoming, grasps this self-identification through its capacity to think speculatively: *in order to comprehend the speculative identity of itself spirit must think speculatively*. In the *Logic*, this amounts to a more precisely delineated realm, namely the realm of the truth of the self-presentation of the concept. Accordingly, the *Logic* is more precisely understood as the philosophical presentation of the thinking of the concept as its own self-manifestation and self-comprehension, that is, as the speculative comprehension of its own speculative core. It is this doubling of the speculative internal to the concept that draws our attention to the structure of speculative thinking. The initial apprehension of the structure of speculative thinking reflects the basic structure of *aufheben* qua experience in that the comprehension of the speculative identity of spirit is configured in three inter-related stages: the *Aufhebung* of the dimensions that form its logical identity (pure being and its reflected essence) in the concept; the *Aufhebung* of its identity as a logically determined ontological status; and the externalization of its logical determinacy in manifold nature. Spirit, in the form of the self-thinking of the concept, is the self-comprehension of the stages of the *Aufhebung* of its abstract apprehension in logic, and negation in nature. Thus, it is the

self-comprehension of its own *self-supersession* through the moments of its abstract presentation, developmental negation and philosophical comprehension.

What spirit comprehends, at the level of what we can now more directly refer to as the spiritual self-movement of the concept, is that it is the subject of its own process of 'becoming self-identical' to *truth*. Speculative thinking is identified, in a delicate distinction from the logic of *aufheben*, by the structure of the 'holding fast' of *sichaufheben*. In a passage that will anchor, in some sense, the totality of our third chapter, Hegel notes that '*speculative thinking* consists solely in the fact that thinking holds fast contradiction, and in it, its own self'.<sup>9</sup> The conceptual distinction between the movement of *aufheben* as it appears *in* and *as* the exposition of experience and speculative thinking qua holding fast is underscored by the theoretical reconstruction of the processual development of dialectics as the movement of conceptual enfoldment. This movement is, as I will show, presented more effectively in the *Logic* by an expression unique to the *Logic* (not appearing in the *Phenomenology*): *zurückgebogen* (*recurvature*). In order to properly articulate this movement the chapter will consist of an investigation into the status of speculation as it unfolds in Hegel's work, paying particular attention to four connected parts: its historical formation in early modern philosophy as the general operator of Western metaphysics; its preliminary, phenomenological presentation in the famous preface to the *Phenomenology*; its delicate distinction from dialectics and dialectical movement; and, crucially, its relation to the category of *life*.

The category of life is absolutely central to the comprehension of the conceptual and ontological status of the speculative as presented and explicated in the *Logic* in that the speculative, as we shall see, is the infinite life of thought (what Hegel consistently calls

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<sup>9</sup> SL, 440; 6: 76 (translation slightly modified).



‘logical life’) *prior* to its *creation* of finitude. The life of the speculative is, in a rather peculiar sense, the life that precedes life. This presentation of life draws attention to a central philosophical move that functions in this study as a whole; it signals the *self-reflexive* status of the posited distinction between *aufheben* and *sichaufheben*.

Self-reflexivity is a form of the movement of the Hegelian subject – spirit – in the moment of its conceptual self-determination. This is why, in the second volume of Hegel’s *Logic* (‘The Doctrine of the Concept’), the determinations of ‘self’ both proliferate (self-determination, self-creation, self-movement, self-presentation, self-development, etc.), and, more crucially, retroactively render fully intelligible their function in the first volume. The distinction between the ‘subjective’ move of self-reflexivity and the ‘objective’ move of reflection is that the former retroactively comprehends the latter as a necessary limit that does not adequately articulate itself within the context of its own notional mediation. Self-reflexivity, then, is a movement of *return*. Yet, this is not configured simply as, to note the expression Hegel employs in the first volume of his *Logic*, a ‘return-into-self,’ but rather, it articulates a return-into-*itself* as the subject that develops itself from out of itself. There is, accordingly, an essentially *genetic* moment expressed in the movement self-reflexivity and, indeed, in the fundamental ontological and historical structure of the movement of the Hegelian *subject*. Spirit is the activity of its own self-formation or, as I shall put it throughout this study, its *self-parturition*.

In so far as spirit is its ‘bringing *itself* to birth,’ its central activity is grasped as the becoming of that birth into itself or, to return to the opening of the *Logic*, the bringing of itself into the self-comprehension of its own essence *prior* to its creation.<sup>10</sup> The activity of

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<sup>10</sup> SS, 228. The expression ‘self-parturition’ is, as we shall see, a reconfiguration of an early Hegelian formulation of the life of spirit. It shares, in some (rather limited) sense, a conceptual affinity with the general

self-parturition articulates a *creation before creation*, that is, a *life before life*. And yet, in that the status of this ‘before’ is, strictly speaking, only retroactively comprehended from the standpoint of the end of speculative philosophy, the immediate temporal import of anteriority is disjointed in such a manner that what comes ‘before’ is in fact the identity of what was always already there and what became what was always already there in the expression of its self-consciousness. This fundamental speculative move comes only at the end of the philosophical system, that is, at the point at which speculative philosophy itself is comprehended in its formal distinction from the other forms of competing understandings of the absolute. The life that creates itself before the putative comprehension of ‘life’ (abstract, immediate sense), is a life that is self-reflexively grasped in the form of speculative philosophy as the most accomplished articulation of absolute spirit’s self-consciousness, that is, the grasping (*begreifen*) of its own concept (*Begriff*). It is, in a sense, only philosophy that can grasp the form of spirit’s life.

This is why spirit and life are constitutively interconnected in Hegel’s philosophy. Indeed, Hegel’s philosophy emerges, from its initial formulation, out of the injunction to ‘venture out into life.’<sup>11</sup> This venture of philosophy into life is one that fights against the reification of life into static, calcified determinations and mechanisms. The way in which Hegel comprehends this attempt to reanimate philosophy in the cultural life of his historical juncture is to provide a dynamic immanent dialectical negation of nominalist accounts of truth, that is, accounts of truth that posit it beyond the reality of life. If it is true that Hegel is

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orientation of Wendell Kisner’s exposition of the dialectical logic of *autopoiesis*; *Ecological Ethics and Living Subjectivity in Hegel’s Logic: The Middle Voice of Autopoietic Life*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. The distinction between our respective conceptions of self-parturition/autopoiesis is the context in which the concept is mobilized: for Kisner, Hegel’s ‘category derivation’ (an expression Kisner uses throughout his work) in the *Logic* is used as a supplement to an impasse in recent philosophies of biology (its normative claims – or ethics – and its categorial presuppositions – its presumed logic). The whole problem of Kisner’s work is its interpretation of Hegel’s *Logic* through an insufficiently problematized notion of ‘derivation.’

<sup>11</sup> D, 85; 2: 15.

the first metaphysician to, as Theodor W. Adorno once put it, ‘dirty his hands’ – that is, to refute nominalist accounts of truth by way of demonstrating that the universality of truth emerges *through* the process of the unfolding of concrete particularities – his project is nevertheless a metaphysics that seems to raise its ‘dirtied hands’ to the level of a necessary moment of speculative truth that retroactively determines the connection of its own processuality.<sup>12</sup>

It is through a reconstruction of the movement from ‘speculation’ to ‘logical life’ that the conceptual distinction between *aufheben* and *sichaufheben* finds a more precise and developed articulation. The structure of the *self-reflexivity* of *aufheben* is of central importance to Hegel’s philosophical project since it operates as the internal structure of the speculative identity of the concept, principally as the reflexivity of the ‘self’: the central articulation of spirit is the circular logic of the *folding* of its ‘self’, through the negativity of externalization, back into itself, which is to say, the structure of the movement that identifies spirit as ‘self-comprehending’, ‘self-determining’, ‘self-reflecting’, etc.<sup>13</sup> At the level of immediate understanding, the relation between *aufheben* and *sichaufheben* is indeed a wholly indifferent (bordering on tautological) one. Why? The notion of *aufheben*, as it is putatively grasped, constitutes the structure of the idea of the passage that results in the return, restoration and recovery of an historical and ontological form that is simply ‘negated’ by its abstractly posited opposition through the negation of that ‘negation.’ Accordingly, *aufheben*

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<sup>12</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1993, p.35.

<sup>13</sup> This notion of the Hegelian philosophical ‘fold’ was apprehended by Althusser in his doctoral thesis of 1947: ‘Hegel is the first to have thought the thinker in the truth thought, by dint of a prodigious effort to turn thought back upon itself. This *Umbiegen* is, properly speaking Self, i.e., self-reflection, by means of which the subject attains himself in the object he thinks. This undertaking may seem excessive; but it is the basis of the Hegelian revelation, and irrevocably sunders Hegel’s enterprise from those of all his predecessors.’ Louis Althusser, ‘On Content in the Thought of G. W. F. Hegel’, in *The Spectre of Hegel: Early Writings*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian, London and New York: Verso, 2014, p.101. Althusser does not, however, develop the sense of this ‘fold’ at the level of its actual philosophical presentation in Hegel’s work.

simply is the structure of the movement of the return – it is identical to the historical and ontological ‘what once was’ at a deepened register of comprehension.<sup>14</sup> Thus, *sichaufheben* is a pleonastic conceptual mode of expressing what is already contained (in a more condensed form) in *aufheben*. Furthermore, the movement of *aufheben* is identified as the structure of speculative thinking itself; the identity of the Hegelian subject is described by its capacity of *aufheben*. *A fortiori*, spirit is ontologically identical to *aufheben*: *spirit is Aufhebung*. And since spirit is the subject that, as we shall see, retroactively comprehends the moments of its development as its own, *it is its own self-supersession (sichaufheben)*.

The distinction rests on their *comprehension* at their *systematic* level. Speculative self-comprehension is the dissolution of the *ambiguous* structure of experience in that it retroactively determines the truth content of experience. Notwithstanding this dissolution of ambiguity, comprehension is still structured in a two-fold relation between (1) comprehension *of* the object that unfolds in itself and (2) comprehension *in* the object, which is to say, self-comprehension of itself as the object (for itself). This twofold structure of comprehension – which is nothing but the structure of speculative thinking – is articulated only at the level of the *passage* from the process of *aufheben* to its retroactive re-identification as spirit’s own self-supersession. Thus, at the core of the distinction between *aufheben* and *sichaufheben* is the distinction between different modalities of the *temporalization* of thinking: the temporalization of experience as the unfolding of the process

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<sup>14</sup> Žižek renders the distinction between *aufheben* and *sichaufheben* indifferent even though he terminologically employs the distinction: ‘the properly Hegelian matrix of development: the Fall is already *in itself* its own self-sublation; the wound is already in itself its own healing, so that the perception that we are dealing with the Fall is ultimately misperception, an effect of our skewed perspective – all we have to do is to accomplish the move from In-itself to For-itself: to change our perspective and recognize how the longed-for reversal is already operative in what is going on.’ Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, p.71. It is this ‘change in perspective’ that grounds Žižek’s Lacano-Hegelian *materialism*: ‘Materialism means that the reality I see is never “whole” – not because a large part of it eludes me, but because it contains a stain, blind spot, which indicates my inclusion in it.’ *The Parallax View*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006, p.17.

of what we could call the power to *spiritualize* (*begesiten* – a term coined by Hegel and meaning, I contend, the becoming self-conscious of the speculative whole as spirit's own life<sup>15</sup>), and the retrospective temporalization of comprehension as self-comprehension and self-consciousness of the truth of the process *in* its processuality.<sup>16</sup>

These two modes of temporalization – the dialectical and the speculative – are indeed interconnected. In so far as they are interconnected, their distinction is always illuminated, which is to say, their distinction is *in* their connection. It is only at the comprehension of this twofold temporalization that the distinction is resolved. This rests on the philosophical presupposition of the absolute self-identification of spirit as the truth in and for itself, which is to say, of truth as its own spiritualization. This presupposition, according to Hegel, requires systematic elaboration. From the outset however it suggests the following: there are moments in which the 'in itself' of truth is not always already its own self-supersession but rather consists of a movement in which *aufheben* emerges, but not immanently to the speculative logic of full appropriation or 'return'. The most salient example of this non-self-superseded (which means, non-comprehended in the speculative sense) form of *aufheben* is located, I contend, in the conceptual development of *aufheben itself*, which is to say, the

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<sup>15</sup> Translated as 'spiritual life' in the epigraph that opens this introduction.

<sup>16</sup> My own project appears as being remarkably close to Ryan Krahn's philosophical project as presented in his recently completed doctoral thesis: '[The] definition of a self-sublating or, shall we say, internally split *Aufhebung*, is the crux of our project.' Krahn, 'The Sublation of Dialectics: Hegel and the Logic of *Aufhebung*', doctoral thesis, p.66. An important distinction however is that Krahn is orientated toward the attempt at a *defence* of Hegelian logic against its 'deconstruction' via an expressly Žižekian exposition of the 'quadruplicity' of dialectical supersession, whereas my project is an attempt to *deepen* the impasse of its speculative core through a reflection of the undeveloped unity of *aufheben* and itself. My project does not function as a hermeneutical 'corrective' (through the proposition of a 'definition'), but rather presents, as I shall show below, a preparatory study in the historical transformation of the concept of *aufheben*. One ought to also add that Krahn does not sufficiently reflect on the philosophical structure and import of the self-reflexive form of *aufheben* because he reduces the movement of speculative thinking to dialectical movement, thus leaving the temporal aspect of Hegel's thought untouched.

development of spirit in moments in which its own development is not completely transparent to itself as its own.

It is in the fourth chapter that the reconstruction of the dialectical permeation of dialectical movement in the form of experiential *aufheben* and spiritual self-movement in the form of speculative *sichaufheben* will be fully developed. I will do this principally by attending to the *temporal disunity* at the core of the relation: the disunity of spirit's experiential formation as 'always already' self-identical from the level of its speculative self-comprehension, and the 'not yet' speculatively self-comprehended form of spirit in its actualization as *absolute spirit*. This temporal disunity will be exposed in more detail in three articulations of absolute spirit: first, in its relation to time at the end of the *Phenomenology*; second, in its transitional formation from out of 'world history' at the close of the second part of the *Philosophy of Spirit*; and third, in the sense of philosophy and its 'return' as disclosed at the end of the *Philosophy of Spirit*. The exposition of the temporality of absolute spirit will yield three distinct modes of temporalization: (1) the experiential temporalization of spirit in history; (2) the posited speculative temporalization of spirit in its absolute form; (3) the temporalization of speculative thinking as the comprehension of the contradiction of the first and second temporal forms. These modes are comprehended by a return to the three, temporal-logical forms of Hegel's philosophy: the finite, the infinite and self-finitude, or, the speculative infinite. This exposition will give rise to the comprehension of the diremption of the temporal mode of the 'present.' It is in this diremption that the sense of the productive disunity of Hegel's philosophy will find its most condensed philosophical formulation. What the reconstruction of the productive disunity of *aufheben* and *sichaufheben* yields is the conceptual exposure of an undeveloped conception of *reconstruction* itself. It is with a

presentation of reconstruction that this thesis will end, paying particular attention to its dialectical emergence from out of the presentation of construction in post-Kantian idealism (Fichte and Schelling's especially). I will show that 'reconstruction' is the clue to providing a renewed dynamic understanding of the speculative core of Hegel's philosophy, that is, its productive disunity.

Nothing as of yet, however, has been said of the *first* chapter of this study. This has been done purposefully in that the first chapter will provide not only the coordinates from whence the thesis begins but it articulates the most basic shape of the *method* that properly organizes the philosophical movement of the study, that is, the method that connects and comprehends the shift, as the chapter titles suggest, the threefold movement from 'Aufhebung' to *sichaufheben* via *aufheben*.

What the three chapters seem to presuppose however – at least at the level of their immediate presentation – is that *aufheben* is a *uniquely* Hegelian concept. The restriction of the term to Hegel's project alone has, in a sense, been a constitutive feature of its one-dimensional understanding. A defining feature of the conceptual development of *aufheben* is its emergence from a post-Kantian context of philosophical production, a context in which *aufheben* is formed, albeit implicitly, as a self-contained expression of conceptual and ontological movement. This is why this study begins with an exposition of the contested meaning and structure of the term from within the last five years of theoretical production in eighteenth century Germany.

The first chapter – "'Aufhebung' and the Need of Philosophy" – will be divided into two parts: first, it will attend to the conception of *aufheben* as it develops in a constellation of philosophical texts in the immediate aftermath of the Kantian revolution: Friedrich Schiller's

*Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), Novalis' *Fichte Studies* (1795-6), the so-called 'Oldest System-Program of German Idealism,' Friedrich Hölderlin's philosophical fragment 'On Judgement and Being' and some short fragments from Hegel's early pre-Jena writings (principally the fragments on 'love'). At the centre of this constellation of writings is the mobilization of *aufheben* as a logical and ontological articulation of the structure of the movement of the subject's reconciliation with the object, and thus the dissolution of the diremption that constitutes modern existence. According to Schiller, the concept of *aufheben*, as a logically limited concept of unity, expresses the failed attempt of the aesthetic articulation of the *harmonious* unity of man with himself. For Novalis, it expresses a post-Fichtean articulation of the a priori movement of the 'positing' of the subject. It is a movement, however, that remains, as it does in Schiller, caught within the limits of reflection. It is only with the project of Schelling and Hegel (and Hölderlin), that the limits of the Kantian philosophy, as it is customarily practiced at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, are traversed.

The second half of the chapter will explore this traversal of the subjective philosophies of reflection by attending to the emergence of *aufheben* in the initial presentation of the task of speculative philosophy in the *Differenzschrift* (1801) as 'the sublation of diremption (*die Aufhebung der Entzweiung*).'<sup>17</sup> This chapter will close by observing that the programmatic articulation of the idea of the 'sublation of diremption' constitutively reflects the ideal posited reconciliatory form of the notion of the 'need of philosophy (*Bedürfnis der Philosophie*).'<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, '*Aufhebung*' is abstractly posited as being constitutively related to the program of the 'becoming-philosophical' of philosophical

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<sup>17</sup> D, 155; 2: 94.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 89; 2: 20.



reflection and thinking itself.<sup>19</sup> As a concept, it emerges from out of the specific philosophical trajectories that make up what we putatively refer to as post-Kantian idealism, Weimar classicism and Jena Romanticism. What the first chapter tries to show is that, above all else, *aufheben* goes through conceptual transformation within the post-Kantian philosophical context. It is not, accordingly, an expression unique to Hegel's philosophy alone. The exposition of the transformation of *aufheben* yields a *defamiliarization* of both the conceptual structure and topological restriction of *aufheben*. It is here that the distinctive methodological approach I follow, and try to give some sense to, is initially actualized. I end these introductory remarks with a brief reflection on the general methodological orientation employed in this study.

Every philosophical work on Hegel passes, willingly or not, through the mediation of its historical reception, since it is this reception that forms the historical setting for any study that grasps the fundamental Hegelian lesson of notional mediation. Hegel's historical reception, however, is not immediately recognizable as a homogenously unified corpus of texts. Rather, it is made up of diverse theoretical trajectories and philosophical positions. To provide a systematic exposition of the historical reception of Hegel's thought since his death in 1831 (a reception that begins somewhat immediately after his death with F. W. J. Schelling's lectures of 1833-4 on the history of modern philosophy) would require a massive theoretical effort, one that far exceeds the aims of this thesis.<sup>20</sup> That said, one could argue that the reception of Hegel is unified by a relation to the notion of *aufheben*. I am inclined to

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<sup>19</sup> I will not pay close attention to the longer essays from the pre-Jena period for a very specific reason. As I will show in the first chapter, only a few writings from Hegel's pre-Jena period are explicitly formed around the attempt to produce a speculative philosophy of the whole. In a sense, the longer essays are distinctively circumspect about such a production. The proper place of the emergence of what we recognize as Hegel's philosophy is located, I believe, in the first writings in Jena. The reasons for this, as we shall see, are centered on the reflection on philosophical methodology.

<sup>20</sup> F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

expand Karl Löwith's insight, namely that the central theoretical debates that formed the philosophical arena immediately after Hegel's death consisted of differing interpretations of *aufheben*, into a much larger historical claim: the history of the development of philosophical and 'post-philosophical' thought after 1831 is punctuated by critiques of *aufheben*.<sup>21</sup>

Although the distinctions between the different positions punctuating the reception of Hegel's work are clear (there is, for example, a clear differentiation between Karl Marx's materialist critique of the speculative claim of philosophy's 'self-sufficiency' and Martin Heidegger's critique of *aufheben* as articulating the most accomplished expression of *Innerzeitigkeit* in his project of fundamental ontology), it is a certain *presumed unity* of *aufheben* that unifies the strands of the reception. This presumed unity has become, the *presumption* notwithstanding, the *familiar horizon on which an understanding of aufheben is initially mediated*.

With the persistent repetition of the familiarity of Hegel's philosophy as an inherently failed attempt to actualize absolute knowledge, *aufheben* has become an increasingly calcified aspect of Hegel's philosophy. Indeed, the more it is centralized as the philosophical impossibility destabilizing Hegel's thought, the more it is hypostatized at a distinctively inert philosophical level (philosophy as ideology, philosophy contra historical science, philosophy as onto-theology, etc.). What I mean by this is the following: *aufheben* ceases to be a notion that *develops within and against itself* in the philosophical project that tries to inaugurate an anti-nominalist account of truth (truth is comprehended in and through its untruth), thus breathing life into the form of its presentation. Raised to the level of the familiar, *aufheben*

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<sup>21</sup> 'The schism of the Hegelian school into right and left wings was made possible by the basic ambiguity of Hegel's dialectical *Aufhebungen*, which could be interpreted conservatively and revolutionarily with equal ease.' Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, trans. David E. Green, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, p.70. (It is worth noting that Löwith signals the ambiguity of Hegel's *aufheben*; he does not however provide a philosophical analysis of its structure.)

becomes nothing but the empty self-identity of the ‘immediacy’ that Hegel so powerfully revealed and critiqued in his major philosophical works, thus losing its immanent dialectical character. The principle conceptual symptom of the familiarization of *aufheben* as, to recall Jacques Derrida’s formulation, the ‘speculative concept par excellence,’ is, *for us*, the strictly *one-sided understanding* of *aufheben* as *the* familiar problem of Hegel’s philosophy, that is, as the a priori ‘problem’ – that is, the positive reintegration and re-appropriation of the negative – of Hegel’s philosophy.<sup>22</sup>

Here a more refined point needs to be made: the experience of our familiarity with *aufheben* as an ‘a priori problem’ that mediates the experience of Hegel’s philosophy is not something that develops at specific intervals in the historical reception, but rather constitutes, more precisely, a certain effect of the dominance of those intervals when connected and converted into a theoretical field (‘postmodern’) with readily recognizable tropes and mechanisms. Any ‘corrective’ to the interpretations of *aufheben*, however, finds its most general determinate presupposition in a *historicist* assumption (assuming that history is a thing that moves forward and depositing its moments only as things of the past on an account of their mere passage) that deflates a proper interrogation of the experience of the field as one

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<sup>22</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p.324. In some sense, Derrida’s work (in his 1967 and 1972 publications, especially) gives us the most accomplished articulation of the assumption of the presumed unity of *aufheben*. It is because Derrida stresses the immanent relation of ‘difference’ and *aufheben* from the standpoint of the conditions of its possibility/impossibility that his exposition of Hegel’s philosophical term falls short, even though it is supposedly the central philosopheme mobilizing the ‘strategy’ of deconstruction. The historical reception of Derrida’s work has too readily positioned ‘deconstruction’ in polemical contra-distinction to Hegel’s *aufheben*, thus ‘systematically [overlooking] the Hegelian character of its own operation.’ Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, London and New York: Verso, 2008, p.32. Derrida clearly knew that the logic of *aufheben* was not one premised on the presupposition or assumption of ‘binary oppositions’, and resulting in a valorization of the pre-established dominant moment in that opposition; rather, *aufheben* – and this is why its movement and the movement of difference constitutes ‘a point of almost absolute proximity to Hegel’ – is the logic that *discloses* the pre-critical assumption of theoretical opposition. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass, London and New York: Continuum, 2004, p.40. As we shall see in the first and second chapters, Hegel’s early Jena writings – and the inauguration of his philosophical project – emerges from precisely the examination and dialectical critique of the presupposition of what he calls ‘direct’ or ‘absolute opposition’.

that mediates the contemporary standpoint. An unquestioned recourse to the historicist standpoint is ignorant of the historical mediation of its own standpoint and thus, in some sense, *reactionary*. A distinctive feature of the reactionary-historicist position is the assumption that a given ‘familiar understanding’ is apprehended as only *one-dimensionally*, or *one-sidedly*, familiar. That is, the inner sense of the familiar is simply given as always already identical to itself, which is to say, *familiar in-itself*. Consequently, the distinct quality of the familiar is not comprehended from out of the movement of its own dialectical development, that is, from out of the process of the transformation of itself from out of its initial non-dialectical appearance.<sup>23</sup> I crystalize this methodological gesture of the dialectical exposition of what appears as ‘familiar,’ paraphrasing an expression of the Russian formalist Viktor Shlovsky, in terms of the *defamiliarization of the familiar*.<sup>24</sup>

The notion of defamiliarization is at work in an *implicit* sense in Hegel’s thought. In his preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel notes that ‘the familiar, just because it is familiar, is not cognitively understood.’<sup>25</sup> Defamiliarization, to render the meaning of this famous adage explicit, is structured by two constitutive aspects of the transformation of the familiar: first, it

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<sup>23</sup> This gesture finds its most accomplished expression in Žižek’s work: ‘*Aufhebung* is often put forward as exemplary of everything that is “idealist metaphysical” about Hegel: does it not signal the very operation by means of which all external contingency is overcome and integrated into the necessary self-deployment of the universal notion? Against this operation, it is fashionable to insist that there is always a remainder of contingency, of particularity, which cannot be *aufgehoben*, which resists its conceptual (dis)integration. The irony here is that the very term Hegel uses to designate this operation is marked by the irreducible contingency of an idiosyncrasy of the German language.’ *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Historical Materialism*, London and New York: Verso, 2012, pp. 470-471. Žižek misses the dialectical lesson to be drawn from what is ‘often put forward as exemplary’: it contains within itself a distinctive experiential content. Notwithstanding this un-dialectical move, my own research will sustain some sympathetic relation to Žižek’s project.

<sup>24</sup> Viktor Shlovsky, ‘Art and Technique,’ in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003, p.280. One could perhaps trace the problem of familiarization to Giambattista Vico’s *New Science* and, more precisely, its examination of the peculiar custom that what cannot be easily grasped is restored to ‘what is familiar and at hand.’ Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984, p.60.

<sup>25</sup> PS, §31; 3: 35.

consists of grasping the permeation of what appears as a rigid opposition between an immediately present familiar phenomenon and what is posited in contra-distinction to the familiar (the unfamiliar, the unknown). Second, it articulates a manner of grasping *that is carried out at the level of the familiar itself*. It is the second aspect that renders the first properly intelligible since the permeation of what appears immediately as directly oppositional is in reality contained in the *appearance* of what is taken as split between two externally and mutually exclusive things, in our case, the familiar and the absolutely unfamiliar, that is, what is unknown as an absolute, horizontal beyond (which, as we shall see in the second chapter, finds its clearest expression in Jena Romanticism via a reconstruction of the Catholic concept of transubstantiation). Instead of sustaining the absolutization of the opposition, defamiliarization grasps the familiar as an appearance, and consequently, as a distinctively *relational* phenomenon momentarily cut off from the constitutive dimension of its relation.

What this means in relation to the general historical setting in which this study is situated is the following: the understanding of *aufheben* experienced in a certain un-philosophical manner in that it is an experience based on a presupposed, general opposition between the maintenance of ‘being a Hegelian today’ and its suspension. At the basis of this perennially posed issue – viz. of the possibility of being a Hegelian today – is the manner in which the totality of Hegel’s thought is comprehended.<sup>26</sup> The fact that it is either vociferously defended or egregiously attacked is not quite the point; the point is that these two positions as appearing standpoints in current Hegel scholarship are the externalized proof of the internal mechanism of the presupposition of an opposition that structures the (false)

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Is it Still Possible to be a Hegelian Today?’ is the title of the fourth chapter of Žižek’s *Less Than Nothing*, pp.193-240.

necessity of the ‘choice’ (you either fully assume the Hegelian position or radically reject its central philosophical orientation).<sup>27</sup> Defamiliarization, however, should not be understood as a progressivist methodological ‘third way.’ It is the name of the complex process of trying to disinter the dialectical quality of what initially appears as wholly un-dialectical. In the case of the isolation of *aufheben* and the historical reception of its critique, what is familiar is the sense in which it operates in the philosophical imagination as the unattainable result of the German idealist philosophical legacy in the form of its highest articulation. This familiarity, I claim, should be pushed further. What is revealed through defamiliarization is that there is indeed a certain truth to the claim, namely that there is something disturbing at the core of the general charge of speculative philosophy (the unity of substance and subject in and as the *Aufhebung* of spirit). This truth, however, is merely a one-sided appearance of a deeper undisclosed truth, one that, as this thesis maintains, consists of the internal dialectical structure of *aufheben* itself.

As I will try to show, what forms the innermost core of Hegel’s conception of the speculative whole is not an a priori unity that must be unified with itself via a speculative logic of supersession that is configured as the eternal metahistorical scheme of all transition, becoming and movement, but rather an immanent division of *aufheben* as the disunity of the

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<sup>27</sup> In the English-speaking world, a *revised tendency* of the former seems to be the most prevalent standpoint. This tendency seems, more often than not, to find its ultimate expression with one-dimensional correctives of historical ‘misunderstandings’ of Hegel’s thought, thus ushering, as if unnoticed, a kind of fantasy of unmediated connectivity to the Hegelian source. A striking example of this is Stephen Houlgate’s recent work, *The Opening of Hegel’s*. Ironically, the way to ‘save’ Hegel from his historical reception is to insert into his body of work a concept that Hegel never employs or develops: the *open*. Hegel’s *Logic*, for example, emerges as a ‘self-critical *openness* to being rather than from the assumption of absolute closure.’ Ibid. 58. The ‘open’ is increasingly mobilized as the speculative kernel of Hegel’s philosophy. See Karin de Boer, ‘Hegel’s Account of the Present: An Open-Ended History’, in *Hegel and History*, ed. Will Dudley, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009; William Maker, ‘The End of History and the Nihilism of Becoming’ in *ibid*; Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, p.217-26; and Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, trans. Lisabeth During, London and New York: Routledge, 2005. Malabou gives us the boldest philosophical exposition of the ontological ‘openness’ of being in Hegel in so far as it focuses its reading on an insufficiently disclosed notion in Hegel’s oeuvre, namely the notion of plasticity.

process of the becoming of spirit's truth and the result of its truth as the retroactive determination of both its processual becoming and its initially posited truth qua 'result.' It is, at bottom, the *immanent disunity of the spirit's truth and the temporal process of its becoming* – one could say, the disunity of the subject and time in Hegel – that this thesis will attempt to disclose and exploit.





## ‘*Aufhebung*’ and the Need of Philosophy

When the might of union vanishes from the life of men and the antitheses lose their living connection and reciprocity and gain independence, the need of philosophy arises.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.1 Introductory Remark

The French philosopher Jean Wahl once noted that the comprehension (and translation) of *aufheben* was ‘*toute la clef du hégélianisme*.’<sup>29</sup> In order to unlock the mysteries of Hegel, one must, first and foremost, grasp its key. Caught in this metaphor is a rather anti-Hegelian formulation: *aufheben* is understood in terms of a spatial and instrumental status. By isolating the notion from its exposition in the philosophy, the issue of *aufheben* becomes a kind of philosophical leitmotif that inscribes every examination of Hegel prior to the examination itself. So, before one even reads Hegel’s work, one knows that the problem at its centre is that of the logic of, as Althusser once put it, the ‘innocent but sly concept’ of *aufheben*.<sup>30</sup> And yet, is Wahl not somewhat justified in reifying *aufheben* to the status of a key? After all, the history of the critical reception of Hegel’s thought can, in some sense, be grasped as a history of the critique of the logic of *aufheben* as central structure of the movement of the systematic consummation of the absolute in and as *absolute knowledge*.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> D, 91; 2: 22.

<sup>29</sup> Jean Wahl, ‘Le rôle de A. Koyré dans le développement des études hégéliennes en France,’ *Hegel-Studien – Beiheft*, 3, herausgegeben von Hans-Georg Gadamer, Bonn: Bouvier, 1966, p.22. I first came across this reference in Gwendoline Jarczyk and Pierre-Jean Labarrière, *Hegeliana*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986, p.102.

<sup>30</sup> Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster, London and New York: Verso, 2005, p.82.

<sup>31</sup> The most immediately apprehended legacy in the historical reception is the so-called historical materialist critique, which has as its basis the division of ‘method’ and ‘system.’ Although it is Frederick Engels who is normally seen as the root of this division, it is perhaps Schelling who gives us the initial philosophical expression. Interestingly, it is Engels who provides us with a succinct formulation of Schelling’s division of the unity of Hegel’s thought. See Frederick Engels, ‘Schelling on Hegel’ (1841) in Marx and Engels, *Collected*

What we lose sight of in this totalization of Hegel's philosophy, in itself and through its historical reception, is that *aufheben* is not a concept unique to Hegel's philosophy alone. It is, as we shall see, an expression of conceptual and ontological movement that unfolds in competing philosophical texts that emerge in the five (remarkably productive) years of the eighteenth century.<sup>32</sup>

A genealogy of *aufheben* as it emerges in modern German philosophy could perhaps begin with Kant's famous expression in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: 'I had to deny (*aufheben*) knowledge in order to make room for faith.'<sup>33</sup> *Aufheben* operates here as a merely descriptive term within the context of the disqualification of 'all practical extension of pure reason.'<sup>34</sup> It, more importantly, functions within the wider context of the project of the initial elaboration of the concept of critique and its relation to the objective validity of synthetic judgements a priori, which is to say, cognition free of experience. The critical project however does not consciously reflect on the specific form of

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*Works*, 2, pp.183-5. This legacy is taken up by Adorno and later, by Fredric Jameson. For the latter, see *Valences of the Dialectic*, London and New York: Verso, 2009; see especially, pp.8-9. For a useful exposition of the division see Ernst Bloch, 'Problem der Engelsschen Trennung von "Methode" und "System" bei Hegel,' *Über Methode und System bei Hegel*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970. And for a Hegelian response to this division, see Gillian Rose, 'From Speculative to Dialectical Thinking: Hegel and Adorno', in *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

<sup>32</sup> The year 1795 inaugurates this 'spike' in artistic and philosophical expression in Germany. To list its most prominent 'products': Kant's essay on 'Perpetual Peace'; the first edition of J. G. Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*; Friedrich Hölderlin's *Hyperion* ('On Judgment of Being', although unpublished, is composed); Novalis' *Fichte Studies*; Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*; Ludwig Tieck's *Die Geschichte des Herrn William Lovell*; and F. W. J. Schelling's *On the 'I' as a Principle of Philosophy*. The historical setting to these works is clear: 1795, the year 'la Marseillaise' became the official anthem of the republic, was preceded by the year of the 'reign of Terror', the year in which France was governed by the revolutionary regime of the Committee of Public Safety (the National Convention) and the massacres of September 1792. We shall come to this setting shortly.

<sup>33</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, Bxxx (henceforth 'CPR'). Giorgio Agamben has recently provided a historically defamiliarized archaeology of '*Aufhebung*', although its terminological and historical legitimacy is questionable considering Hegel's own commitment to the specifically post-Kantian project of speculative identity (Agamben's reconstruction focuses on Martin Luther's notion of *aufheben* via a translation of Aristotelian categories). See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp.99-101.

<sup>34</sup> The omission, for example, of the concept of *aufheben* in Howard Caygill's *Kant Dictionary* is not, I believe, wholly fortuitous. Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995.

the negativity of *aufheben* within the exposition of the theory of knowing and, by extension, the critical project of the suspension of metaphysics as such.

It is only with the overcoming of philosophies of reflection, a philosophical initiative historically exposed in Hegel's 1801 *Differenzschrift*, but theoretically activated by young anti-Fichteans during the last years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (in particular Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich von Hardenberg), that *aufheben* begins to be mobilized at a consciously reflected *conceptual* level, which is to say, as a determinate philosophical expression. The historical setting of this focus of the concept of *aufheben* within the post-Kantian context of the overcoming of philosophies of reflection is located more precisely in a constellation of post-Kantian texts: Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), Novalis' *Fichte Studies* (1795), and some philosophical fragments from Hegel and his young colleagues in the two years proceeding the publication of Schiller's epistolary work.<sup>35</sup> Notwithstanding its own subordination of the achievement of the 'aesthetic state' to the limits of experience, the *Aesthetic Education*, grounded at once in Kant's ethical philosophy and distinctively post-Kantian in its construction of the moral character, functions in this chapter as the salient transition from the insistence of the finitude of subjective reflection to the infinite self-production of being itself since it is in Schiller, Novalis and Hegel that the concept of

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<sup>35</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters*, trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, Oxford: Clarendon, 1982. Henceforth 'AE', with Latin number noting the letter number and Arabic number denoting the paragraph number. Recently, the debate of the philosophical origin of the overcoming of the philosophies of reflection is developed in the works of Dieter Henrich and Manfred Frank. According to Henrich, it is the work of the young Hölderlin that occupies the privileged place in the historical transformation of Kantian and post-Kantian philosophies; see Dieter Henrich, 'The Place of Hölderlin's "Judgment and Being", *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2003. According to Frank, this transformative theoretical moment can be traced back to the early philosophical works of Novalis; for details of their distinction see Manfred Frank, 'On Novalis' Pivotal Role in Early German Romanticism', *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004. A striking omission in their research however is a sustained examination of the relation both Hölderlin and Novalis maintained throughout their philosophical formation to the work of Schiller. Henrich provides short, mostly bibliographical notes on this influence; see Henrich, op. cit. pp.65-81.

*aufheben* is more fully developed as the structure of the movement of ‘infinite self-production.’ An exposition of Schiller’s and Novalis’ conception of *aufheben* is of some importance for a philosophical study of *aufheben* in so far as they give us the most sophisticated articulations of the *limits of aufheben*: the failure of the actualization of the harmony of beauty in the aesthetic state (in Schiller) and the impossibility of the immanent transcendence of finitude (in Novalis). The historical constellation then forms the shape of a philosophical debate in which limits are elaborated and traversed.

There is, however, a striking lacuna in the history of Hegel scholarship around the question of the relation between Schiller’s and Novalis’ conception of *aufheben* as exposed and developed in the *Aesthetic Education* and the *Fichte Studies*, and Hegel’s concept, which began to take proper shape in the first writings of the year 1797. There are, at best, notes that point toward the historical connection between Schiller’s and Hegel’s expositions.<sup>36</sup> And yet, these notes at times offer too hastily theoretical judgements that themselves require deeper analysis.<sup>37</sup> In order to grasp the philosophical co-ordinates of Hegel’s *aufheben*, the complex

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<sup>36</sup> I have thus far come across only one text that attempts to explicate the relation of Schiller’s and Hegel’s conception of supersession: Ralph Palm, ‘Hegel’s Concept of Sublation: A Critical Examination’ (doctoral thesis), pp.186-8. Palm’s (disappointingly laconic) intervention fails to establish, perhaps as a result of the thesis’ overly protracted terminological concern, the movement between the terms themselves as they (a) develop in Schiller’s letters (we have, for example, no sense of *why* Schiller employs the term within a philosophical context), and (b) as this concept is taken up and developed by Hegel through an engagement with Schiller’s letters. In a remarkably anti-Hegelian move, Palm’s ‘examination’ of Schiller is in no way immanent; it is mobilized on Palm’s own terminological reflections (this same ‘schema’ is subsequently employed against Kant and Marx – the name of the other two personages in Palm’s ‘overview’). In Palm’s defence however, the brief reflections do *stage* the crucial distinction between the ‘results’ of Schiller’s notion (the impossibility of harmony) of supersession and Hegel’s (the form of the ‘impossibility’ as a moment of the dialectical development of supersession itself). It is worth noting Josef Chytry, *The Aesthetic State: A Quest in Modern German Thought*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989. Although it comprehends the transition of Schiller’s notion of the ‘aesthetic state’ into Hegel’s idea of the ‘*Aufhebung* of the state’, the work itself does not reflect on the conceptual specificity of the very idea of *Aufhebung* as it develops from Schiller to Hegel.

<sup>37</sup> The editorial notes to the English translation of Hegel’s Frankfurt texts ‘Two Fragments on the Ideal of Social Life’ are exemplary: ‘The use of “*aufheben*” in this fragment is strictly negative (like Schiller’s employment of the term in the *Aesthetic Letters*). It was probably from this source that the concept entered Hegel’s philosophical vocabulary’, M, 148. The problem is whether either Schiller’s or indeed (by extension) the young Hegel’s employment of *aufheben* is ‘strictly negative.’ We shall see how, in Schiller’s case, it is the rendering

convergence and divergence of the points of the historical constellation of philosophical texts that develop conceptions of *aufheben* ought to be reconstructed since it is within the context of 1795-1800 that Hegel forms his notion.

## 1.2 Aesthetics in the Age of the 'Committee of Public Safety'

Schiller's conception of *aufheben* develops throughout the *Aesthetic Education*, which is to say it conceptually unfolds from the first letter (in which indeed the term is first employed) to the last, thus articulating distinct moments of different intelligibilities and significance. This developmental dimension makes the establishment of meaning difficult. That said, the position of *aufheben* in relation to Schiller's wider project is unequivocal: the term is mobilized in clear distinction to a higher form of union, namely the union of *harmony* (presented in the eighteenth letter). 'Harmony', as we shall see, constitutes the superiority of the artistic expression (aesthetic 'semblance', as Schiller puts it in the last two letters) of the true union of the 'subject' with itself and society over that of (1) a purely formal mode of expression (the philosophical exposition of the identity of subject and object by way of a foundational principle); and (2) a purely 'lyrical' mode of expression of unity. *Aufheben* is, in Schiller's letters, presented as the very *failure* to raise philosophy itself into the unity of its own independent (self-sufficient) self-consciousness since it is essentially limited by the subordination of the sensuous order to the strictly rational order. To understand the limits of

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*positive* of *aufheben* that properly underscores its negativity (internal only to the regulative idea of harmony) and in what sense, in the young Hegel's case, *aufheben* fails to sufficiently reflect on its own positive expression in the context of his theoretical development. I would also like to make note here of the instrumental reduction of *aufheben* to 'mere negativity' (or cancellation) within the context of the comprehension of the development of German idealism from Fichte to Hegel via Schelling. It is not at all clear, if one considers Schelling's 1813 *Weltalter* for example, that 'supersession' is employed in the purely negative sense of cancellation. For an example of this instrumentalized reduction, see George J. Seidel, *Activity and Ground: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel*, New York: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 1976, pp.158-60.

*aufheben* then we need to attend to the general intention and structure of Schiller's project of aesthetic education as a whole.

The basic aim of Schiller's *Aesthetic Education* can perhaps be described in the following condensed way: the letters constitute an attempt to raise the concept of aesthetic beauty to the level of the articulation of the *conditions for the possibility of*, what I would like to tentatively call, a *speculative psychology of genius*.<sup>38</sup> This immediately suggests two things. First, the work is essentially transcendental in the *structure* of its theoretical orientation (the elaboration of beauty through the construction of the play-drive of the aesthetic character is to 'genius,' what critique is to the system of speculative philosophy).<sup>39</sup> Second, the works of genius itself are the outstanding task of the aesthetic character, which in turn gives the expression 'genius' a rather focused meaning: 'genius' is the higher expression of the 'statesman-artist (*Staatskünstler*)' who, through his productions, raises the self-identity of the living form of truth to its realization in the work of art.<sup>40</sup> The genius brings *harmony* to the totality of socio-political dissonances; his project consists in the infinite approximation of the perfected aesthetic state. (It is worth recalling that 'genius' is a principle theme of Goethe's 1770's poetry, and indeed a central category of the *Sturm und Drang* movement.)

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<sup>38</sup> I have opted for the expression 'speculative psychology' for two reasons: first, that Schiller's philosophical orientation, regardless of its *structural* affinity to Kant's transcendental philosophy, is directed toward the rehabilitation of the concept of truth in a post-Kantian setting. Second: it strikes me that the expression 'anthropology,' which is putatively associated with Schiller's *Aesthetic Education*, invokes a more holistic and materialist interpretation of 'man'; if we follow the letters closely, Schiller is dedicated more to the task of elucidating the form of the aesthetic character or *psyche* (*Gemüt*). To state that the project is a 'speculative anthropology' is to inadvertently convert Schiller into Ludwig Feuerbach. For a general introduction to the 'anthropological perspective' of Schiller's work, see Walter Hinderer, 'Schiller's Philosophical Aesthetics in Anthropological Perspective', in *A Companion to the Works of Friedrich Schiller*, ed. Steve. D. Martinson, Rochester NY: Camden House, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> '[W]e are, after all, struggling for a firm basis of knowledge which nothing shall shake,' Schiller, AE, X.7.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. IV.4. For the articulation of the privilege of theatre in this context, see Friedrich Schiller, 'The Stage Considered as a Moral Institution', *An Anthology for Our Time*, trans. Jane Bannard Greene, New York: Frederick Ungar, 1959. For a general introduction to Schiller's political thought within the philosophical context of its development, see Frederick C. Beiser, 'The Political Thought of Friedrich Schiller, 1781-1800', *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790-1800*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

The expression, although not really employed in the letters<sup>41</sup>, is perhaps invoked more implicitly in the form of the 'noble' character, whose central essential trait is striving to produce the '*aesthetic state*', that is, the reconstruction of society itself through the power of beauty.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, the task set out by the letters is strictly confined: it is the formation of the concept of *beauty in the idea of the play-drive*<sup>43</sup> as the aesthetic *unification* of the two conditions of man's reality, the sensuous drive of feeling and the formal drive of rational critique.<sup>44</sup>

The motivation for the reconstruction of the idea of an *aesthetics of beauty* – where 'aesthetics' is not reducible either to the lyrical description of the state of feeling or a science categorially restricted by the understanding's critique of reason – is the unification of the disjunction and internal antagonism of the modern individual with himself and, by extension, with the scientific and political divisions established by modern *culture (Kultur)*.<sup>45</sup> It is, rather paradoxically, the *sophisticated* development of the forms of culture *itself* – (i) the *specialization* (thus isolation and division) of knowledge through the critique of reason and the development of the empirical sciences; (ii) the political subsumption of the individual will by the general (exemplified in the central concept of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*);

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<sup>41</sup> The lexical omission of the expression 'genius' throughout the letters is I believe poignant apropos our preliminary presentation of the architecture of Schiller's work as strictly Kantian: Schiller wants to give an account of the essential character of 'genius' and not provide a *work of genius in itself*. For an interesting and useful exploration of genius within the specific context of the Kantian and Romantic motif of the un-presentability of the absolute, see David E. Wellbery, 'Genius and the Wounded Subject of Modernity', *Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

<sup>42</sup> Schiller, AE, XXVII.11. On the meaning of 'nobility' see footnote to XXIII.7.

<sup>43</sup> For the preliminary schematic exposition of the 'play-drive', see *ibid.* XIV. For an exposition of the antinomy of the sensuous drive and form drive, see XII.

<sup>44</sup> Schiller's letters provide a more theoretically focused articulation of the relationship between artistic production and socio-political reform than his philosophical predecessor J. G. Herder (who isolated 'language' as the medium and potential agency of reform). Schiller's work is very much contributing to this field of discourse.

<sup>45</sup> See principally Schiller, AE, V.

(iii) the promulgation of *public opinion*<sup>46</sup> (reflected in the emergence of periodicals and journals, which for Schiller, reflects more deeply the rise in private property relations in specific social contexts such as reading parlours, coffee houses and bookshops<sup>47</sup>) – that has given way to culture's ultimate demise, degradation and depravity of socio-political relations.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, 'culture' is the metaphysical name of the scene of the divisions of modernity. And yet, inasmuch as it is the over-arching realm *in which* the antagonisms of the modern individual occur, it also expresses the promise of man's re-integration of himself with his own freedom ('things which never make contact cannot collide'<sup>49</sup>). The dominant form of the division of culture is raised to new heights in 'the new spirit of government', which in Schillerian language refers to the France of the 'Committee of Public Safety.'<sup>50</sup>

The cultural form of this government operates as the contextual *subject* through which the modern individual is formed, and therefore, shaped in his essential antagonism through subjugation to its order (a state not determined by his own volition). In so far as the state is itself divided, it only has the power of infinitely reproducing this division in the modern

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<sup>46</sup> For a general introduction to the historical setting of the distinction between public life and the realm of the state, see David Blackbourn, 'Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century', *History of Germany 1780-1918: The Long Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. For an intellectual history of the notion of the 'public' in early German Enlightenment, see Benjamin W. Redekop, *Enlightenment and Community: Lessing, Abbt, Herder, and the Quest for a German Public*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000. For a philosophically inflected problematization of the 'public-state' debate, see Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*, Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1988; and Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger, Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1991.

<sup>47</sup> Against the emergence of a bourgeois class conscious of wider socio-political and economic debates through the printed press, Schiller's claim that the ideas of the *Aesthetic Education* 'derived from constant communicating with myself rather than from any rich experience of the world or from reading' (AE, I.2) seems provocative.

<sup>48</sup> 'In the very bosom of the most exquisitely developed social life egotism has founded its system, and without ever acquiring therefrom a heart that is truly sociable, we suffer all the contagions and afflictions of society', *ibid.* V.5. It is important to underscore this distinction between 'sociable' and 'society' in that the former expresses the aesthetic unity of man whereas the other is an externally imposed historical form.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* XIII.2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* VI.7. See also II.3. Apropos the specific historical moment, I have consulted two works: Georges Lefebvre, *The Thermidorians*, trans. Robert Baldick, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1965 and R. R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.



consciousness. And in so far as consciousness is divided, man cannot attain the highest form of his unity, namely *freedom*.

The principle elements of this division – the ‘two-sides’ of the problem if you will<sup>51</sup> – are what Schiller refers to as the essential conditions of man’s being: *feeling* and *thinking*, or, more precisely put, the finite realm of man’s physical existence – *condition* (*Zustand*) – and the infinite realm of reason, man’s capacity to think the idea of the unity of the manifold (that is, to connect and tie together his finite experiences) – the *person* (*Person*).<sup>52</sup> The opposition between ‘feeling’ and ‘thinking’ – an opposition that will be codified more systematically in the notion of the ‘drives’ – is the central *antinomy* of the letters. It expresses the basic theoretical obstacle to be overcome. The philosophical *issue* can, accordingly, be summed up as follows: to attain the higher unity of freedom man must *unify* his two conditions since, in that they are his actual conditions, they (a) express his essential character and (b) give rise to his capacity to create.<sup>53</sup> Freedom however is only attainable, according to Schiller, on the condition that ‘the character of the age...first [lifts] itself out of its deep degradation’.<sup>54</sup> The principle articulation of this elevation is that of the *aesthetic character*.<sup>55</sup>

What we have here, I would like to suggest, is the prototypical articulation of two central elements of the preliminary expression of Hegel’s philosophical project: first, the theoretical supposition of the ‘need of philosophy (*Bedürfnis der Philosophie*),’ that through

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<sup>51</sup> The pejorative judgment of ‘one-sidedness,’ normally and immediately attributed to Hegel’s conception of the structure of the ‘dialectic,’ is in fact first a Schillerian motif; see for example, Schiller, AE, VI.13 and XVII.4.

<sup>52</sup> These categories are specific to Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*. More about this context will be discussed shortly.

<sup>53</sup> Schiller, AE, III.1.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. VII.3.

<sup>55</sup> The notion of character is Schiller’s central ‘corrective’ to Kant’s practical philosophy. According to Schiller, Kant’s ethics do not elucidate the *way in which* (that is to say, in what character) man should carry out the categorical imperative (without the subsumption of man’s inclination by duty the imperative would not be categorical). The separation of duty and inclination by the law, and the ultimate subordination and replacement of ‘morals by Morality’, as Schiller likes to put it (AE, XVI.2), that is to say, the manifold expression of ethical customs by the idea, is the essential deadlock of Kant’s ethics. See especially *ibid.* IV.3.

the *Aesthetic Education* is more generically expressed as ‘the need of our age (*Bedürfnis der Zeit*)’ and means the attainment of the higher unity of freedom through the construction of the aesthetic character as the resolution to the essential contradiction (*Widerspruch*) of the dominant cultural form of the present.<sup>56</sup> (*The need of the age is the aesthetic character.*) And second: the expression of the central task of philosophy as ‘the supersession of diremption (*die Aufhebung der Entzweiung*)’ – which in Schiller’s own philosophical problematization amounts to the revelation of the ‘living form (*lebende Gestalt*)’<sup>57</sup> of the play-drive (raising man to freedom) *through* the relation of the essential conditions *without* recourse to an externally posited *tertium quid* whose condition of possibility is the lifeless synthesis of the subordination of feeling by reason. (*The task of the aestheticization of reason and the philosophically deepened idea of beauty is to overcome the contradiction of the cultural present.*)

These two elements – the ‘need of the time’ and the ‘overcoming of disunity’ – in the context of Schiller’s letters, open up a chain of relations and problems that the *Aesthetic*

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<sup>56</sup> For example, see *ibid.* VIII.7. See also, XVIII.2. The expression – and indeed the spirit of Schiller’s letters – is taken up directly by Friedrich Schlegel in one of his contributions to the *Athenaeum* Journal (‘Ideas’, 41): ‘There is no greater need of the age (*Bedürfnis der Zeit*) than the need for a spiritual counterweight to the Revolution and to the despotism which the Revolution exercises over people by means of its concentration of the most desirable worldly interests. Where can we seek and find such a counterweight? The answer isn’t hard: unquestionably in ourselves, and whoever has seen that the center of humanity lies there will also have discovered in the same place the center of modern culture and the harmony (*Mittelpunkt der modernen Bildung und die Harmonie*) of all the hitherto isolated and conflicting sciences and arts.’ Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p.97. Perhaps Schiller had Jacobi in mind, who, in his ‘Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza’ writes a little more disparagingly of the culture of epochal ‘need’: ‘So if the philosophy of an age, its *thought style*, is to be improved upon, its history, its ways of acting, its *life style*, must be improved on first, and this cannot happen *at will*. This much seems to have been clear to many, and to have led some worthy men to the thought that, since nothing could be done with the old, they should take our children in hand, and build a better race for them...The *more sophisticated* among those worthy men were therefore forced to entice us by the promise (which they came to believe earnestly) that our children ought indeed to be brought up in the right practical way, i.e. for *the need of the age*. And this *really* meant, according to the sentiment and taste of the age. But if the sentiment and taste of an age are exclusively directed to the comfortable life...then, if pursued in a truly rational way, this practical education comes down to this: that our progeny become duly skilled and ready in becoming even worse.’ F. H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, trans. George di Giovanni, Montreal and London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009, p.240.

<sup>57</sup> Schiller, AE, XV.2.

*Education* at once tries to (1) *elucidate* – principally in the form of the relation between the notions of ‘*the middle*’, *synthesis* and *reciprocity*; (2) *philosophically deepen* – principally through the distinction of *limitation*, *negation* and *creation*; and (3) *overcome* – in the notions of *aufheben*, *harmony* and *completion*. They can, I believe, be organized around the single problem of what I would like to initially call, the ‘mediated ‘third’’.

In order to grasp the structure and significance of this ‘mediated ‘third’’ it is important to keep Schiller’s following theoretical transitions in mind (transitions which connect and form the relations of the ‘need of the time’ and the ‘complete unity of the living form’): (1) society needs ‘aesthetic education’ – this need is the ‘higher’ need of social regeneration by way of the reconciliation of the idea of this need (freedom) and the finite needs of physical existence; (2) what first needs to be established is the aesthetic character, without which the specificity of the education has no import or definition; (3) the aesthetic character is properly expressed in the play-drive; the play-drive is the psycho-physiological state that manifests the products of art and beauty in its power of socio-political unification; and (4) the play-drive is a ‘third’ form that ‘results’ from the reciprocal relation of the sensuous drive and the form drive as *equilibrium*.

In a certain sense, the numerically denoted ‘third’ brackets Schiller’s letters in that it is expressed at the *beginning* of the work in terms of what needs to be philosophically elaborated and at the *end*, in terms of what is achieved by the ‘result’ of the letters. In the beginning of the work, the idea of the ‘third’ is the expression of the higher unity that will resolve the basic antinomy between the character that expresses the ‘state of nature’ and the character that expresses the ‘state of law.’ The aesthetic character, which needs to be ‘[brought] into being’ as the ‘third character (*dritten Charakter*)’ will *simultaneously* pacify

the state of nature through the state of law and breathe life into the state of law by the vivifying power of the state of nature. In the last letter, the idea of the ‘third’ is evoked with respect to the achievements of the artistic productions of the play-drive, as the calibrated equilibrium of the sense-drive and the form-drive. As an equilibrium it does not fall victim to the extreme dispositions of both: ‘the aesthetic impulse to form is at work, unnoticed, on the building of a third (*einem dritten*) joyous kingdom of play and semblance.’<sup>58</sup> This ‘kingdom’ is constituted as a ‘third’ in that it is *not*, on the one hand, the ‘kingdom’ of the despotic rule of the immediate satisfactions given to bare circumstance, and on the other, the ‘kingdom’ of the idea of law, which subjugates the individual to the rule of duty.<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, it can be stated that ‘three’ is the number signifying higher unity; it is the numerical code of ‘harmony’. It is the *logic* of *aufheben* – putatively grasped as involving three moments – that brings us to a deeper sense of the structure of harmony.

### 1.3 The Limit of *Aufheben*

The notion of *aufheben* in Schiller’s *Aesthetic Education* unfolds, as was briefly noted earlier, in the theoretical development of the letters themselves; it is not a strictly defined concept, but a technical term that expresses the capacities and, more precisely, the *incapacities* of Schiller’s conception of the higher conceptual unity of the oppositions that structure modern consciousness and the historical state of intra-revolutionary Europe. In the first letter, and for the duration of the preliminary description of the philosophical problematic that establishes

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. XXVII.8.

<sup>59</sup> The ‘third’ kingdom is the state of aesthetico-democratic self-governance. It is the promise of democracy. Accordingly, the philosophical heir to the Schillerian project is no doubt Jacques Rancière (whose own project radicalizes the aesthetic play-drive as anarchic division, declassification and disintegration). For his basic philosophical orientation (and its relation to Schiller) see Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill, London: Continuum, 2004 and Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, trans. Liz Heron, New York and London: Continuum, 1995.

the basic theoretical supposition of the work, the notion of *aufheben* is rendered in, as it has been put, a 'strictly negative' manner. This negative sense however is employed in a wide range of contexts. For example: (1) in the context of analytic synthesis, it represents the *machinic* amalgamation of the elements of nature and thought by analytical philosophy<sup>60</sup>; (2) in the context of Reason's subsumption of feeling in the idea<sup>61</sup>; (3) the suspension of the individual will in the state of law.<sup>62</sup> *Aufheben* begins to have a deeper philosophical import (a development of its 'strictly negative' sense), from the beginning of the philosophical exposition of the concept of the play-drive as the preliminary articulation of the reconciliation of oppositions in the unity of man.

Importantly for Schiller, this transition of the sense of *aufheben* is established through an examination of an 'instrument' that is not provided by the 'tyrannical' state in its current historical form (the France of the Terror): the 'instrument is Fine Art (*Werkzeug ist die schöne Kunst*).'<sup>63</sup> This instrument provides, for Schiller, the portal to the eternal, 'indestructible vitality (*Lebenskraft*)' of beauty.<sup>64</sup> Accordingly, its constitutive function is that it raises the individual out of its historical specificity, its 'timeliness', and into the eternity of the realm of beauty: 'The artist is indeed the child of his age; but woe to him if he is at the same time its ward or, worse still, its minion!'<sup>65</sup> The work of art then is, if we can employ Ernst Bloch's expression, the 'revolutionary lever' of Schiller's project of aesthetic education.<sup>66</sup> The work of art *elevates*.

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<sup>60</sup> Schiller, AE, I.5.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. III.3.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. IV.2 and VII.1.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. IX.2.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. IX.3.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. IX.4.

<sup>66</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope – Volume 3*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight, Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1986, p.1358. The invocation of Bloch's reflection here is apposite in relation to the development of Hegel's concept of *aufheben* since, for the dialectical tradition, the 'revolutionary lever' is

The artist, in so far as he is raised to the level of the aesthetic character, which orientates his creativity to the service of the construction of a higher reality, is the *subjective articulation* of the idea of the ‘third fundamental drive (*dritter Grundtrieb*)’, the play-drive.<sup>67</sup> The play-drive however does not ‘result’ by way of a *synthesis* of the two conditional drives of man. Rather, it is the expression of the fundamental *reciprocal relation* (*Wechselwirkung*) between the two in the form of the maximum extension of the sensuous drive and the maximum intensification of the formal drive.<sup>68</sup> It is in this sense that Schiller grasps what is meant by ‘medium’ or ‘means’ (*Mittel*). In that the two drives collide, there is a psycho-psychological mid-point – a ‘state midway (*mittleren Zustand*)’ – between the two.<sup>69</sup> It is when the two drives *collide* in a strictly *calculated* manner (the equilibrium of extension and intension) that the play-drive manifests the aesthetic character in its unity by way of the creation of art. This amounts to the following: the *energy* of the drives must be appropriately *managed* (the aggressive sensuous drive must be pacified and the calm formal drive must be stimulated).<sup>70</sup> It is in this sense that the play-drive ‘supersedes’ the essential conflict of the drives:

The play-drive, in consequence, as the one in which both the others act in concert, will exert upon the psyche at once a moral and a physical constraint; it will therefore, since it annuls

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the development of what appears as precisely the obstacle of historical transformation in the actuality of the present (according to Bloch’s humanist interpretation of Marx, it is the misery of the working class).

<sup>67</sup> Schiller, AE, XIII.1. For the raising of the concept of ‘play’ from out of its subjective meaning and into an ontological concept, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘Play as the Clue to Ontological Explanation’, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, London and New York: Continuum, 2011; and Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. various, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. (The difficulty of Gadamer’s work (especially in *Truth and Method*), is that it is not entirely clear in what sense the ontology of art relates to hermeneutical experience qua the understanding of the ontology of history.)

<sup>68</sup> Schiller, AE, XIII.3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. XVIII.2.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. XIII.6. Art is, accordingly, essentially determined as the expression of the *control* of the regime of bureaucratic supervision; the ‘aesthetic character’ qua ‘support’ constitutes the ‘managing director’ of the production (the embodiment of the ‘ethics’ that orientates production).

(*aufhebt*) all contingency, annul (*aufheben*) all constraint too, and set man free both physically and morally.<sup>71</sup>

*Aufheben* is initially a mechanism of the realization of freedom (yielding a wholly positive meaning). The sense of the term appears here then (ostensibly) in a kind of proto-Hegelian form: the play-drive supersedes in the sense that it negates the particularity of the extremities of the sensuous drive (the intensification of its extension) and the formal drive (the extension of its intensity) through a controlled inversion of their differentiation in which the distinction between the drives is at once preserved and overcome into a higher unity. It is precisely because it is *essentially divided* by the two drives that the expression of the play-drive of the aesthetic character establishes itself as the 'happy medium (*glücklichen Mitte*).'<sup>72</sup> The play-drive constitutes the *symmetrical* equivalence of the *harmony* (*Harmonie*) of the two drives in their mutual, reciprocal self-subordination to one another. Schiller's notion of harmony is crucial since it raises the unity of the play-drive to the level of *complete* unity. Harmony is, accordingly, distinguished sharply from the unification of mere uniformity (*bloss Einförmigkeit*) of the (asymmetrical) subordination of the sense drive by the form drive through the primary positing of the foundational antinomy between them.<sup>73</sup> The play-drive however can only ever achieve a 'high approximation (*grössern Annäherung*)' to this complete and actual unity since the presentation of the unity in its truth would amount to the laying bare of the idea of beauty itself, which for Schiller remains ultimately inaccessible since man 'can never escape his dependence upon conditioning forces'.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. XIV.5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. XV.5

<sup>73</sup> I am drawing here on the footnotes to *ibid.* XIII.2.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. XXII.4; see also XV.4 and XVI.1.

The idea of the 'third' can now be properly grasped in two senses: (1) it is strictly speaking *metaphorical* in the context of the construction of beauty in the work of art; (2) it is a formal presentation of the logical relations established by reason itself. Consequently, the second signification is nothing but the limit of the first: the 'third' is an essentially impoverished term that cannot express the higher unity of aesthetic freedom; it expresses only the limit of the philosophical deduction of beauty.<sup>75</sup> The *aufgehoben* of the play-drive, in relation to its essential philosophical presupposition, diverges from the *putative* conception of Hegel's notion of *aufheben* in the wider context of his speculative metaphysics since it constitutes, according to Schiller, only a *mere aufgehoben* which establishes an inadequate articulation of the outstanding task of making *union itself complete*, and not the kind of negation that preserves in such a manner that the differentiation of the elements of reality are themselves preserved in themselves, that is, as 'moments'. What the *aufgehoben* of the play-drive establishes in its 'unity-by-way-of-destruction' is the very *disappearance* of the potentiality of a 'third' totality that sufficiently abolishes the *trace* of the conflict of the divided drives (that is to say, 'third' qua harmony). With this disappearance of the transition to harmony by way of *aufgehoben*, we are left with a structural, theoretical hiatus, an *incompleteness* of conceptual unification:

Since, however, both conditions remain everlastingly opposed to each other, there is no other way of uniting them except by destroying (*aufgehoben*) them. Our second task, therefore, is to make this union complete (*Verbindung vollkommen zu machen*); and to do it with such unmitigated thoroughness that both these conditions totally disappear (*gänzlich*

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<sup>75</sup> The 'third' as metaphor simply signals the realm that cannot be established through reason (since this would restrict beauty to the level of the inertia of its analysis); the expression 'third' is the marker of this impossibility. As we shall see shortly, these two senses of the 'third' bring into sharp focus the essential antinomy of modern philosophy according to Hegel in his early Jena writings, namely the antinomy between *principle* and *system*. It is in this sense that Schiller's letters are paradigmatically Kantian and proto-Romantic: its basic theoretical motif being the ultimate *un-presentability* of the absolute. This is the fundamental presupposition of Schiller's *Aesthetic Education*.



*verschwinden*) in a third (*einem Dritten*) without leaving any trace of division behind in the new whole that has been made; otherwise we shall only succeed in distinguishing but never in uniting (*vereinigen*) them.<sup>76</sup>

In so far as the formal conception of the play-drive reveals only the *aufgehoben* of the distinction of its two conditions, the notion of *aufgehoben* itself is simply the analytical residue of an insufficient articulation of the aesthetic realm. *Aufheben* is the purely logical term for 'union'; and in so far as it is the logical expression of the play-drive, it is ultimately subordinated to the formal drive. Consequently, it can be stated that *aufgehoben* provides only the *appearance* of the unification of the two drives. 'True union' (a form of union that will organize Hegel's earliest philosophical constructions) appears more approximately in the *semblance* (*Schein*) of the work of art.<sup>77</sup> It is semblance that signals this 'third' that does not leave any 'trace of division behind'; it is the work of art as the creation of the play-drive that produces this 'whole (*Ganzen*).' The 'third', like 'semblance,' is an essentially ambiguous concept that operates as a conceptual vacillation between the antinomies that structure Schiller's discourse. The notion of semblance is absolutely apposite in the context of the limits of *aufgehoben* since it operates in direct contra-distinction to actuality. Semblance is the very movement of 'play' affirmed in the play-drive in that it at once expresses through feeling the extension of finite reality (through its manipulation of material) and the articulation of the higher, supra-sensible idea of beauty. The logic of *aufgehoben* is deceiving and hypostatic; the beauty of semblance is illuminating, shining a light on the 'decisive step toward culture (*Kultur*).'<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. XVIII.4.

<sup>77</sup> Unlike the careful exposition of the 'play-drive' and the idea of beauty, there is not an 'analytic of semblance' in the letters. It appears as the (lyrical) result the letters try to establish (see *ibid.* XXVI).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. XXVI.4.

Accordingly, Schiller does not require a more robust concept of *aufheben*. In so far as the idea of the beauty of the human being and its creation of the aesthetic state is fundamentally un-presentable, the letters do not need to raise the concept of *aufgehoben* into a more rigorous – and *immanent* – ontological form of being itself and, as we shall see in the development of Hegel's thought, a deepened articulation of experience. As we noted earlier, the constitutive function of the letters is to *prepare the way* to the speculative psychology of the artist-genius; it is the architectural legitimacy of this project itself that is problematic, which in turn reflects the essential diagnosis and prognosis of modern culture and its socio-political remedy. The theoretical achievement of the letters is attained by a theoretical description and restatement of the genius in the model of Greece – the privileged representation of the aesthetic character and the play-drive – in its *unmediated* form. To put the point more prejudicially: the essential presupposition of Schiller's letters is that immediate access to Greece is unobstructed by the cultural forms that mediate its historical knowledge (consequently, Schiller repeats the same problem of the neoclassicism of the French revolutionaries). 'Greece' is in truth grasped as a 'ready-made' (as Hegel likes to put it) object; and in that it is ready-made, it only requires simple common sense to 'know' its content (the epistemological limits of Schiller's project are captured in the expression 'ready-made,' that is to say, the identity of the object, as it is immediately thought, being absolutely equal to itself). Consequently, Schiller's description of culture – and the judgment of its division and divisory effects – is, as a conceptual extension of his neoclassicism, unmediated.

More specifically however, in so far as the play-drive is not a constructed 'third' principle, a goal to be attained – which would suggest that it is not constituted by the reciprocal relation of the two drives – it is in truth a *pre-condition* of artistic creation, a pre-

condition that, one must add, simply requires theoretical *recognition* via an affirmative historical *anamnesis*. Put another way: the positive contradiction of the play-drive is the ultimate constitutive presupposition of the *Aesthetic Education*.<sup>79</sup> Accordingly, it only erects the *infinite displacement and deferral* of the state of the immediate articulation of the ‘aesthetic state.’ Consequently, the latter becomes the (false) *promise* – ‘the reality of [the] political creation of reason (*der politischen Schöpfung der Vernunft ihre Realität*)’<sup>80</sup> through the creativity of the play-drive of the aesthetic character – of an insufficiently mediated project.<sup>81</sup> This problem, however, is what gives Schiller’s work its distinctive temporal form, a form which is taken up and reflected in the work.

The first point to make note of is that Schiller conceives of his epistolary work as somehow ‘out of time’ or ‘untimely’ (*ausser der Zeit*), in that its central object of inquiry – ‘the art of the Ideal’ – no longer participates at an ethical level in the cultural formation of

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<sup>79</sup> In this sense, it is conceptually homologous to Rancière’s declaration of ‘equality’ as the ‘supposition to be maintained in all circumstances.’ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant School Master: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991, p.138.

<sup>80</sup> Schiller, AE, VII.1.

<sup>81</sup> I am evoking here the *staged* compossibility of principally two concepts (and by extension, two philosophical projects), namely Jacques Derrida’s notion of *différance* (and the ‘strategy of deconstruction’) and Adorno’s notion of the ‘promise’ of art (developed in his *Aesthetic Theory* via the procedure elaborated in *Negative Dialectics*). Due to the restrictions of space, this ‘compossibility’ (and indeed its conceptually legitimacy) cannot be examined further here. We can point to some works that, within the expanding literature over the last twenty years, attempt to organize the conceptual convergences and divergences between the two. See, J. M Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*, Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992; Richard Wolin, *The Terms of Cultural Criticism: The Frankfurt School, Existentialism, Poststructuralism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992; Christoph Menke, *The Sovereignty of Art: Aesthetic Negativity in Adorno and Derrida*, trans. Neil Solomon, Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1998; Peter Dews ‘Adorno, Poststructuralism, and the Critique of Identity’, in *The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin*, ed. Andrew Benjamin, London and New York: Routledge, 1991; Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory*, London and New York: Verso, 2007; and Alexander Garcia Düttmann, *The Gift of Language: Memory and Promise in Adorno, Benjamin, Heidegger, and Rosenzweig*, London: The Athlone Press, 2000. The historical ‘basis’ of this interest of the philosophical relation between Derrida and Adorno is perhaps Jürgen Habermas’ brief reflections on the topic: Jürgen Habermas, ‘Excursus on Levelling the Genre Distinction between Philosophy and Literature’, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987. For Derrida’s principle presentation of *différance*, see Jacques Derrida, ‘Différance’, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, London and New York: Continuum, 2007 and Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton, London and New York: Continuum, 2007.

intra-revolutionary Europe.<sup>82</sup> Despite appearances, the externality of Schiller's work to the times is not one in which any connection to the historical quality of the present is severed. The untimeliness of the ideality of art is more precisely comprehended, at the temporal level, as a restorative process that operates on the basis of the actual unfolding of the historical present. Schiller underscores this restorative aspect of the untimeliness of his study via the following metaphor: 'the living clockwork of the State must be repaired while it is still striking, and it is a question of changing the revolving wheel while it still revolves.'<sup>83</sup> The restoration, or repairing, of the state occurs as a supplement and not as a substitution to the state in its present state. This supplemental dimension of aesthetic education is directly reflected in the constitutive sense of the semblance (*Erscheinung*) of the work of art: aesthetic semblance is not in opposition to truth since it is never orientated as its logical substitution,

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<sup>82</sup> Schiller, AE, II.1-3.

<sup>83</sup> Schiller, AE, III.4. This metaphor will function in Hegel's work until the very end: '*Habit* (like the watch wound up and going by itself) is what brings on natural death.' IPH, 78; 12: 100. Interestingly, this allegorical model of the changing of the wheel while the mechanism still moves is repeated in Roland Barthes' allegorical expression of 'structure' by way of the model of the *Argo*; the allegories for Schiller and Barthes however can be understood as being mobilized in contra-distinction to one another: 'A frequent image: that of the ship *Argo* (luminous and white), each piece of which the Argonauts gradually replaced, so that they ended with an entirely new ship, without having to alter either its name or its form. This ship *Argo* is highly useful: it affords the allegory of an eminently structural object, created not by genius, inspiration, determination, evolution, but by two modest actions (which cannot be caught up in any mystique of creation): *substitution* (one part replaces another, as in a paradigm) and *nomination* (the name is in no way linked with the stability of the parts): by dint of combinations made within one and the same name, nothing is left of the *origin*: *Argo* is an object with no other cause than its name, with no other identity than its form.' Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 2010, p.46. According to Schiller, 'creation', or the '*Bildungstrieb*', is not 'mystically' invoked but rather immanently identified in man himself and as the central articulation of the unity of man at the ontological level through the reciprocal relation of the sense-drive and the form-drive. In the summer of 1872, Nietzsche comprehends the figures of the philosopher and the artist – in delicate distinction to the work of art – in the following way: 'Above the tumult of contemporary history lives the sphere of the philosopher and the artist, remote from necessity. The philosopher as the *break on the wheel of time*. It is in times of great danger that philosophers appear – when the wheel rolls faster and faster – they and art take the place of disappearing myth.' Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, trans. Ladislaus Löb, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p.96. This note comes after Nietzsche begins to take a distance from the metaphysical 'solace' of the artwork as articulated in the constellation of Greek Attic tragedy, Weimar classicism, Schopenhauer's 'pessimism of resignation' and Wagnerian opera. It is the specific temporalization expressed in the shift from the artwork to the philosopher-artist (which contains within it a shift from Schopenhauer and Wagner especially, but also, in some sense, Schiller) that needs to be comprehended in light of the interruption of 'the wheel of time.' Unfortunately, this exceeds the scope of this thesis.

rather, it is experienced as it is in itself (qua semblance).<sup>84</sup> The supplement of aesthetic education is the *supportive* substrate of the promise of social transformation.<sup>85</sup> The ‘support’ on which society will lean is, as was signalled earlier, comprehended by Schiller in terms of a ‘third character.’ This tertiary support has been understood more precisely as the positive contradiction – positive because it elaborates an equilibrium between the oppositions that structure Schiller’s thought – of the play-drive, semblance and, in short, of the beauty of the work of art. The distinctive temporality of the supportive substrate of the historical present is the specific temporality of the artwork as the most accomplished result of aesthetic education.

And yet, because of its insufficiently mediated notion of semblance – which is to say, of the very appearance (*Erscheinung*) of semblance as an aesthetic category (a motif Hegel will develop in his phenomenological science) – the specificity of its temporality is extracted from semblance, thus reducing the idea of the ‘work of art’ (the highest work being the ‘aesthetic state’) to an empty a priori form of semblance in which the content is filled by subsequent artworks. The time of the work of art is stripped of its temporality since it is based on the a priori form of the play-drive as the meta-historical ontological status of man. This is why Schiller must apprehend the process of homonization in terms of a *leap* (*einen Sprung*) from animal life in the closing letter.<sup>86</sup> The leap, however, is a distinctively re-spatializing metaphor that is mobilized as negative proof of the extraction of the temporal quality of the temporality of the work of art. The leap re-spatializes the temporality of the

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<sup>84</sup> Schiller, AE, XXVI.5. Only ‘logical semblance’ inaugurates the strictly epistemological opposition of truth and deceptive illusion since the latter tries to provide short-cuts to truth itself. Logical semblance is subordinated to false knowledge of truth whereas aesthetic semblance does not function wholly within the strict limits of an epistemological conception of truth. Aesthetic semblance does not stand in for something else, it is not a substitute, but rather is taken as it is in itself. Schiller develops the distinction between aesthetic and logical semblance, and the relation of illusion and truth, in two essays from 1795, *Von den notwendigen Grenzen des Schönen* and *Über die Gefahr ästhetischer Sitten* (see translators commentary, Schiller, AE, p.284).

<sup>85</sup> Schiller, AE, III.4.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. XXVII.4.

transition from animal to man in the a priori form of the work of art qua semblance, thus rendering intelligible the transition from pre-aesthetic existence to the life of aesthetic semblance from the standpoint of the existence of the work of art.<sup>87</sup>

The principle *philosophical* failure of Schiller's work is, if we can invoke the central distinction Hegel draws out in his 1801 *Differenzschrift*, that it cannot provide a *systematic* expression of its fundamental *principle* (this problem will be raised to the level of the central problem of modern German philosophy as a whole) since it is still limited by an epistemologically restricted articulation of experience (subjective reflection). That is to say, it cannot give a systematic articulation to the play-drive. The preliminary expression of the limit of reflection is the latent philosophical concern of the so-called 'system-program' of German Idealism. Although the issue is not properly thematised, the short fragment does shed light on the epistemological limits of Schiller's aesthetico-democratic promise through a reconfiguration of the project of social unity. It is the 'system-program' fragment that anchors Hegel's own philosophical efforts and establishes the initial program for a construction of the concept of *aufheben* as the central conceptual form of the movement of speculative philosophy. Before we turn to the fragment, I would like to provide a short exposition of Novalis' conception of *aufheben* in his *Fichte Studies*. Novalis' collection of notes offer a distinctively post-Fichtean conception of *aufheben* as the movement of the subject *within* the limits of epistemological opposition. That is to say, Novalis provides a bold philosophical extension of Schiller's conception of the play-drive by attending to the

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<sup>87</sup> This re-spatialization of the temporality of the quality of time in the artwork is, in some sense, rearticulated in the re-spatialized temporal quality of quantity as such in the closing sections of the first part of the first volume of Hegel's *Science of Logic* (viz. 'the doctrine of being'). Hegel develops this by attending to the maxim, *Es gibt keinen Sprung in der Nature*.

systematic unfolding of the self-positing of the 'I' in Fichte's subjective idealism (which Schiller never does).

#### 1.4 Novalis and the *Aufheben* of the Romantic Subject

I have tried to show in what sense Schiller's, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* provides a post-Kantian philosophical presentation of the dialectical structure and meaning of *aufheben*. In the same year of its publication, the twenty-three year old Novalis began to compose condensed, enigmatic and quasi-systematic reflections on the thought of Fichte. Novalis' critical reflections come to an end in autumn 1796 and are collected and presented under the title *Fichte Studies*.<sup>88</sup> Although Novalis' studies were orientated by a diligent and comprehensive critical exposition of Fichte's principle philosophical project – the post-Kantian idealist conception of the original act of the self-positing 'I' – the studies also contain within them careful observations on the limits of Schiller's post-Kantian ethics and aesthetics.<sup>89</sup>

Our reference to Schiller here is not limited to underscoring the historical contemporaneity of Novalis' philosophical studies on Fichte and the publication of the *Aesthetic Education*. Rather, it is the philosophical content at the heart of Novalis' studies that brings into relief the necessity of reconstructing the critical exposition of both Fichte and

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<sup>88</sup> Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, trans. Jane Kneller, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Novalis, *Schriften – 2*, herausgegeben von Richard Samuel, Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1975 (German pagination will follow the English).

<sup>89</sup> On Schiller's relation to the 'existential' formation of Novalis, see Géza von Molnár, *Romantic Vision, Ethical Context: Novalis and Artistic Autonomy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp.11-20. I say 'existential' as Molnár is concerned more with the influence Schiller has on the young Novalis in a much broader context of his social, ethical, cultural and artistic formation. She does not expose in any detail Schiller's strictly *philosophical* influence, choosing instead to subsume Schiller's philosophical work (as well as Reinhold's) into Fichte's.

Schiller.<sup>90</sup> The ‘core’ of Novalis’ reflections is on the structure of the subject. This ‘core’ is reflected in the following condensed and polemically positioned formulation: ‘I *am not* insofar as I posit (*setze*) myself, but rather insofar as I sublate (*aufhebe*) myself – I am not, insofar as I am in myself (*ich in mir bin*), I apply myself to myself (*mich auf mich selbst anwende*).’<sup>91</sup> It is Novalis’ conception of *aufheben* as the self-activity of the subject, as presented in the *Fichte Studies*, that I will consider here, paying close attention to its critical and polemical distinction to Fichte’s notion of positing and bringing into focus its potential relation to Schiller’s reduction of *aufheben* to the form-drive.

The subject according to Novalis is a subject that supersedes itself. It supersedes itself insofar as it supersedes the basic oppositions that determine its activity, which is to say, the oppositions of the subject ‘I’ and the objective ‘non-I’. Accordingly, for Novalis ‘the subject is *at once* whole and part (*zugleich Ganzes und Theil*).’<sup>92</sup> The simultaneity that gives sense to the ontological structure of the subject constitutes a conceptual description and development of the subject as ‘divided absolutely (*absolut getheilt*).’<sup>93</sup> The subject is, accordingly, an expression of the absolute division of itself in itself: the subject is ontologically identical to the separation of itself in and through itself. It is what gives sense to the absolute univocity of the ‘I’ (‘God’).<sup>94</sup> Importantly, Novalis restores back into the

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<sup>90</sup> It is worth noting here that ‘genius’ expresses the self-activity of philosophizing according to Novalis, thus aligning, at times, his exposition of the subject with Schiller’s idea of the genius as the harmonizer of the diremptions of modern existence (Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, p.87; 2: 189 – see also Novalis, ‘Pollen’, fragment 21, in Frederick Beiser (ed.), *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.12; August Wilhelm Schlegel und Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenäum*, Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reclam, 1984, p.12). Thus, the self-assigned philosophical ethos of ‘*fichtisieren*’ that F. Schlegel used in relation to the activity of philosophizing (and in relation to Novalis) is perhaps a slight misnomer as the Romantic subject of infinite, self-active formation is more precisely a subject not limited by the positing of the ‘I’ alone. Novalis, *Schriften* – 4, herausgegeben von Richard Samuel, Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1975, p.482.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 93; 2: 196.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 32; 2: 134.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 31; 2: 133.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 38; 2: 141.



foreground of the philosophical conception of the 'I' the epistemological opposition of subject and object, an opposition that Fichte strategically drops (reflected specifically in his terminological suspension of 'subject' and 'object') in order to render conceptually precise the structure of the self-positing 'I' (and the positing of the 'non-I'). The absolute division of the subject is, for Novalis, the '*ordine inverso*' of the 'I.'<sup>95</sup> It is, accordingly, the inversion of the absolute univocity (the 'absolutely one') of the 'I' in its purity as 'one.'<sup>96</sup> The subject is, as an inverted order of the absolute I, the pure divided 'I'; that is to say, it is the a priori form of the synthesis between the absolute I – the unconditioned – and the absolute division – the conditioned. The subject is then 'the unification of absolute extremes'; it is the dissolution of the idea of the pure, absolute 'I' devoid of the fundamental division between subject and object in that the unification of absolutes is what renders meaningful the *absolute* status of the pure 'I'.<sup>97</sup> As a dynamical synthesis, the subject is the dynamic activity and rest, or the *drive*, of itself and its self-realization.<sup>98</sup> The subject's drive toward unity is accordingly its drive toward itself. It is what *applies* the self (myself, *mich*) back into itself. It is in this sense that the subject is simultaneously the whole and the divided part (*Theil*); it is the drive of its totality in the absolute division of itself as part. Novalis abbreviates these dense conceptual moves in a unifying expression: 'absolute subject.'<sup>99</sup> It is this dynamical core of the absolute subject that renders meaningful the structure of *truth*. This however is not taken up in the first group of notes (1-210, autumn-winter 1795) Novalis makes since these notes are focused on the higher level conception of the *syntax* and *grammar* of the 'original act' of

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 32; 2: 133. See also ibid. 27; 2: 128.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. 31; 2: 133.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 32; 2: 134.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 33; 2: 135.

the absolute 'I' in the context of a restitution of the question of its condition of possibility.<sup>100</sup> (It is for this reason that the forms of the 'I' – empirical, intuitive, mediating, absolute, etc. – are the principle objects of the first group of reflections.) It is only in the second group of notes (211-287, winter 1795 to February 1796) that Novalis begins to provide a more detailed exposition of the relation between the absolute subject and *truth*. More importantly for us, it is in this group of notes that the notion of *aufheben* as the inner sense of the subject begins to emerge.

Formally anticipating (verbatim) Hegel's own condensed formulation of truth in 1807, Novalis notes: 'Truth is the Whole (*Wahrheit ist das Ganze*).'<sup>101</sup> The following proposition is added (distinguishing it from Hegel's identification of the processuality and self-movement of truth): 'illusion only the fracture (*Bruch*) – the half that seems to be the whole and is not – the former the positive, the latter the negative quantity.'<sup>102</sup> The comprehension of truth, which is posited as the whole, consists of the self's desertion or abandonment (*verlassen*) from the identity of being as such. The proposition 'truth is the whole', as the first note of the *Fichte Studies* announces, constitutes what Novalis calls the 'illusory proposition (*Scheinsatz*).'<sup>103</sup> The theoretical judgement of the subject – the *Satz* – is the expression of the fracture of the truth in illusion. There is, accordingly, a dialectical relation between truth and illusion: 'Truth is the form of illusion – illusion the form of truth.'<sup>104</sup> This dialectical relation reveals the strictly *negative* quality of truth and illusion

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<sup>100</sup> The first group of notes are a critique of the original act of the self-positing I in the strictly Kantian sense of 'critique', which is to say, the method of the disclosure of the nature and limits, thus legitimacy, of the concept of the object of the 'I' as self-positing. In this regard, Novalis' initial critical distance from Fichte is focused precisely on the condition of possibility of the opening Fichtean move (the synthetic apriority of the original act).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 77; 2: 179.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 78; 2: 179-80.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 3; 2: 104.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 77; 2: 179.

(‘two halves of one ball’).<sup>105</sup> The nature of the relation is expressed more precisely within the context of the synthesizing *imagination* (more of which shortly) in terms of the universal concepts of determinability and determinedness.<sup>106</sup>

The exposition of the absolute subject then, in direct contra-distinction to Fichte’s absolutization of the ‘I’ as self-positing, thus as the primary principle on which the *Wissenschaftslehre* experientially (or more precisely, *experimentally*) unfolds, does not corroborate through its sovereign act of identification, the truth of being as its own construction.<sup>107</sup> Rather, the subject is what recognizes itself through its judgement, as the identity that moves away from being in the form of its presentation. The self does not grasp itself in its positing – which is formed on the principle of the originary self-identity of the subject, the basic principle of idealism – but rather returns to itself (‘myself to myself’) in and through *aufheben*. The conception of the self here is organized around the distinction between the Fichtean principle of positing (*Setzen*) and the hitherto undisclosed transition of *aufheben*. What is the structure of *aufheben* according to the self in Novalis? Moreover, in what way does it relate to Fichte’s own conceptual deployment of *aufheben* in the *Wissenschaftslehre*?

The reflection on judgement as the desertion from the knowledge of the identity of being as it is purely, in-itself consists of one of the distinct features of Novalis’ critique of Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, namely its emphatic attempt to, as Fichte puts it in the first sentence to the first part of his magnum opus, ‘*discover* the primordial, absolutely

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid. 81; 2: 183. The inter-relation between truth and illusion is developed by Schiller in the last two letters of the *Aesthetic Education*.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> See chapter 2, footnote 34 on Fichte’s notion of ‘experimentation.’

unconditioned first principle of all human knowledge.<sup>108</sup> The discovery of this principle is disclosed by the reflective description of the activity of the self's *positing* of itself in relation to the non-self (non-I). What is to be discovered is the structure of this positing as the structure of activity of the 'I.' The logic of positing emerges in the immanent connection contained in the principle of self-identity, namely the proposition that 'A = A.' The proposition, according to Fichte, simply and purely states, at the level of form alone, that *if A then A*. 'A' is purely itself if it always already connects to itself and that this connection is its own. This pure connection is the basic abstract articulation of the structure of positing: in that A is A, A posits itself as itself without other predication or relation.<sup>109</sup> Insofar as this basic proposition is essentially the judgement of an 'I', the structure of positing is in fact the structure of the 'I' itself since it is the 'I' that grasps the connection posed in the proposition. The connection of 'A = A' expresses the connecting power of the 'I'; the 'I', accordingly, contains within itself the positing and is itself the positing. And insofar as the connecting of the self *connects* itself in the principle proposition, the 'A' is contained with the self as the self itself. The proposition 'A = A' through the logical unfolding of the form of the algebraic proposition leads to the basic proposition of subjective self-identity, namely 'I = I', which is to say, the fundamental proposition of Fichte's idealism in which the self *is* in that it posits itself.<sup>110</sup>

Now, Novalis does not distinguish his own reflections on the identity of the 'I' by way of what stands in direct opposition to the Fichtean project, namely dogmatic realism

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<sup>108</sup> Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p.93.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. 95.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. 96ff. For useful expositions of Fichte's conception of the self-positing I, see Frederick Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990 and (although more restricted in its scope, focusing principally on the first part of the *Wissenschaftslehre*) Günter Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

(which assumes in advance the 'existence' of being as pure precondition of all reflection). Rather, he sharpens his own conception of the self by way of an immanent critique of the structure of positing, the *activity* of the 'I', as the absolute self-positing of the non-I. The postulation of pure being is, according to Novalis, a decidedly non-philosophical fabrication. It is, however, a '*necessary* fiction (nothwendige *Fiktion*).'<sup>111</sup> What necessitates the fiction is, on the one hand, the appearance of the connection of the dimensions of philosophical judgements.<sup>112</sup> Novalis pushes the 'experimental' status of Fichte's work to its extreme logical conclusion, namely that experimentation itself reflects from within itself its own fictive, or illusory, conditions as pure and self-identical. The necessity of the fiction of the judgement of self-identity, on the other hand, discloses the deceptive productivity of the *imagination* (*Einbildungskraft*), which, in contradistinction to the sheer passivity of reflection, is mobilized by Novalis (*pace* Kant) as the *power* (*Kraft*) of philosophical conception: 'Feeling, understanding and reason are in a way passive – which is already shown by their names – imagination on the other hand is the only *power* – the only active one – the moving one.'<sup>113</sup> The imagination is active and philosophical in so far as it is mobilized by the transition from the positing of opposition and contradiction to their unification: 'Philosophy will be the working out of all contradictions. It is the endpoint of the line – as the simplest whole – the sphere of the line will be determined by the endpoints.'<sup>114</sup> Novalis notes, immediately prior to this invocation of philosophy: 'The imagination is the binding

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<sup>111</sup> Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, 77; 2: 179.

<sup>112</sup> Manfred Frank draws out this same conclusion; see Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, p.174.

<sup>113</sup> Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, 65; 2: 167. The reflection on the concept of imagination is absent from Frank's elaboration of Novalis' project of an 'epistemologically enlightened realism'; Frank, *op. cit.* p.171.

<sup>114</sup> Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, 84; 2: 186.

mediator (*verbindende Mittelglied*) – the synthesis – the *power of change* [Wechselkraft].

Power of change – power is change – change is power.’<sup>115</sup>

Interestingly, the grasping of the movement of the *Wissenschaftslehre* – and this brings back into sharp relief Fichte’s insistence that its concept must be *discovered* and *not proved or defined* – consists in the capacity of the free-play of the ‘creative imagination’; Fichte’s major work ‘is of a kind that cannot be communicated by the letter merely, but only through the spirit, for its basic ideas must be elicited...by the creative imagination.’<sup>116</sup> The concept of imagination, which is expounded in the second part of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, consists of the deepened articulation of the self-positing ‘I’, imagination is ‘[the] interplay of the self, in and with itself, whereby it posits itself at once as finite and infinite – an interplay that consists, as it were, in self-conflict, and is self-reproducing.’<sup>117</sup> Fichte’s conception is distinct from Kant’s conception of the productive imagination in that for Kant, productive imagination generates *representations* not derived from experience (*a posteriori*) but rather express conditions of experience (pure *a priori* form)<sup>118</sup>; in distinction to this, Fichte’s conception of imagination sees it produce *reality* directly but in such a way ‘that there *is* no reality therein’ (it is the work of the understanding to ascertain the reality generated by the imagination).<sup>119</sup> The key distinction between Fichte’s conception of imagination, which plays a mediating role between determination and indeterminacy, finitude and infinitude (thus consists of an essential ‘wavering’ between the two), and Novalis’ reflections on the term is that for the latter, imagination is a deepened principle of transition and transformation: ‘All transition (*Aller Transistus*) – all movement (*alle Bewegung*) is the efficacy of the

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p.250.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. 193.

<sup>118</sup> Kant, CPR, A118.

<sup>119</sup> Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p.207.

imagination.’<sup>120</sup> Only in the imagination is the determination moved (as a ‘moved concept’) in the sense that it is configured as the ‘product’ of the subject’s thought and perception.<sup>121</sup> Novalis’ restoration of the epistemological categories of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ in direct contradistinction to Fichte’s philosophical deepening of the ‘subject’ at the level of the positing and self-positing of itself (distinction between ‘I’ and ‘non-I’) is once again revealed as an essential constitutive feature of Novalis’ critique. Accordingly, for Novalis, the movement of the imagination is reflected at a higher level in the movement of the absolute subject as the absolute division of the ‘one.’ Put another way: determination is not wholly a determination of the self-positing I, but rather is a concept ‘already contained’ within the absolute ‘I’ that expresses the original division of the absolute subject, which is to say, as its retroactive reflection.<sup>122</sup>

Novalis’ reflections at this point come remarkably close to those of Hölderlin from the same year (‘On Judgment and Being’).<sup>123</sup> A conceptual distinction between the two however centres on the expression of *aufheben* of the subject’s self-activity as essentially formed as the division of subject and object and the opposition of both to the absolute ‘I’ as a non-representational ‘I.’ As a retroactively disclosed a priori and its immanent distinction in the absolute other, the subject is said to contain within itself, *aufheben*. Or: the determinations of the subject constitute their own *aufheben*: ‘they sublate themselves (*sie*

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<sup>120</sup> Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, 86; 2: 188.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. I would tentatively propose the following re-articulation of the determination of the product: it contains within itself, and through its relation in the ‘efficacy of the imagination’ a processual dynamic that is not wholly annihilated by the self-positing I. The product for Fichte is the fixed opposite of the active ‘cause’ of the ‘synthesis by indetermination.’ Thus, ‘the product should never be spoken of as a process.’ Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p.131.

<sup>122</sup> Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, 93-6; 2: 194-8.

<sup>123</sup> Novalis provides of course a far more expanded and quasi-systematic philosophical account of a critical post-Fichtean self-consciousness, thus giving the studies a distinctively more sophisticated depth to Hölderlin’s gnostic articulations.

*heben sich auf*) as soon as they are applied to themselves.'<sup>124</sup> *Aufheben* is, accordingly, at once the description of the limits of Fichte's notion of the original act of self-positing (both immediate and self-referential) and the dynamic transition of activity and representation at the level of the subject. The sense of *aufheben* in Novalis then is affirmed at its twofold level of 'apparent negation' and transformation.<sup>125</sup> It is here that we can return more definitively to the proposition that inaugurated our reflections: 'I *am not* insofar as I posit myself, but rather insofar as I sublate myself.' The original act of the 'I' and its positing of the 'non-I' (what 'I am not') is, accordingly, impossible at the level of positing since it is presupposed on the represented determinacy of the 'undetermined' (the original act itself).

An important distinction to be drawn out within the context of Novalis' employment of *aufheben* is its distinction from the pure negativity Fichte assigns to the term in his *Wissenschaftslehre*. *Aufheben*, as 'apparent negation' functions merely as a mere opposite, that is, too readily grasped as the opposition of the self-positing 'I' (an opposition posited immediately from the immediacy of the original act). Such negation, which figures prominently in Fichte's magnum opus, fails to grasp the immanent inter-relation between the presented and the represented, which is to say, the conception of determination internal to the 'undetermined', the 'absolute spontaneity' of self-positing.<sup>126</sup> What I call here 'immanent inter-relation' restores to the primacy of thought the experience (Novalis: 'feeling') of the absolute status of the divided one. This means something specific: that thought (and the original act) cannot emerge from a defining and grounding, single principle that functions as

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid. 93; 2: 194.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p.135.



the basis on which all senses of the 'I' are derived.<sup>127</sup> It is perhaps Schiller's conception of *aufheben* that gives Novalis the expression that allows for a more determinate distinction from Fichte's positing in that the sense of *aufheben* as it unfolds in the *Aesthetic Education* attempts to disclose a movement of unification internal to the form drive that is not wholly negative (based on fixed oppositions), but signals the aesthetic unity of harmony from the side of its incapacity to actualize that harmony.<sup>128</sup>

In order to close these reflections on the concept of *aufheben* in Novalis and its relation to the intellectual milieu of post-Kantian aesthetics and idealism, I would like to suggest that the philosophical studies on Fichte function, at the level of the formation of the conception of the Romantic subject, as the groundwork of the more mature philosophical constructions Novalis makes in the *Athenaeum*. It is in 'Pollen' – which opens the *Athenaeum* – that the activity of *aufheben* as the inner movement of the Romantic subject is most clearly discerned:

For us, to go into oneself means to abstract from the outer world. Similarly, for spirits, earthly life means an inner reflection, a turning into oneself, an immanent activity. Thus earthly life springs from an original reflection, a primitive going into oneself, a collection of oneself, that is as free as our reflection. Conversely, spiritual life (*geistige Leben*) in this world springs from breaking through such primitive reflection (*primitiven Reflexion*). Spirit unfolds itself, goes outside itself again, sublates (*aufhebt*) this reflection again, and in this moment it says for the first time 'I'. One can see from this how relative the activities of going outside oneself and returning to oneself are. What we call going into ourselves is really going outside ourselves, a reacceptance (*Wiederannahme*) of the original form.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> 'This could be called an absolute postulate. All searching for a single principle would be like the attempt to square the circle. / *Perpetuum mobile*. Philosophers' stone.' Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, p.168; 2: 270 (translation slightly modified). Compare this to: 'There is absolutely nothing permanent, either without me, or within me, but only an unceasing change. I know absolutely nothing of any existence, not even my own... *Images* there are... I am myself one of these images; nay, I am not even so much, but only a confused image of images,' Fichte, cited in Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860*, Volume 1, Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004, p.1.

<sup>128</sup> See chapter 1, sub-sections 1.2 and 1.3.

<sup>129</sup> Novalis, 'Pollen', fragment 45, *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, p.17; *Athenäum*, 17.

## 1.5 The 'Mythology of Reason' as Social Regeneration

The influence of the *Aesthetic Education* in 'The Earliest System-Program of German Idealism,' composed one year after Schiller's epistolary work, is incontestable.<sup>130</sup> From the metaphors it mobilizes – for example, the state as '*machine (Maschine)*'<sup>131</sup> – to the expression of its central aim – the reconstruction of society itself as a great work of art ('the greatest work [*größte Werk*] of mankind'<sup>132</sup>) through an 'aesthetic sense (*ästhetischen Sinn*)' – the fragment is shot through with Schiller's aesthetic neoclassicism. There is, however, a distinct way in which the project announced by the author(s)<sup>133</sup> of the fragment is differentiated from Schiller's letters: the central distinction lies in the mediation of social relations themselves, which is to say, the distinction of the need of the unification of a social subject, what the fragment refers to as the 'enlightened and unenlightened.'<sup>134</sup> This distinction is of theoretical significance since it expresses the preliminary steps toward a concrete and historically mediated project, which, within the specific context we are mobilizing here, amounts to a project that does not become an essentially politically deflated 'flight into a utopian dream of a circle comprised of an intellectual and moral elite.'<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> The relation of Schiller to the young idealists is detailed at great length in Frank-Peter Hansen, "*Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus*" *Rezeptionsgeschichte und Interpretation*, Berlin und New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989, pp.419-74.

<sup>131</sup> M, 110; 1: 235.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 112; 1: 236.

<sup>133</sup> The historical judgment of the actual author of the fragment is no doubt a great aporia in the development of German Idealism. That it appears in the collected works of Hegel, Schelling and Hölderlin should reflect the essentially collective spirit of philosophical expression that the name 'German Idealism' invokes (philosophy, after all, is, as Aristotle states in book Alpha the lesser of *Metaphysics*, a fundamentally collective activity; Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred, London: Penguin Books 2004, pp.43-7). (With its projection of a speculative physics however, it seems highly likely that the author is in fact the young Schelling. As with so many of my philosophical reflections, I am indebted to many conversations with my colleague and dear friend Vijak Haddadi, who made the strong claim for the fragments authorship around precisely this point. I have had the good fortune of reading his doctoral thesis, 'Existential Cosmology: The Foundation of Post-Critical Metaphysics in Schelling', a work that attempts to reconstruct Schelling's (late period) philosophy from the standpoint of its cosmological reconstruction of the critical project after the challenge of its dialectical negation in Hegel's speculative ontology of the absolute idea.)

<sup>134</sup> M, 111; 1: 236

<sup>135</sup> Georg Lukács, *Goethe and His Age*, trans. Robert Anchor, London: Merlin Press, 1979, p.135.

We begin the reconstruction of the idea of social unity in the fragment by way of underscoring the continuation of a motif of the intellectual development of German thought, namely the socio-political motif of the *need (Bedürfnis) for philosophy*. We have already made note in what sense Schiller raises the idea of need from mere physical needs, to that of the central socio-political manifestation of the present ('the need of the age' under its current 'tyrannical yoke'<sup>136</sup>). The system-program fragment does not veer from such historical projection: 'Monotheism of reason and heart, polythesim of the imagination and of art, this is what we need (*was wir bedürfen*).'<sup>137</sup> The pronominal identification of the 'we' is not, however, limited to the aesthetic construction of the 'community' by the 'genius'. Rather, it forms the subject of the result of the unification of 'philosophers (*der Philosoph*)' and the 'great mob (*große Haufen*)': 'we are told so often that the great mob must have a *religion of the senses*. But not only does the great mob need it, the philosopher needs it too.'<sup>138</sup> The conception of the unification of the play-drive and its creation of approximations to the complete union of the aesthetic state is here recoded into a universal prototype of social cohesion. The *chiastic* form of the fragment is telling: it not only attests to Schiller's own delight in the rhetorical modality ('Man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays'<sup>139</sup>), but it formally registers the *ambiguous* movement of the idea that unites humanity *in toto*, namely *beauty in its strictly aesthetic manifestation* (the *semblance* of the work of art).<sup>140</sup> The chiastic form is itself a manifestation of the play-drive. In so far as it is expanded in a wider theoretical terrain – of the social cohesion of all 'spirits' – the work of the play-drive generates a more

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<sup>136</sup> Schiller, AE, II.3.

<sup>137</sup> M, III; 1: 236.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Schiller, AE, XV.9.

<sup>140</sup> M, III; 1: 235.

definite 'third' concept in the fragment, a concept that attempts to express the actual mediation of social forms and, on a theoretical level, attempts to dissolve the restricted epistemological exposition of reflection: the concept of *mythology*.

The 'mythology of reason' is the projected idea of the unification of aesthetics and reason. Accordingly, as unity of this opposition, it stages the *transition* of the philosophers and the 'great mob': 'mythology must become philosophical in order to make the people rational, and philosophy must become mythological in order to make the philosophers sensible.'<sup>141</sup> Mythology engenders a two-fold conceptual movement: first, it must 'become philosophical', which is to say, it must be raised to the level of reason and establish the truth of the idea of reality. Accordingly, 'mythology' itself needs *constructing* at a rational level if it is to have any social effect (the rationalization of society itself). Second: philosophy itself must raise itself to mythology, if the *philosophers* are to become aesthetic.<sup>142</sup> This implies two things: (1) that 'mythology' as a specifically *non-philosophical* cultural form already functions at a purely non-reflective level as an objective 'substance' in which thought is always already immersed; and (2) that it is a 'peoples' (*Volk*) form of wisdom (since the social antinomy staged in the fragment is between the philosophers and the *Volk*). By 'mythology' I believe the author has both the works of pre-philosophical antiquity in mind (the Greece of Homer, the gymnasium and the epic hero) and the idea of a 'people's poetic wisdom'. The form of Schiller's chiastic proposition noted above is useful in providing co-ordinates for orientating and grasping the first implication here.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> The fragment, through its identification of the raising of beauty in the philosophical sphere and the everyday sphere, can be grasped as being directly opposed to Novalis' declaration that 'art must triumph over the crude multitude (*die rohe Masse*)', Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, pp.189-90. This reflection anticipates Novalis' rhapsodic Catholicism at the end of his 'Christendom or Europe', see Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, pp.137-152.

The form of this proposition appears ‘paradoxical’, according to Schiller, only within a strictly *scientific* (*Wissenschaftliche*) context, which is to say, within the restricted confines of modern thought.<sup>143</sup> In distinction to the state of the present, the significance of ‘man’s play’ expressed in the chiasmic form ‘was long ago alive and operative in the art and in the feeling of the Greeks’.<sup>144</sup> Greece had need for *neither* the rationalization of social edification, *nor* the aestheticization of its reason, as it was itself the *organic* unity of its individuals and its republic (the Greek *polis*, according to Weimar neoclassicism, is ontologically identical to its social relations).<sup>145</sup> Importantly, the term mythology is nevertheless mobilized in the fragment – a term that Schiller does not really employ. I believe there are specifically two reasons for this: first, myth denotes the classical conception of the primordial unity of λόγος and φύσις – the being of μῦθος.<sup>146</sup> Second: this ontological unity of myth is itself *mythological* in the *tragic* sense, that is to say, the unity of myth is *always already* internally self-divided – being is speculatively self-sundered (this is its tragic past).<sup>147</sup> This sense of mythology directly displaces the central conception of Greek unity according to Weimar neoclassicism (an immediately ‘whole’, unified realm). It argues instead for an alternative form of classicism. Hölderlin’s ‘alternative’ Hellenism as articulated in his *Hyperion*, but

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<sup>143</sup> Schiller, AE, XV.9.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> It is worth noting that Schiller was influenced deeply by J. J. Winckelmann’s research into Greek art in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. See J. J. Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2006.

<sup>146</sup> *Timaeus*, 29d. For an intellectual history of ‘myth’ in Greek culture, see Marcel Detienne, *The Creation of Mythology*, trans. Margaret Cook, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986. It is worth noting that Schelling’s first independently led philosophical venture is a commentary of Plato’s *Timaeus* in 1794 (I am indebted again to Vijak Haddadi for this observation [‘Existential Cosmology’, pp.88-95].)

<sup>147</sup> See Friedrich Hölderlin, *Hyperion and Selected Poems*, trans. various, New York: Continuum, 1990, pp.62-74. On the relation of the ‘self-sundered’ to the notion of the ‘self-deconstruction’ of the speculative, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, ‘The Caesura of the Speculative’, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, trans. Christopher Fynsk, Harvard University Press, 1989.

more precisely, his so-called 'On Judgment and Being' fragment, sharpens the focus of the specific intellectual moves the 'system-program' fragment makes.<sup>148</sup>

At stake for Hölderlin in his 1795 fragment is the articulation of the *essential* loss of the original ontological unity of being and its impossible recuperation in judgment. Judgment at once affects the division of subject and object (the *teilen* of *Urtheil*) and self-reflectively marks its own operation as diremption. It does not, however, sufficiently bridge the lacuna cleaved between absolute being and judgment since *stricto sensu* the original being cannot be fully accessed: to 'talk of an absolute Being' one must overcome the limits of judgment (the impossibility of accessing the irredeemably lost) and return to the expression of being *without* judgment.<sup>149</sup> But being's expression is negatively realized through the judgment that splits the organic whole; subsequently, the task of the philosopher is comprised of the recollection of the infinite failures of bridging the conceptual gulf between the autonomous self-identical, self-positing 'I' (Fichte's foundation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*: 'I = I') and the 'non-I' that bars reconciliation.<sup>150</sup>

Hölderlin's *tragic* Greece, which operates in contra-distinction to Schiller's, is *always already* bifurcated, from which the ground of being is originally postulated.<sup>151</sup> This suggests that absolute being is a self-dismantling identity. The 'result' of this original split is the 'eccentric path [*exzentrische Bahn*]' that the philosopher endlessly traverses through a

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<sup>148</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, trans. Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth, London: Penguin, 2009, pp.231-2.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Hölderlin's anti-Fichteanism here is perhaps partially attributed to the influence of Friedrich Niethammer's anti-foundational philosophy, which operated as a direct attack on the Kantianism (esp. Fichte and Jacobi) of the time. For Hölderlin, the 'I' cannot posit its own identity as the purely foundational subjective act since it is itself *constituted* by its relation with the non-ego, viz. the *object* of its judgment.

<sup>151</sup> For a discussion on Hölderlin's alternative Hellenism, see Georg Lukács, 'Hölderlin's *Hyperion*', *Goethe and his Age*, trans. Richard Anchor, London: Merlin Press 1968.

*narrational, artistic* redeployment of the speculative being.<sup>152</sup> The eccentricity of the artistic narrative is its recollection of the loss, thus, the infinite exacerbation of the lacuna cleaved between ontological, pre-reflexive unity and subjective judgment. Although the fragment presents a deepening of the ontological status of diremption itself, it nevertheless does not raise judgment to the complex level of cultural form in society (which is partially articulated in Schiller's conception of the cultural-formation drive [*Bildungstrieb*]).<sup>153</sup>

The system-program fragment then can be said to bridge Hölderlin's speculative ontology of the diremption of being, Schiller's aesthetic character of the play-drive, and J. G. Herder's (*pace* Giambattista Vico) 'invention' of the social category of the *Volk* (with its specifically counter French materialist inflection) and the 'mythology' of 'poetic wisdom' (as Vico puts it), through the conceptual movement of the tragic sense of mythology as the self-diremption of primordial unity.<sup>154</sup> Importantly, the subjective identity of the *Volk* – via Schiller's project of *Aesthetic Education* – structures the philosophical orientation of the genetic expressions of German Idealism. The task now becomes the articulation of social *models* of ethico-political unity. Hegel explicitly takes this task up in 1797, when moving to Frankfurt and re-uniting with Hölderlin.

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<sup>152</sup> The possibility of the 'narrativity' of speculative being will be developed, at a subterranean level, through chapters 2, 3 and 4.

<sup>153</sup> Schiller, AE, IX.6.

<sup>154</sup> For an exposition of Herder's notion of the '*Volk*', see Benjamin W. Redekop, *Enlightenment and Community: Lessing, Abbt, Herder, and the Quest for a German Public*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000. On 'poetic wisdom', see Giambattista Vico, *New Science*, trans. David Marsh, London: Penguin, 2001. If the fragment is to be understood as an expression of the convergence of Hölderlin, Hegel and Schelling, I believe that the philosophical content of the fragment must be reflected in the historical genealogy of its intellectual context. Accordingly, I would like to suggest that the fragment functions as a palimpsest of ideas (which of course implies that the ideas themselves are simply noted or staged and it is down to us to reconstruct their meanings and inter-connections).

## 1.6 Love as a 'Model' of Social Unity

It is in the Frankfurt writings on love that Hegel begins to employ the term *aufheben*. More importantly, *aufheben* emerges as an initial theoretical description of the social experience of love as a model of modern socio-ethical unity, thus as the articulation of the overcoming of the basic epistemological division of subject and object.<sup>155</sup> Accordingly, the initial writings of the Frankfurt period can be understood as Hegel's first forays into speculative philosophy in a specifically Kantian and post-Kantian context (via Schiller's *Aesthetic Education*).<sup>156</sup>

In direct contra-distinction to Schiller however, *aufheben* emerges as the *conceptual expression* of the movement of the unity unfolded in love itself and not the ratiocinative limit of the abstract dissolution of the oppositions that reciprocally affirm one another and raise themselves to harmony. The speculative depth of the articulation of *aufheben* as the immanent structure of the movement of the self-identification of the subject itself however is

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<sup>155</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that in the 1780s Schiller was beginning to take a more direct interest in the concept of love and its relation to duty and selfhood, see for example Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers and Passion and Politics*, trans. Robert David MacDonald, London: Oberon, 2005. There has been a renewed interest in Hegel's concept of love in recent literature. Žižek has recently noted that the 'underlying problem is, from the very beginning of [Hegel's] thought, that of love.' Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, p.9; see also, Judith Butler, *To Sense What is Living in the Other: Hegel's Early Love*, dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2012. It is Dieter Henrich however who properly discloses the systematic centrality of love in Hegel's thought: 'Hegel's system emerged uninterruptedly from out of this adoption of the word "love" as the central term of his thought.' Dieter Henrich, *The Course of Remembrance*, trans. various, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, p.131; see also Dieter Henrich, *Hegel im Kontext*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2007, pp.61-72.

<sup>156</sup> As I have briefly noted, the secondary literature on the development of Hegel's philosophical thought fail to provide detailed expositions of the relationship between Schiller's 1795 work and the formation of Hegel's theoretical project. H. S. Harris, who has perhaps provided us with the most in depth examination of the development of Hegel's thought from its first articulations to the *Phenomenology*, completely overlooks the effects of Schiller's letters on Hegel's Frankfurt writings: 'Most of the manuscripts that can be firmly dated to 1797 and 1798 are concerned with the Judaic tradition from the Flood to the birth of Jesus. Plato's *Phaedrus* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* certainly play a part in Hegel's reflections about love in this period. But until he took up Kant's *Metaphysik der Sitten* in August 1798, I suspect that the Old Testament, Josephus, and Herder occupied ore of his attention than any works of literature or philosophy in the ordinary sense, either classical or modern.' H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p.272. Stephen Crites adds: '[Hegel in the early Frankfurt period] immersed himself afresh in close exegetical studies in the Greek New Testament, especially in the Gospels', Stephen Crites, *Dialectic and Gospel in the Development of Hegel's Thinking*, Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, p.117. Even less convincing is Laurence Dickey, who argues that 'it was the culture of Old-Württemberg not the principles of German Idealism, that furnished Hegel' with the necessary intellectual context in which his ideas flourished and developed; Laurence Dickey, *Hegel: Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit, 1770-1807*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p.6.



not systematically deployed or expanded in these early writings. Also, the logical relation of the aspects of *aufheben* ('negation' and 'preservation') are not, in the Frankfurt writings, properly unfolded. That it is mobilized as a description however does not suggest that it is simply another term in the project of articulating speculative unification. The constitutive function of the expressive effect of *aufheben* in the context of the formation of a model of social unity is its signalling of the special mode of dialectical movement Hegel will develop and expound in more rigorous detail in his concept of experience in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*. What the structural social unity of love establishes is the *genetic* form of the union of the separation of subject and object *in* their separation. What is established in Kant's transcendental philosophy as an unbridgeable epistemological interstice between finite subjective knowledge and the object truth of the thing-in-itself is, in the structure of the relation of love, raised into the immanent identity of the idea of the object itself: 'In love the separate does still remain, but as something united and no longer as something separate; life senses life.'<sup>157</sup>

In the 'true union' of love the separate remains but not as wholly separated. This extension of the 'separated' in the dissolution of its divided form is achieved by the transcendence of the subjective reflection of the 'lover' (that sustains a distinction between itself and the object) in the objective substance of love; at this point, subjective reflection recognizes itself as immanent to the ethical order of love and, more precisely, identifies itself *as* that order; this self-identification of love dissolves the epistemological alienation of the finite subject of knowledge and the infinite object of truth. The recognition of the identity of subjective love and the object of love as the self-identity of love is described in terms of

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<sup>157</sup> ETW, 305; 1: 246. For a reconfiguration of love qua transcendental condition of possibility of relationality, see Emmanuel Levinas, 'Section IV: Beyond the Face', *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2008.

supersession: 'love is completely objectless and thereby supersedes (*aufhebt*) reflection, deprives man's opposite of all foreign character (*Charakter eines Fremden*), and discovers life itself without further defect.'<sup>158</sup>

The full effect of Hegel's 'post-Schillerian' reflections is illuminated here: the operation of supersession as the movement of the idea (love) itself at the level of its substance does not emerge as an essentially counter-harmonious unification of subject-object in a higher state of social unity. What is infinitely deferred through the effect of artistic semblance (namely, the deferral of the true 'aesthetic state') in Schiller, is, according to the young Hegel, contained within a form of social relation that is mobilized in contra-distinction to, but not in spite of, the pre-existing forms of modern life – principally, private property (*Eigentum*) relations in civil society (the specific historical context is the capacity to sustain an ethical gap between individuals). A strictly modern form of love – which is to say, a love completely immanent to the socio-ethical order of civil society – is a love that remains merely negatively related to its reality conditions: 'love is indignant if part of the individual is severed and held back as a private property.'<sup>159</sup> The problem of the reconstruction of love reflects the problem of the construction of true political freedom through the artwork as semblance of the aesthetic state according to Schiller: both 'love' and 'artwork' function as models that strictly speaking cannot be recognized in the ethical order of the present. Consequently, both reproduce the problem of the cultural resistance to reason: the problem with philosophical reason within the immanence of the present is that it creates an ideal that cannot be sufficiently recognized by way of the experiences of the present itself (one could

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<sup>158</sup> ETW, 305; 1: 246 (translation slightly modified).

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. 307; 1: 247.

call this, in a decidedly pre-Marxist sense, *utopic*).<sup>160</sup> Plato is fully aware of this problem when he states, ‘the majority of people aren’t convinced by our arguments, for they’ve never seen a *man* that fits our *plan*’.<sup>161</sup> For Hegel however, love is an immediately recognizable social form of relation. Its recognition from out of the limits of civil society however is more problematic. Hegel himself, although expounding the ‘positive’ nature and status of civil society in its genetic form, does not reflect on his own immediate employment of love qua model, which is to say, he fails to reflect on the positive character of love as immediate – which is to say ‘abstract’ – form of social unity.

To state that Hegel’s writings ‘fail’ to grasp the dialectical distinction between ‘abstract’ statement of social unity and the concrete expression of that unity itself is perhaps unfair since all we have are fragments. That said, the fragments on love are clearly structured by ‘stages’, or ‘levels’, of development. The fragment entitled ‘On Love’ – which I have been principally discussing – begins with the brief exposition of the problem of the love that is, as has already been noted, structured on the socio-political basis of private property relations: ‘love’s essence at this level, then, is that the individual in his innermost nature is something opposed [to objectivity].’<sup>162</sup> Further on, the unity that emerges in the developed form of love – in which the subject does not stand in direct opposition to the object – is expressed when ‘life has run through the circle of development from an immature to a

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<sup>160</sup> ‘Pre-Marxist’ in the sense that for the young Marx, ‘utopian’ referred principally to the socialism of the Saint-Simonists and Owenites and was organized by Marx’s identification that these socialist forms functioned by *idealizing* the mechanisms of the status quo and not positing an ideal world in a distant future unrelated to the actuality of the present. For an early identification, see Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works – Volume 3*, trans. various, New York: International Publishers, 1975, p.214.

<sup>161</sup> *Republic*, 498d-e. For Plato, this incapacity to recognize reason through education results in forms of state discipline. See also Plato’s *Laws*. All translations of Plato’s works will be taken from Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (trans. various), Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.

<sup>162</sup> ETW, 303; 1: 245. If more of the fragments remained, perhaps one could make the tentative claim that it is in the early Frankfurt writings that the embryonic structure of phenomenological science is initially conceived.

completely mature unity.’<sup>163</sup> ‘Immaturity’, according to Hegel, is the state in which love is articulated in a context in which its severance from the object is a constitutive function of the substance of love. Crucially, the ‘immature’ stage of the development of love is not identified as something that is oppositional to love; on the contrary, the stages themselves are articulated as immanent stages of the development of the idea of love itself.<sup>164</sup> Accordingly, one can recognize traces of the structure of the movement of phenomenological observation in this fragment, namely the structure of the path toward absolute knowing as the path of the constitutive and interconnected stages of the misunderstanding of the relation between a mode of consciousness and its claim to truth.<sup>165</sup> And yet, the ‘result’ of the higher articulation of love – which emerges from the immanence of its undeveloped forms – is not expressed in relation to the philosophical science that itself grasps the inner content of each ‘level’ and, more importantly, their necessary interconnections. Love, as expressed as a posited model of social unity, is essentially folded into the impasse of Kantianism and post-Kantianism (the un-presentability of the absolute) since the concrete philosophical knowledge of the truth of that model cannot be established. The corollary to this is the following: love is grasped in essence as an a priori form that is always already the abstract result of social unity, thus restoring the ‘positivity’ of the epistemological subject of modernity that Hegel is trying to expound in the early Bern writings. The young Hegel cannot grasp this himself since the philosophical concern of the legitimacy of the ‘self-certifying certainty’ (as Hegel puts it in

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. 305; 1: 247.

<sup>164</sup> Similarly, in part, to the development of the experience of ‘truth’ in Plato’s allegory of the cave. Recall that the initially imprisoned cave-dweller observes the ‘truth.’

<sup>165</sup> We can recognize in this sketch of the development of the ‘life’ of love from immaturity to maturity the whole structure of Hegel’s project of the dialectical articulation of the permeation of historical and ontological modes of being as it is first attempted on a systematic level in the ‘System of Ethical Life.’ Interestingly, this conception of the structural development of love as a social model of speculative unity in 1797, is developed in a different trajectory in Schlegel’s 1798/99 work *Lucinde*. Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971.

*Faith and Knowledge*) of the modern epistemological subject has not been raised to a consciously reflected level.<sup>166</sup>

It is precisely the *absence* of philosophical systematicity at the level of the unfolding of philosophy itself that forms the fundamental problem – but also the formal *distinctiveness* – of the conception of love qua social model of unification in the early Frankfurt writings. The limitation of love is based on the essential articulation of the absolute unification of the epistemological subject-object opposition from *outside* the unfolding of philosophy itself as an historical ‘object’ whose development must be dialectically unfolded if it is to mean anything at all, that is, if it is to be grasped as the actual science that can comprehend the inner sense of the truth of the speculative identity of subject and object *in their* identity. The world in which love appears as *aufheben*, when reflected from the expansion of Hegel’s philosophical project, is still not a world in which the *extremities* of the contradictions that form the ‘ethical substance’ of life have been fully experienced. Importantly, as a model of the movement of social unity, love is replaced by a more agonistic and conflicting experience in Hegel’s philosophical development (the ‘life-and-death struggle’ in the famous fourth chapter of the *Phenomenology*).<sup>167</sup> Love lacks the antagonistic moment of its self-mediation *at the level of the social itself*. It is posited in external distinction to assumed a priori social forms.<sup>168</sup> Accordingly, the model of love functions as a ‘result’ that is posited from the very outset as totally identical to itself, that is, as an abstract, immediate ‘result’ that lacks the dialectical development of the interdependent relation of the result and its process (the truth and the becoming of truth). It lacks such a development since the opposition between truth

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<sup>166</sup> FK, 64; 2: 298.

<sup>167</sup> For useful reflections on the distinction between the unity of ‘love’ and the unity forged in ‘struggle’, see Leo Rauch, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Self-Consciousness: Texts and Commentary*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, pp.87-102.

<sup>168</sup> ETW, 306; 1: 248.

and becoming, result and process and, moreover, the philosophical opposition of intuition and concept as an *absolute* opposition, has not been sufficiently explored. This, I believe, amounts to the following: although the structure of love ‘supersedes’ the separation of subject and object in the separation itself, it annihilates the need for the exposition of the structural movement of philosophy itself as the science that grasps in itself and for itself – without recourse to any other science – the truth of that union qua truth and not simply as a model that signals and represents unity. Love in the Frankfurt writings annihilates the need for philosophy as such (the harsh irony apropos Hegel’s *philosophical* development cannot be missed) since it is always already embedded in a state of philosophizing that takes itself for granted. The constructed model of *aufheben* does not grasp its own philosophical structure as *aufheben*, thus it *tacitly ratifies the very division it is trying to overcome*.<sup>169</sup>

### 1.7 The Two Forms of Diremption

It is clear from the writings of the Frankfurt period that Hegel began experimenting with trying to express, in more universal forms, different forms of social unification (the ‘living whole [*lebendiges Ganze*]’), the principle of which is preliminarily expressed in the concept of ‘love.’ Accordingly, it is clear that Hegel was in the process of raising his own theoretical development to the level of philosophy (in so far as philosophy thinks the whole). The transition of the writings, from Frankfurt onwards, is unequivocal: there is a slow progression toward a more systematic exposition of the relation between philosophy and the idea of ‘life.’<sup>170</sup> Accordingly, these early writings operate within the problematic expressed in the conflict of Schiller’s Romanticism and the immanent critique of Fichte’s subjective idealism

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<sup>169</sup> Thus falling into the limits of post-Kantian philosophy.

<sup>170</sup> See ‘1800 Fragment of a System’, ETW, 309-19; 1: 419-27.

in Hölderlin's illumination of speculative identity. In the move to Jena, we see that Hegel begins to employ more steadfastly the (Schellingian) notion of the identity of the 'absolute' (which operates as the more general, universal expression of philosophy's object).

The slow process of theoretical abstraction (from 'love' to 'life' and to the 'absolute' in its systematic expression) is transformed in Hegel's first philosophical publication, namely the 1801 *Differenzschrift*. The transformation itself consists in the descent of 'theoretical abstraction' to the level of cultural form. This amounts to the following: deploying 'philosophy' itself as a particular form of culture (*Bildung*) in the reality of the present, thus, in a certain sense, evoking Schiller's description of the 'specialization' of the sciences as a constitutive feature of the divisions of modern life at the level of mere positive affirmation. In its immediate form, philosophy is a particular way of grasping the actuality of the present; it is not *the* way, which is to say, the self-determined and self-organizing systematic articulation of truth. But in so far as the actuality of the present is, *qua actual*, the *totality* of its particular manifold realities, philosophy still operates as the 'queen of the sciences' in that it grasps the total reality *in its antinomies*. In respect to this, Hegel's preliminary philosophical motivation in his early Jena writings can be condensed in the following question: *how is speculative philosophy possible now* (at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century)? That is to say: how is philosophy possible in a context in which it is sustained as a specialized, isolated and distinct science that simply reflects the basic divisions of modern society? This immediately suggests two things: first, that the initial *formal* character of Hegel's philosophical project emerges as an expanded continuation of Kant's critical project; and second, that the critical project could never adequately raise this question since it does not grasp itself as a particular systematic form of philosophical expression within a cultural

whole that expresses its *basis* and which is, in and of itself, a *divided* basis. The conceptual development of Hegel's project is initially organized by the exposition of the notion of 'diremption' (*Entzweiung*) since it is this concept that gives rise to philosophy itself.<sup>171</sup>

Hegel declares that 'diremption is the source of *the need of philosophy* (*Entzweiung ist der Quell der Bedürfnisse des Philosophie*).'<sup>172</sup> The preliminary identification of diremption is the 'particular form (*besonderen Form*)' from which a philosophical *system* emerges.<sup>173</sup> The particularity of this form is made visible through an examination of the 'form worn' by a particular philosophy.<sup>174</sup> The philosophical form, according to Hegel, emerges in two principle manners: first, as 'the living originality (*lebendigen Originalität des Geistes*) of the spirit whose work and spontaneity have reestablished and shaped the harmony (*Harmonie*) that has been rent'; second, as we have just noted, the form of diremption.<sup>175</sup> What the preliminary observation establishes is an opposition of *forms*: on the one hand, the

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<sup>171</sup> The concept was at work in Hegel's earlier Frankfurt writings: 'Destruction of life is not the nullification of life but its diremption (*Entzweiung*), and the destruction consists in its transformation into an enemy.' ETW, 229; 1. The notion of diremption had a significant effect on the understanding of the consciousness of suffering and its place within a divided reality in the Frankfurt school. See for example, Adorno, *Critical Models*, p.6 and Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, p.125.

<sup>172</sup> D, 89; 2: 20. The expression and thematic of the 'need of philosophy' is not uniquely Hegelian; it is rather a reflection of the atmosphere of the post-Kantian impasse. In his *Fichte Studies*, Novalis writes (invoking, up to a certain point, interesting overlaps with what Hegel will develop in his Jena writings): 'Reflection finds the need of philosophy, or of an assumed systematic connection between thinking and feeling – because the need is in feeling. It searches through its material and finds nothing but itself and itself alone, unchangeable, as something firm to support it, - that is, without material, mere form of material – but properly understood, its own form, thought, indeed, as without actual matter, but nevertheless in order to be *its* form, [thought] in essential relation to matter in general. Because otherwise it would not be the pure form of *reflection*, which necessarily presupposes a material, because [reflection] is the product of the limited thing, of consciousness in this sense – in short, of the subjectivity of the subject, the accidental character of the accident. This is the original act, etc. It is this contingency that reflection, apparently alone, delivers to satisfy the need [of philosophy].' Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, pp.14-5. As I shall try to show, the need of philosophy according to Hegel is not limited to the overcoming of the epistemological scheme of the connection of thinking and feeling; it will, for Hegel, involve a deeper and wider terrain (historical and ontological).

<sup>173</sup> D, 89; 2: 20.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. The neoclassical category of 'harmony' here is mobilized, I believe, intentionally. What stands as the unreachable goal of Schiller's neoclassical project (viz. the total harmony – and not the mere supersession – of form and matter in the work of the aesthetic state), is here reduced to a form immanent to the cultural present, since, as we shall see, the principle of harmony needs to be united with (a) itself in the form of the system and (b) the form of the absolute as the source of harmony.



form of philosophy in its systematic expression, and the form of diremption that is the source of this expression. These forms are essentially *oppositional* for strictly *philosophical* reasons: philosophy is the grasping of the *truth of what is* (the actuality of the absolute); it is according to Hegel, *neither* conditioned by the particularity of a formal presentation *nor* has the object before it as an idea that cannot be grasped. These declarations are based on the specifically anti-Reinholdian identification of philosophy as the steady unfolding of the differing, idiosyncratic views that are all orientated by the basic assumption that ‘philosophy’ means ‘completeness of information (*Vollständigkeit der Kenntnisse*).’<sup>176</sup> The consequence of this identification of philosophy qua compendium of knowledge is, for Hegel, grave: the figure of the philosopher fails to ‘venture out into life’, that is to say, s/he is cut off from *objectivity* itself in all its manifold and substantial transformations. In order to not fall into this trap of endless false ‘progression’ – which perhaps implies the concept of the ‘bad infinite’ *avant la lettre* – philosophy itself must turn to itself as a specific cultural form and *self-reflect*. It is from this self-reflection, this turning in on itself, that philosophy will raise itself to universality.<sup>177</sup> In order to establish this self-reflection, philosophy must recognize two things: first, that it is indeed a particular cultural form; and second, that its reality condition of possibility is diremption, thus, that it is itself internally divided (between its truth and its historical shape).

What we have here then is a rather peculiar relation between two cultural forms immanent to an *asymmetrical* context of inter-permeation: what philosophy needs according to Hegel is a systematic form of philosophy in which it must raise itself out of the dichotomies of reality that it reflects when it subjects itself to self-reflection (that is, when

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid. 85; 2: 15.

<sup>177</sup> This will be developed in chapters 2 and 3.

philosophy begins to critique its *systematization*). What diremption points to is the division of the 'one' into the 'two'; or, to put it less obliquely, the separation of the original speculative unity of identity into its subjective and objective sides. This has no doubt bolstered the standard way of grasping Hegel's identification of the reality of the present as an overcoming of diremption in the positive re-integration of the original speculative unity of subject and object (diremption is defined 'through the opposites of spirit and matter, soul and body, faith and understanding, freedom and necessity', etc.<sup>178</sup>). Hegel's preliminary distinction between the 'two' that gives *Entzweiung* its ontological sense in the *Differenzschrift* (and indeed in the subsequent Jena works) makes, I believe, a more refined conceptual claim than the putatively assigned one (the expression of basic antinomies): *what is dirempted is not the whole array of philosophical binaries, but rather, the very distinction between on the one hand, the form of philosophy that arrogates to itself the standpoint of universality (in harmony with the absolute) and, on the other hand, the fissured system of philosophy in the context of the dirempted form of the cultural present.*

To state that the expression 'diremption' *defines*, even at a preliminary level, the basic state of binary opposition is to reduce the expression itself to a static opposite that would give rise only to an equally static result (namely, the hypostatized 'unification' of the opposites). I agree that there is a literal sense to the term; I do not think however that 'literal' here should be grasped in terms of 'ordinary' (which is a more specific experience elaborated in the *Phenomenology*). The literal sense – separation, bifurcation, division – does not grasp the dynamic movement of the splitting of the forms themselves since what 'splits' is not the 'one' into the 'two', but rather, the preliminary state of the division of two cultural forms,

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<sup>178</sup> Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology*, p.9.

that of the philosophical form and that of the historical form. What this means is the following: *the sense of diremption is itself formally dirempted*.<sup>179</sup>

The *Differenzschrift* can be said to constitute the preliminary philosophical articulation of the specificity of Hegel's philosophical project since it expresses the necessity of raising philosophy to its *historical self-consciousness*. It begins to form this project however, and as we have seen, by attending to 'philosophy' as the most accomplished reflexive form of the culture of the present and not simply as an undifferentiated, eternal form of thinking; if philosophy was simply treated as timeless 'thought' then there would not be anything particularly 'historical' about the 'insights' that Hegel attempts first to establish. The presentation of diremption as the reality of the present reflects itself in the expression of the 'need of philosophy': that philosophy needs to become philosophical (an expression that, unlike Schiller's formal division of aesthetic semblance and philosophical expression, will be raised into the mode of speculative expression) is at once a philosophical need and a *non-philosophical* need.

The terminological employment of the 'non-philosophical' is based on Hegel's own insistence on the conceptual distinction between the 'philosophical' and the 'unphilosophical' (*unphilosophisch*) in the early Jena writing.<sup>180</sup> What is represented as 'unphilosophical' is not the pure negation of philosophy as such, or an *anti-philosophical* mode of knowing. Rather, it represents the *truth of a philosophical expression that fails to raise itself to its own historical self-consciousness* (what Hegel calls in his *Phenomenology*, the *untruth* of

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<sup>179</sup> This is perhaps what makes Hegel's philosophical presentation so 'wretched' as Jacobi once put it in a letter to Reinhold. Quoted in Harris, op. cit. (Vol. II), p.xxiv. I think that we should pay closer attention to the preliminary experiences of Hegel's readership at the time of his early Jena publications; that is to say, to the experiences of the *unintelligibility* of Hegel's publications from 1801 by figures such as Jacobi and Friedrich Schlegel. For a brief presentation of this initial reception, see *ibid.* pp.xxii-xxv.

<sup>180</sup> The principle distinction between 'philosophical' and 'unphilosophical' is made in the introduction to the 'Critical Journal of Philosophy'; see 'On the Essence of Philosophical Criticism Generally, and Its Relationship to the Present State of Philosophy in Particular', M, 208-219; 2: 171-87.

consciousness). The ‘unphilosophical’ then designates the form of philosophy that has not actualized itself as ‘true philosophy (*wahre Philosophie*)’ (the notion of ‘true philosophy’ can be traced back to the classical notion of φιλοσοφίαν ἀληθῆ).<sup>181</sup> Does this however amount to rehearsing the project of the transcendental critique of reason as the elaboration of the idea of transcendental philosophy qua *path* to the system of speculative science? According to Hegel, the ‘unphilosophical’ consists of the description of the strictly *philosophical* expressions of a culture in a specific historical time; it is a *formal* distinction disclosed by philosophy and its relation to the diremption of reality from whence it emerges. Hegel’s orientation to the philosophical problem of Kantian philosophy here is not structured by the rigid opposition of the understanding and reason, which is to say, the distinction between the critique of reason and the claims of speculative philosophy. Rather, it posits an enlarged historical distinction between the *form* of philosophy as a particular moment in a wider given cultural reality (the ‘present’) and the form of the diremption of the culture that gives rise to the need for the philosophical *system*. The cultural fissure concretely reflects the theoretical diremption of principle and system since ‘philosophy’ in its specific form (here, the Kantian one) can only disclose the nature and the limits of speculative philosophy but it cannot grasp the very diremption between the critique of reason by the understanding and reason itself as originating *in* the diremption of the given present, of what Hegel calls ‘the unfree and given aspect of the whole configuration [of the relation of the form of philosophy and the form of the cultural diremption].’<sup>182</sup>

Consequently, we can state that there are two senses of the need of philosophy at the level of the actual cultural need *for* philosophy: first, philosophy is needed to re-establish the

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<sup>181</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 521c.

<sup>182</sup> D, 89; 2: 20.

unity that has been divided in the cultural present (according to Hegel, this is what philosophy has done throughout the ages); and second, philosophy is needed to set into motion the distinction between itself as agency of cultural unification and the actual diremption of reality itself at a given moment that gives philosophy its systematic characteristic (that is, the way it unfolds, the way it is done – its method). What is needed then is a ‘new’ philosophy, one that brings into a deepened permeated relation the particular *totality* (*Totalität*) of a specific philosophy (‘every philosophy is complete in itself’<sup>183</sup>) and the universal cultural form of diremption that gives birth to the system of philosophy. The cultural need for this ‘new’ philosophy is the need of the one, true *whole* (*Ganze*).<sup>184</sup> That is, the becoming-philosophical of philosophy itself as the ideal reflexive form of culture as a whole.

The idea of a ‘new philosophy’ however does not sufficiently underscore what Hegel is trying to achieve in a programmatic sense in the *Differenzschrift*. In fact, the notion of the ‘new’ as idiosyncratically and historically (*historisch*) novel is positively forbidden at the level of grasping the shape of ‘true philosophy’ in Hegel’s immanent critique of philosophical methodologies since the idea of the ‘new’ suggests another temporally limited mode of philosophical methodology, which, for Hegel, implies that the history of philosophy is the history of the progress of merely different and idiosyncratic ways of philosophizing that are only historically linked by way of a deflation of the relation of the mere past to the present. The ‘past’ is subordinated to the realm of the stasis of ‘useful preludes (*nützliche Vorübungen*)’ to the present – the ‘prelude’ amounts to the simple idealization of an historical moment into a ‘fossil’ of information that can be taxonomically identified, ordered and

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

registered into a catalogue of knowledge.<sup>185</sup> The whole philosophy, the one ‘true philosophy’, is, on the contrary, the raising of its inward identity and the context of its diremption from within the context of its historical particularity and the permeation of historical moments to a speculative historical whole, that is, the history of reason. History in this sense no longer means the hypostatization of the past as the mere ‘collection of mummies (*Kollektion von Mumien*)’ that is presented by what Hegel seems to refer to as the ‘philosopher-collector’ (exemplified by Reinhold).<sup>186</sup> The philosopher in this context simply looks onto the history of philosophy as an archive of opinions (*Meinungen*) loosely connected by their self-identification as philosophies.<sup>187</sup> The history of philosophy becomes for the ‘philosopher-collector’ nothing but the endless accumulation of information in which only the mere phenomenal order of the ‘historical progress’ – externally reflected – is of real interest, thus leaving the question of the *truth* of philosophy completely untouched. What Hegel sketches out, albeit in broad outlines, in the *Differenzschrift* (and the other early Jena writings) is that the need of true philosophy is distinct from the notion of the ‘philosophical need’ of method that is offered within the context of a presupposed ‘image of philosophy’ as an infinite linear progressive flow of constantly improving *instrumentalized* methodological ‘inventions.’ Hegel has the Kantian formulation of the philosophical need of the science of critique expressed in the third sub-section of the introduction to the second edition of the *First Critique* in mind.<sup>188</sup> When philosophy myopically focuses on itself qua method of

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. 86; 2: 16.

<sup>187</sup> The dialectical status of the ‘opinion’ will be exposed in more detail in the next chapter through a reflection on the first chapter of the *Phenomenology*.

<sup>188</sup> ‘Philosophy (*Philosophie*) needs (*bedarf*) a science (*Wissenschaft*) that determines the possibility, the principles, and the domain of all cognitions *a priori*’, Kant, CPR, B6.

grasping the truth, it quickly forgets that it is always already *in* truth and that this truth is to be had as its specific object.

In light of this distinction between instrumentalization and truth, it is worth providing a general schema of the relations between what Hegel refers to as 'philosophy', 'philosophizing' and 'system.' One should point out that Hegel's *Differenzschrift* does not promise the exposition of the difference between Fichte's and Schelling's *philosophy*, but rather their *systems*. The essence of philosophy according to Hegel is the rational; it is the appearance of reason grasping the absolute that is present in all the historical forms of philosophy, that is, of *philosophical systems* (which in a certain respect is employed as a theoretically refined term of what Reinhold refers to as 'idiosyncrasy'). The essence of philosophy then – reason – 'is at all times the same (*zu allen Zeiten dieselbe*).'<sup>189</sup> Accordingly, for reason, 'there are neither predecessors nor successors (*Vorgänger noch Nachgänger*).'<sup>190</sup> From this we can draw the following: on the one hand, 'system' is the historical form of philosophy; it is the external expression of the inner essence of philosophy (its appearance) as a category of determinate finitude ('whatever is peculiar in a philosophy must *ipso facto* belong to the form of the system and not to the essence of the philosophy').<sup>191</sup> 'Philosophy', on the other hand, is the articulation of the eternal essence of philosophical systems that discloses at once their external differentiation and their essential indifference. Hegel's presentation of the distinction between Fichte's and Schelling's systems then is one that is explicitly *philosophical*. In this sense, to state that the *Differenzschrift* performs the movement of phenomenological science *avant la lettre* is not without some justification if by

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<sup>189</sup> D, 87; 2: 18.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. The idea of the 'system' as a self-unfolding organization of the whole itself will become more central to Hegel's later philosophical work. In the context of the Jena writings, 'system' is deployed in its putative distinction to philosophical essence or, as we shall see shortly, 'principle.'

‘phenomenological science’ we mean the *immanent* emergence of the appearance of philosophical science from within the dialectical movement of the de-familiarization of the formal presentation of philosophical systems that dominate in the context of the present.<sup>192</sup> Put more simply: Hegel’s philosophy emerges from *out of* the exposition of the relation and movement of philosophical systems and not *against* them.

Accordingly, the philosophizing of true philosophy rests on the recognition of always already being immanent to the specificity of a cultural form and the particularity of its diremption. What this amounts to is the following: one can never ‘take the plunge’ or be absolutely ‘beside one-self’, so to speak, into philosophy as one is always already in its element in the form of the historical particular (the prevailing *system*).<sup>193</sup> (This is why to cast oneself wholeheartedly into the abyss of the absolute is only the ‘initial’ step. It is a necessarily misplaced step – or illusory step – since what is reflected in the realization of the step into philosophy is that one is always already embedded in its element.<sup>194</sup>) It is unsurprising that Hegel will prefer the metaphor of the ostensibly tranquil ‘step’ (of and into

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<sup>192</sup> I am, accordingly, in disagreement with Gillian Rose over her isolation of Hegel’s ‘System of Ethical Life’ as the genetic expression of Hegel’s phenomenological science. Rose fails to disclose two essential points: first, the relation between the movement of phenomenological dialectics and Schelling’s idea of the ‘potencies’ of the self-emanation of the absolute (which figure as the basic structure of Hegel’s ‘System of Ethical Life’); and second, the distinct absence of the method of dialectical defamiliarization articulated in the phenomenological ‘we’ (the observing consciousness), that reclaims, ‘for itself’, the historical and ontological movement as its own. Thus, the movement articulated in the 1802-3 system is not a movement *for us* (since it is the absolute movement of the absolute in its potencies [‘levels’]). See Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, London and New York: Verso, 2009, pp.63-77. It is in the 1803-4 ‘First Philosophy of Spirit’ that Hegel begins to employ the self-reflexive ‘we’ as observer of the historical and ontological movement. See SS, 214 and 227.

<sup>193</sup> This hypostatization of the ‘being-beside-oneseif’ (*ausser sich sein*) is the principle identification of the sensuous drive in its extreme limitation according to Schiller. Because of his incapacity to demonstrate the mediation of the drives, and therefore the mediated identity of infinite and finite, Schiller’s conception falls within the limits of transcendental philosophy demonstrated by Hegel, which in turn, ultimately leads to the incapacity to unify self-consciousness. For Schiller’s conception of the sensuous drive, see AE, XII (especially the footnote to XII.2). Hegel’s expression for this wholehearted abandon into the ‘philosophical abyss’ of reason is ‘to throw oneself *à corps perdu*.’ D, 88; 2: 19.

<sup>194</sup> One can recognize the qualitative distinction between incarceration in the cave and the ‘first’ liberation that occurs inside the cave in Plato’s allegory. The first liberation is not liberating in relation to truth. It is however liberating in relation to consciousness of the limits of the cave itself and the position maintained in the cave. Plato, *Republic*, 516-7.



reason) to that of the melodramatic pathos of (romantic) abandon: to remain caught within the philosophical vestibule (the infinite pseudo-philosophical propaedeutic of historical reflection), on the one hand, and to cast oneself into the abyss of the essence of philosophy on the other hand, is to re-launch, in somewhat extreme and inflated terms, the static antinomies established by the understanding and its critique of reason. It is, within the more focused discourse of Hegel's early Jena writings, to continuously reproduce the division between 'principle' and 'system.'

### 1.8 The Division of Principle and System

The problem at the core of the division of principle and system is that of the systematic *expression* of the principle. That is to say, the principle as a developed whole – the truth – in which all its parts are dialectically *connected* – the process of the development of truth (the becoming of truth). As has already been noted, what modern philosophy fails to achieve is the systematic unfolding of the abstract statement of the grounding principle (*Grundsatz*) of philosophy. This incapacity to fully elaborate the principle at the systematic level leaves the very project of the systematic expression as a 'boundary' folded back onto the principle itself: the systematic articulation of the principle is grasped, at the level of the expression of the principle, as an outstanding task recoded epistemologically and ontologically into the very status of the principle ('the principle *ought* to be...').

The normative effect of the principle reflects the nominalism of modern philosophy according to Hegel: the truth, in so far as it remains outstanding at the systematic level, is something abstractly stated but never fully comprehended. Accordingly, the infinite is subsumed within the limits of the finite: 'as soon as speculation steps outside the concept that

it establishes for itself and evolves into a system, it abandons itself and its principle and does not come back to it again.<sup>195</sup> Consequently, philosophy is replaced by the ‘pretentious’ discourse of its own *incapacity* to raise itself to the level of the comprehension of truth (this discourse is known as ‘argumentation’) and, as a direct result of this substitution, ‘philosophy’ becomes a spuriously infinite discourse that ‘modestly’ identifies its own finitude in relation to the unknown infinite.<sup>196</sup> And this (false) ‘modesty’, as the mature Hegel puts it, is the ‘worst of virtues’ since it posits as impossible the reconstruction of speculative identity – the identity of subject and object in the systematic unfolding of this principle – itself as identity and true infinite.<sup>197</sup>

The idea of ‘reconstruction’ here is mobilized in relation to the limits of the ‘appearance’ of the form of the absolute as ‘apprehended’ by *reflection*; the structural presupposition of this identification of apprehension is, of course, the separation of philosophical cognition and the cognition of the absolute.<sup>198</sup> It is reflection itself which becomes the *instrumental* force of the division between knowledge and truth since reflection, as the positing of the opposition, involves a contradiction between what it knows and the basis on which its knowing is conditioned (since it is essentially limited by its opposite). This instrumentalization of reflection structures the axiomatic propositional form in which philosophical judgements are made.<sup>199</sup> The theoretical development of Hegel’s early Jena writings, and especially around the problem of the relation between principle and system

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<sup>195</sup> D, 81; 2: 11.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid. 2: 10.

<sup>197</sup> Enc. III, 22; 10: 35.

<sup>198</sup> ‘Transcendental intuition, the very principle [of speculation], thereby assumes the awkward posture of something that is in opposition to the manifold deduced from it. The Absolute of the system shows itself as apprehended only in the form in which it appears to philosophical reflection.’ D, 81; 2:11. Here we can see in embryonic form Hegel’s presentation of the distinction between ‘apprehension’ and ‘comprehension’ that runs through the *Phenomenology* (especially the preface).

<sup>199</sup> D, 94-8; 2: 25-30.

have as their philosophical presupposition the problem of judgement, that is, the problem of the structure of philosophical propositions.

The basic principle of speculative identity is expressed in a standard propositional form of logical non-contradiction: 'A = A'.<sup>200</sup> The immediate problem of such a proposition for Hegel however is its function at the systematic level, that is to say, at the level of the complete articulation and presentation of the absolute itself. The form of the proposition is itself formally reflected by reflection itself: reflection produces propositions in so far as they are necessarily posited. They are then, by definition, limited and conditioned; or, more precisely, they formally register and express their own limitation and conditioning (since the absolute is grasped as the basis of reflection within the limits of reflection itself). This self-presentation of the reflective form of the proposition within the context of an instrumental reflective understanding of philosophical cognition gives rise to the necessity of infinite reflective legitimation of one proposition by another that would serve as the foundation of the initial one.<sup>201</sup> Subsequently, the very *form* of propositions or judgements is intrinsically limited since a proposition can only properly articulate an antinomy between itself and that which it *inadequately* expresses: for a fundamental proposition – the expression of the absolute itself – to be fundamental in the strictest sense of the term (grounding all other propositions) it must articulate in and for itself an absolute identity between form and content, that is between the work of understanding and the truth of the absolute. If 'A = A' is absolute however *at the point of it being posited*, then what is actually being posited is the mere (or 'pure') abstract identity of form and matter as identical to themselves (as things that

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<sup>200</sup> Hegel's reflections are developed within the context of Fichte's asseveration that 'every science requires a first principle.' J. G. Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, trans. Daniel Breazeale, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988, p.104.

<sup>201</sup> D, 103; 2: 36.

always already *mean what they mean*, as abstractly absolute and pre-given).<sup>202</sup> Consequently, the *difference* between form and matter is strictly excluded; this strongly implies that the presupposition and condition of the sense of the fundamental proposition is in fact the *unreflected* differentiation between form and matter. Accordingly, the proposition is ‘not absolute but defective.’<sup>203</sup>

Another way to grasp the fundamental proposition would be that it articulates – in direct contradistinction to the initial way of understanding what is expressed in the proposition – the opposition of form and matter itself so that ‘A = A’ is at once an analytical judgement (of immediate identification) and a synthetic one (as a priori unified). The problem with an analytical judgement, and Hegel here follows Kant to the letter, is that it strictly speaking does not constitute a judgment in the sense that subject and predicate are always already *identical* thus dissolving the structure of the *connection, relation* and *distinction* between subject and predicate. To call an analytic judgement a ‘judgement’ is in a certain sense a misnomer. It is rather an expression of pure tautology. That a proposition expresses itself as both analytic and synthetic suggests that it is structured as an antinomy, or rather, that it raises itself to the level of an antinomy and not a fundamental proposition since a fundamental proposition would not be conditioned by the necessity of another proposition from whence it *derives* its fundamental sense. An antinomic proposition cannot furnish the expression of a fundamental proposition. With this exposition of the *internal contradiction* at the heart of a founding proposition Hegel draws the following, stark conclusion:

It is a delusion that something merely posited for reflection must necessarily stand at the summit of a system as the highest or absolute and basic proposition; or that the essence of any system is expression as a proposition that has absolute validity for thinking...The delusion

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid. 103-4; 2: 36.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. 104; 2: 36.

accounts itself all the more justified if the system itself expresses the Absolute which is its principle, in the form of a proposition or definition which is basically an antinomy, and for this reason suspends itself as something posited for mere reflection.<sup>204</sup>

The delusion of the capacity of a founding proposition is not the delusion of the adequacy of philosophical expression as such. The immanent critique of the foundational proposition exposed in the *Differenzschrift* here concerns the structural mobilization of such a proposition at the very *zenith qua foundational beginning* of philosophical exposition. It is at this point that we can recognize the genetic form of Hegel's dialectical process in its sharpest articulation: the philosophical problem of establishing first, founding principles has given rise to the understanding of philosophy as partaking in the necessity to construct a preparatory study that functions as elaborating the 'correct' and adequate methodology that will sufficiently achieve the task set out by philosophy (the truth of the absolute). This elaboration of a sufficient propaedeutic to philosophical knowledge reduces philosophy, as has already been noted, to a series of competing meta-philosophical articulations of methodology in which the 'subject-matter' itself is separated from philosophical consciousness itself. The 'result' of these competing modes of philosophizing is that they continuously *reproduce* the presupposition of the division between finite knowing and infinite truth.<sup>205</sup> A philosophical beginning – in the form of a grounding principle (a *philosophical* beginning can only be philosophical if it is structured on a foundational principle) – that is based on the distinction between 'method' and 'result' remains limited by

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid. 105; 2: 36-7.

<sup>205</sup> The young Schelling had a more impassioned way of putting this presupposition of the separation of consciousness and the absolute within the context of the limits of reflection: 'Man is not born to waste his mental energy in struggling against the hallucination of an imagined world, but to wield all his forces on a world which has influence upon him, which allows him to feel its power, and against which he can react ... Mere reflection is a form of illness ... It makes the division between man and the world permanent, by making the latter into a thing in itself, unreachable by perception, imagination, understanding or reason.' From *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797), cited in John Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel: From German Idealism to Christian Metaphysics*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007, p.45.

the very structure that is erected in order to achieve that which is barred (knowledge of truth); what occurs subsequently is a deflation of the capacity of the unfolding of philosophy itself as a science that grasps the truth of the absolute.

Such a philosophical method results in the paradoxical image of an infinitely restless movement of thought that goes 'hither and thither' but does not get anywhere at all (put another way, we could call this movement the 'inertia of endless toing and froing'). The 'philosophical debate' between competing philosophies now becomes a question of the critique of which is the *correct* method; philosophy becomes wholly a discourse on method. The properly dialectical move is not to provide a 'negation' of a particular philosophical method (for example, 'phenomenological science' as the 'negation' of 'critique'); this would suggest that the 'error' is in the subjective standpoint of the philosophizing itself. Rather, the properly dialectical move is to grasp that the 'error' is in the legitimacy of establishing a foundational principle of philosophy at the very beginning. The point is that the idea of a philosophical beginning as such is an abstraction, a false and erroneous structural component that should not be simply taken for granted. Accordingly, the properly dialectical moment in Hegel's critique of foundational propositions in the context of 'philosophical beginnings' is that it exhibits the objective *invalidity* of the philosophical progress of the 'philosophical beginning' as such. The upshot of this is clear: *the beginning of philosophy can never be sensu stricto philosophical*. More importantly, it can never be sufficiently philosophical because it can never be a complete expression of the form and content of the proposition (the principle articulated) at a systematic level; the initial proposition of philosophy (the speculative identity) can only be grasped as the unification of proposition and system at the end and, by extension, as a *philosophical end*.

A philosophy that begins with the foundational proposition of 'A = A' – which is to say, the basic articulation of the principle of identity – cannot raise this principle itself to that of the principle of its own system (since this would require the exposition of oppositional and derivative propositions). Such a theoretical structure would dissolve the capacity to grasp the identity of speculation itself. Fichte's philosophical system is, according to Hegel, the most accomplished theoretical form of this separation of principle and system within the context of the attempt to philosophically supersede it. In positing the speculative identity as its foundational principle, Fichte's system fails to raise that principle in the systematic unfolding of that identity at the level of its objective supposition (the 'objective Subject-Object' as Hegel puts it). Thus, the limits of Fichtean philosophy are expressed in its most developed philosophical concept, namely the expression of the self-positing I – the identification of self-consciousness as the absolute itself – as the basis of the philosophical knowledge from whence truth is to be 'derived.'<sup>206</sup> It is clear that by 1801, Hegel was defending Schelling's philosophical system as the highest and most sophisticated expression of speculative identity since it grasps the principle of that identity as the principle of the system 'as a *whole* (*ganzen*)', that is, *systematically*, since the speculative identity is posited in both its subject-object forms (subjectively and objectively).<sup>207</sup>

It is not the consciously reflected task of the *Differenzschrift* to lay out an immanent critique of Schelling's philosophical system. We need to keep in mind that the exposition of their difference provides the critique of the post-Kantian philosophical legacy that reduces philosophy into a 'system' of the endless aggregation of information on 'idiosyncratic' philosophical methods; that is to say, the reduction of philosophy to a kind of amateur

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<sup>206</sup> The structure of 'derivation' is internal to Fichte's general methodology. J. G. Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p.110.

<sup>207</sup> D, 155; 2: 94.

historical archiving or collecting (resulting in the endless reproduction of the misunderstanding of philosophy itself). Put more directly: Hegel's exposition of the differences of philosophical systems gives him a dynamic critique of the philosophical present – exemplified in the 'philosophy' of Reinhold, the critique of which closes the *Differenzschrift*. The break with Schelling – which is announced in the preface to the *Phenomenology* – is however found in its latent genetic form in the *Differenzschrift*. It is located, more precisely, in the identification of the 'task of philosophy' itself as the construction of the absolute in and for consciousness, thus as the very dissolution and overcoming of that diremption between one and the other. The irony is that Hegel is giving us an exposition of what is 'particular' in Schelling's philosophical system (it is a *difference* essay), so it affirms at some level the Reinholdian 'insight'; what is dissolved however is that the particularity of Schelling's philosophical system is its identification of the indifference of the absolute as the 'birth' of itself *and* philosophical systematics; which is to say, the identification of the absolute as being 'born' from the positing of its philosophical identity in both its subjective and objective forms.<sup>208</sup> What Schelling cannot think however is the twofold structure of the identity of the absolute *at the level of philosophy itself*. Hegel himself has not become fully conscious of this but it can be recognized in its most atomic expression in the strange formulation of the self-identity of the task of philosophy itself. Hegel presents this in an uncharacteristically circumspective conditional form: 'If the task of philosophy is taken to be the supersession of diremption (*die Aufhebung der Entzweiung*), Reason may try to solve it by nullifying one of the opposites and exalting the other into

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid. As we shall see later, Hegel restores this unity of 'birth' and 'being-born-from' into the identity of 'self-parturition' in his first 'philosophy of spirit'.



something finite.<sup>209</sup> It is clear that Fichte's philosophy ends by subordinating the objective subject-object to the subjective subject-object. Hegel's *Differenzschrift* demonstrates how this occurs in detail. It is not entirely clear however in what sense the 'task of philosophy' is *systematically* grasped as the articulation of the 'supersession of diremption.' What I want to stress here is the conditional form of this expression *in its general form* in so far as it articulates the unconsciously articulated presupposition of Hegel's own philosophical project in the context of the development of his Jena writings. That philosophy has as its task the supersession of diremption is the un-reflected presupposition of German Idealism itself according to its development into the *Phenomenology*.

The *appearance* of Hegel's *withdrawal* from directly tarrying with the philosophical subject matter through the construction of models of speculative unity (early Frankfurt writings) into the trans-historical reflection of philosophical methodology in the substance of the philosophical present reveals, somewhat paradoxically, the necessity of the *actualization of philosophy* itself as an outstanding project. This is principally how the writings of the early Jena period should be grasped: as the *performance* of the abstract expression of the necessity of the *systematic reflection of philosophy against and from within itself*, the result of which is abstractly posited in the expression 'true philosophy.' This 'performance' is achieved through Hegel's diligent and careful immanent critique of the 'present state of philosophy (*gegenwärtigen Zustand der Philosophie*)' (as, the reader will recall, it is put in the title to the introduction to the *Critical Journal*).

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid. (translation slightly modified).

### 1.9 The Task of 'True Philosophy': Hegel's Project Abstractly Stated

The task of philosophy, in light of the diremption of the two forms of the absolute and in relation to the philosophical hiatus between principle and system, is identified, as has been noted, in a single condensed formulation (coming at the end of the *Differenzschrift*): '*die Aufhebung der Entzweiung*.' According to Hegel, the 'supersession of diremption' amounts to '[constructing] the Absolute for consciousness.'<sup>210</sup> The *Aufhebung* of diremption figures in the *Differenzschrift* as the expression of the result of philosophy yet to be attained and properly ascertained for the philosophical subject. This deferral however does not mean that the expression is void of conceptual significance. It rather suggests that Hegel's philosophical project is to be developed *systematically* (Hegel acknowledges the logic of his own theoretical argument thus performing a kind of self-critique). Therefore, what the expression gives us is the undeveloped form of speculative philosophy as the articulation of the *Aufhebung* of the two forms of the diremption of the absolute. This suggests the following: the expression gives us the undeveloped form of the very notion of 'supersession' in its deepened speculative sense (which is to say, distinct from its employment in the early Frankfurt writings).

We have already tried to establish the conceptual distinction between 'harmony' qua completed union (the *whole*) and 'supersession' qua uniform progression (of *units*) in Schiller's *Aesthetic Education*. We have seen that in Schiller, it is the harmonizing power of the play-drive of the aesthetic character that attempts to raise the antinomies of feeling and thought to a higher unity (the *beauty* of the whole in the aesthetic state). In so far as the play-drive is only as powerful as its expression, the effect of the *logical* negation of the two conditions at the level of philosophical exposition fails to articulate the unification of

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 94; 2: 25.

aesthetic beauty. This amounts to the following: philosophy *itself*, even in its speculative form, must be raised into the unity of a higher order (what the young author of the system-program fragment called 'mythology'). And it can do this only through aesthetic creation. Here, a sharp convergence and divergence with Hegel's 1801 essay can be posed: the philosophical orientation of the essay is the lifting of the philosophy from out of the diremption of the distinction between philosophical principle and system via an immanent critique of the cultural instrumentalization of reflection. The way through the conceptual impasse of diremption is by establishing the form of the philosophical antinomy within the form of the diremption of the absolute itself. Accordingly, the 'antinomy' itself is deepened, or raised to a higher expression, by way of its reflection of the diremption of the absolute. In this sense, Hegel's project, as was noted earlier, is mobilized by the attempt to raise philosophy *itself* to the level of its particular unfolding immanent to the absolute. This self-identification is itself *philosophical* in so far as the opposition at the core of its differentiation is always already folded into the higher reality of the absolute in which 'philosophy' is a form. The preliminary philosophical need then can be expressed as follows: what 'philosophy' needs is philosophy; that is to say, what a philosophical system needs is the systematization of its own idea; *philosophy needs to be philosophically self-consciousness*. It is in this strict sense that Hegel diverges from Schiller's project apropos the problem of the 'fate' of philosophy (and indeed, the project announced in the system-program fragment).

This however does not raise philosophy itself to the level of its own 'subject-matter' since it is still formed by the reality of the diremption of the absolute. In order to answer the 'need of the age' (as Schiller puts it), philosophy needs to become philosophical qua 'true philosophy' since it is the latter that, formalizing this distinction between itself and the

absolute as a self-reflected and mediated experience, actually comprehends the idea of diremption in its *speculative* sense, which is to say, as a relational identity of internal contradiction and not in the form of pre-given and fixed determinate oppositions. This implies the following point: the sense of the ‘supersession of diremption’ is constitutively related to the experience of the ‘need of philosophy.’ They are *dialectically permeated*. This dialectical permeation itself has two forms of articulation. These two forms, as we shall see, are internally reflected in the expression ‘the supersession of diremption’ and its relation to the idea of ‘the need of philosophy.’

The formal symmetry of the two expressions should not be overlooked (*die Bedürfnis der Philosophie/die Aufhebung der Entzweiung*); this implies that we should not overlook the double movement of their genitive tie. Accordingly, the *Aufhebung* of diremption can be understood in principally two ways: first, that *Aufhebung* – whose structure and meaning is not sufficiently disclosed in the *Differenzschrift*, which at the outset is not entirely a problem for a basic understanding of the work – constitutes the name of the overcoming of the diremption that is required for the unification of philosophy with the absolute in the present. Consequently, the first ‘reading’ of the expression progresses in a direct and ‘linear’ manner (the task of philosophy is to supersede the diremption). This linearity restores a normative function to the project articulated in the *Differenzschrift*: what *ought* to be achieved is the supersession of diremption. That said, the normative function is itself mediated by the actuality of the present in its deepened dirempted form. It does not then function as a transcendental form of moral comportment but rather is, because mediated, immanent to the identity – dislocated as it is – of the present.

The second way of grasping this expression is conceptually more sophisticated in that it contains within itself the movement of the expression of the need of philosophy and its identification of the ontological status of the absolute itself (as dirempted). In that it is the absolute that is dirempted in its historical form, the diremption to be superseded is the diremption of the absolute in itself. This suggests the following: the absolute supersedes itself since it constitutes in itself the ontological status of diremption as such. There are specific consequences to this, apropos Hegel's reflections: first, philosophy is itself dissolved qua specific cultural form and is raised to the level of the absolute (in that the absolute supersedes itself *and* the task of philosophy is identified as the *aufheben* of the identity of the absolute); second, that the identity of supersession itself is split between, on the one hand, the supersession of the absolute itself – what I would like to call here, its *self-supersession* – and, on the other hand, the supersession of philosophical methodology in the unfolding of method itself; or, more precisely, the specific inner character of philosophical comprehension structured as the movement of supersession itself. What we have here is the initial diremption of the split between the philosophical subject qua the subject of the unfolding of the comprehension of the absolute and the philosophical subject qua absolute process and self-identification.

The problem at this stage (in the context of the *Differenzschrift*) is that this identity of the absolute and the philosophy that needs to become philosophical is presented only in abstract form; it can only be stated as the posited 'result' of the supersession of the deepened diremption of philosophy itself and the absolute. To *state* that this opposition is to be superseded is in no way to achieve the supersession. That said, to state it at the level of a posited *result* and not as the foundational *principle* that subsequently orientates all derivative

propositions (of what Hegel will identify in his introduction to the *Phenomenology* as the false mode of the dialectical exposition of ‘truth’) does not simply fold philosophy back into the pre-determined assumption (given as always already true in itself) of the structural presupposition of the distinction and separation between method and subject-matter (although as we shall see in the next chapter it nevertheless and necessarily performs this philosophical fold). The *initial* presentation of Hegel’s philosophical project – that the supersession of diremption can only take place strictly speaking at the *end* of the philosophical system and through the systematic presentation of the path to the true philosophical standpoint (absolute or ‘true’ philosophy) – is not expressed within the full assurance of what can be described as the temporality of the *perfect present* and *future anterior* (namely, the sense that the absolute is given fully in advance of its systematic presentation and that the ‘result’ is in truth simply the ‘restoration’ of the immediate absolute at the end of the dialectical exposition which it always already was). Thus, Hegel’s philosophy does not *grasp* that the *initial* absolute *will have been* the absolute since as the propositional form of philosophical presentation attests, the absolute structure and meaning of the absolute cannot be given in the form of a foundational theoretical proposition from which all meaning and forms of the absolute are subsequently articulated. The absolute will differ at the point of its own exposition against (a) its dialectical presentation and (b) the dialectical unfolding of the task to supersede the diremption via a negative immanent critique of the limits of philosophical thought.

The result of the *Differenzschrift* is, accordingly, a wholly negative one: in the exposition of the dialectical interrelation of the need of philosophy and the task of philosophy what is revealed is the absence of a philosophical project that can properly unify the need and the task – which is to say, unify them in such a way as their distinctions are preserved but

their opposition is negated. The presentation of *aufheben* at the level of the early Jena writings is accordingly a *programmatic* one: it is limited by the naming of a project that is yet to be actualized. The *Differenzschrift* consists of, by extension, the deployment of the term *aufheben* without its own internally reflected philosophical development. The programmatic expression leaves the labour of philosophical exposition untouched. It is left untouched for a very precise reason: Hegel is yet to provide a determinate exposition of the philosophical subject that has as its internally reflected content the unity between itself and its object – which is to say, which self-consciously grasps that the normative function of the *Aufhebung* of diremption is in fact the movement and dynamic of its own immanent self. The distinctive constitutive philosophical feature of Hegel's 1801 essay is that it articulates the initial permeation between program and speculative identity at the level of the immanent critique of philosophical methodologies in the actuality of Hegel's own present (thus in the state of the diremption of modern life). This is why the *Differenzschrift* has, for us, a crucial place in the exposition of the unfolding of the concept of *aufheben* in Hegel's work. The proper place of the dialectical exposition of the 'supersession of diremption' in its own self is located, as some of our reflections have already signalled, in the most important writing of the Jena period, namely the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.





## *Aufheben* and Experience

The peasant woman lives within the circle of her Lisa, who is her best cow; then the black one, then the spotted one, and so on; also of Martin, her boy, and Ursula, her girl, etc. To the philosopher, infinity, knowledge, movement, empirical laws, etc. are things just as familiar. And as her dead brother and uncle are present to the peasant woman, thus Plato and Spinoza, etc. are present to the philosopher. The one has as much reality as the other, but the latter are immortal.<sup>211</sup>

### 2.1 Introductory Remark

In the first chapter, I tried to show in what sense Hegel's early Jena writings establish a programmatic articulation of the task of philosophy through the posited sense of the 'supersession of diremption.' The preliminary expression of the task of philosophy – the actualization of which consists of the supersession of the dichotomies of modern life in the form of the speculative – consists of the articulation of a determinate *limit* of *aufheben*: the idea of supersession is posited within the philosophical expression of its *apprehension*, thus leaving the comprehension of supersession still outstanding. For Hegel, the comprehension will consist of a phenomenological study into the *appearance* of philosophical thinking (its form) and the scientific mode of its preliminary unification. Notwithstanding the debate around its overarching identity and its place within Hegel's philosophical project as a whole, it is clear that the *Phenomenology* is the conscious expression of itself as the ideal reflexive form of the unfolding of the appearance of the historical modes of philosophical thinking.<sup>212</sup> It is also, as Hegel puts it in the preface (and invoking the classical model of the development of the philosopher), the presentation of the unfolding of the historical modes of philosophical

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<sup>211</sup> M, 246; 2: 242.

<sup>212</sup> For an overview of the different conceptions of the *Phenomenology*, see Jon Stewart, 'Introduction', in Jon Stewart (ed.), *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

thinking in the structure of 'leading the individual from his uneducated standpoint to knowledge.'<sup>213</sup>

The process of this 'leading' however is not a clear linear progression in which the preliminary starting point ('un-education' or ignorance) and the end point (knowledge) are teleologically pre-established as *fixed* and *oppositional* determinations externally reflected.<sup>214</sup> Rather, the process Hegel will methodically express consists of, somewhat paradoxically, an initial *withdrawal* from an immediate 'tarrying' with the customary object of philosophy itself – the elaboration of the correct, methodological mode of cognizing the truth of the absolute as a preliminary transcendental science that functions as a legitimizing discourse and investigation into the conditions of possibility of philosophical science itself. This withdrawal, which on first appearance immediately reflects the mode of methodological abstraction that Hegel strictly forbids, functions by way of the *immanent* reflection of the state of philosophical methodology in the present: the constitutive function and structure of this 'withdrawal' is more precisely a philosophical *defamiliarization of philosophical methodology*. It is the concept of experience that forms the central nervure of the process of conceptual defamiliarization that Hegel will articulate in the *Phenomenology*. By attending to the essential philosophical form articulated in the *Phenomenology*, this chapter will show in what way *aufheben* is developed as the structure of the movement of Hegel's concept of experience.

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<sup>213</sup> PS, §28; 3: 32.

<sup>214</sup> Perhaps the most accomplished expression of the fixed opposition between 'ignorance' and 'knowledge' is found in Althusser's structuralism. A Hegelian critique of the presuppositions of Althusser's conception of ideology takes its aim at the strict opposition Althusser makes between 'ideology' and 'science'.

## 2.2 Experience as the Limit of Philosophical Knowledge

According to Hegel, *German* philosophy started to deviate from its principle task – namely, the systematic expression of the speculative identity of subject and object – when it became increasingly *British*. The British deviation, expressed primarily in the philosophy of John Locke, consists of the subordination of the speculative identity to that of the exposition of the finitude of subjective knowledge: philosophy is converted into ‘empirical psychology’ in that it traces reason and the understanding back to basic epistemological cognition.<sup>215</sup> In lieu of its speculative impulse, philosophy designated the theory of establishing the validity of the realism of finitude by way of a dissection of the faculty of reason. With the Lockean project, philosophical inquiry ‘asked and answered the question of what the universe is for a subjectivity that feels and is conscious by way of calculations typical of the intellect (*Verstand*).’<sup>216</sup> For Hegel, the philosophies of Kant, Fichte and Jacobi are caught within the Lockean impasse. They are essentially Locke’s philosophy raised to its most sophisticated articulation; they ‘are the completion and idealization (*Vervollständigung und Idealisierung*) of [Locke’s] empirical psychology’ since they ‘understand that the infinite concept is strictly opposed to the empirical.’<sup>217</sup> This strict opposition of speculative concept and empirical experience – of what Hegel throughout his Jena writings refers to as ‘direct’ or ‘absolute’ opposition<sup>218</sup> – is itself raised to the level of the absolute limit of philosophical cognition and, more importantly, the *culture* (*Kultur*) of subjective finitude raised to philosophical *system*.<sup>219</sup> The philosophical presupposition of the ‘system’ of German philosophy in its dominant

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<sup>215</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1959.

<sup>216</sup> FK, 63; 2: 297.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. At one point, Hegel identifies Kant’s critical philosophy as identical to Locke’s; see FK, 69; 2: 304.

<sup>218</sup> The crystallization of ‘absolute opposition’ seems to have been initially stated in the so-called ‘Fragment of a System.’ It is clear from the content of the short text that Hegel is refining the theoretical presupposition of direct opposition; M, 152-8; 1: 419-27.

<sup>219</sup> FK, 64; 2: 298.

forms (Kant, Fichte, Jacobi) is the understanding of ‘experience’ as always already identical to itself qua empirical and subjective, thus finite. Importantly, this philosophical presupposition becomes the *fixed principle* of the philosophical systems of Kant, Fichte and Jacobi. This fixed principle is epitomized, for Hegel, in the epistemological identity of subjective reflection.

The limits of reflection have already been touched upon in the first chapter. Recall in the *Differenzschrift*, reflection was configured as an ‘instrument’ of philosophical cognition that itself blocks or manipulates the object that it is itself derivative of. The critical objective of Hegel’s *Faith and Knowledge*, the immanent critique of modern philosophies of subjective reflection, consists of the extension of the observations exhibited in the *Differenzschrift*. The 1802 essay however consists of a ‘return’ to Kant’s theoretical philosophy as grounded on the authentic expression of the speculative identity of subject and object.<sup>220</sup> Yet, the inner sense of this ‘return’ does not consist of the reproduction of the basic presupposition of Kant’s critical project (the exposition of the gap between finite cognition and infinite truth). Rather it returns to the speculative element of Kant’s philosophy by way of the latent identification of that philosophy *against* the cultural form it unconsciously gives rise to, namely ‘Kantianism.’ This implies the following: the ‘return to Kant’ is in fact only a ‘return’ to what is authentically philosophical about that project, that is, what identifies it as a work of philosophy: the speculative core of its *objective impulse*. (Thus the ‘return’ to Kant is in fact a ‘return’ to something that never fully appeared.) It is clear that the basic structure of this orientation toward objectivity is articulated in the founding question of transcendental

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<sup>220</sup> In the *Differenzschrift*, it was Fichte’s philosophical presentation of the self-positing I that furnished German Idealism with the initial expression of the speculative identity (D, 81; 10-1). In *Faith and Knowledge* however, it is Kant’s deduction of the categories (the synthetic unity of apperception) that provides the philosophical present with its preliminary articulation of speculative unity: ‘the Kantian philosophy expresses the authentic Idea of Reason in the formula, “How are synthetic judgements a priori possible?”’ FK, 69; 304.

philosophy, namely the ‘chief question’ of the possibility of a priori synthetic judgments: ‘*What and how much* can understanding cognize free of all experience?’<sup>221</sup> At the methodological level, such questioning suspends the method of hypothetical postulation based on the putative assumptions of a philosophical consciousness that *dogmatically* proceeds along the path of reason ‘without an antecedent critique of its own capacity.’<sup>222</sup> I stress here, *at the methodological level*: Kant clearly distinguishes between dogmatism as such – the mode of philosophical thinking which immediately identifies itself as *philosophical*, and more importantly, as knowing philosophically the elements that structure its capacity to grasp truth – and the mode of the dogmatic *procedure* immanent to speculative science itself – science is nothing but the objective knowledge of truth derived a priori from ‘secure principles.’<sup>223</sup> Accordingly, critique contains within itself – and Kant fully attests to this – the orientation of the dogmatic procedure of science as such. Perhaps we would not go too far in suggesting that Hegel’s distinction between ‘culture’ and ‘system’ is the recoding of Kant’s own distinction between the dogmatism as expressing a specific methodological approach to truth (one in which the ‘method’ is already pre-critically given since dogmatism is already ‘certain’ that it is in the philosophical element) and the dogmatic procedure at the heart of science as such in the second preface to the *First Critique*.

This conflation of the basic result of Hegel’s immanent critique of the basic presupposition of philosophies of subjective reflection and the preliminary expressions of Kant’s transcendental science of critique (method) illuminates a crucial distinction between the two. It is clear that Kant’s critical project takes as its starting point the *terminus ad quem* of diverging philosophical trajectories of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (dogmatists, indifferentists,

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<sup>221</sup> Kant, CPR, Axvii (emphasis mine).

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. Bxxxv.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

physiologists, sceptics) and, more importantly, the question of their *limits* (thus *legitimacy*) in relation to metaphysics as such. Thus, the *judgement* of the historical context that inaugurates the *First Critique* is constitutive of critique itself (the prefaces to the *First Critique* function as critiques of the state of modern philosophy). Of course, one could make the claim that every philosophical project has as its *terminus ad quem* the state of philosophy in its own time (and, as a reflection on this state, forming a critique of that state).<sup>224</sup> The distinction between Kant's philosophical enterprise and this generic understanding of having the (dubious) fortune of posterity is that, for Kant, what needs establishing is an investigation into the conditions of possibility of philosophy itself; philosophical cognition as 'knowledge of truth' is itself not simply given, that is, always already in its own element in that it is 'certain' of its own reason and the core of its metaphysical duty. Kant's critical project attempts to hold in abeyance this immediate identification by disclosing the conditions of possibility of knowing the a priori concept of objects, which is to say, to bring into relief the limits of cognizing free of all experience. 'Transcendental philosophy' is, in a certain sense, a paradoxical expression since it expresses itself as the preparation of the systematic science of pure speculative reason but only by way of the postulate that reason itself is the unconditioned condition of possibility of the preparatory study.<sup>225</sup> Thus, in order to provide a methodical exposition of the conditions of possibility of the system of pure speculative reason, critique has to have as its basis the science of reason: the regulative idea of reason functions as the *boundary* from whence *limits* are disclosed.

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<sup>224</sup> Adorno represents the history of philosophy as the history of the critique of, if you will, 'states of philosophy'. See Theodor W. Adorno, 'Lecture 5', *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Rolf Tiedemann, Cambridge: Polity, 2001.

<sup>225</sup> It is in this sense that I understand the 'negativity' of the *First Critique* apropos Adorno's formulation of its expression of 'bourgeois resignation'. Adorno, *ibid.* p.6.

In light of this, it can be stated that Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason bends philosophy in on itself* in order to gain clearer access to the *possibility* and *impossibility* of metaphysics.<sup>226</sup> This philosophical 'plication' – which will express, *in part*, a speculative movement for Hegel<sup>227</sup> – is not, however, taken up at the level of metaphysics itself in what could be called the 'post-critical' aftermath of critical philosophy, that is, the naturalization of the critical project at the level of its preparation of an infinitely deferred system of pure reason. With this insight Hegel casts his disparaging eye on the state of modern *Kantianism*, which consists of the extraction of the critical method from the element in which that method is formed and elevated philosophically. Kant's philosophy, converted into a theoretical *culture*, consists of the admiration of having pedagogically established methodological *philosophizing* (*Philosophieren*) but not *philosophy* (*Philosophie*) itself. This amounts to an absurdity for Hegel: 'as if someone could teach carpentry but not how to build a table, a chair, a door, a cabinet, etc.'<sup>228</sup> More importantly, it amounts to the deepened *instrumentalization* of critical philosophy in such a way that its philosophical, objective impulse is completely deflated; it serves, more prominently, as a pedagogical tool of logical reflection.<sup>229</sup>

The neutralization of critique itself – which is the focal point for clearing the distinction between 'Kant' and 'Kantianism' (and which shall be developed in more detail below) – is however not simply an historical 'effect' of misinterpretation of transcendental philosophy but rather is contained within the very movement of bending philosophical discourse in on itself. According to Hegel, the very idea of a philosophical critique of

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<sup>226</sup> Kant, CPR, Axii.

<sup>227</sup> In the form of 'recurvature (*zurückgebogen*)'. This will be developed in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>228</sup> M, 252; 2: 559. This is taken up in the *Phenomenology*: PS, §67; 3: 62-3.

<sup>229</sup> This is evoked in the opening passages of the preface to the first edition of Hegel's *Science of Logic*.

philosophy already unconsciously attests to the speculative identity of subject and object since it is *conscious of its presupposition* (the ‘unconditioned’ as the pre-condition of critique). For Hegel, it is the ‘becoming-system’, if you will, of the culture of post-critical Kantianism itself that *illuminates the immanent architectural inconsistency of Kant’s critical project as a whole*. Thus, Kant’s philosophy is grasped *retroactively* by way of its mediation through its historical forms. Hegel is not consciously reflecting on the full scope of the structure of notional mediation in the Jena essays; it is unequivocal, however, that the unfolding of the Kantian and post-Kantian context provides the conduit through which to grasp the speculative element of Kant’s philosophy. It is the ‘speculative kernel’ immanent to Kant’s philosophy that distinguishes it from ‘Kantianism’ and ‘post-Kantianism’, which dogmatically posits as its absolute presupposition the epistemological break between cognition and truth.

Consequently, Kant’s philosophy, according to Hegel in the context of his 1802 essay, consists of an internal ambiguity: it is, on the one hand, a deviation from the philosophical knowledge of the absolute; and on the other hand, it expresses *through that deviation* the speculative kernel, or the genetic form, of the principle of speculative philosophy, that is, the original unity from whence the theoretical and practical oppositions are themselves *produced*. The original identity of synthetic unity is not however a ‘third’ unity generated from out of the oppositions themselves, but rather it is their speculative ground.<sup>230</sup> Accordingly, it is the ‘productive imagination’ that ‘is a truly speculative Idea’ since it is in this unity that the sensuous intuition of the manifoldness of being and the experience of the knowing of the manifoldness of that intuition are themselves contained as ‘two-sides’ of an original

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<sup>230</sup> Hegel’s philosophical development is wholly mediated by Fichte’s and Schelling’s idealism around this point. By the presentation of the *Phenomenology*, we will see in what sense the presupposition of Fichte and Schelling’s philosophies are revealed and dialectically negated.



synthesis. More precisely put, the structure of the synthetic unity is always already two-sidedness and not a product of antithetical (externally related and opposed) 'sides.'<sup>231</sup> The 'productive imagination' then consists of an authentic articulation of the inner sense of the absolute as a dynamic expression of its two-sidedness in the inter-permeated identity of subject and object and not as an agglomeration or compound of externally (and epistemologically) opposed parts. Imagination, accordingly, is 'primary and original, as that out of which subjective Ego and objective world first sunder themselves into the necessarily bipartite appearance and product, and as the sole In-itself.'<sup>232</sup>

In Kant's philosophy, however, the productive imagination does not emerge as the structure of what Hegel will refer to as the immanent 'dialectical movement' of experience itself, that is, as the movement of immersion in the identity of the absolute itself as the self-immersion of the absolute. Through the mechanization of its methodological claims, critical philosophy subordinates knowledge of the deduction of the categories into a 'formal knowledge' that stands in direct antithesis to the absolute (indeed, Jacobi's and Fichte's philosophies will both be grasped in terms of such 'formal knowledge').<sup>233</sup> The true *a priori* of the productive imagination (which expresses the univocity of reason) is converted into the formal *a priori* subsumed under formal concepts. Formal knowledge is reduced to universal, subjective *experience* (Hegel also refers to this conversion of the speculative identity into formal unity *a priori*, invoking the Lockean context, as a 'psychological idealism'<sup>234</sup>). This formal knowledge qua 'experience,' in the Kantian system and indeed in its transitions into post-Kantian idealism, is reduced to the subjective form of mere reflection in which the

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<sup>231</sup> FK, 71; 2: 306.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid. 73; 2: 308.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. 92; 2: 328.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid. 75; 2: 310.

subjective side of the understanding simply reflects the formal identity of its other as identical to itself since the heterogeneous manifoldness of objectivity itself is strictly derived from the categories and not from themselves thus reducing the 'experience' of objectivity to mere sensation.<sup>235</sup> Consequently, Hegel draws the conclusion that cognition of the phenomenal realm is grounded in the dogmatic assumption that it is the only kind of cognition there is.

The fate of Kant's philosophy however does not share the same fate of its contemporaries according to Hegel (it does not fail to raise its principle to its systematic articulation) since it is orientated by the *objective* impulse of the investigation into the legitimacy of such systematic articulation. It expresses, instead, the *miscomprehension* of its own unconscious phenomenological status by recoiling from thinking the speculative unity of the idea that grounds its own reflections. It is this relation between comprehension and miscomprehension that gives us the basic underlying structure of Hegel's reconstructed concept of experience. In order to begin to form a clearer understanding of this structure of experience, I would like to provide a detailed exposition of what represents perhaps the first self-contained expression of its meaning, structure and movement.

### 2.3 Aphorisms of the Everyday: An Experimental Model

Polemicizing against the philosophico-cultural core of Wagnerian opera, Friedrich Nietzsche famously declared that 'Hegel is a *taste*'; and the taste is utterly nauseating.<sup>236</sup> What renders the reader of Hegel (and the listener of Wagner) *sick* is the philosophy's 'polychromy of the ideal'; the more it externally enlivens its form, the more it seduces the reader-listener to its false reconciliations and resolutions of what is an irreconcilable scission in modern cultural

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid. 77; 2: 312.

<sup>236</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufman, New York: Vintage Books, 1967, p.177.

life.<sup>237</sup> Philosophy, like Wagner's art, becomes a false palliative to the destructive force of historico-cultural life, an instrument that, paradoxically, covers over the sense that life is 'nothing but surface.'<sup>238</sup>

Notwithstanding his (avowed) lack of diligent reading of Hegel's work, Nietzsche perspicaciously underscores a transition that Hegel makes note of *through the very metaphor of colour*: the transformation of the cultural neutralization and calcification of philosophical thinking (reduced to lifeless aggregation of information) into the spiritual life of speculative philosophy is comprehended in terms of the transformation of 'monochromatic formalism' – a formalism that, in some sense, 'paints its grey on grey' – into, *presumably*, the *polychromatic experience of philosophical life*. This attention to colour – which runs through the totality of Hegel's work – is developed in the so-called 'Aphorisms from the Wastebook' in relation to the exposition of the concept of experience.

Between the years 1803 and 1806, Hegel composed a number of pithy notes based on the interrelated ideas of the identity of philosophical science, the structure of methodology and, most distinctively, *observations from everyday life*. Observations of everyday life – the habits and customs that permeate cultural reflection – are philosophically mobilized around the necessity to articulate the immanent content of what Hegel crystallizes in the expression 'the familiar (*das Bekannte*)':

The divorce (*Scheidewand*) between the terminology of philosophy and that of ordinary consciousness is still to be broken down (*durchbrechen*); there is a *reluctance to think the familiar* (*das Bekannte zu denken*). Ordinary consciousness is supposed to rest content with this; it is not supposed to consort seriously with philosophy. However, philosophy does this when it applies itself to day-to-day things.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid. 178.

<sup>238</sup> Cited in K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, *The Protoliterary: Steps Toward and Anthropology of Culture*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, p.11.

<sup>239</sup> M, 251-2; 2: 559-9 (emphasis mine).

The expression 'the reluctance to think the familiar' could be raised to the level of a general maxim for understanding Hegel's philosophical orientation in the years immediately preceding the publication of the *Phenomenology*. And this latter work, as a consequence, should be conceived as the most accomplished articulation of *both* the abrogation of the unwillingness of philosophy to raise itself to the level of ordinary consciousness and the patient articulation of the 'familiar' from out of itself, which is to say, from out of the dynamics of its self-relation. There is one particular entry that anticipates this twofold structure of the *Phenomenology* (and indeed, as we shall shortly see, anticipates the philosophical content of the *Phenomenology*). I would like to call this entry the 'experience aphorism.' Before I present the passage I would like to make a brief remark on the aphoristic form.

It is the general structure of the passages that make up the totality of the 'Wastebok' that reflects the editorial appellative decision. As aphorisms, the passages have an essentially *ambiguous* relation to the dialectic of the particular and the whole: an aphorism expresses the twofold structure of being (a) a note that signals the development into another, deeper or more elaborated presentation; and (b) a self-contained, conceptually abbreviated totality that reflects from within itself its own production. It is this twofold identity that gives depth to what is meant here by 'ambiguity.' The ambiguity of aphorisms, which is mobilized at the immediate level as an interpretive judgement, will emerge as an ontological structure of the unfolding of the content itself. This transition of ambiguity is illuminated, in genetic form, in the 'experience aphorism.' It is in this aphorism that the ambiguity of the aphoristic form will be reflected into the ontological ambiguity – what Hegel will refer to as '*Zweideutigkeit*'

in his introduction to the *Phenomenology* – of the object of its terse, epigrammatic articulation.<sup>240</sup>

The ‘experience aphorism’ is the following:

*Experience* (Erfahrung). The shadow which candlelight projects, when illuminated by the early morning light, becomes (*wird*) blue; the shadow which daylight casts (which is weaker, and in order for it to become visible one must move away from the light), when lit up by candlelight, becomes red. The shadow cast by candlelight, when held quite near to the light, shimmers almost green.<sup>241</sup>

The aphorism can be immediately identified as the narrational description of an experience Hegel perhaps had while he was in his study: he is making note of a relatively uneventful experience of the chromatic transformations of the penumbrae of two mixed but distinct sources of light (sun and candle) through pure empirical observation. It is this pure observation that quickly dissolves the potentially misconstrued content of the aphorism as reflected a purely ‘private’ (as if it were an anecdote) empirical experience. *A fortiori*, this dissolution of the private via the *immersion* of observation into the object also dissolves the

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<sup>240</sup> Note should be made here of the distinction between Hegel’s aphoristic expressions as self-contained totalities and the aphoristic structure of the fragment in early German Romanticism. In the case of Romanticism, the fragment is explicitly mobilized as a multiplicity; there is a transition of thinking in fragments, thus dissolving the fixed determinacies of *genres*. For the early German romantics, the fragment was an essentially trans-generic mode of expression since it cut across a wider range of modes of theoretical expression that were not underwritten by a monistic systematic structure (which is to say, with a bloated sense of total systematic completion and closure). For a more detailed exposition of the theory of the fragment in German Romanticism, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘The Fragment: The Fragmentary Exigency’, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.

<sup>241</sup> M, 246; 2: 541. The ‘experiment’ disclosed in the aphorism was carried out initially by Goethe with Hegel and the physicist T. J. Seebeck when they met in August 1806 (perhaps making the composition of the ‘experience-aphorism’ absolutely contemporaneous with the composition and completion of the *Phenomenology*); see Harris, *Hegel’s Development: Night Thoughts (1801-1806)*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, p.lix. The aphorism then anticipates, albeit in abbreviated and undeveloped form, further experimentation carried out by Goethe and composed and published in 1810. See J. W. Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, trans. Charles Lock Eastlake, Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 1970. It is perhaps worth noting that this colour scheme – blue, red and green – is a constant point of reference in Hegel’s work; see for example, SS, 130, 223-5 and 258; PS, §280; 3: 213; SL, 5: 210-15 and 6: 320-336. Enc. I, 251; 8: 325 and *ibid.* 255; 8: 329-30.

'narrative' structure of the entry.<sup>242</sup> Hegel is not, despite appearances, simply giving us a story of *an* experience (his own particular, private, individuated), but rather is trying to establish the truth of experience *as such*. The elaboration of the truth of experience as such is reinforced by the function of the first word of the entry. The first word has two constitutive functions: (1) it operates not as the mere title to the passage but as the term that underscores its content; and (2) the aphorism is not 'about' experience (which would presuppose the subjective narratological reflection) but rather is an attempt to express the inner, *ontological* sense of experience itself. At stake in the description of the entry is the articulation of the appearance of the being of light in its permeation with its shadows *as they appear to thinking that does not develop and express itself with the a priori assurance of a methodological science of being that already fixes the determination of the categories of photo-optic existents*.

The aphorism however does not simply operate for our reflections here as a clever aperçu to the *Phenomenology* as a whole. Rather, it will anticipate three precise theoretical co-ordinates as developed in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*. Note has already been made of the first: the ontological structure of the ambiguity of the truth of experience as itself reflected in the philosophical presentation. The second anticipation is that of the method of the defamiliarization of the familiar (the defamiliarization of experience). The third is that of the structure of the movement of *aufheben* as the essential structure of the *whole* movement that renders intelligible the truth content of the shape of ambiguity and the method of defamiliarization. What was initially posited as the programmatic articulation of the

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<sup>242</sup> I am in a certain sense making this claim retroactively from the position of Hegel's identification of philosophy as the science of the truth of what 'happens' or the 'event' (*Geschehen*) in the *Science of Logic*: '[P]hilosophy is not meant to be a narration of happenings but a cognition of what is *true* in them, and further, on the basis of this cognition, to *comprehend* (*begreifen*) that which, in the narrative, appears as a mere happening', SL, 588; 6: 260.

necessity of speculative philosophy (the posited notion of *Aufhebung* of the dirreption of modern existence), is here unfolded in the exposition of experience via the modest and unaffected observation of everyday life. Accordingly, it can be said that the aphorism quietly performs the transition from the expression of the program of speculative philosophy to its unfolding via the illumination of its initial, constitutive step: the abrogation of the reluctance to think the familiar (perhaps it is unsurprising that this initial step into ‘tarrying’ with the familiar takes the unpretentious and subdued form of a short aperçu).

What constitutes the ‘familiar’ in the entry? The sense of experience as the subjective reflection (and phenomenal knowledge) of the ‘thing-in-itself’ – that is to say, what is familiar is the dominant notion of ‘experience’ in German philosophy of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>243</sup> And yet, the entry does not make note of ‘knowing’ (or indeed the Kantian distinction between knowing and thinking). Rather, it transcribes, in three differentiated moments, the transition of the colour of the being of the observed penumbrae. The ‘subject’ of the aphorism is not strictly speaking the ‘observer’ who marks the chromatic transformations as if they were an ‘extra, picked up from experience.’<sup>244</sup> Rather, the ‘subject’ is *change*. Experience in this sense is no longer the inert ‘determinate thought’ of the subject qua ‘object of thought that thinks’ (as it is put in the epigraph to our introduction) but is itself the expression of the transformation of the object in its *living* state. It is important to stress here the actual components punctuating the *mise-en-scène*: the ‘object’ is not structured on (a) the distinction from ‘subject’; and (b) is not itself divided on an assumed (classical) opposition between ‘shadow’ and ‘light’, which is to say, between the umbrageous forms of

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<sup>243</sup> It is worth noting perhaps that another contextual ‘familiarity’ is at work in the aphorism: the familiarity of the proverbial ‘candle’ stick that is so central in the development of modern philosophical epistemology. I am of course thinking here of the second meditation of René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. John Cottingham, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>244</sup> FK 166; 2: 408.

mere appearance, or illusion, and the enlightening clarity of truth. The ‘object’ is the composition and configuration of what occurs when daylight and candlelight are *permeated*. The actual permeation of lights reflects the conceptual permeation of appearance and truth in its classically inflected variation (the Platonic opposition of truth and illusion in both the allegory of the cave and the *Sophist*).<sup>245</sup> It shows that oppositions are strictly speaking not ‘fixed’ in pre-determined forms but rather are inter-related and inter-connected in the development of their *temporal* formation.

What experience names, from the very outset of the entry, is the *processual* development of the transitions punctuating the structure and content of the aphorism itself. The central philosophical category at work in the aphorism apropos ‘processuality’ is that of ‘becoming (*werden*).’ Properly speaking, the structure of the aphorism reflects the structure of the becoming of the changes of colour as the very transition and dissolution of the determinate opposition of ‘being’ and ‘nothing’ (Hegel will develop the ontological category of becoming, as is well known, in the opening sections of his *Logic*). It is in this sense that experience is defamiliarized: the entry begins with the familiar philosophical term, and through the unfolding – or *becoming* – of the observation of an actual, ordinary situation, what is putatively grasped as ‘experience’ within the philosophical context that arrogates to itself the content of theoretical familiarization, is dissolved in the processual development. *A fortiori*: the processual development, when we come to the end of the aphorism, is itself *reflected back into* the first term that initiated the articulation – experience is itself a process;

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<sup>245</sup> Plato’s allegory of the cave is perhaps an expanded presentation of *Sophist*, 266c. It is also worth adding here that Hegel’s aphorism no longer functions via the structure of the allegory, as it did in the early writing on love, of the movement of philosophical development. The suspension of the recourse to allegorical models of speculative unification gives way for the immanent thinking of the familiar in its actuality.



it is not mobilized from an inert, transcendental subjective position constitutively separated from the truth of the thing itself.

The 'result' of the defamiliarization of experience in the small aphorism does not, however, give rise to a 'new' term that is employed in place of 'experience.' Defamiliarization is not orientated by the belief that the 'old' terminology needs to be replaced by a new philosophical lexicon. Rather, defamiliarization emphatically holds onto the sheer *formal appearance* of pre-existing theoretical expressions; what occurs is a transformation of the philosophical consciousness that appropriates and reflects on them. This transformation of philosophical consciousness then properly takes place through an immanent reflection of the inner sense of the expressions themselves. Put in a way that anticipates the movement of phenomenological science, this transformation consists of the folding expressions (such as 'experience') in on themselves. This philosophical defamiliarization is signalled in the aphorism through the formal underscoring of the first term. Experience, as has already been noted, not only constitutes the first word of the aphorism (thus signalling the content), but is also retroactively reconfigured from the end of the passage as the abbreviated expression of the *whole* movement of the processual content. The aphorism then, I believe, folds experience in on itself resulting in a deepened conception of experience: through the experience of the processual chromatic transformation, experience is produced as the higher unity of, to make direct reference to Hegel's preface to the *Phenomenology*, 'process' and 'result.'<sup>246</sup> This movement of the philosophical fold, which happens at the level of presentation itself, will be developed into a more dialectically robust concept of *aufheben* as the unified process that forms dialectical unity itself. It does however have a function in the aphorism.

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<sup>246</sup> PS §3; 3: 13.

What is 'superseded' in the aphorism is the calcified, epistemological conception of experience as subjective cognition. Presented in its wake is an initial model of experience as the dialectical movement of the permeation of subject and object – which is to say, experience as a model of *aufheben*. That said, 'supersession' is not named as the process since Hegel's philosophical focus is the structure and movement of experience. It is only in the introduction to the *Phenomenology* that the interconnection of experience, dialectical movement and the structure of *aufheben* will be consciously reflected. What the aphorism provides us with is a preliminary *experimental* model for re-articulating the internal, existential dynamic of experience (something not limited by the presuppositions of modern epistemology).<sup>247</sup> This is why, I believe, the chromatic transformation of the penumbræ is the central object; colour will be the explicit metaphor Hegel employs in the preface of the *Phenomenology* when reflecting on the ossification of philosophical methodology and the abrogation of commitment to thinking truth through the infinite repetition and reproduction of the presupposition (fixed oppositions, especially 'philosophical' thinking and 'ordinary'

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<sup>247</sup> Some words on experimentation should be made here. I believe Hegel has Fichte in mind when in the *Wissenschaftslehre* he notes that the achievement of establishing the 'science of science' through the comprehension of the self-positing I is based on the structure of elaborating a series of conceptual experiments for the thinking I; see Fichte, 'Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, or, of So-Called 'Philosophy', *Early Philosophical Writings*, p.113 and Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1797 – 1800)*, trans. Daniel Breazeale, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Ltd. 1994, p.37. Accordingly, Fichte's work is structured by the unfolding of the experiments of consciousness and the observation of the experiments, the elaboration of their essence. There is a moment in the *Wissenschaftslehre* in which Hegel's aphorism could be said to reflect: "At the physical point X, posit light an instant A, and darkness at the immediately subsequent instant B: light and darkness are thereby sharply distinguished, as they should be. But instants A and B immediately bound one another, and there is no interval between them. Picture to yourself the sharp boundary between the two instants = Z. What is there at Z? Not light, for that is at instant A, and Z is not identical with A; and not darkness either, for that is at instant B. So it is neither of the two. –But I might equally well say that both are present, for if there is no interval between A and B, there is none between light and darkness either, and so both are in immediate contact at Z. –It might be said that in this latter argument Z itself, which was to be only a boundary, is extended into an instant by my own imagination; and *so in fact it is*. [The instants A & B have themselves arise no otherwise than through such extension by means of the imagination]. So by mere imagination I *can* extend Z; and *must* do so, if I wish to conceive of the immediate bounding of instants A and B. –And here at once we have begun an experiment with the wonderful power of productive imagination in ourselves, which will shortly be explained, without which nothing at all in the human mind is capable of explanation – and on which the entire mechanism of that mind may very well be based.' Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, pp.187-8.

consciousness) that grounds all 'philosophical' reflection. Hegel calls this axiomatic reproduction 'monochromatic formalism (*einfarbiger Formalismus*).'<sup>248</sup> The aphorism, anticipating the more refined conceptual development of the *Phenomenology*, expresses instead the *transformation* of 'what truly is' in its more complex appearance. Philosophical experience is no longer an infinitely re-useable rubber-stamp that *will have imprinted* itself on all objects prior to experience itself. Rather, experience is the dialectical result of the inter-dependent relation that unfolds through the reflection of what unfolds in an assumed state of immediacy and the reconfiguration of that immediacy as something transformed by consciousness itself ('immediacy does not maintain its immediate pose').<sup>249</sup> And it unfolds precisely because the philosophical concept of experience is folded in on itself. This is more precisely exposed in the movement of phenomenological *defamiliarization*.

## 2.4 Defamiliarization as 'Method'

The nature of Hegel's Jena writings in relation to his pre-Jena writings has already been noted (and is rendered more determinate in relation to the above): they are distinct in so far as they have at their centre the problem of philosophical method – or as Hegel consistently put it in the Jena writings, the 'way of doing philosophy (*Philosophieren*)' – and its relation to the truth of the absolute.<sup>250</sup> The distinction between the Jena writings and the *Phenomenology* is that the latter inaugurates the mode of the thinking of the truth of the absolute from out of the limits of the historical forms of philosophical methodologies. It accomplishes this through a

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<sup>248</sup> PS §15; 3: 21. The monochrome is developed in the neutralization of Kantian philosophy into a duochrome test: 'The instrument of this monotonous formalism is no more difficult to handle than a painter's palette having only two colours, say red and green, the one for colouring the surface when a historical scene is wanted, the other for landscapes.' PS, §51; 3: 50.

<sup>249</sup> Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.40.

<sup>250</sup> FK, 118; 2: 357.

*defamiliarization of the familiar*. This methodical operation is employed throughout Hegel's philosophical enterprise. It is, accordingly, this immanent and transformative function of method that initially determines the sense of phenomenological unfolding and dialectical movement *and* the specifically *post-phenomenological* process of logical, historical and ontological movement of the philosophical self-comprehension of spirit qua absolute idea retroactively determining the content of its initial presentation as phenomenology.<sup>251</sup> Since we are concerned here with Hegel's 1807 work and its emergence from the earlier Jena writings however, I shall remain within the context of its exposition in the *Phenomenology*.

The idea of methodological defamiliarization, regardless of its centrality in Hegel's thought, is by no means a strictly Hegelian invention. It is genetically formed, I believe, in two historical legacies: first, within the general structure of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*; and second, in early German Romanticism.

The idea of defamiliarization is developed in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* in terms of the negative reversal of the meaning Hegel will give it. There are two elements of Fichte's 'science of science' that are apposite for our reflections here: first, Fichte's work consciously states its own presupposition of the *familiar* rules and laws of logical reflection.<sup>252</sup> In the presentation of the activity of the thinking I, the rules of its reflection are pre-given. Accordingly, the thinking I is always already a philosophical I since it engages immediately in what is putatively considered 'philosophical reflection' (reflecting on phenomena) or philosophical 'observation'. Second: the *Wissenschaftslehre* identifies itself as the philosophical consciousness that reflects on philosophical reflection itself, and by extension,

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<sup>251</sup> To give just a few examples, see Enc. I, 19-45; 8: 67-90; Enc. II, 105-18; 9: 133-46 and Enc. III, 75-92; 10: 100-18 (reflections emerging from out of thinking the familiar run through the totality of the system). The structure of the logical, retroactive determination of phenomenological experience will be developed in the third chapter.

<sup>252</sup> Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p.93.

the nature of its own 'secondary' reflection as illumination of the nature and content of the initial 'observation.'<sup>253</sup> Although Fichte is conscious that the presupposition of the familiar rules of logical reflection are given but do not determine the outcome of his own philosophical science, the presupposition itself remains un-reflectively determined. Fichte reflects on the limits of the starting-point, positing them as necessary for any philosophical beginning, but he does not reflect on the very capacity of positing the starting-point as always already philosophy *as such*. That is to say, he does not reflect on the *Wissenschaftslehre's* arrogation to itself of the philosophical standpoint; *it immediately takes itself to be in the philosophical element itself*. Despite its claims of absolute immanence to the activity of the thinking 'I,' this transition from philosophical reflection to the reflection of 'reflection' itself (the observation of the observer) rests on the assumption of the initial standpoint as being always already *thinking philosophically* (since the rules of logical reflection is its content).<sup>254</sup> What Fichte does not reflect upon is the wholly *un-philosophical* nature of the experience of immediate familiarity *at its own level*.<sup>255</sup> Although it posits the presupposition of the thinking I, Fichte's science does not grasp the inner sense of the presupposition itself.

It is in early German Romanticism that the 'commonplace (*Gemeinen*)' and the 'familiar (*Bekannten*)' have a decidedly distinct centrality in the formation of the sense of the

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<sup>253</sup> 'In the first instance, there is simple reflection upon the phenomenon - that of the observer; in the second, there is reflection upon this reflection - that of the philosopher upon the nature of the observation.' Ibid. 151-2.

<sup>254</sup> The philosophical claim of immanence consists of Fichte's identification of his own philosophical enterprise with critical philosophy and its distinction from dogmatism: 'Now the essence of the *critical* philosophy consists in this, that an absolute self is postulated as wholly unconditioned and incapable of determination by any higher thing; and if this philosophy is derived in due order from the above principle, it becomes Science of Knowledge. Any philosophy is, on the other hand, *dogmatic*, when it equates or opposes anything to the self as such; and thus it does in appealing to the supposedly higher concept of the *thing (ens)*, which is thus quite arbitrarily set up as the absolutely highest conception.' Ibid. 117.

<sup>255</sup> The notion of 'un-philosophical (*unphilosophisch*)' is developed in more detail in the introduction to the *Critical Journal of Philosophy*. It is employed principally as a notion that expresses the continuation of philosophical dualism in modern thought, which is to say, the *Cartesian* limits of the distinction between the *res cogitans* and *res extensa*; see M, 218; 2: 184. Interestingly, the expression is used more generally as a title of self-identification of Jacobi's 'philosophical' position in direct contradistinction to Fichte's; see Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings*, p.501.

*Romantic*. According to Novalis, the creation of the Romantic involves a *transubstantiation* of the familiar and ordinary into the mysterious ‘unconditioned.’ I quote from a famous passage:

When I give the commonplace (*Gemeinen*) a higher meaning, the customary (*Gewöhnlichen*) a mysterious appearance, the known (*Bekannten*) the dignity of the unknown (*Unbekannten*), the finite the illusion of the infinite, I romanticize it. The operation (*Operation*) is the converse (*Umgekehrt*) for the higher, unknown, mystical and infinite; through this connection it becomes logarithimized. It receives a customary expression (*geläufigen Ausdruck*). Romantic philosophy. *Lingua romana*. Reciprocal elevation and debasement (*Wechselerhöhung und Erniedrigung*).<sup>256</sup>

The Romantic project consists here of the statement of the conversion of the familiar into the ‘higher’ and of the higher into the familiar through the operation of romanticization. The formal presentation of this operation however rests on the pre-existing division and opposition of the familiar with the un-familiar; the opposition presented by Novalis in this fragment amounts to what Hegel calls ‘direct’ or ‘absolute opposition’ since the co-ordinates of the opposition are mobilized as the transcendental schema of thinking the romantic transubstantiation. Accordingly, the opposites do not meet in the deepened Hegelian sense, namely in such a manner that the finitude of the familiar collapses from within itself and yields, through immanent defamiliarization, its retroactively comprehended truth content. Within this structure of the mere positing of the familiar as always already self-identical (since it maintains a fixed determinate relation to its opposite, viz. the infinite), what is ‘reciprocally’ related is in fact a relation of non-connection. The structure of modern civil society, the ethical substance in which the diremption of subject and object rests, is here simply reflected in the romantic project of transubstantiation thus rendering the ‘operation’

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<sup>256</sup> Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.85; Novalis, *Schriften* – 2, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1965, p.545.

void and superfluous. Romanticism, and this is Hegel's point in his lectures on the philosophy of fine art, constitutes the most accomplished articulation of the *incapacity* of raising spirit from out of the mere subjective reflection of the ethical status quo (which means that Romanticism fails to grasp its own epistemological limits).<sup>257</sup> The basic supposition of this incapacity is that Romanticism, notwithstanding its enlarged projection of the conversion of the familiar into the romantic, wavers with regard to thinking the actuality of the familiar and not simply taking it as a pre-given, fixed determination. With this, Romanticism tacitly ratifies the very limits of civil society it is trying to overcome.<sup>258</sup>

Hegel's project of de-familiarization begins precisely by consciously reflecting on the inner sense of the 'reluctance *to think* the familiar (*das Bekannte zu denken*)' in modern thought as the 'sense' posited initially in direct opposition to its other. Within the context of the exposition of 'absolute opposition', 'to think (*denken*)' in this sense means to initiate critical reflection that is not structured on the presupposition of a distinction between 'familiarity' and its opposite. According to Hegel, the familiar, the thoughts of which are attributed to what is known as the 'ordinary consciousness' (thus immediate, abstract), requires exposing at its *own* level, which is to say, at the properly *un-philosophical* level since it is in the experience of the familiar that the philosophical mode of expression is revealed in its simple articulation. It is only through this exposition that the philosophical content contained within ordinary thought can be retroactively recognized. The condition for such an exposition is the immanence of 'tarrying (*Verweilen*)' – an expression that has

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<sup>257</sup> A (I), 517-29. Catholic transubstantiation is, accordingly, the symptom of this failure to grasp its own notional mediation in the ethical substance.

<sup>258</sup> One could argue that the rhapsodic call for a 'new' Catholicism at the end of Novalis' 'Christendom or Europe' is a performative expression of this incapacity to dwell within the objectivity of the familiar, inciting instead the reverie of a utopic infinite. Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, pp.137-152.

already been used throughout this chapter – or dwelling within the familiar.<sup>259</sup> The operation of ‘tarrying’ amounts to a *reduplication* of the immediacy of the familiar. This reduplication of immediacy – which will give rise to the immanent reflection of immediacy itself – is, rather ironically, conditioned on the immanent critique of the state of philosophical knowledge in the present. What contemporary philosophy exhibits for Hegel is the self-arrogation of philosophy; *what it exhibits is that it's consciously reflected philosophical steps are themselves unconsciously un-philosophical*. This however is not reflected simply at the level of subjective reflection: the un-philosophical is itself the *content* of the order of Hegel's philosophical present. The un-philosophical is the cultural realm of immediacy, the asphyxiating miasma in which thought declares itself, simply through the ‘power’ of dogmatic self-declaration, ‘philosophical.’ The solidity of philosophical knowing has melted into the air; and this ‘sublimation’ is intensified all the more since this philosophical knowing takes itself as the normative maximization of solidification.<sup>260</sup>

Hegel's project of ‘thinking the familiar’ is formally crystalized (by 1807) in the expression that ‘the familiar, just because it is familiar, is not cognitively understood (*Das Bekannte überhaupt darum, weil es bekannt ist, nicht erkannt*).’<sup>261</sup> The familiar is an ambiguous entity for cognition: on the one hand, it contains within itself a certain amount of knowledge – of something known (*erkannt*) – and, on the other hand, it is precisely that which appears immediately as knowledge that reveals – by way of its repetition and reproduction – its unknown element. It is the conceptual movement of the elaboration of that which appears as ‘unknown’, or not fully known, in the familiar from out of letting the

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<sup>259</sup> PS, §3; 3: 13 and §32; 3: 36.

<sup>260</sup> ‘Sublimation’ is used in its scientific (not psychoanalytic) sense: the term expresses the movement in which solid objects transform directly into gas state (thus without any intermediary stage of transitioning) according to the expanded laws of thermodynamics.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid. §31; 3: 35.



familiar ‘speak for itself’ that gives rise to the basic movement of Hegel’s phenomenological method. Despite its juridical appearance (*res ipsa loquitur*), this initial acquiescence does not come by way of clearing a platform on which the familiar can be properly presented.<sup>262</sup> Rather, it is fully elaborated from the notion that all ‘philosophical’ thought starts from a state of being dialectically permeated through its ‘other’ (ordinary, everyday thought). The ‘natural assumption’ from whence, as we shall see, the *Phenomenology* gets under way is never annihilated in the work; it is never ‘dropped’ as a wholly illegitimate philosophical mode of thinking. Rather, it is patiently and carefully expounded from out of itself, from within its own *internally divided* philosophical expression (between the expression it immediately recognizes as its ‘own’ and the expression that is revealed to it through the articulation of the content of the initial expression).

The twofold structure articulating the familiar is exposed through the form of an instrumental, *caricatured emphasis*, that is, ‘the shapeless repetition (*gestaltlose Wiederholung*) of one and the same formula, only externally applied to diverse materials.’<sup>263</sup> The goal of philosophy itself, the truth of what is (the absolute), is the idea that expresses, at the level of immediacy, the theoretical orientation of philosophy. Hegel does not hesitate in stating that what appears as the highest promise of philosophy is in fact reducible to such *inert (unbewegte)* formulation since the idea is itself something that is given as a ‘primitive condition.’<sup>264</sup> The name that Hegel gives to this process of the infinite repetition of the familiar qua ‘higher truth’ is, as was noted above, ‘monochromatic formalism (*einfarbiger*

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<sup>262</sup> Reason is the most accomplished form of self-expression presented in the *Phenomenology*: ‘The absolute Notion is the category; in that Notion, knowing and the *object* known are the same. Consequently, what pure insight pronounces to be its other, what it asserts to be an error or a lie, can be nothing else but its own self; it can condemn only what it is itself. What is not rational has no *truth*, or, what is not grasped conceptually, *is not*. When, therefore, Reason speaks of something *other* than itself, it speaks in fact only of itself; so doing, it does not go outside itself.’ Ibid. §548; 3: 404.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid. §15; 3: 21.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

*Formalismus*)’ (whose highest articulation in modern philosophy is as we have seen the algebraic formula ‘ $A = A$ ’).<sup>265</sup> What Hegel argues, by way of his isolation and examination of the inner character of such formalism, is that the *familiar is itself a moment in the thinking of the absolute actuality*. This is only realized if we fully expose such formalism through its dialectical *exaggeration*.<sup>266</sup>

The philosophical method of defamiliarization is, accordingly, immanently formed in the process of the unfolding of the different forms of philosophical cognition (‘certain habits of thought’) by way of a presentation of those forms *in extremis*.<sup>267</sup> Philosophical comprehension of the method of Hegel’s philosophy then is topologically defined by the *end* of the philosophical presentation. The comprehension of the method, which is dissolved in

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid. The metaphor of colour runs throughout Hegel’s work. The expression ‘monochromatic formalism’ can no doubt be heard echoing in the famous closing remarks of the preface to the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*: ‘When philosophy paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized (*erkennen*) by the grey in grey of philosophy’, EPR, 23; 7: 28. It has been noted that the closing of the preface expresses Hegel’s own personal resignation in light of the capacity of philosophy to change the world; see Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, p.183. I believe that, with the elaboration of the defamiliarization of the familiar as the basic content of dialectical processuality, we can counter Marcuse’s judgement. Our disagreement however is not teleologically directed toward ‘inverting’ the judgement of resignation but rather it is employed to demonstrate that a more refined nexus of differentiation is at work in the closing passages of the *Philosophy of Right*. It is clear, for example, that the impediment of the philosophical invigoration of the world is, at the level of issuing prescriptive instructions (an emphatically non-Hegelian doctrine if there ever was one), formulated around the repetition (‘grey in grey’) of the *thought (Gedanke)* of the world. As shall be developed in this chapter, ‘thought’ has a distinct meaning in Hegel, a meaning that is retroactively determined from the speculative sense of ‘thinking.’ Recall that, the familiar – which will emerge in the second chapter of the *Phenomenology* as the ‘thought’ of common sense – requires thinking (modern philosophy is marked by the ‘reluctance to think (*denken*) the familiar’).

<sup>266</sup> The *Phenomenology* can be said to unfold through the logic of expressing a proposition or a concept to its extreme, logical point of articulation. The logic of extremity, of what I called above ‘exaggeration’, is a methodological aspect of the dialectical process. The judgement that dialectics is exaggeration and caricature is famously elaborated by Friedrich Nietzsche. The most accomplished figure of such theoretical ‘buffoonery’ is Socrates; see Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘The Problem of Socrates’, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin Books, 2003. Nietzsche, who never really studied Hegel (and in a certain sense fully admitted this), does not explore the dialectics of Hegelian philosophy and its relation to Socrates. It is clear that, for Hegel, exaggeration is a consciously reflected methodological attitude at work in modern philosophy; the presupposition of ‘absolute opposition’ of subject and object, for example, is based on an ‘extreme’ antithesis that does not sufficiently elaborate its own becoming. For Nietzsche’s self-confessed ignorance of Hegel see Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.218.

<sup>267</sup> PS, §16; 3: 22.

the activity of the absolute idea, requires that philosophical thinking is fully actualized at the end point of its presentation. This however does not mean that we cannot grasp the sense of the becoming of the method in its unfolding at the phenomenological level. It is, crucially, within this context that we develop the negative sense of the phenomenological method, that is, as the *intra-methodological* unfolding of the self-development of philosophical methodology.

The dialectical presentation of the history of philosophical methodologies does not acquit Hegel of presenting his own method. The ‘method’ of the immanent presentation of the philosophical method to its own experience – which will structure the first part of the *Phenomenology* – emerges as the de-familiarization of the structural necessity of elaborating a philosophical method *prior* to its application. *That* philosophical consciousness is familiar with the place in which the method is formed – viz. at the very beginning of the ‘science’ and, more precisely, as its axiomatic preparation – is a familiar ‘thought’ (*Gedanke*) that requires, according to Hegel, ‘thinking (*denken*)’ – which is to say, submitted, via the movement of its articulation, to its own immanent logic. The familiar philosophical apprehension of the topology and meaning of method is immanently defamiliarized when it is pushed to its extreme logical point (at the ‘end’ and not the ‘beginning’). At this point, the familiar *collapses and folds in on itself* since what is revealed is the identity of itself qua *instrumental* (thus external) knowledge of the absolute.

The corollary of this ‘method’ of methodical immanent negation of the forms of philosophical methodology is ‘the seriousness (*Ernst*), the suffering (*Schmerz*), the patience (*Geduld*), and the labour (*Arbeit*) of the negative’ and of *self-abstraction*, of taking ‘one’s

own thoughts' from out of the unfolding form.<sup>268</sup> The phenomenological de-familiarization of the familiar will have to, if we can add Novalis' early theoretical injunction to Hegel's list above, 'practice slowness.'<sup>269</sup> This slow, strenuous and patient thinking of the familiar gives rise to the deepened understanding of the nature of *mediation*, that is, the conceptual movement from which immediacy returns to itself in its reflected form (as a mediated 'immediacy', or: a de-familiarized familiar), thus restoring to itself truth as its own content and becoming.<sup>270</sup> There is, in this structure of immanent self-mediation, the dissolution of 'axiomatization' of absolute opposition and the liquidation of recourse to external syntheses. Defamiliarization is not, consequently, an easily applied, external mechanism bolstered on to what always already is in the state of direct opposition (recall the insistence on the co-extension and coalition of philosophical cognition and ordinary sense in the system-program).<sup>271</sup> Hegel's idea of philosophical thinking does not rest peacefully assured, 'like wine in a wineskin' (to quote Michel Leiris<sup>272</sup>), but strains first to extract *through* experience the inner sense of the familiar *in its familiarity*. The putative mode of the instrumental implementation of philosophical methodology is transfigured in its transition into the 'knowledge' it claims to ground since it does not take itself as always already in direct relation to the absolute, which is to say, *mediated* by the absolute. According to Hegel, philosophical methodology hitherto does not express from within itself the becoming of its own self-restitution in the absolute, that is, the scientific 'formative process (*bildende*

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<sup>268</sup> PS, §19; 3: 24.

<sup>269</sup> Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, p.133.

<sup>270</sup> PS, §21; 3: 25.

<sup>271</sup> Jacobi provides a clear example of the dissolution of external synthesis via the absolute opposition of knowing and the absolute (thus, expressing, for Hegel, a mode of thinking that busies itself ad infinitum but gets nowhere): 'God is, and is *outside me*, a living, self-subsisting being, or I am God. There is no third.' Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings*, p.524. Hegel, who makes reference to this explicitly in *Faith and Knowledge*, notes that philosophical knowledge is precisely knowledge of a 'third way', the expression of speculative identity; see FK, 169-70; 2: 410-1.

<sup>272</sup> Georges Bataille, *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, trans. Iain White, London: Atlas Press, 1995, p.60.

*Bewegung*) in all its detail and necessity' of what has *always already* 'been reduced to a moment and property of Spirit.'<sup>273</sup> Rather, the promise of philosophical methodology is ossified into the attempt to correctly elaborate the laws of proper cognitive conduct in a strictly un-dialectical relation to the idea (external to the spatio-temporal dynamic of the appearance of the idea).

Defamiliarization is accordingly the movement of experience itself since it unfolds itself immanent to the self-relation of the experience of the familiar. Subsequently, defamiliarization is comprehended for us as an initial model for understanding the dialectical movement of experience as it is constructed in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*. It, more precisely, yields the structure of the *immanent self-diremption of consciousness itself* (since what is familiar yields its negative defamiliarization from within itself); a diremption that inaugurates the phenomenological movement of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*.

## 2.5 The Immanent Split of Consciousness

We have thus far exposed the initial methodological tendency made in the opening stages of the *Phenomenology*: first, the immediate 'folding' in on itself of immediately employed philosophical terminology (especially in the expression 'experience'); and second, the processual unfolding of that fold in terms of the defamiliarization of what is ordinarily assumed by each term. This development of 'defamiliarization' has a specific consequence in the development of Hegel's project of phenomenology: it provides the conceptual condition for the elaboration of the transformation of consciousness as such. What is rendered intelligible in the transition, as the we shall see, from 'natural consciousness' to its philosophical observance by the collective phenomenological subject (the 'we' that recollects

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<sup>273</sup> PS, §29; 3: 33.

that comprehends the transitions as moments ‘for us’) is the transition into the basic comprehension of the structure of experience as the central entity that unfolds the inner sense of philosophical science.<sup>274</sup> The initial shape of natural consciousness – and indeed the preliminary step in the unfolding of the *Phenomenology* as a whole – comes about by way of the presentation of what is assumed to be the dominant ‘natural assumption (*natürliche Vorstellung*)’ of the state of philosophy:

It is a natural assumption (*natürliche Vorstellung*) that in philosophy (*Philosophie*), before we start to deal with its proper subject-matter (*die Sache selbst*), viz. the actual cognition of what truly is (*was in Wahrheit ist*), one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded either as the instrument to get hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers it.<sup>275</sup>

The natural assumption consists of the wholly familiar philosophical standpoint of critical philosophy as the dominant cultural form of philosophizing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thus, the natural assumption is a historically determinate form of thinking. Consciousness of this historical specificity is however dissolved in the naturalization of the assumption which takes itself as self-identical: the natural assumption does not reflect on its *own* legitimacy (its nature and limits) as a philosophical position embedded in the cultural neutralization of philosophical reflection, but rather takes its ‘standpoint’ as always already the *true way of cognition* (which means of course that it does not take itself as a ‘standpoint’ in the phenomenological sense). Accordingly, the natural assumption presupposes an anterior gesture of *spontaneous self-arrogation*: it claims for

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<sup>274</sup> I would like to make a short note on the transition from *Philosophie* (which appears in the first sentence of the introduction to the *Phenomenology* and is dropped from that point as a term that expresses what is articulated therein) to *Wissenschaft*. The transition constitutes the initial, unconsciously disclosed methodological transformation of the structure of experience as the comprehension of itself as the basic model of *aufheben*. The transition then functions as the ‘negation of negation’ of the formation of the moment in which ‘experience’ makes its philosophical appearance.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid. §73; 3: 68.

itself without justification the philosophical necessity of methodologically elaborating the 'correct' mode of cognizing the absolute. As Hegel notes, this preliminary methodological 'step' consists of two conceptual consequences: (1) the instrumentalization of cognition – which results in the manipulation of the absolute; and (2) the passivity of cognition as a medium through which the absolute passes – which results in the dissolution of the truth of the absolute itself since it simply reflects the medium through which it passes.<sup>276</sup>

The self-arrogation of the natural assumption, accordingly, consists of the radical dissolution of what is *critical* in critique; it is the cultural normalization of transcendental critique as the a priori method of philosophizing that is, paradoxically, dissolved into a pre-critical, hypostatic schema of philosophical commencement. Critique is neutralized in its endless (and 'monochromatic') reproduction as the self-evident philosophical method. Thus, Hegel's *Phenomenology* commences with a remarkably condensed *immanent critique* of the neutralization of critique and its appearance as 'self-evident' philosophical method: the opening passages of the introduction bring into sharp relief the nature and limits of the neutralization of critique, presupposing the 'critical' claims of the natural assumption (one could say, recalling our earlier reflections, that 'critique' is 'folded in on itself').

The initial conceptual 'result' of the immanent critique of 'critique' consists of a reflection on the relation between 'error' and 'truth.' The instrumentalization of transcendental critique rests on the presupposition that there exists an unbridgeable void between subject (cognition) and object (absolute), which is to say, a chasm separating *knowledge* and *truth*. This presupposed absolute separation of knowledge and truth – the effects of the naturalization of critique – itself presupposes the separation of truth and the movement of erring itself as a particular cognitive mode. The 'fear of error' that constitutes

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

the essential presupposition of the natural assumption is not only the ‘fear of truth’, as Hegel himself points out.<sup>277</sup> It is also the fear of knowing oneself as an ‘erring consciousness’ immanent to the truth. Hegel will recode this comprehension of oneself as an ‘erring consciousness’ in terms of the appearance of ‘unreal’ consciousness.<sup>278</sup> What an ‘error’ actually articulates is a determinate content from the side of the consciousness that reflects on its errors by being confronted by them as something that stands before it. The most salient lesson to be drawn from this, if you will, ‘courage to err’, is that *we are ourselves the entities that are in the act of grasping the truth.*<sup>279</sup> The distinction between knowledge and truth presupposes a distinction between, on the one hand, ‘ourselves’ as reflecting subjects, and on the other hand, the ‘the truth of the absolute’ as something that stands before (and beyond) the limits of our subjective reflection.<sup>280</sup> The dissolution of the instrumentalization of cognition results in, crucially, the dissolution of an externally reflected *criterion* of measurement (since the instrumental method is based on the absurd presupposition that it takes for granted that it is itself ‘true’ but remains necessarily ‘outside’ truth since truth in itself remains unknowable).<sup>281</sup> This dissolution of criteria is something for the consciousness that is taken through the introductory moves of the *Phenomenology*. With this dissolution, consciousness experiences a certain kind of ‘standstill’: it realizes that all that was at one point fixed and given for it is now liquidated. It is liquidated since what occurs is that consciousness *becomes* conscious of the appearance of this ‘standstill’ – what Hegel calls the ‘in itself’ of the experience – and comprehends that this standstill is itself the position

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid. §74; 3: 69-70.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid. §79; 3: 73.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. §74; 3: 69-70.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> The opening reflections then are themselves taken up and phenomenologically deepened in the later passages of the introduction.



consciousness occupies – the ‘for itself.’ More precisely put, *consciousness is conscious of itself as an appearance*.

With this self-reflection of its own appearance, consciousness comprehends itself as always already *plunged in medias res*, that is, in the ‘philosophical element’ so to speak: it no longer remains caught in the element of pseudo-philosophizing about how to properly go about cognizing the absolute but instead realizes that it is always already in a form of knowing the absolute since it is *always already in a form of self-knowing*. What consciousness does not know is, paradoxically, how complicated and alienating self-knowledge itself will become. For the sake of the opening reflections, this ‘awareness’ of consciousness’s appearance generates the initial distinction between the two preliminary modes of consciousness: natural and observing. The unfolding of natural consciousness – the consciousness that arrogates to itself the familiar as immediately true – has given rise to its self-dissolution in relation to the process of its development: as natural, the very notion of a ‘process of development’ (a ‘path’ toward true comprehension<sup>282</sup>) is a purely negative object for it; it is a *nothing* for it (‘since it directly takes itself to be real knowledge’<sup>283</sup>). The annihilation of the underlying assumptions of natural consciousness (assumptions that it takes as true) consists of self-annihilation. And yet, this form of self-annihilation for Hegel consists of the mere theatricality of conceptual and existential alienation from oneself; it is a kind of burlesque of philosophical alienation (knowing fully well that it loses nothing since it is already in the element of knowing that truth cannot be known). It is for this reason that

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid. §77: 3: 72.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid. §78: 3: 72.

Hegel denounces the empty 'pathos' of doubt and constructs in its place a pathway of *despair*.<sup>284</sup>

What is of central importance at this point is the precise nature of the experience of negativity illuminated through the exposition of the inner sense of the natural consciousness (via the unfolding of the natural assumption of the dominant philosophical culture of basic methodological reflection). The negative emerges initially as an object of absolute nothingness for natural consciousness since this consciousness identifies itself, as has already been noted, with 'real knowledge': it is the *path* toward knowledge that has a negative significance for the natural consciousness. This negative experience is recoded into the internal sense of the experience of the dissolution of 'real knowledge' on the path itself: the negative significance of the path toward knowledge is transferred onto the experience of the loss of the consciousness itself. The experience of the path demonstrates that natural consciousness loses the truth it assumed it firmly had of itself (qua real knowledge). This loss of self is the true initial negation of the path of experience and not simply the assumed 'negative significance' of the path in contradistinction to consciousness. More simply put: consciousness is always already on the path toward knowledge since it is always already embedded in a form of knowing that makes immediate assumptions and is founded on unreflected presuppositions. Consciousness then is always already on the path of despair; it just has not sufficiently reflected on how deeply embroiled it is in the situation. It is upon cognition of this basic structure of self-dissolution that the second central mode of consciousness begins to form: the phenomenological consciousness that *simply looks on* and describes the transitions of experience, that is, the *we* that comprehends that the moments grasped are moments *for us*.

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

This consciousness is the consciousness that reflects on the basic structure of the natural consciousness. Through its observation, it becomes clear that the natural consciousness is one mode of reflection. As a particular mode of reflection, the natural consciousness is in fact a moment in the history of a series of distinct forms of consciousness. These forms of consciousness are competing modes of comprehending the absolute. They are, however, modes of consciousness that fail to grasp the way in which they are all *interconnected*.<sup>285</sup> What the modes of consciousness fail to grasp is their own insufficiency of grasping the absolute philosophical mode of consciousness because they fail to articulate the manner in which all historical forms of consciousness are inter-related. Consequently, each mode of consciousness arrogates to itself the full articulation of the *absolute* philosophical standpoint leaving the 'path' of its own development as a purely negative procedure for it. Put another way: each mode of consciousness fails to reflect on itself as an initially 'untrue' or 'unreal' consciousness. This self-reflection as 'untrue consciousness' is the initial passage into the observing consciousness and its internalization of the negativity of the path as a *necessary* negativity. It is for this reason that the emergence of the observing consciousness is conceptually co-terminal with the emergence of the concept of *determinate negation* (*bestimmte Negation*).<sup>286</sup>

Determinate negation consists of the structure of the movement of the comprehension of what appeared initially as a pure 'assumption' as a moment that arises from a process that engenders it: what is determinately negated is the assumption as self-identical and the *transition* made through its negation is the emergence of the comprehension of its true inner sense – namely that it is a consciousness that immediately arrogates to itself the true

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid. §79; 3: 74.

philosophical standpoint. Through this negation of the pure, immediate determinacy 'a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation the transition is made through which the progress through the complete series of forms comes about of itself.'<sup>287</sup> Negation is accordingly a process of passage and transformation. By 'negation', consciousness does not comprehend the ordinarily assumed idea (pure 'nothingness'). Rather, negation itself, when unfolded through the structure of consciousness itself, reveals that it is an integral part of the movement of philosophical thinking, of what Hegel calls 'experience (*Erfahrung*).'<sup>287</sup> It is, importantly, a mode of transition immanent to consciousness as such: consciousness is self-negating since it comes to observe itself as the agent of its own transition and transformations.

Within this context of the initial presentation of negation, we can begin to have a clearer understanding of the way in which natural and the phenomenological consciousness of the 'we' are inter-related. The latter consciousness is itself the unity of the retroactive comprehension of itself as both the natural consciousness and the observation of its own development on the path toward philosophical science that was initially rejected as a pure nothing for the natural consciousness. We are, accordingly, not *extraneous* to the unfolding of the natural consciousness. Rather, our subjectivity is something that is immanently formed within the fold of natural consciousness and its truth claims. To observe is not to be within the element of a philosophical standpoint always already in full assurance of its own relation to the development of natural consciousness. Rather, it consists of *deepening* the dissolution of the claims made by the development of consciousness that punctuates the history of philosophical reflection. It is by way of the unfolding of consciousness that one begins to

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

make initial sense of the particular quality of the transition made by what Hegel means by experience in the dense opening passages of the *Phenomenology*.

## 2.6 Experience as 'Dialectical Movement'

As was noted earlier, the 'experience-aphorism' anticipates the interconnection of three philosophical components that form the introduction of the *Phenomenology*: (1) the ontological structure of the *ambiguity* (*Zweideutigkeit*) of the truth of experience; (2) methodological defamiliarization; and (3) the structure of *aufheben* as the most developed articulation of ontological and methodological movement that retrospectively determines the truth content of the interconnection of the first two components. The place of the elaboration of the interconnection of these three parts is more precisely located in the closing passages of the seventeen paragraphs that form the introduction. It is here that experience is defined in the following formulation: the '*dialectical* movement (*dialektische Bewegung*) which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object' from which '*the new true object springs* (*der neue wahre Gegenstand entspringt*).'<sup>288</sup>

The formulation consists of a deepened defamiliarization of experience as it is putatively comprehended in the philosophical tradition in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: experience no longer stands as the epistemological expression of the limits of cognition of subjective reflection. Rather, it is structured in three interconnected ways: (1) the transformation of knowing; (2) the transformation of the object of knowledge; and (3) the formation of a 'new, true' object that was not initially present to consciousness. It is, more precisely, through the permeation of (1) and (2) that (3) emerges as the result. Accordingly, it is the emergence of the 'new, true object' itself that retroactively determines

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid. §86; 3: 78.

the interconnection of ‘knowledge’ and ‘object’ *and itself* as the processual dynamic that renders that interconnection intelligible. What is underscored by Hegel as ‘dialectical movement’ is, in truth, the *twofold* movement of what appears at the level of philosophical exposition as *three* discrete moments of development. Hegel is perfectly aware that this retrograde transition from threefold structure of development to twofold truth is difficult to comprehend since, immediately following his formulation of experience, he notes that a further elucidation is required.<sup>289</sup> The central point to be illuminated in the context of the principle exposition of the dialectic of consciousness is focused in the expression of the ‘ambiguity (*Zweideutigkeit*) of [experience’s] truth.’<sup>290</sup>

As an ambiguity, the ‘truth’ that enters on the stage of the development of the basic structure of experience is essentially twofold in structure. Experience is formed by two inter-related moments. First: since consciousness simply is conscious knowledge of *something*, consciousness always already finds itself in an immediate relation between itself qua knowing subject and its other qua object of knowledge, the essential substance or the *in itself*. We need to be more precise in light of this ‘simple’ identification of the structure of experience as the structure of the subject’s epistemological claim on that which stands opposed to it since what Hegel has in mind here is not the pure vindication of this epistemological shape. Rather, what is underscored is that the shape is itself the actual ‘in itself’ that structures the movement of experience: it is the basic structure of the epistemological subject – the relation to something which is presupposed as the pure ‘in itself’ – that is in fact the true ‘in itself’ for experience. Thus, one ‘side’ of the dialectical

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid. 3: 79.

movement of the ambiguity of experience is that it has the basic structure of epistemological consciousness as its own 'in itself', which is to say, as its own immediate, pre-given object.<sup>291</sup>

Second, this first 'side' has demonstrated that the object of the 'in itself' of the shape of knowing reveals from within itself the sense of the second 'side' of the ambiguous truth of experience. What the first side raises from within its reflection is that the 'in itself' is an object *for* experience. So: 'the second is the *being-for-consciousness* (Für-es-Sein) *of this in itself*.'<sup>292</sup> Despite appearances, the basic structure of this second 'side' of experience is not the simple self-reflection of consciousness's knowledge of the initial object of the in itself (since this is already performed in the first side). The second side is the *reduplication* of the *movement* of the development of the first object for experiential consciousness: consciousness is conscious of the movement of the first object as its own objective *content*. Experience does not, accordingly, stand above its own experience, but rather comprehends the transitional stages of its own apprehension and comprehension. It is this self-comprehension that is the essence of experience. And it is the very structure of this 'self-comprehension' that properly defamiliarizes the notion of experience: 'This exposition of the course of experience...does not seem to agree what is ordinarily understood by experience.'<sup>293</sup>

The defamiliarization consists of the relation between experience as the point of cognition and the *transitions* that are putatively observed. In the context here, the transition from the 'first', initial object – the in itself – is internally displaced revealing its opposite object – the second object of the 'being-for-consciousness of the in itself'. According to the standard notion of experience, the moments that punctuate the numerical progression of

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid. §87; 3: 79.

differing objects are only externally related in direct opposition to experience as the medium through which the objects are experienced. It is however the immanent transition of the 'first' object into the 'second' that reveals that the transitions are in fact immanent to experiential consciousness itself; they are, as Hegel is fond of putting it, *for us*.<sup>294</sup> The 'new, true object' of consciousness is, in an immanent inversion of the structure of modern epistemology, *our experience itself* and *our* progressive development through the shapes of consciousness that structure the history of philosophy.

As has been noted, the dialectical movement of experience is the dialectic of our experience of the progressive transformations of consciousness. The central distinction between our experience and that of the form of consciousness that experience grasps is that consciousness is itself *epistemologically ignorant* of its own change.<sup>295</sup> The distinction between the consciousness that 'experiences' and the experience of the philosophical consciousness that comprehends itself in the initial 'experience' is not a distinction of direct or absolute opposition – that is to say, they are not discrete and isolatable forms that are externally connected by a 'third' organizing consciousness. Rather, the two consciousnesses – the natural and the philosophical – are one and the same subject; they are immanently connected. Thus, the epistemological ignorance of the natural consciousness is in fact *our* ignorance raised to an objective level. The dialectical movement of experience is accordingly the transition of the comprehension of consciousness's *miscomprehension* of itself and its truth claim.

The *Phenomenology* consists of the methodical unfolding of our own progression to the true philosophical standpoint through the immanent dialectical experience of the forms

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid. §87; 3: 79.



that punctuate that progression, which is to say, forms of the misrepresentations and misunderstandings of philosophical truth. Importantly, the *Phenomenology* does not end with the knowledge of truth but rather ends with the dissolution of the dialectic of consciousness and its transformation into the ontological structure of spirit as the philosophical consciousness that grasps its internal self as the ambiguous truth of this peculiar structure of 'comprehension of miscomprehension.' It is for this reason that the structure of the *Phenomenology* as a whole is ambiguous, thus reflecting the structure of experience: it is at once the introduction and step into philosophical science (*Wissenschaft*) and nothing but a necessary immanent articulation of philosophical science ('the way to science is itself already science').<sup>296</sup> Accordingly, the 'we' that is the central subject of the *Phenomenology* is ontologically identical to ambiguity itself *at the phenomenological level of its presentation*: the 'we' is at once the comprehension of itself as general, universal, collective subject of philosophical comprehension and the miscomprehension of itself as the bifurcated and divided subject. This is why the relation between natural and observing consciousness is essentially *antagonistic* throughout phenomenological development: 'our' observation – which is self-observation – is not a pure, undifferentiated position that calmly looks onto the stage of differing historical forms of consciousness. Rather, *it is itself transformed against itself in the changes it observes.*<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid. §88; 3: 80.

<sup>297</sup> This immanent antagonism of the structure of experience (thus suggesting that 'ambiguity' is the philosophical recoding of 'antagonism') has been overlooked by certain Hegel scholars who attempt to disclose the meaning of the relation from within the precise context of the introduction to the *Phenomenology*. Perhaps the most problematic form of this 'overlooking' of antagonism emerges by way of 'post-political', liberal conceptions of social 'inter-subjectivity' in which the 'we' is structured through a mutually accepted form of social exchange. The essential antagonistic structure of natural and observing consciousness is summarily dispatched in Robert Williams' book on Fichte's and Hegel's concept of 'recognition'. Robert Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*, Albany: State University of New York, 1992. Although Williams stresses the non-antithetical (non-external) structure of natural and observing consciousness (ibid. 102), he consistently interprets natural consciousness as a pre-existing and pre-conditional form of consciousness that is

Thus, the initial definition of spirit is preliminarily coded in the experience of the philosophical 'we' that retroactively grasps the speculative identity of spirit as nothing but the truth of the identity of the absolute with '*ourselves*'. This 'we' is at once posited in the opening of the exposition of the problem of the 'natural assumption' of philosophical thinking and developed in the self-identification of criterion for grasping the knowledge of truth: what '[lies] within ourselves' is that 'we' constitute the speculative identity of the absolute.<sup>298</sup> It is at this stage that we can posit an initial understanding of the doubling of the 'we' in the famous passage from the fourth chapter of the *Phenomenology*: what 'we' attend to is the structure and meaning of the 'we' that is yet to be *actualized* but whose idea is always already present to experience since it is the immanent content of what experience simply is (the twofold identity of the comprehension of the deepened articulation of the 'in itself' and that in itself as for experience). In so far as the *Phenomenology* is itself the dialectical reflection of the ambiguity of the truth of experience as such, it consists of the *true* comprehension of the *incapacity* of actualization of the reconciliation of the basic impasse of

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self-identical, which is to say, that 'exists' prior to philosophical reflection (ibid. 132). This assumption tacitly ratifies the 'antithesis' that Williams suggests and is abrogated in Hegel's account of the dialectic of consciousness: Williams simply gives 'natural' and 'ordinary' a wholly natural and ordinary meaning and fails to mark that they are forms retroactively determined by the philosophical consciousness as its own consciousness. This confusion is encapsulated in the following passage: 'Hegel is explicit in granting ordinary consciousness a right to demand and receive a ladder to the standpoint of science', ibid. 132. This completely ignores that Hegel himself is consciously reflecting on philosophy's immanent formation within the 'thinking of the familiar [hence 'ordinary' – HA]'. Gillian Rose is a much more refined and perspicacious interpreter of the relation between natural and observing consciousness. Indeed, the relation itself is the conceptual groundwork of her project of reclaiming 'speculative experience'. That said, in a crucial section on the exposition of the relation between natural and observing consciousness (which unfolds as a close reading of the introduction to the *Phenomenology*), Rose seems to dissimulate the antagonism at the heart of experience itself (its 'ambiguity' – which Rose does not discuss or even make note of). Instead of attending to the ambiguity of the truth of experience, Rose grasps the natural consciousness as the experiencing consciousness and the observing philosophical consciousness ('us/we') as the entity that '*knows*' the experiential content of consciousness (Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, pp.160-4). In lieu of a discourse on 'ambiguity' Rose opts instead to smuggle in the concept of recognition (p.163) which – and Rose herself is critical of such a move – does not itself emerge at the stage of the introduction.

<sup>298</sup> PS §83; 3: 76 and §74; 3: 70.

the diremption of modern existence.<sup>299</sup> This is why the *Phenomenology* is truly a path of philosophical *despair*: the impasse of modern life – the diremption of subject and object – is radically *deepened*. But this deepening of the impasse of modern life is consciously reflected. It is, accordingly, a deepening that constitutes the essential content of the subject of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>300</sup>

Experience is, accordingly, the initial model of the comprehension of the movement of *aufheben* since what occurs in experience is, if one recalls the standard definition of the term expounded in our introduction, the twofold movement of the negation and preservation of the initial postulation of the in itself and the comprehension of that in itself as being-for-us: what is negated – the initial in itself – is retroactively reconfigured at the level of an ‘in itself’ that is dialectically formed by us, thus the initial negation is itself preserved through the transition of experience. What emerges as the central philosophical term is the notion of ‘ambiguity’ as the expression of the structure of experience. Thus, experience is not initially identified in terms of *aufheben*. There is in fact an interesting absence of the identification of dialectical movement with *aufheben* at the terminological level: the introduction to the *Phenomenology* is in fact the *only* section of the work in which the term is *not* employed. This terminological absence is apposite in relation to the philosophical content of the very idea of experience as dialectical movement: experience, as the essential movement of spirit phenomenologically presented, will unfold all philosophical terms (those ‘yet to be ascertained’) including those that constitute its most inner activity. The whole conceptual

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<sup>299</sup> This collective subject is, accordingly, a significantly more focused and refined philosophical subject than that of the collective subject announced in the 1796 ‘system-fragment’ in that it is a subject formed immanent to the historical development of philosophical reflection itself. See ‘1.4 The ‘Mythology of Reason’ and Social Regeneration.’

<sup>300</sup> It is for this reason that Hegel, at the end of the *Phenomenology* grasps spirit in the following paradox: ‘to know one’s limit is to know how to sacrifice oneself.’ Ibid. §807; 3: 590.

movement of the introduction is, subsequently, the preliminary dialectical exposition of the structure of *aufheben* as the philosophical movement of the content of the introduction itself in the absence of its proper identification (consciously reflected identification of 'Aufhebung' as its movement). The ambiguity of experience is reflected in this ambiguous absence of *aufheben* as the content that is not consciously reflected at the level of appearance. It will take the next three chapters of the *Phenomenology* to begin to expound the structure of the appearance of the unity of *aufheben* as the very formation of dialectical unity.

### **2.7 The *Aufhebung* of Experience/The Experience of *Aufhebung* (I): 'Sense-Certainty'**

In so far as experience is the structure of the unfolding of itself and the object by way of the transformation of both, it is orientated by the movement of its own self-transformation in differing modes of consciousness. The 'new, true object' that emerges in experience negates the co-ordinates of particular consciousness and gives rise to new modes of consciousness through the dialectical abrogation of particularity; *the shift in the object is the shift of experience*. This dynamic of self-formation through the negation of change gives us, at the very outset of the *Phenomenology*, the phenomenological movement of the structure of *aufheben* in its deepened philosophical form (that is, at the level of the inter-dependent, dialectical relation of consciousness and absolute). It elaborates the structure of *aufheben*, however, *prior* to the terminological employment of the expression.

To suggest that the lack of the terminological employment of *aufheben* (and its grammatical derivations) in the introduction is incidental and inconsequential is, I believe, to immediately fail to expound the *dialectical development of the dialectical movement of experience* at the level of its phenomenological exposition, that is, in the unfolding of its *own*

appearance. Importantly, to extract the inner sense of the dialectical movement of experience from the dialectical exposition that experience itself has given initial expression to is to schematize, at the point of its initial – thus immediate and abstract – articulation, the immanent structure of a truth – the self-movement of spirit in absolute knowing as the *aufheben* of the structure of the dialectic of consciousness – that is yet to be properly ascertained. In contradistinction to this, the notion of *aufheben* itself unfolds in its basic conceptual form, from the introduction to the third chapter of the *Phenomenology*, *dialectically*. More simply put, *the structure of aufheben appears in the explication of the experiential unfolding of the modes of consciousness that methodically punctuate the phenomenological 'path': the modes exposed reflect the development of aufheben.*

The most general structure of this development unfolds in, I will show, the first three chapters of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Accordingly, our exposition will consist of an extraction of the structure of the phenomenological development of *aufheben* from its putatively delineated conceptual and topological arena: recognition (*Anerkennung*). There are two main reasons for this extraction, the first is a basic hermeneutical and structural point, whereas the second is philosophical in its orientation.

It is Alexandre Kojève's remarkable series of lectures on the *Phenomenology* that centre the reading and comprehension of Hegel's work on its fourth chapter, paying special attention to the structure and social import of the 'struggle for recognition.' This focus is what gives Kojève's analysis its distinctive quality. That said, it also yields from within itself and its relation to Hegel's work, its distinctive problem. By augmenting the fourth chapter into the status of the true, philosophical beginning of Hegel's work, the actual philosophical development of the dialectical movement of experience is completely cut off. As readers of

the *Phenomenology*, we have no proper sense of the way in which Hegel's work first emerges as an immanent dialectical negation of the state of philosophy in the historical specificity of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Instead, the *Phenomenology* becomes a treatise – echoing, in a sense, Schiller's 1795 epistolary work – on the formation of man's self-consciousness.<sup>301</sup> Consequently, Kojève makes the fourth chapter do too much philosophical work, leaving his interpretation of Hegel open to a dialectical critique of its decidedly *anthropological* one-sidedness; Hegel's *Phenomenology* becomes a work focused on the becoming of the 'wise man,' from out of the conditions of the 'fight' for life in an existential-materialist (Heideggerian-Marxist) drama of historical character. *Aufheben* becomes, in this reading, the philosophical logic that gives sense to the historical structure of the self-overcoming of the 'slave,' thus ushering in, as far as Kojève is concerned, the post-historical time of the *spatialization of man's life* as the result of the end of historico-political temporalization of struggle.<sup>302</sup>

Gillian Rose, as has already been made note of, raises the concept of recognition into the central philosophical shifter of Hegel's *speculative* philosophy, thus superseding the one-

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<sup>301</sup> The shape of this reading is given its most general form in the opening section of the publication of the seminars, 'In Place of an Introduction,' *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, pp.3-30.

<sup>302</sup> 'The disappearance of Man at the end of History is not a cosmic catastrophe: the actual world remains what it has been from all eternity. And it is not a biological catastrophe either: Man remains alive as animal in *harmony* with Nature or given Being. What disappears is Man properly so-called – that is, Action negating the given, and Error, or, in general, the Subject *opposed* to the Object. In point of fact, the end of human Time or History – that is, the definitive annihilation of Man properly so called or of the free and historical individual – means quite simply the cessation of Action in the strong sense of the term. Practically, this means: the disappearance of wars and revolutions. And the disappearance of *Philosophy*; for since man no longer changes himself essentially, there is no longer any reason to change the (true) principles which are at the basis of his knowledge of the World and of himself. But all the rest can be preserved indefinitely; art, love, play, etc.; in short, everything that makes man *happy*.' Cited in Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, p.6. The disappearance of time as temporalized by social struggle, intellectual struggle and 'natural struggle gives sense to the re-appearance of happiness as the time of post-historical man. Void of struggle – of constitutive antagonism – the subject is de-temporalized since it is no longer caught in the dynamics of differentiation and self-differentiation. The flattening out of the dialectical dynamic of time provides the conditions for its spatialization.

dimensionality of Kojève's presentation. Similarly to her philosophical predecessor, Rose gives too much philosophical weight to what in actuality appears on as a relative moment in the dialectical becoming of absolute knowing. To hold onto the socio-political stakes of Hegel's philosophy – viz. that it has social import only if we can think the absolute – Rose must enlarge the socio-political import of recognition far beyond its Hegelian limitation. Consequently, the dialectical development of the notion of *aufheben* itself is dropped off and is understood instead as a conceptual substrate of recognition. This is, of course, a highly productive move. It substantiates the strength of Rose's philosophical position and its insistence on the speculative core of Hegel's thought (a position that my own reading is no doubt indebted to). It, however, leads Rose into problematic conceptual and structural territory. The most significant one of which, at least for our investigation here, is the exposition of recognition from out of the opening philosophical move of the *Phenomenology* articulated in its introduction: the dialectical movement of experience as expounded in the immanent diremption of consciousness.<sup>303</sup> Accordingly, *aufheben* becomes an effect of the deeper structure of recognition, which, in a flagrant contortion of the development of Hegel's thought, becomes the principle dialectical motor of the *Phenomenology*. By insisting on the exposition of its development in the introduction and the first three chapters, I will not only correct this contortion, but, more importantly, I will give sense to the dialectical development to the most general and salient structural formation of *aufheben* at the level of its phenomenological exposition. This amounts to giving structure and meaning to, as I noted above, the dynamics of *aufheben in the movement of aufheben*.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> See footnote 301.

<sup>304</sup> It is, however, important to note that the fourth chapter, and its exposition of recognition, is not without conceptual import in relation to the dialectical unfolding of the dialectical movement of experience. What I want to suggest is that with recognition, we have no fundamental development of the general structure of

The preliminary articulation of *aufheben*, employed as the description and expression of the movement of the negation of negation in the first chapter, reflects the very context in which it is mobilized, namely the exposition of the immediate knowing of ‘sense-certainty.’ The exposition of this mode of consciousness gives rise to the immediate form of dialectical movement: what sense-certain consciousness *points toward* is observed as the mere movement of the dialectical process of its knowing.

In this pointing-out (*Aufzeigen*), then, we see merely a movement which takes the following course: (1) I point out the ‘Now’, and it is asserted to be the truth. I point it out, however, as something that *has been* (*Gewesenes*), or as something that has been superseded (*Aufgehobenes*); I set aside (*hebe...auf*) the first truth. (2) I now assert as the second truth that it *has been*, that it is superseded (*aufgehoben*). (3) But what has been, *is not*; I set aside (*hebe...auf*) the second truth, its *having been*, its supersession (*Aufgehobensein*), and thereby negate the negation of the ‘Now’, and thus return to the first assertion, that the ‘Now’ *is*. The ‘Now’, and pointing out the ‘Now’, are thus so constituted that neither the one nor the other is something immediate and simple, but a movement which contains various moments. A *This* is posited; but it is rather an *other* that is posited, or the *This* is superseded (*aufgehoben*); and this *otherness*, or the setting-aside (*Aufheben*) of the first, is itself *in turn set aside* (*aufgehoben*), and so has returned into the first. However, this first, thus reflected into itself, is not exactly the same (*nicht ganz genau*) as it was to begin with, viz. something *immediate*; on the contrary, it is *something that is reflected into itself*, or a *simple* entity which, in its otherness, remains what it is: a Now which is an absolute plurality of Nows.<sup>305</sup>

This proliferation of the expression *aufheben* (in direct contra-distinction to its terminological absence in the introduction) comes ‘on the scene’ in the second part of the first chapter, that is, in the section devoted to the exposition of ‘what experience shows us’ about the initial result of the first part of the chapter (which was devoted to the basic unfolding of the experience of sense-certainty at the level of its own immediacy). The first part of the first

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*aufheben*; rather, we experience a deepening of the structure of *ambiguity* in the *doubling* (*gedoppelte, Verdopplung*) of self-consciousness. PS, §176; 3: 144. The transition of the first three chapters into the dialectic of dependence and independence passes through the doubling of the truth of self-conscious certainty in the extremely dense opening paragraphs of the fourth chapter.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid. §107; 3: 89.



chapter exhibits a basic reversal in sense-certain consciousness: what consciousness expresses principally – the knowing of being in general, the priority of pure being (*reine Sein*) – is upon utterance, expelled from the realm of pure being itself and absorbed into the pure ‘I’ of immediate, private possession (what is ‘mine’ [*Mein*]).<sup>306</sup> The precondition of such immediate knowing of being as such are the empty universals of our everyday lexicon, especially words that designate and declare the most general form of being (its space – ‘Here’ – and its time – ‘Now’). The words are ‘my own’; they are employed to counter the vanishing of pure being in the reality of its ‘here and now.’ Even at the level of the *sensing* involved in sense-certainty (hearing and seeing) the dialectical reversal exposed in the first part of the chapter – viz. that sense-certainty employs empty universals that are not immediately known even though it is this knowledge that it professes to obtain – is repeated in the movement of the experience of the ‘I.’<sup>307</sup> What is sensed is not ‘pure being’, but rather the particular ‘I’ expressed through the empty universality that designates, at its most immediate and indeterminate level, the universal particular (‘This’). The true observation of what is sustained in this pure ‘I’ is the universality of its act of sensing in general; notwithstanding the negative differentiation characteristic of particularities, the universal ‘I’ is, qua simple universal, indifferent to the ‘content’ of each moment.<sup>308</sup> This indifferent universal forms the general logic of sense-certainty and the dissolution of the immediacy of its knowing, that is, the dissolution of, according to Hegel, the undisturbed conflation of its opinion (*Meinen*) with its meaning (*Meinung*). The dialectical movement of the experience of sense-certain consciousness exhibits the inner sense, the essence, of the mode of knowing in its totality. This essence is the articulation of the *pure immediacy* expressed in sense-

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid. §99-100; 3: 85-6.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid. §101; 3: 86.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid. §102; 3: 86-7.

certainty exposed experientially, that is, its capacity to hold on to that which stands before it, without discrimination.<sup>309</sup> Pure immediacy is the pure act of intuiting the undifferentiated immediate. It is only by way of another 'I', that of the observing consciousness who reflects on the experience of sense-certain consciousness, that the inner character of sense-certain consciousness can be fully expounded as a pure form of pointing and of the simple asseveration of signalling immediacy as such.<sup>310</sup> Accordingly, the observing consciousness enacts the activity of sense-certainty through a performative mimicry (by pointing); it is through this enactment that the immediate structure of the dialectic of sense-certain consciousness is revealed. What is revealed is the incapacity to sufficiently point to being as such; more precisely, that which is pointed toward is only the immediate signalling of an essential *passage* (*Gewesen*). With this passage, the plurality of 'Nows' – the content of universality as the expression of infinity in a term – is, through experience, revealed as the result of the empty universal in its truth. It is the movement of the 'Now' that expresses the movement of experiential learning of the plurality of Nows contained within the singular (as Nancy would have it, the 'being-singular-plural'<sup>311</sup>).

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid. §103; 3: 87.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid. §105; 3: 88.

<sup>311</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. My reference to Nancy here is not without some provocation; the context in which the reference is situated is no doubt central to the provocation. One could interpret the first chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a direct dialectical polemic on the limits of ontology as 'first philosophy' and indeed, the possibility of a 'first philosophy' as such (Nancy's essay avows fully its ambition of elaborating a first philosophy). As we have seen, the universal which appears as pure, empty universal – as a *singular* (the word is Hegel's) universal – is a universal of pure indifference; it is the pure being that simply 'takes place.' It is not the being that reflects in itself the immanence of its own development, that is, its own becoming, 'course' (*Verlauf*) or history. The historical supposition of the 'absence of meaning' – the *terminus ad quem* of Nancy's reflections – is, in a certain sense, Hegel's issue. Hegel however is not bemoaning the absence, but rather the sheer multiplicity of meaning in the immediate experience of the ethical order of civil society and the structure of private property relations. The ideological reflection of sense-certain consciousness is the consciousness that takes what is given in all its unmediated positivity. The infinity of the world of immediate, 'pure' objects is thus reflected by the infinity of opinions (opinions are by definition spuriously infinite in that they are void of any commitment to objectivity). The 'being-with' of Nancy's social ontology does not reflect the deeper dialectical transitions of the historical forms in which it makes its appearance. But, it is argued that what comes properly 'first' is ontologically anterior to what simply appears. This 'first philosophy' is given further ontological depth

This plural content of the immediate universal as pure immediacy for consciousness is reflected by the observing consciousness into the transitions of the dialectical movement of *aufheben*. The undifferentiated passage from that which is superseded (*aufgehoben*) to the 'setting-aside' (*Aufheben*) reflects the dissolution of the observing consciousness into the sense-certain consciousness. In that the indifference of universality in the context of sense-certainty is the result that is reflected in the exposition, the distinction between the multiple forms of supersession (as employed in the excerpt above) cannot be raised, at the level of the mode of consciousness under examination, into a higher level of conceptual reflection.<sup>312</sup> Here, the distinction between the supersession of the 'Now' and the supersession of the sensuous consciousness is a distinction that sense-certainty at once demonstrates at the level of (a) the limits of the infinite reversal from 'pure being' to pure 'I' as a movement that does not sufficiently supersede its own limitation; and (b) by revealing the necessity of a deepened philosophical consciousness to disclose the distinction.<sup>313</sup> This is why the dialectical movement initially presented is the mere movement of experience which simply points to the empty universals (*this, that, here, now*) that are employed at the level of consciousness's most basic expressions. Accordingly, *aufheben* appears wholly limited to the context in which it emerges. Thus, we can say, following Hegel, that the significance of *aufheben* points toward something that is *otherwise* meant at the point of its expression: to assert that the appearance of *aufheben* at this stage as encoding the absolute truth of its meaning 'is to not know what one is saying, to be unaware that one is saying the opposite of what one wants

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in Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology: Being is that 'on the basis of which' all entities are made intelligible; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, pp.25-6. This articulation of 'Being' is nevertheless contained within a mediated universality in that it appears at the level of consciousness.

<sup>312</sup> Rendering Miller's different translations conceptually productive for us.

<sup>313</sup> PS, §100; 3: 86.

to say.’<sup>314</sup> For Hegel, *aufheben* is the name of the movement of the reversal that emerges from the assertions of sense-certain consciousness since consciousness itself is the movement of the supersession of any grounding of truth in an immediately proclaimed ‘truth’ qua empty universal (the ‘this’ that is ‘here and now’, without distinction).<sup>315</sup> And yet, at the level of sense-certainty, the empty universal itself does not contain within itself the differentiations of the moments that punctuate the movement of its experience. Sense-certainty merely infinitely repeats its assertions of truth without knowing what it says, and more importantly, without grasping its own limit. Subsequently, the ‘supersessions’ of the movement Hegel describes in his initial exposition of the dialectic of sense-certainty are themselves infinitely repeated at the level of being ‘set aside’ or ‘archived.’<sup>316</sup> Without the capacity to grasp the difference immanent to the universal itself, the movement of supersession is in truth a movement that goes ‘to and fro’ but gets nowhere; it is the ‘movement’ of pure tautology (a movement that will return, as we shall see, in the exposition of the inner structure of the understanding). It repeats itself in the vain hope of gaining philosophical ground. Importantly, *aufheben* appears on the phenomenological scene as an expression that immediately means something that it cannot itself give proper meaning to. Why? Because it takes its meaning as non-dialectically and pre-critically given (a pure immediate meaning).

What is of crucial importance for Hegel is not the limit of sense-certainty *per se* – that it does not know what it means when it speaks in the name of truth – but that *with* and *from out of* this mode of consciousness the truth of its limit is itself fully disclosed: with

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid. §109; 3: 90.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> A putative meaning of *aufheben* is ‘to archive.’ This signification was made apparent to me in the following essay: Ignaz Cassar, ‘The Image of, or in, Sublation’, *Philosophy of Photography* 1:2, Bristol: Intellect, 2010, pp.201-15. Hegel himself would perhaps dislike this meaning since it invokes, through the object of the archive, the presentation of infinity in a purely finite model, namely the immediate infinitude that gives constitutive sense to the archive as such. The archive is a model of the bad infinite.

experience, we come to know that consciousness (a consciousness nevertheless assumed by us) does not really know what it is saying. It is this conceptual ascertainment of what cannot be ascertained at its own level that gives conceptual depth to the properly dialectical core of the elaboration of the dialectical movement of experience. Thus, *aufheben* appears on the phenomenological scene as necessarily immediately pluralized in a context in which plurality can simply be pointed to, and in the pointing, is subsumed within an empty universal that 'contains' the possibility of each of its 'moments.' What 'is said' of the sense-certainty of *aufheben* is what is merely universal in it, and by extension, ushering in the ineffability of truth itself as something beyond meaning, that is beyond the actuality of its expression (this is why *aufheben* emerges in the context of sense-certainty as, to use Hegel's famous expression, a spuriously infinite movement).<sup>317</sup>

## 2.8 The *Aufhebung* of Experience/The Experience of *Aufhebung* (II): 'Perception'

At stake at the end of the exposition of sense-certainty is the problem of the expression of truth at the philosophical level: what is meant, *for* sense-certain consciousness, cannot be expressed *in* sense-certain consciousness. Consequently, it (vainly) asserts that the inner sense of the thing cannot properly be expressed, that language (*Sprechen*) cannot capture the movement of the singularity of immediate experience.<sup>318</sup> And yet, sense-certainty is wholly mediated by the *words* that it mobilizes to mean what cannot be expressed; the words themselves – the atoms of language – contained within the reversals that individual,

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<sup>317</sup> 'When I say: 'a single thing', I am really saying what it is from a wholly universal point of view, for everything is a single thing; and likewise 'this thing' is anything you like. If we describe it more exactly as 'this bit of paper', then each and every bit of paper is 'this bit of paper', and I have only uttered the universal all the time.' PS, §110; 3: 92.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

immediate opinion (*Meinung*) is forced to assume cannot be grasped.<sup>319</sup> At the end of the first chapter, Hegel writes of the ‘divine nature’ of what are exposed in the preface to the second edition of the *Logic* as ‘speculative words’: ‘language...has the divine nature of directly reversing (*verkehren*) the meaning of what is said, of making it into something else, and thus not letting what is meant get into words.’<sup>320</sup> (One such word, as is well known, is *aufheben*.) The *signification* of *aufheben* is exposed, in its principle technical form – expressing within itself the opposition of negation and preservation – in the second chapter ‘Perception: Or the Thing and Deception.’ So to put it quite directly: *the conceptual refining of aufheben is reflected and formed in the transitions of experience.*

A key distinction between sense-certain consciousness and perception is that the latter does not consist of a state that simply ‘takes place’ in a kind of pell-mell of intuited certainty. Perception raises the pure contingency (accidents) of sense-certainty to necessity by way of recognizing that both the ‘I’ and the ‘object’ are essential moments in the movement of the universal in its simplicity, that is, as a *mediated* universal.<sup>321</sup> Perceptual consciousness then has the object of this universal as something before it and posits as its central task its apprehension.<sup>322</sup> According to Hegel, the universal exhibits its simple form as mediated by ‘showing itself to be *the thing with many properties (Eigenschaften)*.’<sup>323</sup> Perception, or perceiving consciousness, is the realm of distinction and differentiation within the essence of the object itself; it does not fall into the undifferentiated empty universalism of being in general, but contains within itself *negation*, thus determinacy. Perception grasps that the

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<sup>319</sup> Any understanding of the first chapter of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* must keep in mind that ‘empirical’ knowledge is subsumed within the problematic of expression. Quite simply put, not very much sensing occurs in the chapter.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid. §112; 3: 94.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid. §116; 3: 96-7.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid. §112; 3: 94.

thing qua 'this' is not simply an empty universal but rather expresses in itself its immediate abstract identity (a 'this') and simultaneously the immanently mediated other of this identity ('not this'). Sense-certain consciousness then is internalized at the level of perception since what sense exhibits is the thing itself qua 'this'; perception however retroactively determines the untruth of the identity of 'meaning' that arrogates to itself the truth of universality. Accordingly, sense-certainty is superseded in perception, but it is superseded in a deepened philosophical sense. It is here that Hegel refines the concept of *aufheben* (from sheer 'occurrence' to determinacy) immanent to the unfolding of the exposition of experience: '*Supersession (Aufheben) exhibits its true twofold meaning (gedoppelte Bedeutung) which we have seen in the negative: it is at once a negating and a preserving (es ist ein Negieren und ein Aufbewahren zugleich).*'<sup>324</sup> This twofold sense of *aufheben* is presented at this stage precisely because the thing is defined as 'property (*Eigenschaft*).'<sup>325</sup> At the level of the appearance of this form of being, the perceived object possesses within itself the capacity of immanent discrimination (of the difference within unity) and yet, at the level of perceiving consciousness, this 'immanent discrimination' still reflects the immediacy of the sense-element since what is perceived is the multiplicity of properties contained in the mediated universal but only as properties that do not come into contact with one another; the properties themselves – like the social relations of civil society – immediately appear in the form of 'unity' but are only the pure expression of the immediate relation of 'self to self.'<sup>326</sup> The

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid. §113; 3: 94.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid. The 'ethical' content of property here should not be overlooked since it gives socio-historical depth to Hegel's exposition of the dissolution of modern epistemology. The modern phenomenon of private property in the form of social relations is developed in 'The true Spirit. The Ethical Order: Legal status' in the *Phenomenology*; it was also a central theoretical topic of Hegel's early philosophical ventures. Within the idea of love as a model of social unity for example, property itself appears as a particular 'stage' of love in the form of an externally reflected relation: 'If the separable element persists in either of the lovers as something

universal is in this sense articulated as a simple *medium* (Medium), or the *one, through which* the appearance of 'interpenetration' or 'reciprocity' (to use Fichte's term) is staged at an abstract level. Another way of expressing this medium is the indifferent 'Also': the thing is a collection of properties that do not conflict, but are connected with contact (the thing in perceptual consciousness is 'this...and also this...'). And yet, the thing *is* by nature of having properties which are determinate and not simply self-related (without determinacy the structure of immediate pure connection would not emerge). It is, as we have already pointed to, itself and its other by way of a negation (qua exclusion) which brings this identity and non-identity into unity. The thing is, as Hegel puts it, a *one* exposed by the work of consciousness and its unification of manifoldness into a singular individual thing.<sup>327</sup> It is through the immediate relation of these two structures of the perceived 'thing' that the basic truth of the 'thing' emerges as the object of perceptual consciousness. The 'thing' is given as the self-identical, immutable universal, what is always already there and, more importantly, in direct contradistinction to the 'I' that thinks it (and that, in relation to the 'thing', remains mutable and unessential). In the structure of the hypostatization of the 'thing' (thus the hypostatization of truth itself), the misunderstanding of the object is converted into the deceptions of perception itself (error is on the side of knowing).

The 'sense' of *aufheben* in the context of perception reflects, as it did in sense-certain consciousness, the basic structure and movement of the context in which it operates. Accordingly, as the 'second' stage of our phenomenological reconstruction of the development of *aufheben*, the terms of Hegel's concept – its 'properties' – are exhibited at the level of their relation to one another, but in a relation in which the properties are

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peculiarly his own (*eigenes*) before their union is complete, it creates a difficulty for them...love is indignant if part of the individual is severed and held back as private property (*Eigentum*).’ ETW, 306; 1: 247.

<sup>327</sup> PS, §114; 3: 96 and §121; 3: 100-1.



connected but, as has just been noted, ‘without *coming into contact* (zu berühren) with one another’ (that is, without the agonistic depth of the relation of dialectical contradiction).<sup>328</sup> What is presented in the concept of *aufheben* at this stage then is the simple ‘togetherness’ of its lexical designation (negation and *also* preservation), which is to say, the externally reflected ‘play’ of the abstractions of the terms – a ‘play’ that common sense revels in and, more problematically, arrogates to itself (as it reflected in the general form of the natural consciousness) the standpoint of ‘realistic consciousness’ that has the ‘thought’ of ‘essence’ as always already identical to truth (and not simply as a mere abstraction).<sup>329</sup>

Just as sense-certain consciousness – the ‘empiricist’ – failed to grasp the actual content of its own mode of knowing (the pure abstraction of being in general), so too does perceptual consciousness – ‘common sense’ – fail to restore to its immediately given ‘thoughts’ the content of its truth since perceptual consciousness fails to reflect on the immanent contradiction at work in its own sophistical logic, namely the contradiction of material essentiality and mental representation or entities (leading it to insist that ‘philosophy is concerned only with mental entities’).<sup>330</sup> Common sense does not take its own thoughts as essences (qua material substance) but rather pre-critically posits its own thoughts as non-entities (and in that it grasps itself to be already in the element of ‘stuff’ which is wholly distinct from its thoughts, it does not take itself as a material, which is to say as immediately objective).<sup>331</sup> This is the source of its ignorance, its essential failure to raise itself to true

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid. §113; 3: 94.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid. §131; 3: 105.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> The reader will recall that ‘common sense’ is an object of Hegel’s critical reflections on its relation to speculation in his *Differenzschrift*. D, 98-103; 2: 30-5.

philosophical knowledge.<sup>332</sup> This 'failure', which experience is conscious of, is reflected once again in the deployment of *aufheben*: the term is posited as the 'thought' of the dialectical movement but it is not internalized as that movement itself. This is why, in both the first and second chapter, the understanding of *aufheben*, like the goal of philosophy itself (to know the truth absolutely as the absolute truth itself) at the differing stages of modes of knowing, remains an *outstanding* task for experience since experience is pushed on toward new experiences through the experiential content of its findings. In the context of the experience of the misunderstanding of perceptual consciousness, what this mode of consciousness is actually trying 'to do is *bring together*, and thereby supersede (*aufzuheben*), the *thoughts* (Gedanken) of those non-entities, the thoughts of that universality and singular being.'<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> This failure, as we have already seen, is the failure of natural consciousness at the philosophical level, which is to say, at the level of its utterance of the philosophical 'grammar' as already the expression of philosophical knowledge (simply because the abstract particulars, the words, are used).

<sup>333</sup> PS, §131; 3: 106-7. Hegel's project, which emerges at this level as the exposition of experience as a structure of the movement of thinking that dialectically negates 'thought' where 'thought' is posited as abstract, immediate and positively given in the everyday and familiar units of its ostensibly 'quotidian' language. Adorno appropriates Hegel's formulation of 'thinking (Denken) against thoughts (Gedanke)' in his *Negative Dialectics*: 'As thinking, dialectical logic respects that which is to be thought – the object – even where the object does not heed the rules of thinking. The analysis of the object is tangential to the rules of thinking. Thought need not be content with its own legality; without abandoning it, we can think against thought, and if it were possible to define dialectics, this would be a definition worth suggesting.' Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.141; Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik – Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2003, p.144. Adorno does not, in this passage, make a more definite terminological distinction between 'thinking' and 'thought' in the same way Hegel does since it is thinking qua dialectical logic itself, for Adorno, which is pushed against itself ('*gegen sich selbst zu denken*'). He thus refers perhaps more directly to the 1830 edition of the encyclopaedia; see Enc. I, 65; 8: 93 ('*Denkens in und gegen sich*'). There is Hegelian scholarship that remains completely ignorant of this central theoretical move in Hegel's thinking and in the exposition of that thinking. This ignorance – which amounts to the restitution of common sense philosophy into Hegel's thought – is principally found in the Anglo-American tradition of Hegel studies. To give one example, I would like to invoke the attitude of making Hegel 'speak Anglo-American', which amounts to Hegel speaking analytically in the strict sense of the term (that is, how Hegel's philosophy conceives of mental activity in its pure, 'neutral' sense and, at times, from within the problem of the relation of 'mind' to the findings of empirical sciences); see Willem A. DeVries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988. (DeVries is of course playing with Hegel's idea of making philosophy 'speak German'; L, 107; B (1): 100.) Hegel emerges here as a naturalist, the 'great' precursor to American pragmatism. This project of 'Americanizing' Hegel has been taken up more recently in the post-analytical attempt to 'return' to sematic, holistic meaning via a 'return' to Hegel; see, for example (and for a basic overview of the stakes of the 'post-

## 2.9 The *Aufhebung* of Experience/The Experience of *Aufhebung* (III): 'Understanding'

With the disclosure of the experience of perceptual consciousness we are brought to the highest philosophical articulation of knowing in modern epistemology according to Hegel, namely the 'understanding (*Verstand*)' of critical philosophy. With the understanding, the untruth of consciousness and object are *superseded* (*aufgehoben*) in such a manner that through it the concept of the 'true' (the unity of consciousness and thing) is presented. It is presented however only in *principle*, that is, as a theoretical abstraction.<sup>334</sup> Instead of simply taking the world of manifold reality as a 'thing', the understanding unifies this 'thing' with its conceptual thought of the unconditioned (*unbedingte*) universal in a system of theoretical laws. As has already been note, this elaboration of the laws of the understanding are themselves beyond the phenomena themselves; the thought of the true in principle constitutes the boundary that determines the limits of experience. And yet, Hegel is drawn to the essential unity expressed in the principle of truth disclosed in the experience of the understanding, which is to say, the truth of the *Aufhebung* of the absolute antithesis between the categories of *force* – the pure expression of 'being-for-self' (identity) and the understanding itself – 'being-for-another' (difference).

The critical distinction of the transition from perceptual consciousness to understanding is that the moments of truth in principle are moments that are reflected *into* themselves, thus a unity that expresses the essence, or *inner* sense, of the 'thing' in the deepened immediacy of its thought qua concept. Within the context of our exposition of the unfolding of the concept of *aufheben* as being itself reflected in the content of the unfolding of the experience of consciousness, this transition to the inner being of the unconditioned

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analytical return'), Robert Brandom, 'Some Hegelian Ideas of Note for Contemporary Analytical Philosophy', *Hegel Bulletin* – Vol. 35, issue 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

<sup>334</sup> PS, §133; 3: 108.

universal articulates the transition of the positing of the ‘parts’ (aspects) of *aufheben* into the supersession of the thing itself; the internal moments of the universal show themselves, *in principle*, to be ‘themselves essentially self-superseding (*selbst sich aufhebende*) aspects, and what is posited is only their transition into one another.’<sup>335</sup> Here we come to a crucial moment in the unfolding of the concept of *aufheben* since what is revealed is its own immanent and objective self-relation. It is within the context of the understanding, the limits of cognition established through the method of transcendental critique, that the movement of *aufheben* is positioned in direct relation to itself as the very movement of the object of the universal itself.

The emergence of *aufheben* in the context of the experience of the understanding is, importantly, the emergence of the limit of *aufheben* in its strictly *non-contradictory* form.<sup>336</sup> This non-contradictory form is illuminated in the specific form of the unity of plural differentiations in the unconditioned universal that initially reveals itself as the agent of its own development from *one side of* the consciousness that thinks it. The interrelation of ‘identity’ (being-for-self) and ‘difference’ (being-for-another) which are posited in reciprocal relation to one another in the universal are in fact void of actual connection: ‘they mutually interpenetrate, but without coming into contact with one another because, conversely, the many diverse ‘matters’ are equally independent.’<sup>337</sup> The universal undivided unity is a unity amongst a plurality of purely reflected unities, which is to say, unities differentiated with one another only on account of their being undifferentiated. What we have here is a deflated conception of the universal’s self-differentiation (reflected in the social context of private

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid. §135; 3: 109.

<sup>336</sup> Recall the conception of ‘harmony’, and its distinction from *aufheben*, in Schiller’s *Aesthetic Education*. The failure and limit of *aufheben* according to Schiller is precisely its incapacity to negate, without trace, the agonistic essence of reality itself. See ‘1.3 The Limit of *Aufheben*.’

<sup>337</sup> PS, §136; 3: 110.

property relations). In this context, the movement of *aufheben* is itself the reflection of this total privatization of the universal qua pure being-for-self: 'This supersession (*Aufgehobensein*) in its turn, this reduction of the diversity of pure *being-for-self*, is nothing other than the medium itself, and this is the *independence* of the different 'matters'.'<sup>338</sup> The movement of *Aufgehobensein* at this point yields from within itself the proper concept that corresponds to the mode of consciousness under examination: *force* as the concept of the understanding. Force is the actual movement – the '*inner* being of Things' – of what appears as immediately 'self-superseding.'<sup>339</sup> The actual movement of force, according to Hegel, gives rise to the inner contradiction that cannot be sustained in the expression and movement of force itself: the essential self-diremption of itself into two distinct and externally reflected moments – duality – that cannot be *reconnected*. The mode of consciousness that is experienced here is, by extension, the mode of consciousness that infinitely reproduces the determinacy of the antithetical oppositions of the universal, an antithesis without synthesis. The movement of *aufheben* that force initially reflects is in fact a movement of endless diremption (*Entzweiung*).<sup>340</sup> But it is a diremption which does not have itself as the subject of its own identity in the differentiation; rather, it is a diremption resulting in the positing of determinate diremption as such (as the 'thought' of diremption). This pure positing of determinate separation gives the movement of the understanding of the concept of force the limited inner sense of *vanishing*: the movement of force is the movement of mutual *vanishing* of the distinct moments that equalize one another.<sup>341</sup> But the comprehension of this movement of the vanishing moments of force, presented at the level of understanding as

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid. §138; 3: 112. For a more detailed exposition of Hegel's concept of 'diremption' see chapter 1, subsection '1.6 The Two Forms of Diremption'.

<sup>341</sup> PS §141; 3: 114.

vanishing moments in themselves, is a comprehension *for us*, which is to say, for the consciousness that looks on and describes the totality of the movement of experience.<sup>342</sup>

What ‘we’ observe in the comprehension of this vanishing is the basic transition of force as an expression of itself and as the immanent self-dissolution of its self-expression in an actuality contained in another that it externally reflects. Once again, Hegel mobilizes an initially self-reflective mode of *aufheben* to articulate properly the content of force’s expression: it is grasped in terms of the movement of self-supersession (*Selbstsichaufheben*).<sup>343</sup> What the understanding apprehends is the appearance of the show of force as a being that it has no access to since the object before the understanding is nothing but the negative universal of what appears and not the ‘positive’ universal of the being-in-itself of force. The understanding is immediately the opposite ‘extreme’ of a negative universal that determines itself as object. The ‘self’ that articulates the self-reflectivity of force is not the self of the understanding that comprehends the higher unification of itself as the dialectical result of its posited opposition to force. Rather, it is the limited expression of the ipseity of the universal that remains purely posited as a regulative boundary, limiting the play of appearances, since the understanding qua mode of consciousness does not find itself in the universal. And in so far as the understanding does not locate itself in the universal as something that is for itself, then the true essence – the *inner being* – of force is something that cannot properly be posited in its realized form but rather, its realization is dissolved, ironically, at the moment of its realization qua force (this is what is meant by the moment of force being ‘driven back into itself’).<sup>344</sup> More precisely, the true result of this identification of the movement through the understanding is the very idea of *appearance* (*Erscheinung*)

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid. 3: 115.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

itself as the 'middle' term mediating the understanding and force.<sup>345</sup> Against this sensuous world of appearances is the realm of truth as a super-sensible beyond which is not limited by the particular form of the vanishing – of what is initially articulated as self-reflexive supersession (*Selbstsichaufheben*) – of being (the particular movement of appearance).

It is worth making note of the dissolution of the expression of *aufheben* as the immanent sense of the movement of the understanding when the third chapter of the *Phenomenology* begins to consciously reflect on that mode of consciousness as something that is the object for the philosophical consciousness working through the text. What appeared initially as self-reflexive *aufheben* developed through its observation into vanishing; and finally in the phenomenological presentation of the understanding the movement of disappearance is reconfigured into the true essence of the 'movement' of the understanding itself: the 'movement' (inertia) of *tautology* (*tautologischen Bewegung*).<sup>346</sup>

[T]he Understanding, as we have seen, sticks to the inert unity (*ruhigen Einheit*) of its object, and the movement falls only within the Understanding itself, not within the object. It is an explanation that not only explains nothing, but is so plain that, while it pretends to say something different from what has already been said, really says nothing at all but only repeats the same thing (*von dem schon Gesagten zu sagen, vielmehr nichts sagt, sondern nur dasselbe wiederholt*). In the Thing itself this movement gives rise to nothing new; it comes into consideration as a movement of the Understanding.<sup>347</sup>

The movement of the understanding then is in truth a non-experiential movement in the dynamic, phenomenological sense as unfolded in the introduction and first three chapters of the *Phenomenology*. The form of *aufheben* deployed in the context of the understanding is an *aufheben* that does not fall within the object as something that is for consciousness itself as the unity of subject and object. The structure of the understanding accordingly reflects at this

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid. §143; 3: 116.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid. §155; 3: 126.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

stage of the phenomenological unfolding of the experience of consciousness the structure of the most accomplished epistemological, formal identification of *aufheben* as the immanent structure of knowing.

It is clear that *through* the careful and methodical unfolding of the initial epistemological forms of consciousness (sense-certainty, perception and understanding), the structure of the *Aufhebung* of experience (the constitutive structure of what experience itself *is*) is itself unfolded: the development of the experience of consciousness *reflects* the philosophical development of *aufheben* as the conceptual expression of the dialectical sense of experience. Accordingly, *aufheben* does not emerge, within the context of the *Phenomenology*, as a borrowed theoretical method that plots in advance the way in which the appearances of consciousness will interconnect. Rather, it properly emerges as an intra-phenomenological concept. *It emerges more precisely at the level of the experience of the unfolding of experience itself.*<sup>348</sup> Accordingly, *aufheben* and experience are dialectically and constitutively inter-reflexive: they give sense to one another.

## 2.10 Experience as Initial Movement of Speculative Thinking

In the first chapter, the structure of 'love' in the early Frankfurt writings was exposed as articulating a 'model' of the *Aufhebung* of social unity in the context of civil society, which is to say, within a context structured principally by the social relations – the 'ethical substance' – formed under private property relations. In so far as philosophy itself as a cultural form

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<sup>348</sup> The notion of the dialectical movement of experience as unfolding in experience itself is an interesting omission from Derrida's analysis of Bataille's Hegelianism. According to Derrida, the concept of *Aufhebung* is the underlying presupposition of Hegel's dialectical process giving it a thoroughly un-dialectical identity within Hegel's thought. See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, pp.327-31. It is therefore a concept that emerges within philosophical 'discourse' (as the unity, as Derrida notes, of 'process and system' [ibid. p.327]) and not within the reconstruction of phenomenological experience as the most accomplished form of the comprehension of the miscomprehension of the unity (result) of 'process' and 'result'.



that articulates the reality conditions and actuality of such unity is phenomenologically taken for granted, the writings on 'love' cannot sufficiently reflect on their own theoretical identity as modular. What the early Jena writings establish, emerging in direct contra-distinction to the early philosophical expressions of the Frankfurt period, is that philosophy in the dominant mode of its expression (philosophies of subjective reflection) has itself become an immediate 'model' in the sense of being an instrument of thought that measures and reflects in advance of its experiences the limits and boundaries of reason, of what can or cannot be known of the thing-in-itself (the subject-matter). Such a philosophical 'model' insures the 'infinite repeatability (*unendliche Wiederholbarkeit*)' of its judgements and propositions (especially in the putative method of establishing the foundational principle) without grasping the *internal* contradiction that such a structure of philosophical expression gives rise to (that in the 'thinking' of the grounding principle, which amounts to an application of that principle, what is suspended is thinking itself).<sup>349</sup> The immediate affirmations of the early Frankfurt writings are themselves transformed into the very structure of the incapacities and internal inconsistencies of the philosophical form itself. Accordingly, philosophy is turned against itself; but it does so in such a way that it internalizes its 'errors' and recognizes that the *fearful* presupposition of modern philosophy is the very structure of experiences capacity to advance.<sup>350</sup>

The structure of this self-reflection finds its basic philosophical form, as I have tried to show, in the methodological movement of defamiliarization at the level of experience itself: the dialectical movement of experience is the movement of defamiliarization since

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<sup>349</sup> D, 108; 2: 40.

<sup>350</sup> This posited claim, which defines the basic movement of dialectical inversion, was noted down in Hegel's 'Wastebooks': 'The most damaging thing is to want to save oneself from errors. The fear of intentionally making a mistake is the comfort and accompaniment of a wholly unintentional error.' M, 249; 2: 550.

immanent to the structure of experience is the dissolution of the 'reluctance' to dwell within the element of familiarity (experience is initially formed by this very habitation) and expose its inner sense. The unfolding of the *Phenomenology* however folds this structure of the defamiliarization of the familiar into itself in so far it becomes in itself the familiar form of philosophical comprehension. The goal of philosophical *Bildung*, the self-reflected aim of the *Phenomenology*, is to raise consciousness to the level of familiarization with the dialectical movement of experience which consists of the philosophical reflection of its own activity as *aufheben*. This familiarization however does not consist of the initial immediate abstraction of the familiar but rather is the philosophically deepened reflection of the immanence of familiarity as a moment in the movement of experience: experience consists of the thinking and knowing of the transitions of itself as encapsulated in the dialectical transitions of immediacy, mediation and concretion. The philosophical result of *Bildung*, that is, the 'end' of the *Phenomenology*, reconstructs experience as the very logic of this transition of the understanding of its own misunderstandings in the interconnected course of its development. What we know at the end of the *Phenomenology* is that the moments of the dialectic of consciousness have themselves been absolutely dissolved, thus giving sense to experience as the internal structure of the 'speculative thinking' of spirit itself. And yet, in precisely this *absolute* knowing, our understanding consists of the *misunderstanding* of the inner sense of speculative thinking, that is, in its own movement.

Consequently, the exposition of experience consists of consciously reflecting on the significance of itself as the initial movement of speculative thinking in the context of the misunderstanding of the identity of the permeation of 'thought' and 'being' in *thinking*, which is to say, at the speculative level. Put another way: the end of the *Phenomenology*

does not bring us back to the starting point from whence it commences (the ‘natural assumption’ of immediate, natural consciousness), but rather to the *beginning of philosophical science*, the immediate form of which is putatively understood as the philosophical beginning of philosophy itself (the problem of beginning). This is why we read the preface of the *Phenomenology* once again at the *end* of the work, when we have travelled the course of the *Phenomenology*: phenomenological movement is ‘retrograde’ in a deepened dialectical sense – this necessary transition is presented in the form of the work itself (the dialectical unfolding of experience is reflected in the structure of philosophical presentation). What absolute knowing *knows* at the end of its phenomenological presentation is that it has grasped itself as the appearance of philosophical *Bildung*, as the actual, self-realizing philosophical consciousness whose past (it’s becoming) is its own work and whose object, as a shape of consciousness, is its own self-consciousness: absolute knowing knows the appearance of its own self-identity since it ‘gives its complete and true content the form of the Self and thereby realizes its Notion as remaining in its Notion in this realization.’<sup>351</sup> Accordingly, the *Phenomenology* posits itself as the appearance of the form of philosophical comprehension to be concretized in ‘*Logic or speculative philosophy*.’<sup>352</sup> It is, strictly speaking, the philosophical preparation of philosophical science that does not arrogate to itself by way of empty universal asseverations that are immediately identified as ‘philosophical’ (due to the direct and familiar employment of the philosophical lexicon and propositions), but rather generates itself, through the intellectual labour of grasping the totality of the moments that structure the movement of consciousness, as immanent to philosophical science. This is why the central operation of the last chapter, and the preface,

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<sup>351</sup> PS, §798; 3: 582.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid. §37; 3: 39.

of the *Phenomenology* is *declarative*: it declares the necessity of speculative philosophy, and the *Logic* as its preliminary articulation, through the dialectical experience of the relation between consciousness and its object (itself). It only declares this identity since in the unfolding of absolute knowing we are left with the pure form of the truth of the 'self' of spirit, and its manifestation of itself in the form of objectivity as consciousness draws itself into the appearance of the propositional declaration 'Spirit...*is Science*.'<sup>353</sup>

The mode of this proposition, which formally reflects the general structure of foundational propositions at an immediate level, is taken up in the closing sections of the preface that is, through the discussion on the movement expressed within the *speculative proposition*. The appearance of the speculative proposition is supposed on the thinking that can grasp the movement of the proposition (and its distinction from ordinary judgement) *speculatively*, which is to say, not as a philosophical declaration but as the philosophical science of its truth. For this to occur however, the pure form of spirit qua 'self' has to appear in its determinate substance (*Dasein*) as the concept in and for itself in both the subject of that appearance and its substance as being-for-self (not simply as abstract moments of self-consciousness). We can only declare or state the repetition of the form of the proposition at the phenomenological level since the thinking that grasps the content of the movement that, despite appearances, emerges in speculative expression can only be grasped in the exposition of that thinking itself.<sup>354</sup>

With the end of the *Phenomenology* then we are brought back to its beginning as the initial articulation of the opening of philosophical science through the expressive form of the speculative proposition. Accordingly, the dialectical movement of the book performs a *single*

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid. §798; 3: 583.

<sup>354</sup> This is why I shall examine the speculative proposition in more depth in the next chapter.

circle in which what appears as such is the logic of circulation: 'The movement is a circle that returns into itself (*zurückgehende Kreis*), the circle that presupposes its beginning and reaches it only at the end.'<sup>355</sup> The expression 'circle that returns into itself' appears at first as nothing but a peculiar pleonasm, a pure tautology. The presentation of this tautology at the end of the appearance of spirit however suggests a necessity of expression: the phenomenological circle is the only articulation of the stage at which philosophical science *fails* to appear.<sup>356</sup> At the point of *Bildung*, philosophical experience knows this 'failure' as a necessary development that raises philosophical science to the stage of *knowledge of its untrue appearance in the historical forms of its mis-articulation* (the highest historical form being that of religion which can only *represent* the identity of spirit), thus, in a certain sense, its *occultation*. This strongly implies that the only path to philosophical science is that of the experience of the *Phenomenology*.

The last phenomenologically disclosed shape of spirit (absolute knowing) is, through the circularity of its development from posited result to the *comprehension of the appearance* of itself as the pure form of self-identification, the preliminary expression of a philosophical science that itself – that is, in the moments of substance – has to be fully elaborated. This is why in the last chapter the abstract categories of the logical inauguration of the system (at the beginning of philosophical science thinking has as its substance the immediate unity of thought and being) are signalled.<sup>357</sup> The *Phenomenology*, according to Hegel, folds back in on itself the charge made against natural consciousness at the very beginning of the *Phenomenology*, namely that it immediately arrogates to itself the philosophical form of cognition without ascertaining the truth content of that form. The 'return' to immediacy at

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid. §802; 3: 585.

<sup>356</sup> The identity of the 'circle' will be expounded in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>357</sup> Especially, PS, §803; 3: 586-7. This means that the 'elaboration' has to run through the *Logic*.

the point at which the *Phenomenology* folds in on itself is however a point at which 'immediacy' becomes the deepened principle of the thinking of spirit at the level of the dissolution of the dialectic of consciousness. 'Philosophy' qua historical form no longer stands as an issue for philosophical *Bildung* since it is now engaged with the higher demand of grasping the knowledge of truth itself, that is, itself as philosophical science in and through speculative thinking. Through the *Phenomenology*, philosophical thinking no longer becomes reduced to the fixed algebraic signs of its 'grammar'. (the application of the categories) as Hegel puts it in the *Logic*. Rather it deepens experience in such a sense that it has for itself the outstanding task of philosophy at the point at which it is *failing* to be realized. It is within this fold that the *Logic* as the initial articulation of speculative thinking properly emerges.

This, finally, does not imply, despite appearances, that the *Phenomenology* is left behind (the 'ladder' is 'kicked away' so to speak)<sup>358</sup> and that 'philosophy', as the result, is

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<sup>358</sup> This is the putative form of understanding the relation between the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*: in contradistinction to the historical development of the *Phenomenology*, the *Logic* is the unfolding of thinking at the level of pure thought itself, thus 'in the *Logic*, the dialectical motion is strictly conceptual; there is no interaction with historical experience.' H. S. Harris, *Hegel: Phenomenology and System*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995, p.95. The extraction of phenomenological movement from logical movement is odd. Is not the basic assumption of the sense-certain consciousness that it knows being in general (even when this being is reversed in the exposition that it becomes certain of itself, the 'I'), or *pure being* (*reine Sein*), which is to say, the first 'category' of the logical development? (PS, §99; 3: 85.) The result of this separation is clear: Hegel's philosophy is split between, on the one hand, an historical dialectic, and on the other, a conceptual one – the result of which is nothing short of the miscarriage of Hegel's philosophical enterprise, namely grasping the truth of the absolute as subject and substance. I would also like to add here that the *Logic* is, within this orthodox tendency, comprehended as a transcendental exposition of thought: 'Hegel said that his logic was a metaphysics, but he was using the word as Kant did when he spoke of the "metaphysics of morals" or the "metaphysics of nature." For Kant these denote studies of the necessary structure of our activity in the areas in question, and therefore, the necessary structure of all rational actions or knowable objects in those areas. Discovering such structure enables Kant to criticize attempts to extend knowledge beyond the field opened and organized by the necessary categories and principles. Hegel's logic will be a metaphysics in the Kantian sense, a study of the necessary structure of thought. It is a transcendental analysis of the categories of thought rather than a pre-critical attempt to hypothesize or intuit the necessary structures of being.' David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986, p.41.

taken up.<sup>359</sup> The problem lies here in the separation of *Phenomenology* and ‘philosophy’ where the former is seen as the path toward the latter, but where the latter is taken in its immediate sense thus abrogating the whole problem of ‘philosophy’ as the cultural form of self-arrogation of the investigation into truth. As shall be exposed in the next chapter, the *Logic* identifies itself as a specifically ‘post-phenomenological’ work; but it achieves this status only by way of preliminarily expressing itself through the basic structure of the phenomenological method, namely the movement of the defamiliarization of the familiar (Hegel, in one of the last texts he wrote, restores the centrality of this method into the *Logic* and the inner sense of speculative thinking<sup>360</sup>). By ‘post-phenomenological’ I mean principally the following: the *Logic*, as the initial unfolding of speculative thinking, grasps the movement elaborated in ‘the higher standpoint reached by spirit in its awareness of itself’ as a movement that consciously reflects on its own incapacity to raise itself fully to the level of its own self-consciousness *in and as* the element of philosophical science. In order to expound the movement of its own thinking, speculative thinking presupposes the movement of experience as the *model* of its own development.<sup>361</sup> This amounts to the following: the central presupposition of the self-comprehension of speculative thinking is structured as *aufheben*.

The *Aufhebung* of experience – the transitions and transformations of consciousness and its object – does not come to a standstill in the *Logic*; rather, speculative philosophy is mobilized in terms of a *need for a higher philosophical need*, namely the reconstruction of

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<sup>359</sup> This point is made by Houlgate; see Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995, pp.101-5.

<sup>360</sup> SL, 33; 5: 22.

<sup>361</sup> I am partially in agreement with Rose here, who identifies the *Logic* in terms of being ‘a phenomenology of abstract philosophical consciousness.’ Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p.200. The degree to which I am in *full* agreement is expounded in the next chapter.

speculative philosophy in its historical and ontological unfolding of the thought of the absolute *as* that thought itself. This recourse to experience as the ‘model’ of the logical movement of thinking itself is apposite for the consistency of Hegel’s thought since the experiential model is in fact a ‘model’ that emerges from out of the immanent critique of the recourse to non-philosophical models (especially mathematics). Thus, the *Logic* does not have to reproduce the movement of the limits of the natural consciousness that arrogates to itself (through borrowing external models of cognition) its own philosophical legitimacy (via the declaration that it is already in the philosophical element). It takes as its own model the experiential movement of its internal transformation and interconnection of previous ‘models’ of consciousness in so far as it operates as the defamiliarization of *what appears in absolute idealism itself as familiar*, namely the speculative idea as ‘the eternal and unchangeable model of what really is (*ewigen und unwandelbaren Urbild der Sache selbst*).’<sup>362</sup>

The logical movement of the *Phenomenology* consists of its collapse within itself and leads us to the immediate ‘ethical order’ of the philosophical present that ‘always already’ structures the context in which Hegel’s thought forms, but structures it in the form of *misrepresentation*. The *truly* inner philosophical sense of truth’s unfolding – which amounts to the *Aufhebung* of *aufheben qua experience* – remains to be fully elaborated. This will be the express goal of the *Logic* at the level of its conception of speculative thinking.

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<sup>362</sup> M, 208; 2: 171.



### *Sichaufheben* and Speculative Thinking

Logic is to be understood as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought. This realm of truth is as it is without veil and in its own absolute nature. It can therefore be said that this content is the presentation of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite spirit.<sup>363</sup>

#### 3.1 Introductory Remark

The task set out by Hegel in his introduction to the *Science of Logic*, at the level of an immediate engagement of the passage above, is astonishingly ambitious: it declares nothing short of the philosophical presentation (*Darstellung*) of the subject of creation prior to its *externalization in*, and *mediation through*, the shapes and finite moments of its creation. The reader will be excused for making the assumption that with this declaration, Hegel smuggles in the very philosophical claims he strictly forbids, namely, the comprehension of the ‘result’ in its pure immediacy (as its pure actuality). That is to say: a ‘result’ (here the truth of God’s ‘eternal essence’) that does *not* emerge from the process that engenders it but rather is posited as truth in advance of the movement of its negation. Here we have the simple inversion of what appeared in the introduction to the *Phenomenology* as ‘scepticism’ (which abstractly posits pure nothingness from its own results as the nothingness of the result as fixed determination); thus, if one were to momentarily detach the *Logic* from its phenomenological presupposition, we have a full blown *dogmatism* in so far as ‘God’ is posited immediately as a purely self-relational and self-identical speculative idea (the spiritual subject-object).

This restitution of *pre-critical metaphysics*, however, applies only if the subject – God – is posited as an ‘out-and-out other’, which is to say, as something that stands absolutely

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<sup>363</sup> SL, 50; 5: 44.

distinct and externally oppositional to cognition.<sup>364</sup> The subject 'God' invoked is in fact a putative form of identification of the philosophical subject that unifies itself with its content; a subject that is identical with its own development and subject matter. 'God' according to the discourse of the *Logic* is not the divine, super-sensible, infinite entity, but rather the metaphoric expression of the logical subject of spirit in the form of what Hegel will refer to as the 'logical life.' What this means is, initially, the following: the philosophical subject that raises itself to the identity of its own inner essence as the self-comprehending philosophical subject. Or: a subject that has grasped its own form and content as its own self-identity. This, for our philosophical focus, implies that the *structure* of the subject of spirit in the form of its 'logical life' consists of the movement of *aufheben*: the structure of the form of spirit's self-identification, self-comprehension and determination with itself as its own content (absolute truth), comprises of the *Aufhebung* of the opposition that structures the immanent passage of logical life from immediate ontological identity-with-itself to self-determining and self-subsisting identity qua 'absolute idea.' And this structure of *aufheben*, which appeared at the phenomenological level through the unfolding of the experience of the modes of consciousness, is the immanent movement of the logical unification of the opposition forming logical life (the basic opposition of 'being' and 'thought').

Hegel will refer to this immanent movement of unification in the *Logic* as 'speculative thinking.' But it is here that the structure of *aufheben* as composing the immanent sense of the structure of speculative thinking is problematized. As a speculative mode of thinking – or more precisely, as the speculative thinking of the speculative itself (the unity of being and thought, of subject and object) – the immanent structure of *thinking* as unfolded in the *Logic* is no longer identified in terms of the restless movement of the

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<sup>364</sup> Enc. III, 1; 10: 9-10.

production of the 'new, true object' but rather emerges as the internal *truth* of the very process of what appears phenomenologically as the 'new, true object.' With speculative thinking, the truth of experience qua dialectical movement is itself retroactively comprehended as a *moment* of its own internal formation and self-identification. This formation of what we could call the 'truth of the 'truth of truth (dialectical becoming)'' is, as I will try to show, articulated in the central identification of speculative thinking in the *Logic*:

*Speculative thinking* (spekulative Denken) consists solely in the fact that thinking holds fast (*festhält*) contradiction, and in it, its own self, but does not allow itself to be dominated (*beherrschen*) by it as in ordinary thinking (*Vorstellen*), where its determinations are resolved by contradiction only into other determinations or nothing (*auflösen läßt*).<sup>365</sup>

Speculative thinking is its own self-presentation (*Darstellung*), in which its internal dynamic (the contradiction of itself in itself) is held fast in such a manner that the conceptual form it takes – its thinking – does not fall into the ambiguity of experience as the presentation of the mere representation (*Vorstellen*) of speculative identity in the unfolded moments of its self-reflected development.<sup>366</sup> The dialectical movement of experience, which itself is raised into the dialectical movement of the 'speculative' as the inner sense of positive reason, does not reflect in form and content the speculative thinking that grasps in itself the whole of its structure as its own since dialectical movement is the structure of the content of the speculative itself reflected in a dialectical dynamic that cannot comprehend the whole (but

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<sup>365</sup> SL, 440-1; 6: 76 (translation slightly modified). This statement appears initially in the first remark of the transition from determinate being to being-for-self: 'In this being which is thus the *ideality* of the distinct moments, the contradiction has not vanished abstractly, but is resolved and reconciled, and the thought are not only complete, but they are also *brought together*. In this detailed example, there is revealed the specific nature of speculative thinking, which consists solely in grasping the opposed moments in their unity.' Ibid. 152; 6: 168. Absent in this 'detailed example' is of course the exposition of speculative thinking as its own self-grasping in the contradiction.

<sup>366</sup> The reader will recall that the identity of the initial form of phenomenological reflection is the 'natural assumption (*Vorstellung*).' The articulation of speculative thinking still consists at a certain level – a level that shall be disclosed in this chapter – of its anterior phenomenological move.

through it the whole is apprehended).<sup>367</sup> Accordingly, the following movement is revealed: the structure of *aufheben* as the dialectical movement of the speculative is itself to be subjected to its own internal supersession as the very movement of the philosophical subject that grasps itself as the speculative, that is to say, as the movement of speculative thinking. *What 'holding fast' means, to posit in advance our central claim, is the self-supersession (Sichaufheben) – or the 'spiritual self-movement (geistige Selbstbewegung)' – of aufheben. It is the self-comprehended truth that reflects from within itself the proper form of its self-expression. With this self-supersession, which is initially posited as the movement of the speculative itself, the dialectical process of aufheben is speculatively suspended thus retroactively grasping the movement of aufheben as immanently formed in speculative thinking.*

### 3.2 The Word 'Speculation'

As was noted in the first chapter, Hegel's project of expressing the 'speculative' and articulating 'speculation' (under the auspices of Schelling's philosophy of the absolute) is abstractly stated in the 1801 *Differenzschrift*: the task of philosophy is to *supersede the diremption and division of subject and object* into the philosophical system of the identity of speculation that articulates its unity. As we have seen in the last chapter, this 'system' that attempts to articulate the speculative identity of the historical substance of reason itself requires a philosophical exposition and preparation of the distinct modes of philosophical consciousness (in the form of a phenomenology), since the basis on which the articulation of

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<sup>367</sup> The relation between the 'speculative', 'speculative thinking' and 'dialectical movement' is explored in subsection 3.6.

the unity of speculative identity is itself permeated by the philosophical subject that can grasp that identity – and grasp it *speculatively*.<sup>368</sup>

The *Phenomenology* discloses the structure of philosophical experience as the comprehension of the miscomprehension of the identity of subject and object in the forms of its appearance. This is the ‘truth’ of experience; it is an ‘ambiguous (*Zweideutigkeit*)’ truth in so far as the dialectical movement of subject and object are doubled in the movement itself: experience is the comprehension of the *asymmetrical* relation between the thought of the identity of ‘subject and object’ in the mode of consciousness and the thinking of that thought (as its defamiliarization) in its objective truth. The subject of experience does not emerge as a ‘corrective’ of the historical forms of philosophical consciousness; rather, it exhibits, through the immanent dialectical critique of those forms, the essence of experience as such – experience is the structure of ambiguous truth.<sup>369</sup> In the preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel puts this another way: experience articulates the appearance of ‘the *True* in its *true shape* (*des Wahren, das in der Gestalt des Wahren*)’<sup>370</sup>; it does not grasp that truth in its *own* movement as the truth itself, which is to say, as the truth of truth. The philosophical comprehension of the ‘true truth (*wahre Wahrheit*)’<sup>371</sup> – which, as we shall see, amounts to the self-comprehension of truth – has its most accomplished articulation in the structure of

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<sup>368</sup> Recall the closing statement of Hegel’s *Faith and Knowledge*: ‘Good Friday must be speculatively re-established in the whole truth (*ganzen Wahrheit*) and harshness of its Godforsakenness.’ FK, 191; 2: 432.

<sup>369</sup> Žižek has recently referred to this logic as the ‘weird certainty’ of Hegel’s dialectical process: ‘If there is a “semantic choice” that underlies Hegel’s thought, it is not the desperate wager that, retroactively, one will be able to tell a consistent, all-encompassing and meaningful story in which every detail will be allotted its proper place, but, on the contrary, the weird certainty (comparable to the psychoanalyst’s certainty that the repressed will always return, that a symptom will always spoil every figure of harmony) that, with every figure of consciousness or form of life, things will always somehow “go wrong,” that each position will generate an excess which will augur its self-destruction.’ Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, p.207.

<sup>370</sup> PS, §38; 3: 40.

<sup>371</sup> This polyptotic expression is actually used by Hegel in his early Jena writings: FK, 65; 2: 300. The form of the polyptoton, as we shall see, will be employed more systematically in the *Logic*.

speculative thinking, which is to say, in the structure of the speculative identity that thinks itself, namely the self-identity of *spirit in the form of its logical movement*.

The comprehension of this identity requires a comprehension of the movement of speculation. Throughout Hegel's Jena development, the *word* speculation – and, as was demonstrated in the last chapter, it is not without some justification to stress its initial lexical identification – is immediately presupposed as the term that simply *names* the project of speculative philosophy.<sup>372</sup> More precisely, 'speculation' is always already the name given to the result of the philosophical project that forms the undifferentiated presupposition of the history of philosophy as a whole. Hegel does not reconstruct the posited aim of philosophy (the truth of speculative identity – of the identity of 'thought' and 'being') since this simply *is* the speculative element of philosophy itself. What Hegel does – and I have already tried to show this in some detail in the last chapter – is first *turn* philosophical thoughts (*Gedanken*)

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<sup>372</sup> The figure of Adam as the archetypical figure of self-arrogated nomenclature is invoked throughout Hegel's *oeuvre*, from its earliest philosophical forays to its most mature articulations. The Adamic figure operates pre-critically within the context of theoretical aggregation: Adam names all things around him in such a manner that each thing is idealized into a hypostatized and ossified word that eradicates the particularity of each intuition but rises Adam's own understanding to the level of immediate external *certainly* epitomized in the abstract universality of the word-concept ('The concept was the other of its content, an abstract universal which negated the content, or preserved it in fact while negating it in the *word*; it was negated in its turn in yet other words, without preserving for itself this preservation of the content in its very negation.' Althusser, *The Spectre of Hegel*, p.81). The 'Adamic consciousness', if you will, is by extension a thoroughly modern consciousness, or at least, is a consciousness that has been sustained, according to Hegel, throughout the history of philosophy and brought to the point of its extreme accomplishment in modern philosophy (the most emblematic figure who reflects the Adamic consciousness is Reinhold). It is a consciousness that, by way of its understanding, generates the empty universality of its own claim to truth in the form of a single word ('the thought of the Understanding itself manifests its own insufficiency. For in pursuing its ideal of Identity, it finally leads to a universal tautology which is empty in meaning or of content, and its "discourse" in the end reduces to the single word: "Being" or "One," and so on.' Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr., Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969, p.197). For the employment of Adam, see D, 85; 2: 15; PP, 157; 4: 52; Enc. II, 13; 9: 23 (the same point is repeated in Enc. III, 180; 230; Hegel's *Jenenser Realphilosophie*, quoted in Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen, Albany: State University of New York, 1997, p.32; and in a certain sense, Enc. I, 44-5; 8: 88-9). It is also worth adding that this process of naming is itself grasped in terms of an internal moment of the process of 'thinking' in Hegel's philosophy; this reaches its fullest and clearest expression in the third sub-section of the first section of Hegel's philosophical exposition of 'Spirit' in the third part of the system: 'Given the name lion, we need neither the actual vision of the animal, nor its image even: the name alone, if we *understand* (*verstehen*) it, is the unimagined simple representation. We *think* in names (*Es ist in Namen, daß wir denken*).' Enc. III, 220; 10: 278.

against their own pre-given assumption – or more precisely, *turn* the immediate experience of philosophical knowledge that arrogates to itself its own truth *against itself*. This is achieved by tarrying with the lexicon that takes itself as unquestionably and inviolably philosophical.<sup>373</sup>

The term ‘speculation’ accordingly does not escape the *subjection of itself to its own thought*. Unlike terms such as ‘knowledge’, ‘subject’ and ‘object’, however, ‘speculation’ is initially employed by Hegel as a term that is not immediately subjected to the phenomenological critique of its appearance. Why? Because the course of the history of philosophy has demonstrated that it is a term that expresses a metaphysical dogmatism that must be arrested at the level of the investigation of the conditions of its possibility if its objective meaning is to be properly delimited. Recall that transcendental critique operates as the attempt to provide the adequate foundation on which the system of ‘pure speculative reason’ is to be based.<sup>374</sup> According to transcendental philosophy, critique discloses the limits and nature, hence legitimacy, of a priori synthetic judgments by grasping first the dogmatic claims of metaphysics – of speculative philosophy itself, according to Kant – in the following manner: dogmatic asseverations that arrogate to themselves the element of truth as such. Kant’s own employment of ‘speculation’ operates as an extension of the contradistinction between classical, scholastic philosophy and the new theoretical orientation of modern epistemology, a formal opposition exemplified in the work of Francis Bacon and René Descartes (note that the epigraph appended to the second edition of Kant’s *First*

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<sup>373</sup> Hegel’s philosophy can be mobilized in this context in direct contradistinction to Fichte’s annihilation of the ‘fruitless dispute’ over words: ‘We have no desire, however, to engage in a fruitless dispute over a word; and this is why we have long ceased to lay any claim to the name ‘philosophy’ and have given the name [*wissenschaftslehre*], of ‘the of scientific knowledge,’ to the science that actually had to carry out the task.’ Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*, p.9.

<sup>374</sup> Kant, CPR, Bxxii.

*Critique* consists of a passage from Bacon's *The Great Instauration* reflecting on the general intention of the work as a specifically *finite* discourse '[prescribing] only the end of infinite errors').<sup>375</sup>

The word 'speculation' in the context of the epistemological tradition stands for the mode of thinking that does not have at its basis the rigorous legitimation of empirical and experimental calculation of the knowable. The distinction between 'speculation' and 'science' – the general opposition activating modern epistemology – perhaps has its clearest preliminary expression in the works of Bacon, whose staunch anti-Aristotelianism (the presiding dogma of English scholasticism and, by extension, theoretical pedagogy) cleared the space in which to usher in the attempt to reform natural philosophy (what Bacon himself calls 'the physical sciences'). Bacon's 1605 work *The Advancement of Learning* stages a sustained and explicit presentation of the difference between the two sides of philosophy: 'fruitless speculation', is nothing but the putrefaction and dissolution of 'good and sound knowledge...into a number of subtile, idle, unwholesome, and (as I may term them) vermiculate questions.'<sup>376</sup> The reform of natural philosophy raises itself into a declaration of

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<sup>375</sup> It is worth noting here that Bacon constitutes the first 'moment' – that is, the preliminary articulation – of 'modern philosophy' according to Hegel in his lecture courses on the history of philosophy. In respect of this, the distinction and indeed dichotomy between 'speculation' and 'scientific knowledge' as the general dynamic of modern thought is the preliminary supposition of our research into Hegel's speculative philosophy. As we shall see, for Hegel, the two terms actually express one and the same thing, but in a higher unity of thinking. For Hegel's exposition of the content of Bacon's thought apropos its place in the development of philosophy, see LHP (III), 177-188. See also, Ludwig Feuerbach, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974 (especially section dedicated to 'Leibniz'). For a useful exposition of this work, see Marx W. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp.89-109.

<sup>376</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Major Works*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p.140. Bacon's polemicizing continues: 'This kind of degenerate learning did chiefly reign amongst the schoolmen; who having sharp and strong wits, and abundance of leisure, and small variety of reading; but their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors (chiefly Aristotle their dictator) as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges; and knowing little history, either of nature or time; did out of no great quantity of matter, and infinite agitation of wit, spin out unto us those laborious webs of learning which are extant in their books...if [this learning] work upon itself, as the spider worketh his web, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit.' Ibid.



‘first philosophy’: in order to grasp the depths of any science a *prima philosophia* (what Bacon calls ‘Primitive’ or ‘Summary Philosophy’), the philosophical articulation of primary and universal principles of all modes of knowing, ought to be established.<sup>377</sup> Notwithstanding its differentiation from Aristotelian philosophy, Bacon’s pursuit of the refinement of natural philosophy is constitutive of a refinement of ‘first philosophy’ as such, which in turn, is mobilized by cutting away speculation in its codified and dogmatic form. It is important to note that Bacon does not want to preclude metaphysics. Rather, he attempts to re-orientate it in such a fashion that it arrives at its principles by way of the empirical and observable experiences (and experiments) of thought (a project taken up by Kant in identical fashion at the level of the *spirit* of Bacon).<sup>378</sup>

‘Speculation’ is, in direct contradistinction to Bacon’s inaugural philosophical reform, identified in modern philosophy as specifically *theological* in orientation. It is, more precisely, theological in the explicitly Thomist sense, that is, as the thought of God himself (and not the thinking *about* God qua object).<sup>379</sup> In opposition to modern empirical and experimental philosophy – which, as we have already seen, has as its highest articulation the cultural apotheosis of subjective finitude according to Hegel – the scholastic tradition of articulating God’s *speculatio* dogmatically takes as its own absolute pre-given the *infinitude* of divine intelligence and reason. In reducing its own thinking to a mere determination of infinite thought, the expression ‘speculation’ in the scholastic context suggests the empty

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid. 189.

<sup>378</sup> In direct counter-distinction to the epistemological restriction of knowledge, the so-called ‘Cambridge Neo-Aristoteleanism’ attempted to reinvigorate the speculative aspect of thinking as such; see especially, Margaret Cavendish, *Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Cavendish’s philosophical work can perhaps best be described as a stalwart defence of the apriority of ‘speculation’ in relation to the methodological claims of modern epistemology (see especially *ibid.* 10-11 and 48-9).

<sup>379</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Questions on God*, trans. Brian Davies and Brian Leftow, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp.138-66.

formalism and universalism of a single word that cannot express from within its own limits its own truth claim. It is, rather, a theoretical knowledge posited as an 'end' that remains ultimately deferred. It constitutes, more properly put, a theoretical *horizon*.<sup>380</sup>

The limits of the self-identification of divine *speculatio* restores thinking, which identifies itself immediately in the element of speculative philosophy, to the limits of natural consciousness: pre-critically appropriating for oneself what is most immediately obvious, what is most familiar, without grasping the *content* of that familiarity. This self-arrogation of truth as pure revelation immediately present to ordinary thinking (indeed what furnishes ordinary thinking with its clearest constitutive function) functions as a pure tautology. In order to grasp the truth content of speculation in its determinacy as immediate appearance qua 'thought', Hegel's philosophy will need to grasp the word 'speculation' *speculatively*. And this speculative comprehension of speculation can unfold only within its own movement. Thus, the task of thinking speculation – which amounts to 'speculative thinking (*spekulative Denken*)' – determines for itself the grasping of the being of thought as a thought determined *against and from within itself* (the ordinary determination it initially occupies); it

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<sup>380</sup> This is exemplified in Duns Scotus' 'Of Metaphysics', which ends with the following definition of metaphysics: 'metaphysics is concerned with the highest causes as its goal, and ends (*finaliter*) with the theoretical knowledge (*speculatio*) of them.' Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings: A Selection*, trans. Allan Wolter, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, p.12. It is precisely this 'theoretical knowledge' that Hegel wants to grasp; it is not the goal of speculative thinking to simply posit it as an 'end'; interestingly though, such a mode of thought is grasped only at the end of philosophy according to Scotus – a move Hegel insists on. For Hegel however, it is the form of speculative thinking qua philosophical science that distinguishes itself from Scotus' notion that theology itself is the highest mode of thinking: 'pure truths are known in the Eternal Light as in a remotely known object. For the Uncreated Light (*lux increata*) is the first source of speculative things (*entium speculabilium*) and the ultimate end of practical things. The first speculative and practical principles, then, are derived from it. Hence, the knowledge of speculative and practical things by means of principles derived from Eternal Light, where the latter is known, is more perfect and prior to knowledge derived from principles from the respective class of things as such, as has been pointed out in the question of the subject of theology (*subjecto theologiae*). Such knowledge (*cognitio*) is more eminent than any other. Now it is in this way that the knowledge of all things pertains to the theologian.' Ibid. 129.

is a task that immanently emerges from the idea of speculative thinking itself (and not through recourse to other modes of thinking).<sup>381</sup>

Speculative thinking is, therefore, the mode of thinking that grasps itself, its thought, and that thought in relation to its contradiction *within* the dynamic of its mediating contradiction. It, more importantly, *holds fast* to the particular moments of this threefold dynamic in the element of their inter-permeation and differentiation; it consists of a conceptual movement that suspends the movement of *aufheben* (thus of experience) since it will reveal itself as the comprehension of the truth *of* that movement *in* that movement. The 'suspension' of *aufheben* however does not comprise of a meta-experiential form of philosophical cognition that expresses the true preparation (the logical anteriority of its conditions of possibility) of the science of experience.<sup>382</sup> Put another way: Speculative thinking is not a *critique* of experiential *aufheben*. Rather, it is the mode of thinking that grasps the experience of dialectical experience in its truth through the immanent unfolding of the structure of its thought disclosed from within experience and into its expression. It is Hegel's *Logic* that presents the principle expression to speculative thinking in its *systematic* form.

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<sup>381</sup> It could be argued that Hegel's conception of speculation was, from his earliest writings in Bern, already affirming a defamiliarization of the word from its putative context, namely the dogmatic assumptions of scholasticism and its philosophical variations in Wolff and Baumgarten (as critiqued by Kant). In his 'The Positivity of the Christian Religion', Hegel draws a sharp distinction between the Judaic religious consciousness and that of Jesus – who emerges from within the 'ethical' substance of the Judaic 'state': 'Jesus was compelled for his own purposes to speak a great deal about himself, about his own personality. He was induced to do this because there was only one way in which his people were accessible. They were most heartily convinced that they had received from God himself their entire polity (*Verfassung*) and all their religious, political, and civil laws. This was their pride; this faith cut short all speculations (*Spekulationen*) of their own; it was restricted solely to the study of the sacred sources, and it confined virtue to a blind obedience to these authoritarian commands.' ETW, 75-6; 1: 113. Speculation is the immanent critique of positivity in so far it emerges from out of the extreme revelation of the limits of positivity (authoritarianism).

<sup>382</sup> This is, as I tried to show in the introduction, how 'suspension' functions in Houlgate's recent work on Hegel's *Logic*.

### 3.3 Hegel's *Logic*, or, the Task of Speculative Philosophy

The basic structure of the *Phenomenology* is reflected in the *ambiguity* (*Zweideutigkeit*) of the truth of philosophical experience (the disclosure of the appearance of the structure of the comprehension of miscomprehension of the identity of subject and object). The corollary to this ambiguity of the *Phenomenology* as a whole is that it essentially functions as the expression of the *incapacity* to reconstruct philosophical science as the science of the absolute in its full self-consciousness. Accordingly, the *Phenomenology* ends with the presentation of the ideal reflexive form of the subject of spirit as an ontological entity that does not comprehend itself in the moments of the becoming of its own truth and as the comprehension of itself as the inner sense and structure – the truth – of that becoming. It comprehends only its form of immanent miscomprehension of what it takes as ‘comprehension.’ Although the *Phenomenology* ends with the ontological articulation of spirit as self-identity (of itself qua process and result), this ontology emerges within the limits of the phenomenological analysis, which is to say, within the context of the science of the unfolding of absolute *knowing* (and not the actuality of absolute *knowledge*) and the ambiguity of its truth in experience. What cannot be established in the *Phenomenology* is the truth content of the philosophical identity of absolute knowledge: the inner thought of spirit itself as its own self-comprehension. Thus, what the *Phenomenology* fails (but it self-consciously avows to this failure) to internalize at the level of a ‘return-into-itself’ as the subject of truth is the *speculative suspension of ambiguity as a restless vacillation of dialectical processuality*. The system of philosophical science consists of the speculative presentation of the speculative thinking of spirit from out of its phenomenological impasse. The preliminary form of this speculative content takes shape in the first *self-consciously*

*reflected*, thus *non-ambiguous*, systematic *step* of the unfolding of the system in its own element. The preliminary form of the speculative unfolding of speculative thinking is, accordingly, expressed in the *Science of Logic*.

The exposition of the movement of truth in its own shape, is a movement organized, as was noted in chapter 2, in '*Logic or speculative philosophy*.' Logic, in the context of its relation to phenomenological science, is synonymous with speculative philosophy. This basic presentation of the idea of logic qua speculative philosophy already mobilizes a defamiliarization of what is normally understood by 'logic', namely the abstract, axiomatic methodology of pure thinking, which is to say, a thinking externally posited from the object in which and through which it thinks. The movement organizing speculative philosophy is that of the movement of the unity disclosed at the end of the *Phenomenology*, namely the movement of the ontological unity of 'being and knowing' articulated in the simple oneness of knowing. As expressing the unfolding of a *movement* (of truth in its own truth), speculative philosophy contains within itself a residual phenomenological element: the structure of dialectical unfolding. Accordingly, one can state that an initial comprehension of the appearance of speculative philosophy (so a phenomenological account of *Logic*) consists of an *Aufhebung* of the *Phenomenology*; or more precisely, that the *Logic* itself retroactively determines the truth content of the necessity of phenomenological science as the science of the appearance of spirit. The *Phenomenology* then is not abstractly annihilated as an essentially unnecessary preparatory work but rather reflects back to itself its own immanent dynamic of movement into the central *logical* sense of that movement, a sense that is conceptually and systematically *anterior* to the *Phenomenology* and yet, is revealed only from the standpoint of the dissolution of philosophical 'standpoints' in absolute knowing (the

resolution of the dialectic of consciousness). This conceptual and systematic anteriority is not required in order to render intelligible the phenomenological movement of experience as such. It is rather the logical movement that retrospectively determines the truth content of the *incapacity* of the work to actualize speculative philosophy at its *own* level. Put another way: the *Phenomenology* cannot raise itself to the level of the true philosophical *subject*. The appearance of spirit does not articulate the inner sense of the 'self' of spirit itself.

The composition of the *Logic* as the initial *self-expression* of spirit itself (the truth of the subject's true self-consciousness) is, accordingly, only *initially apprehended* as residually phenomenological. The comprehension of speculative philosophy cannot be reduced to a phenomenological account of the experience of philosophical consciousness in that it is an attempt to raise speculative philosophy itself into the element of its own expression. This self-expression of speculative philosophy is properly identified in a more condensed mode of theoretical presentation. The idea of 'the true in its true shape' is still bound too closely to the phenomenological presentation of spirit (since truth remains a 'shape'). Speculative philosophy however is orientated by the expression of truth in and as its own truth. In his lecture notes to his philosophy courses to university students – notes composed after the publication of the *Phenomenology* and during the composition of the *Logic* – Hegel states that 'Science does not *seek* truth but *is* in the truth and is the truth itself.'<sup>383</sup> This twofold structure of science as at once 'in' the truth and 'is' the truth itself (ontologically identical to truth) is reflected in the idea of the 'true truth.' The recourse to *Faith and Knowledge* in the context of the comprehension of the transition from phenomenological science to the science of speculative philosophy as the self-actualization of its autonomy qua absolute truth is of interest since the 1802 essay functions as an unconsciously articulated transition from the

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<sup>383</sup> PP, 77; 4: 166.

immanent dialectical critique of the appearance of dominant modes of philosophical methodology (exposed in the *Differenzschrift* and in part in *Faith and Knowledge* itself) to the postulation of the internal aim of speculative philosophy as the expression of the truth of speculation in its own truth: the expression of, as Hegel puts it, the 'speculative Good Friday' in all its immanent horror.<sup>384</sup> What appears as 'true truth' is, I believe, not simply reducible to a phenomenological expression of a shape of 'truth' (the 'true' shape) since this phenomenological reduction does not reflect the central orientation of the essay as a whole, which is to say, its internal speculative commitments. Accordingly, the expression of 'true truth' registers a mode of expression that is no longer encapsulated within the order of phenomenological *aufheben* (the *Aufhebung* of experience) since it does not comprehend itself within the order of appearance but rather its own self-reflected element (of the truth of itself as itself).

At stake in the *Logic* is, accordingly, the philosophical presentation of *thinking* itself as the central philosophical activity of the *concept* (*Begriff*). Thinking however is not given in any abstract sense – as a 'mere form' of cognition that abstracts from all content in order to establish its 'empty' form – but rather will unfold dialectically from out of its own self. It is the *content* of thinking itself – and what is putatively posited as 'thinking' as the presupposed object of logical science – that is the central object of the *Logic*.<sup>385</sup> The basic theoretical intention of the *Logic* is, consequently, to dissolve the presupposed opposition constitutive of the standard notion of logic, namely the opposition between the form of logical cognition and 'real truth (*reale Wahrheit*)' or 'genuine knowledge (*wahrhafter Erkenntnis*)', reducing logic

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<sup>384</sup> The reader will recall that 'speculative' in this context is positioned in contra-distinction to the 'historical' (*historisch*) at the end of the essay.

<sup>385</sup> SL, 43; 5: 36.

to a mere 'pathway [*Weg*].'<sup>386</sup> This dissolution however is not to take place through a phenomenological presentation of the unfolding of the path, but rather within the element of the truth of dissolution itself. Accordingly, the *Logic* consists of the preliminary expression of the truth of truth (of the becoming of truth) in its truth. This twofold objective of the *Logic* – (1) the expression of the truth of truth and (2) the expression of that truth *in* its truth – will be taken up more concretely in the identity of speculative thinking. But this identity itself unfolds within the development of logical science.

The task of speculative philosophy then consists of an orientation to the reconstruction of truth in which the process of truth itself is unfolded speculatively from within its own essence (and not appearance) and as the essential *aufheben* of itself in its ontological and conceptual form. This speculative unfolding of speculative thinking will retroactively complicate the structure of *aufheben* as the immanent movement of experience reflected in the *Phenomenology*. In order to prepare the basis for the philosophical exposition of 'speculative thinking' and its relation to the structure of *aufheben* as the immanent structure of the phenomenological movement of experience, I would like to develop three interconnected points of transition: first, I will provide a condensed exposition of the concept as the operator of speculative philosophy and its distinction from the wider philosophical problem of post-critical metaphysics; second, I will provide an exposition of the preliminary movement of speculative thinking as presented in the preface of the *Phenomenology* through the exposition of the 'speculative proposition' (an exposition that yields an initial distinction between dialectics, the 'speculative' and speculative thinking). And third, the internal sense of the philosophical subject as the ipseity of the unity of philosophical comprehension and the

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid.



concept – *der Begreifen* and *Begriff* – will be examined as it is this subject that articulates itself in the structure of speculative thinking.

### 3.4 Speculative Philosophy and Metaphysics: The Concept

One of the first things the reader will notice when tackling the *Logic* is the historical, conceptual and methodological expansion of Hegel's philosophical project. Because of the necessity of its immanence to the historical present, the *Phenomenology* remains caught in a specific moment in the development of philosophy: it is restricted to the discourse of the consummation of *German* philosophy. It is, in a sense, geopolitically spatialized by its attempt to raise to the highest level of philosophical self-consciousness, the *incapacity* of German philosophy to provide an adequate system of pure reason. The negativity of this project, as I showed in the second chapter and the excursus is, unlike Kant's early self-understanding of the general orientation of transcendental philosophy, one that does not precede metaphysical science, but rather attempts to articulate the phenomenological core of metaphysics itself.<sup>387</sup> In this sense, metaphysics always already articulates the negative problematic of its own self-legitimation. Critique, in its phenomenological reconfiguration, is no longer 'negative' in the sense that it wishes to ground the possibilities of metaphysics as a particular science orientated by the attempt to comprehend the content of objects in themselves (thus cleaving a gap between transcendental science of the *formal* knowledge of the *concepts* of objects as a priori principles and metaphysical science as the knowledge of *content*). Rather, phenomenology is the expression of the truth of the ambiguity of the

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<sup>387</sup> In a letter from 1770 to J. H. Lambert, Kant wrote of the need for a 'quite special, though purely negative science.' Cited in Eckart Förster's introduction to Kant, *Opus Postumum*, p.xxix.

dialectics of form and content; it articulates, in its most accomplished form, the immanent diremption of philosophical science.

What Hegel wants to give sense to is the a priori diremption of *metaphysics*. This internal schism makes its phenomenological appearance in the ethical substance of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe, that is, within the dialectical progress of the Enlightenment (dialectical in that it reaches its most developed point in its regression: the Terror). Significantly, the only point in which Hegel refers to 'metaphysics' in his *Phenomenology* is precisely the end of the 'truth of Enlightenment' and its transition into the infamous section on the identity of 'absolute freedom' and 'terror.'<sup>388</sup> In this context, the passage of the Enlightenment as a cultural project simply results in the direct division of itself into two separated forms: the absolute 'beyond' of 'absolute pure being' in 'pure thought' (beyond self-conscious comprehension) and the absolutization of 'pure matter' or *nature* as the reversed (thus identical) 'other' to pure being qua thought (the 'mind-matter' opposition). The miscomprehension of the identity of these two 'starting points' articulating the two 'sides' of the truth of the Enlightenment (not comprehended as one and the same point) results in the positing of metaphysics as the basic *apprehension* of what is not comprehended in self-consciousness. Comprehension of their unity is comprehension of what is posited in immediate form as the concept of (Cartesian) dualism.<sup>389</sup> This means a movement that animates itself from out of the basic limit of metaphysics as the mere positing of the concept.

Hegel picks up on this directly in the opening passages of the first preface of the *Logic*, noting that the age no longer recognizes the necessity of metaphysics. It has, accordingly, been 'extirpated' root and branch. That said, Hegel's philosophy does not

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<sup>388</sup> PS, §580-2; 3: 429-32.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid. §578; 3: 427.

consist of a *restoration* of metaphysics, from out of its historical diremption in a post-revolutionary Europe and against its critical suspension in the Kantian philosophy.<sup>390</sup> Rather, he locates, as noted above, what would immediately appear as ‘metaphysics’ in the heart of this diremption. This philosophical move will require, as we are now within the context of the *Logic*, some more precise justification.<sup>391</sup>

If Hegel has a metaphysics, and *in some sense* he does, it consists of the self-comprehension and self-determination of the central and most distinctive speculative kernel of the truth of spirit qua absolute, namely that it brings itself to birth as a unity of its being

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<sup>390</sup> I believe Hegel’s philosophy adds depth to Adorno’s declaration that ‘[r]estoration is as futile in philosophy as it is anywhere else. Philosophy has to protect itself from the chatter of culture and the abracadabra of worldviews.’ *Critical Models*, p.6. (Of course, for Adorno, Hegel’s philosophy ends with a restorative claim.) Compare this with Hegel’s remark on the inert tripartite schema of thesis-antithesis-synthesis found in the Kantian philosophy: ‘once familiar (*bekannt*), the repetition of it becomes as insufferable as the repetition of a conjuring trick already seen through.’ PS, §51; 3: 50. (According, Karl Popper completely ignores the crucial differentiation between the Kantian schema and the dialectical logic of *aufheben*; see *The Open Society and its Enemies, Volume II – The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, p.340n15. This ‘triadic’ conception of the structure of movement in Hegel’s thought is attributable to Henrich Moritz Chalybäus; see Allen Wood, *Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp.3-4.) For a recent presentation of the metaphysical shape of Hegel’s philosophy, especially the *Logic*, as both a ‘Metaphysikkritik und Restitution der Metaphysik,’ see Iris Harnischmacher, *Der metaphysische Gehalt der Hegelschen Logik*, Kassel: Frommann-Holzboog, 2001. In the Anglo-American context, see Ivan Soll, *An Introduction to Hegel’s Metaphysics*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1969. For a recent collection of essays on metaphysics and its critique in Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy, see Myriam Gerhard, Annette Sell und Lu de Vos, *Metaphysik und Metaphysikkritik in der Klassischen Deutschen Philosophie, Hegel-Studien Beiheft 57*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2012.

<sup>391</sup> The sense of this diremption of metaphysics, although not exposed at the level of its connection to the Hegelian concept of diremption, is taken up, in a sense, by Michael Theunissen in his study on the unity of critique and presentation (*Darstellung*) at the heart of Hegel’s conception of metaphysics; *Sein und Schein. Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978. In a similar sense, Karin de Boer has tried, more recently, to exploit the internal division of Hegel’s ‘speculative science,’ by focusing on ‘two different strands, namely a tragic and a dialectical strand.’ *The Sway of the Negative*, p.2. The philosophical condition of such an interpretation however is located more precisely in a distinctively Derridean position (for Boer, via William Desmond – see *ibid.* 209n3), thus relaunching the reading of Hegel on grounds of a transcendental treatment. Such a position, like its philosophical ‘source,’ overlooks what I understand to be the truly undeveloped core of Hegel’s thought, namely its dialectical and speculative dimensions. This means something quite specific in relation to our methodological orientation: we do not try to develop a ‘quasi-transcendental’ dialectic of dialectics and its constitutive ‘other’ – a repressed, marginalized and ‘un-supersedable’ negative – but rather, we stand at what Hegel himself declares to be the centre of his thinking, its speculative charge as self-comprehension of the absolute through the negation of the dialectics of negative reason. Contra Derrida, a Hegelian position that aims to defend the indefensible in Hegel must affirm the speculative structure of the ‘negation of negation.’ Such a defence however does not need to end with a purely Hegelian philosophical position. As I try to show through this thesis, such a defence is the philosophical precondition for bringing into focus the dialectical disunity of dialectics and speculation, a disunity that, I believe, fully expresses the adoption of Hegel ‘within the reach of [his] strength.’ SL, 581; 6: 250.

and its self-comprehension.<sup>392</sup> This, however, immediately implies that Hegel cannot have a metaphysics in the sense most commonly deployed and understood in the German philosophies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which, as I noted above, is grasped as the science of the content of objects on the basis of the a priori presumed unity of being and thought. Rather, ‘metaphysics’ is transformed in the new speculative exposition of the genesis of the *concept* (*Begriff*) as the operator of post-Kantian idealism and, more precisely, the philosophical impasse it poses. This means that Hegel cannot ‘have’ a metaphysics in either the pre-Kantian or in the sense of its critical suspension by transcendental philosophy.<sup>393</sup>

The dissolution of metaphysics from its distinctively post-Kantian context is, as has already been noted, a constitutive feature of the *Logic* and its attempt to reconstruct truth through the speculative suspension of its phenomenological basis (the ambiguity of the truth of experience as an ambiguous truth in and for itself). This reconstruction of truth from within and from out of itself is unfolded in three inter-related ‘doctrines’: being, essence and concept.

The ‘doctrine of being’ consists of a dialectical exposition of the non-dialectical determination of the general categories that punctuate the familiar understanding of being. Importantly, this does not mean that the first doctrine is the ‘simplest.’ Rather, it articulates

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<sup>392</sup> Recall that, according to Hegel, his ‘speculative logic’ consists of the preservation of the historical development and philosophical core of metaphysics. *Enc. I*, 33; 8: 53.

<sup>393</sup> A great deal of recent Anglo-American Hegel scholarship has revolved around the issue of whether Hegel is either a metaphysician or not. The distinctive feature of this orientation is its presupposition: ‘metaphysics’ is seen as a determinate, isolatable field of inquiry that can be posed in relation to ‘epistemology’ or ‘language.’ This rather peculiar division of philosophy is reflected in the sub-division of the academic discipline of philosophy as one caught up in relation only to itself. In a way that tries to situate itself in this ‘debate,’ Brady Bowman has recently posited the identification of Hegel’s metaphysics as a ‘speculative metaphysics’ consisting in, crucially, a revisionary core. Brady Bowman, *Hegel and the Metaphysics of Absolute Negativity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p.7. Bowman’s reduction of Hegel’s speculative thought to a process of the critique of the *categories* of traditional ontology is a symptom of his positioning within the Anglo-American debate, centred on Hegel’s relation to Kant. For Bowman, Hegel offers us, more precisely, a ‘critical metaphysics’ that never ‘[oversteps] the limits set down by Kant’ (*ibid.* 14).

in its own complexity a distinctive 'movement' of being, namely the movement of its incapacity to sufficiently move from out of its *indeterminacy*. This is why the first doctrine provides us with a multitude of expressions that try to grasp being in itself and in its distinctive forms and, more importantly, consists of the transition from 'quality' (and its abstract moments – being, determinate being and being-for-self) to the more definite particularities of 'quantity' (quantity, quantum, the specificity of mass). The inertia of 'quality' can only properly proliferate empty universals of movement; for example, the section on 'becoming' at the very beginning of the work consists of a multiplication a number of different forms of movement ('transition,' 'passage,' 'vanishing,' etc.). The differences however are not comprehended in their interconnection since what has not been developed is the dynamic of relation as the distinctive status of being's movement. This is also why, I believe, Hegel ends the first chapter of the doctrine of being with a wholly hypostatized presentation of the expression *aufheben*. It is the most accomplished historical, ontological and conceptual articulation of movement at its most general *and* particular level, but it can only be posited thus in its un-dynamic, calcified form at the end of a chapter that self-consciously comprehends the limits of its own systematic place in the development of speculative logic.

The immanent relation of determinations is developed in the doctrine of essence. Here, the categories presented in the first doctrine are developed and complicated, which is to say, are enriched in content *at the level of their relation*. The moments of being are developed into the moments of essence that were disclosed in the dialectical unfolding of being in its immediacy: 'appearance,' 'reflection,' 'ground,' and 'actuality.' The result of the dialectical analysis of being as it categorially unfolds itself from out of itself yields the

positing of its truth in its reflected form. This is why the doctrine of essence begins with the single sentence that the truth of being is essence. The ‘dialectical development’ of the *Logic* is a deepening of the indeterminacy of the initial postulation, namely that being simply *is*, without determination.

The philosophical presentation of the concept, on the side of its systematic place as the ‘doctrine of the concept’, constitutes the final part of the unfolding of the absolute idea in the *Logic*. Comprehended in the direction of its philosophical representation, the concept appears as the final point of the philosophical development. ‘Genesis’ is understood, accordingly, in relation to the topological restriction of the third doctrine of the *Logic*; that is to say, it is not comprehended as self-parturition, as its self-creation and, more importantly, the determination of its being and essence. (It is important to note that ‘genesis’ appears *only* in the doctrine of the concept as a term expression the content of the movement of being and its dialectical relation to the philosophical presentation.<sup>394</sup>) It is only once the concept reaches its self-comprehension qua ‘pregnant with content’ does the strictly *ontological* import of a ‘genetic exposition’ make proper sense.<sup>395</sup> It makes ‘proper sense’ in so far as with the concept, the speculative core of the *Logic* is comprehended as a *whole*. The ‘whole’ is registered, in *form and content*, in the relation between concept – *Begriff* – and conceptual activity – *Begreifen*.<sup>396</sup> The concept is ontologically identical to its mode of grasping; grasping is phenomenologically identical to the form of the concept. This identity articulates a certain undifferentiated status between concept and comprehension as a result of the dissolution of their relation in the movement of their *self-relation*.

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<sup>394</sup> The is a striking omission of ‘genesis’ as a description of the mode of movement of both the concept and its philosophical presentation (its own presentation) in the first part of the (1830) *Encyclopaedia*.

<sup>395</sup> SL, 577; 6: 245.

<sup>396</sup> The reader will recall Hegel’s notion of ‘*begreifende Denken*’ in his preface to the *Phenomenology*; PS, §59; 3: 56.

This self-relation of the concept at the point of its genetic self-exposition is based on the dissolution of the unity of being and essence as interrelated and retroactively comprehended moments of each other. More precisely, the course of the doctrine of essence shows in what sense 'relation' raised to the level of 'absolute relation', as a category of essence, cannot raise itself to the adequate level of the self-formation of the concept. This does not, however, mean that the concept manifests itself without relation. On the contrary, it is the concept's self-production of the unity of being and essence that discloses their substantial relation. Genesis is, accordingly, the mode of being that is prior to the creation of its externalized moments but is revealed only in those moments (as appearances). It is in this sense that we can have a more refined understanding of the claim that the exposition of the truth of being consists of the 'presentation of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation.' Genesis is not the *Grundsatz* of any ontological exposition of creation; rather, it is its paradoxical end. It is this ontological status of genesis that renders intelligible the totalizing status of the concept (as the totality of the moments that it is). Hegel's *Logic* is, from out of the reconstruction of ontology and metaphysics in a transformed notion of logic, more precisely understood as a speculative ontology of the absolute idea. Speculative philosophy is the articulation of the unity of the actualized result in and through the movements of its phenomenological, ontological and categorial developments. Thus, as the articulation of the whole qua absolute self-parturition, the concept is, in a sense, the reflected philosophical expression of the unity of the *Phenomenology* and *Logic* immanent to the consummation of the latter as *spiritual principle* of the philosophical system. We shall see how this is composed at the level of the structure of the *encyclopaedia* latter in this chapter.

For now, it suffices to come to an understanding of this unity of Hegel's two major philosophical works.

The unity of *Phenomenology* and *Logic* has been a subterranean philosophical issue in Hegel scholarship, unfolding slowly but steadily over the course of the twentieth century. There are principally two strong identifications of this unity: Hegel's philosophy is understood either as a *phenomenological ontology* – the science of the appearance of the development of being (from its indeterminacy to absolute idea) – or an *ontological phenomenology* (the substantial condition grounding appearances).<sup>397</sup> In the former, Hegel's *Logic* is comprehended as an extension of phenomenological science, which is to say, on the dynamics of the permeation of the appearance of modes of comprehending miscomprehended forms of the absolute at the side of its ontological status. What 'appears' in the *Logic* presupposes its appearance to a philosophical consciousness that is epistemologically aware of its own ontological presuppositions. That is to say, phenomenological ontology articulates itself in relation to the ontological status of appearance as such. In the unity composed as ontological phenomenology, phenomenological science is a result of the self-comprehended modality of the concept as the fundamental *being of beings*. Accordingly, Hegel's *Logic* is grasped as 'originary' science, from the basis of which phenomenological movement is rendered intelligible.<sup>398</sup>

The problem in these two ways of thinking the relation between Hegel's great two works is the direction of their intelligibility: in the first case – phenomenological ontology –

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<sup>397</sup> For the most accomplished exposition of phenomenological ontology, see Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, pp.185-203 (especially); and for ontological phenomenology, see Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology*, pp.228-49 (especially).

<sup>398</sup> Marcuse's study is shot through with this basic premise of Heideggerian 'fundamental ontology.' The crucial distinction however is that the 'being of beings' has its own 'way toward being,' namely itself qua 'motility.' It is perhaps worth noting that Marcuse's study is absolutely contemporaneous with Heidegger's seminar course on Hegel's *Phenomenology*, a course that ends with Hegel's philosophy as an articulation of fundamental ontology.



the *Phenomenology* remains an undisturbed structural form that renders meaningful the 'dynamics' of the *Logic*. Thus, it functions in some sense as a transcendental philosophical frame that determines the legitimacy of the cognition of a priori concepts of the objects disclosed in the *Logic*. In the case of ontological phenomenology, the direction is inverted giving way to a transcendental ontology of experience, thus rendering absurd and wholly tautological the dialectical movement of its ambiguity as unfolded in the *Phenomenology* (and 'despair' becomes comic). What these two 'directions' of interpretation cannot properly give an account of is the sense of the speculative from out of the unity of phenomenological science and logical science. In some sense, 'speculation' is configured as a kind of 'result' that is formed as an added consequence of the direction of interpretation: in the case of its 'retrieval' in phenomenological ontology, the speculative remains caught in its distinctively dialectical movement, thus leaving the positive reason of the speculative as the suspension of dialectics untouched; in the case of an ontological phenomenology, the mode of being of speculation is rearticulated as the mode of being of *historicity* and raised into the principle of the movement of being as such, thus stripping the speculative of its distinctive transition from its dialectical articulation into the retroactive self-movement of speculative comprehension of dialectics as a constitutive moment of its genesis.

What we have no sense of is the development of speculative philosophy from within its formation in the unity of phenomenological and logical science. This is surprising in that the significance of speculation emerges, within this textual context, in the transition from *Phenomenology* to *Logic* via the structure of the movement of the 'speculative proposition.'

### 3.5 The Expression of the Speculative Proposition

According to Hegel, one of the great paradoxes of modern philosophy is its incapacity to form the *expression* of speculative truth in philosophical presentation (this distinction between speculative truth and speculative presentation is a recoded distinction of the division of principle and system expounded in the *Differenzschrift*).<sup>399</sup> The paradox of philosophy in Hegel's time, as I have tried to show in the previous chapters, is its incapacity to express itself *philosophically*, which is to say, in the expression of 'the true shape of truth.' A paradoxically reflected philosophy ends, at the level of its formal expression, with deflated propositions in the form of 'simple judgements', that is, judgements that posit in advance what they *ought to mean*. The nature of these judgements are identified in the context of the conceptual distinction cleared between external-positive reflection and immanent dialectical reflection. In the former mode of reflection, the judgement takes the parts of the proposition or judgement as immediately identical-to-themselves; it thus impatiently confuses the immediacy of the apprehended 'moment' as the comprehended whole (expressed in the proposition). External reflection then fails to examine the immanent unfolding of the moments themselves, thus failing to grasp the immanence of the contradiction that constitutes its reflection.<sup>400</sup> It is for this reason that Hegel's philosophical project insists on beginning with an immanent reflection on the philosophical propositions (regardless of how crude) that structure the history of the development of philosophy and its incapacity to unify its truth claims with its own form of expression. The most accomplished form of speculative

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<sup>399</sup> 'It is the form of simple judgement (*einfachen Urteils*), when it is used to express speculative results (*spekulativer Resultate*), which is very often responsible for the paradoxical and bizarre light (*paradoxe und bizarre Licht*) in which much of recent philosophy (*neueren Philosophie*) appears to those who are not familiar with speculative thinking (*spekulative Denken*).' Ibid. 91; 5: 93.

<sup>400</sup> '[T]hough ordinary thinking everywhere has contradiction for its content, it does not become aware of it, but remains an external reflection.' Ibid. 441; 6: 77.

expression in Hegel's philosophy is a direct reflection of the *form* of simple judgements; I am thinking here of the speculative mode of expression that takes the form of the 'speculative proposition (*spekulativen Satz*).'<sup>401</sup>

The immediate dimensions of the speculative proposition to be disclosed is its strictly *identical* reflection, at the level of form, of the simple judgement; the speculative proposition is deployed as a repetition of the form of the simple judgement.<sup>402</sup> Accordingly, the logic of the speculative proposition unfolds in the context in which the subject of the proposition is grasped in terms of the '*objective, fixed self (gegenständliche fixe Selbst)*' *from which* the infinite multiplicity of possible predicates, or determinations, proceed.<sup>403</sup> The 'movement' of this relation of subject to predicate (based on the dogmatic hypothesis of a transcendental subject – of what Hegel calls a 'passive Subject') at the level of the identity of their unified truth is, as has been exposed, the movement of inert tautological repetition; Hegel grasps this *positive* movement as 'the movement which runs back and forth (*die Bewegung hin und wider läuft*)', but effectively gets nowhere other than its infinite alternation from one end to another.<sup>404</sup> In so far as Hegel's own mode of thinking emerges as the immanent articulation of the dialectical relation between itself qua philosophical thinking and its subject-matter qua object of thought (the truth of the absolute), the strict opposition between subject and predicate is dissolved at the level of the assumption of a *passive* subject that takes as wholly given indeterminate 'accidents' or predication. Through the given-ness of predication – that is, of *substance* – the passive subject must arrogate to itself its own claim to being the basis

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<sup>401</sup> PS, §61; 3: 59.

<sup>402</sup> For a detailed analytical exposition of Hegel's speculative proposition, see Günter Wohlfart, *Der spekulative Satz: Bemerkungen zum Begriff der Spekulation bei Hegel*, Berlin: de Gruyter Verlag, 1981. See also Jere Paul Suber, 'Hegel's Speculative Sentence,' *Hegel-Studien – Band 10*, Bonn: Bouvier, 1975, pp.211-30.

<sup>403</sup> PS, §60; 3: 58.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid. §60; 3: 57.

of conceptual movement since the transition from subject to substance, in which the initial subject is fixed as merely apprehended, consists of the dissolution of its fixity in the realization of the ground of substance itself. The movement from *subject to predicate* and from *predicate to subject* (that is, from subject to substance and from substance to subject) is in truth an identical movement registered in the incapacity of its own expressions to grasp the unity of its two sides (these identical movements rehearse the distinction Hegel *pace* Fichte made in his Jena writings between the realist and idealist standpoints<sup>405</sup>). This identification of one trajectory of movement and its reciprocally reflected opposite gives rise to the 'ordinary' or putative understanding of the grammatical form of the proposition. What the movement of the 'general nature of the judgement or proposition' cannot articulate is the specific nature of the *conflict* generated by the thrust and 'counter-thrust (*Gegenstoß*)' of the immanent relation between the immediate expression of standardized forms of judgements and their unfolding in philosophical articulation of the unity of thought and being in the concept.<sup>406</sup> The standard form of the judgement cannot grasp the unity of subject and predicate since it is based on precisely the *distinction* between those moments (the constitutive function of the copula is divisive) and not the destruction (*zerstören*) of their posited division in the speculative form.

In order to clarify the specific nature of the speculative proposition, Hegel mobilizes the relation between 'accent' and 'metre' in poetical rhythm as the *harmony* (*Harmonie*) of the two distinct 'moments' of poetic expression. Rhythm, or harmony, 'results (*resultiert*) from the floating centre (*schwebenden Mitte*) and the unification (*Vereinigung*) of the two.'<sup>407</sup> Thus, what is 'destroyed' in the standard form of the proposition is not the subject and

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<sup>405</sup> This is exposed most prominently in 'First Philosophy of Spirit'; see SS, 224-7.

<sup>406</sup> PS, §61; 3: 59.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

predicate as such, but rather their identification as direct, 'absolute' opposites since the 'result' of rhythm emerges in the dynamic permeation of accent and metre. The reference to Schiller's aesthetico-ethical conception of harmony, in polemical counter-distinction to 'the monotonous sound (*eintönige Geräusch*) of the wheel' that eternally arrests the possibility of man's development of 'the harmony of his being (*Harmonie seines Wesens*),' is recoded in the context of philosophical expression.<sup>408</sup> The invocation of 'harmony' at this juncture is interesting: for Hegel, the term harmony is *immediately* deployed as the term abstractly expressing the unification of subject and predicate in the proposition. Accordingly, it operates as the mere immediacy of the goal of philosophy, but does not establish or clarify the content of its own immediacy since it reveals itself, at the level of immediate expression, as an essentially indefinite and indeterminate term; or, as it is put in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Spirit*, harmony constitutes 'a favourite and oft-recurring (*häufig*) catch-phrase (*Schlagwort*)', a phrase that, moreover, only gives the expression of a unity that 'ought to be' and 'not to the original unity.'<sup>409</sup> What harmony cannot express is the *caesura* posited in its very expression since it consists of, within the framework of philosophies of subjective reflection, a normative maximization of an infinite *Sollen*. And this is, as I showed in the first chapter, the distinctive limit of Schiller's conception. The Schillerian intellect, the intellect that recognizes the harmony of beauty in its own form, cannot sufficiently disassociate itself from the ossified opposition that structures the impasse of modern epistemology.

The 'slogan' of 'harmony' reflects the normative maximization of a unity deferred *ad infinitum*. Hegel will in fact make note of the form of (immediate) thought that thinks in

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<sup>408</sup> Schiller, AE, VI: 7.

<sup>409</sup> Enc. III, 4; 10: 12-3.

‘slogans’ (*Schlagwort*) in the closing passages of the preface to the *Phenomenology*.<sup>410</sup> Accordingly, the preliminary exposition of the form of the speculative proposition – and indeed its identification as simultaneously ‘destruction’ and ‘harmony’ (note should be made to their *direct* opposition) – in its direct relation to the putative form of judgement *is itself executed at the immediate and abstract level*.<sup>411</sup> The corollary question to this is the following: *what is the content of the speculative articulation of the speculative proposition if it is grasped in distinction to the putative propositional form?*

Hegel himself extends this employment of the ‘immediate’ clarification of the speculative proposition in the ‘speculative’ proposition ‘God is being’ (a proposition that is expanded in the *Philosophy of Spirit* through the brief examination of the limits of Nicolas Malebranche’s epistemological dictum – grounded in Cartesian dualism – ‘we see everything in God’ in the so-called doctrine of the ‘Vision of God’ as elaborated in the 1678 [1674-5] work *The Search after Truth and Elucidations*<sup>412</sup>). Of central importance for Hegel in the expounding of the familiar proposition – even in its immediately ‘speculative’ form – is the *experience* of the displacement and confusion of thinking in its transitions from subject to predicate. In the proposition ‘God is being’, the predicate articulates the content of the subject in so far as the predicate is meant to signify the very eternal essence of the subject as a whole (and not a particular predicate). Accordingly, instead of ‘making progress in the transition (*Übergange*) of subject to predicate’ thinking ‘feels itself checked by the loss

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<sup>410</sup> PS, §69; 3: 64.

<sup>411</sup> The recoding of the *speculative* comprehension of the speculative proposition within the context of the general movement of the defamiliarization of the familiar is overlooked in the secondary literature. This has led to philosophically problematic interpretations in which the distinction of speculation is said to be registered in the linguistic form of the proposition itself. A sharp example of this can be found in Chong-Fuk Lau, ‘Language and Metaphysics: The Dialectics of Hegel’s Speculative Proposition’, in Jere O’Neill Surber (ed.), *Hegel and Language*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.

<sup>412</sup> Enc. III, 33-4; 10: 48-9.

(*verlorengeht*) of the subject.’<sup>413</sup> Thinking in the context of this transition is *forlorn*; it misses the assurance of the immediate philosophical truth of the philosophical grammar (of terms that mean immediately what they ought to mean). In this state of crestfallen reflection, ordinary thinking can only be ‘thrown back (*zurückgeworfen*) on to the thought (*Gedanken*) of the subject.’<sup>414</sup> The thinking that ‘returns’ to ‘thought’, that is, to the familiar philosophical grammar of sound common sense, is a thinking that lacks the patience of strenuous philosophical and conceptual labour. It is, accordingly, a ‘return’ to the *immediacy* of either doxography or blind faith in the veracity of what is given. Put another way: the thinking of the desperate restitution of the sense of ‘subject’ and ‘predicate’ within the context of their inchoate permeation and peripatetic inversion (thus the total liquidation of their usual concatenation) is a thinking that wants to assure itself that the diremptions of the modern world are the mere opinions and ‘visionary dreaming (*Träumereien*)’ of ‘speculative’ philosophers, and not the ‘hard’, positivistic veracity of common sense. This ‘thinking’ is the pure reflection of the status of the individual in civil society who remains epistemologically and ontologically ignorant of the historical mediation of his own thinking, a thinking that always takes itself as having (effortlessly) grasped ‘thoughts’, thus resides – so it believes – in the immediacy of the pure ‘Ideal of philosophical utopia (*Utopiens*).’<sup>415</sup>

For Hegel, the movement of philosophical thinking followed in its actual movement is significantly more difficult than simple self-declaration. What is irksome and aggravating about philosophy is that (a) the *comprehension of its expression takes too much time* (since

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<sup>413</sup> PS, §62; 3: 59.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> D, 185; 2: 128.

‘so much has to be read over and over before it can be understood’)<sup>416</sup>; and, directly following from this (b), that grasping the immanence of the *posited caesura* of the mediating determinacy itself (the copula) exacerbates the time of philosophical comprehension since it stands in direct contra-distinction to ‘sound’ common-sense. This frustration is experienced principally by the ordinary – ‘natural’ – consciousness. The philosophical experience that raises itself from out of the immanent experience of this frustration folds the immediate experience in on itself. Accordingly, philosophical experience learns that with an ‘experience of opinion (*Meinung*) we meant (*gemeint*) something other than we meant to mean (*meinte*)’ (the tautological repetition of this statement reflects the content of the mode of thought addressed therein).<sup>417</sup> With this deepened experience, thinking goes back to the proposition and attempts to ‘understand it in some other way.’ Its ‘return’ to the proposition however is now mediated by the deepening of its experience of the misunderstanding hitherto grasped. More importantly, it does not in truth return to the proposition simply as a fixed unit of expression that *precedes* the experience.<sup>418</sup> Rather, philosophical labour consists of the transformation of the mode of thinking itself: to experience the speculative proposition *speculatively*, one needs to *think speculatively*. Hegel begins to de-familiarize the familiar standpoint of putative understanding (and frustration) of *philosophical* propositions (*philosophische Satz*) by way of the de-familiarization of the form of the proposition itself, that is its ‘expression (*ausgesprochen*)’, through the superseded (*aufgehoben*) form of the

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<sup>416</sup> PS, §63; 3: 60. Hegel makes the same point in the *Philosophy of Spirit*: ‘Philosophy is...a troublesome neighbour (*lästige Nachbarin*): for it is an enemy of all arbitrariness and hasty suggestions.’ Enc. III, 278; 10: 348.

<sup>417</sup> PS, §63; 3: 60 (translation slightly modified).

<sup>418</sup> It is precisely in this sense that Houlgate reduces the function of the speculative proposition within the context of his understanding of the *Logic*, thus radically deflating the movement of speculation and dialectics in the speculative proposition: ‘In the *Logic* Hegel does not discuss the speculative proposition in detail, nor does he pick out any propositions or sentences as specifically speculative. It is clear, however, that many sentences in that book should be read as speculative propositions rather than ordinary judgments.’ Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, p.95.



general proposition and in the *presentation* (*Darstellung*) of the concept of the unity of the proposition and its thought.<sup>419</sup> In the experience of this unity, it is now said that the proposition itself is structured as a ‘dialectical movement (*dialektische Bewegung*)’ which ‘alone is the *actually* speculative (*wirkliche Spekulative*), and only the expression (*Aussprechen*) of this movement is a speculative presentation (*spekulative Darstellung*).’<sup>420</sup>

The expression of the dialectical movement immanent to the speculative proposition determines the truth content of a speculative presentation. This strongly suggests (and this is Hegel’s intention) that the formal presentation of speculative thinking in speculative propositions is the expression of the objectivity of its own development and becoming, which is to say, the expression of ‘*what the true is (was das Wahre ist)*.’<sup>421</sup> For Hegel, however, truth is itself spirit, that is, it is that which has as its own truth the determination of the dialectical movement that it itself internalizes, and thus, when comprehended, retroactively generates. Consequently, the dialectical movement of the proposition – raised from its general nature to the level of the abstract expression of speculation – is only the *objective side* of the process of the speculative expression of spirit. This does not, despite appearances, mean that speculative propositions cannot sufficiently express the internal expression of spirit; as Hegel notes, such an insight would lead to the exclusion of the immanent objectivity of the dialectical process of the becoming of propositions. Rather, the expression of the speculative proposition emerges as the *preliminary* articulation of the speculative expression of spirit *in and for itself* since it is spirit which is identical to its expressions, regardless of how ‘invalid’ or ‘insufficient.’ In that the speculative expression of the speculative proposition contains within itself (preserved) the dialectical movement of spirit’s own

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid. §65; 3: 61.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid. (Translation slightly modified.)

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

development, the spurious infinity of demonstrating the inner reason of all propositions that are contained within that movement (since it is in the movement itself that the content of the speculative identity, or the ‘speculative truths [*spekulative Wahrheiten*]’ of spirit), is initially exposed; its exposition consists of the distinction from the structure of the ordinary thinking of ‘external cognition’ which takes as its fixed presupposition the absolute opposition of subject and predicate.<sup>422</sup> As a preliminary form, the speculative kernel of the speculative proposition is yet to be fully ascertained. This is developed in the notion of ‘speculative thinking’ as unfolded in the *Logic*.

### 3.6 Speculative Thinking

On the very first page of the preface to the first edition of the *Logic*, Hegel makes note of ‘speculative thinking (*spekulativen Denken*)’ within the wider theoretical culture of German philosophy in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century: speculative thinking is strategically barred from the realm of philosophical thought since it violates the basic results of the ‘exoteric teaching’ of transcendental-critical philosophy, viz. ‘that the understanding ought not to go beyond experience, else the cognitive faculty will become a theoretical reason which by itself generates nothing but fantasies of the brain.’<sup>423</sup> Speculative thinking then is, on an immediate level, immanent to the wider socio-political debate of the project of the public’s enlightenment. Indeed, the initial reflections of Hegel’s preface to the first edition of the *Logic* are centred on the place of speculative thinking – recoded initially as the thought of metaphysics – in the substance of the ‘people (*Volk*).’<sup>424</sup> The renunciation of metaphysics, and speculative thinking, has for Hegel – over fifteen years after the ‘birth’ of the program of

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid. §66; 3: 61-2.

<sup>423</sup> SL, 25; 5: 13.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

German Idealism in 1796 – the significance of the dissolution of the reconstruction of ethical life. The renunciation of metaphysics, and in its place the infinitely repeated axiom of theoretical pedagogic edification, ratifies the inertia of the state of civil society and its incapacity to raise itself out of the relations that govern its ethical substance (relations organized by the relations of private property). From the very first page of the *Logic* then, speculative thinking consists of the life of spirit's contemplation of itself in its own essence as the very life of the collective subject of the 'people.' In order to raise itself out of the exoteric, private world of social division, society itself – signalled here through the abstract entity of the 'people' – needs to begin to make sense of its own immanent self (and through this self-comprehension, it will concretize its own knowledge and properly identify itself as spirit). According to the internal sense of the *Logic*, this dissolution of the exoteric presuppositions of philosophical pedagogy in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany consists of, rather problematically, the dissolution of what is ordinarily taken as logic. An initial form of the thinking that emerges from within this dissolution of logic has already been explicated: the form of thinking immanent to logical movement of the speculative proposition.

The limit of the speculative proposition is the limit of its supersession of the general internal structure of the judgement as such. Accordingly, the speculative proposition does not sufficiently express the inner character of speculative thinking; it posits instead the initial expression of its dialectical development. Since it remains caught within the basic structure of propositions, speculative thinking does not sufficiently articulate its internal dynamic of 'holding fast (*festhält*).’ Note has already been made of this identity of speculative thinking, namely that it consists solely of 'holding fast' to itself and contradiction in the contradiction – which is to say, grasping thinking itself in its own contradiction and as the contradiction.

One can also make note here that the ‘highest mode’ of *philosophical* expression is the capacity to seize (*erfassen*) the absolute idea in the most developed form of its abstract sense and that the speculative expression is grasping the content of this abstraction in its higher speculative form (speculative proposition).<sup>425</sup> The internal structure of the movement of *philosophical science* unfolds this abstract seizure of the goal of philosophy in its immanent development from its initial transformation of the abstract statement of philosophy as such. Philosophy (*Philosophie*) is said to be superseded in philosophical science (*Wissenschaft*); or, more precisely, philosophical science consists of the supersession of the abstract presentation of philosophy since it *negates* what is abstract in philosophy (the immediate presentation of its goal – the truth of the absolute – that runs through its history), yet *preserves* what is essential about the internal logical movement of philosophical thinking.

The speculative impulse at the heart of a thinking that ‘holds fast’ is that it is in a certain respect a ‘compound’ or ‘connecting’ expression: the power of speculative thinking is that it holds fast to things that ‘should’ (within the context of ordinary thinking) fall apart from one another since they are opposing moments and contradictory meanings. In so far as two opposing meanings and moments of thought are contained within thinking – viz. the thinking *of* contradiction and thinking *in* the contradiction itself – it has been argued that the speculative concept ‘par excellence’ is *aufheben* since it expresses in itself the unity of two contradicting senses. As I have been trying to show however, it is the work of speculative thinking which discloses the immanent unity of contradictions and not the expression itself as a ‘ready-made’ sense that can be ‘pocketed’, as Hegel put it, like a ‘minted coin’ and profited from by philosophical expression. Accordingly, speculative thinking no longer sustains its

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<sup>425</sup> This ‘seizure’ is what properly identifies the philosophical activity of absolute spirit in the closing sections of the *Philosophy of Spirit*. Enc. III, 302; 10: 378-9.

inner character as the dialectical movement of *aufheben*. This of course does not mean that *aufheben* is not the exemplary speculative concept; rather, it suggests that there is a transition from the abstract immediacy of the apprehension of speculative sense to the comprehension of that sense in speculative thinking. Accordingly, *aufheben* is an historical expression that, just like all expressions, is contained within the life of ordinary thought and the neutralization of philosophical thought (the transformation of philosophical thinking into habituated – ordinary – thinking).

As has just been noted, and indeed exposed in the last chapter, there is a wholly ‘ordinary’ sense of *aufheben*: it means either negation (cancellation, annulment, etc.) or the preservation of something taken out of its immediacy (to archive, to lift something out of its current state). But what is ‘ordinary’ at the level of the ordinary is not so at the level of a reflection that emerges from the immanent dialectical critique of what appears as ordinary in itself. Thus, what is ‘ordinary’ for ordinary thinking – namely that *aufheben* has more than one meaning – is extra-ordinary for philosophical thinking since it is a word that expresses the unification of oppositions in itself. And in so far as philosophical thinking emerges from out of the supersession of ordinary thinking, the latter’s employment of supersession itself is superseded in the philosophical form: ‘*supersession*’ is *strictly speaking superseded*. And yet, in so far as this transformation occurs within thinking itself – that is, within the speculative thinking that grasps that the thinking of itself and contradiction in the contradiction is its own thinking – supersession is more properly understood as having collapsed within itself and bent back on itself: *supersession superseded itself, it is self-superseding*. It is, nevertheless, conceptually registered, at the level of speculative expression in the form of immediate ordinary thought, which is to say, in the form exposed in the mode

of expression of the speculative proposition. It is the thinking that thinks in the expression of the speculative proposition that gives rise to the speculative character of the proposition itself. Contrary to the putative image of Hegel's philosophy as monolithic and oppressive (a kind of omniscient terror), the thinking of Hegel's philosophy actually reaches at its highest point a consciously avowed precariousness since what can 'return' when thinking is folded back into itself at the point at which the new beginning is the 'spiritual principle', is the radically non-speculative thought of immediacy itself since all that speculative thinking is left with is the mode of expression that ordinary thinking employs (the general form of the proposition).<sup>426</sup>

The fragility of Hegel's philosophy *could be*, in the end, nothing but a gigantic *tautology*<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Consider, for example, Gilles Deleuze's observation of the asphyxiating miasma of Hegelianism at the time of his own philosophical formation (and indeed the polemical context of his own work): anti-Hegelianism was 'manifestly in the air'. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, London and New York: Continuum, 2004, p.xvii. A less familiar reference is worth nothing: in his 1893 Rectoral address at the Free University of Berlin, the polymath Rudolph Virchow announced the end of Hegel as nothing else but the liberation of philosophical thinking from systematicity: 'It is in any case certain that with the death of Hegel the university too was freed from the power of philosophical systems. No philosopher has since then assumed a position of similar control, and – we may say it with appreciation – none has laid claim to such a position.' Cited in Otto Pöggler, 'Hegel Editing and Hegel Research' in J. J. O'Malley (ed.), *The Legacy of Hegel: Proceedings of the Marquette Hegel Symposium*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1973, p.13. It is in the work of Slavoj Žižek that we find the most *instrumental* mobilization of the identification of anti-Hegelian and post-Hegelian thought as internally structured by a false and illusory representation of the 'phantasmic construction' of Hegel qua 'panlogical monster'. Ironically, the image of Hegel in post-Hegelian philosophy becomes in and of itself the 'Real' of Žižek's own counter-post-Hegelianism, which is to say, according to the author, consists of the 'construction of a point that does not actually exist...but that, nonetheless, must be presupposed in order to legitimate our position through negative reference to the other, by distancing ourselves.' Slavoj Žižek, *The Most Sublime Hysteric: Hegel with Lacan*, trans. Thomas Scott-Railton, Cambridge: Polity, 2014, p.2. The Hegel 'monster' articulated in the legacy of post-Hegelianism (exemplified in the self-relating idea of absolute knowledge) is itself the 'monster' of Žižek's Lacanian Hegelianism.

<sup>427</sup> It is perhaps Adorno who insists on this point most consistently: 'The philosophical call for immersion in detail, a demand not steered by any philosophy from above or by any intentions infiltrated into it, was Hegel's one side already. Only, in his case the execution is caught in a tautology: as by prearrangement, his kind of immersion in detail brings forth that spirit which from the outset was posited as total and absolute'; Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.303. In lecture thirteen of his course on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (delivered on 13 July 1965), Adorno, in opposition to the claim made above, is perhaps not as definitive in his judgement on the 'positivity' of German Idealism: 'Accordingly, in the highest thoughts [according to Aristotle], subject and object coincide, just as they do later in absolute idealism; that is to say, the thought and the thinking are held to be the same. I would point out in passing that in this thesis, put forward with a certain innocence by Aristotle, there is manifested a paradox or an absurdity which disappears in the more sophisticated presentation of these ideas at the height of German idealism. We should not be persuaded, however, that it has ceased to exist...in [Aristotle's] case we are obliged to ask the question which must be addressed to all idealism: what does mind, or

(and even at the level of the so-called 'recognition of misrecognition' since all that is recognized is the misrecognition of recognition in, notwithstanding the misrecognition, the context of the process of recognition which remains identical to itself – what is never misrecognized in the logic of recognition itself<sup>428</sup>). To grasp the speculative expression of the proposition speculatively requires, in contradistinction to the judgement of tautology, the internalization of speculative thinking as the thinking that thinks itself from within and from out of the thinking that remains caught within the empty asseverations of immediate thought. This calls on the requirement to raise *Bildung* – the form of philosophical internalization of the thinking that thinks itself and the absolute at the level of its abstract statement as the truth of knowledge (thus not the actual knowledge of truth) – to the level of the construction and formation of its own speculative content, a kind of *reorganization/reconstruction* (*Umbildung*) and *elaboration* (*Ausbildung*) of *Bildung* that is in truth *anterior* to phenomenological *Bildung*. Hegel draws our attention to the distinction between the conceptual labour of speculative thinking and the result of *Bildung* exposed in the *Phenomenology*, in the preface to the first edition of the *Logic*:

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thinking, or knowledge really amount to, if it only thinks itself? Does this not make thought itself, and thus the absolute which thought is supposed to be, one single, immense tautology?' Adorno, *Metaphysics*, pp.93-4. (Notwithstanding this question, Adorno ends his lectures on the radical distinction between his conception of negativity and that of Hegel's; see, *ibid.* p.144.) Interestingly, in his earlier work with Max Horkheimer, 'tautology' is a result of the mode of knowing of mathematical formalism and not the determinate negativity of dialectical thinking, a thinking that does not infinitely reproduce its blind satisfaction through the a machinic subjugation of existence to the immediate, pure forms of the medium of thought (number in mathematics); Adorno, and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.20. For another distinction between dialectical thinking and tautology see Theodor. W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, London and New York: Verso Books, 2005, pp.126-8. And finally, in the posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno returns to the limits of the tautological self-identification of 'thought' (and thus the 'truth' of the absolute) in the context of his polemic against the putative self-conception of modern art: 'For the content of art cannot simply be art, unless it is to be reduced to an indifferent tautology. Contemplation that limits itself to the artwork fails it. Its inner construction requires, in however mediated a fashion, what is itself not art', Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.442.

<sup>428</sup> Interestingly, Rose's conception of speculative experience is in fact grasped in its philosophical entirety right at the beginning of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, namely its introduction; see Rose, *Hegel contra Sociology*, pp.158-64.

[I]t seems that the period of fermentation with which a new creative idea begins is past. In its first manifestation, such an idea usually displays a fanatical hostility toward the entrenched systematization of the older principle; usually too, it is fearful of losing itself in the ramifications of the particular and again it shuns the labour required for a scientific cultivation (*wissenschaftlichen Ausbildung*) of the new principle and in its need (*Bedürfnisse*) for such, it grasps to begin with at an empty formalism. The demand for the treatment (*Verarbeitung*) and cultivation (*Ausbildung*) of the material now becomes all the more pressing. There is a period in the formation (*Bildung*) of an epoch as in the formation of the individual, when the primary concern is the acquisition and assertion of the principle in its undeveloped intensity (*des Prinzips in seiner unentwickelten Intensität*). But the higher demand is that it should become philosophical science (*Wissenschaft*).<sup>429</sup>

What the *formation* (*Bildung*) of the epoch of the modern world has demonstrated according to Hegel is the raising of itself to the level of the abstract statement of the need for the concrete knowledge of the higher unity immediately expressed in the principle that orientates, directs and sustains that need. The historical course of the development of contemporary philosophy has shown that this period of fermentation is not a thing of the past but rather is in the state of its beginning. As has already been noted, and as is exposed in the passage above, the development of novel philosophical *constructions* has passed; and it has passed because it has reached its highest articulation in the form of the *Phenomenology*; that is to say, the work that raises ordinary consciousness to the level of philosophical dissolution of the distinction between consciousness and the object of thought, and positing the speculative identity of the two in the form of a thinking yet to be actualized. This is what Hegel means by *Bildung*: it is not the process of unfolding as a meta-historical instrument that methodically structures the 'path' of consciousness. Rather, it is the result of that historical path that reflects on itself as the identity of the dialectical permeation of 'result' and 'process through which [the result]

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<sup>429</sup> SL, 27; 5: 15-6 (translation slightly modified).



came about' at the phenomenological level.<sup>430</sup> It would be naïve to think that Hegel's first major philosophical work did not itself fall into the historical epoch Hegel's *Logic* is retroactively reflecting on.<sup>431</sup> The *Logic* is a self-consciously reflected *post*-phenomenological work in that it *at once* openly identifies its own constitutive presupposition as the general philosophical movement of the *Phenomenology* and discloses the limits of that work in its own logical systematization. What it openly attests to however is, more precisely, the speculative impulse of the movement of the thinking of the defamiliarization of the familiar; that is to say, the trans-historical result of the labour of the raising of thought to the level of the thinking of absolute knowing. The identification of the *Phenomenology* as 'presupposition' is crucial since it enfolds that work into the history of the present that has suspended all conceptual differentiation. Thus, what we have in the *Phenomenology* is the unconsciously disclosed articulation of the absolute idea as the self-comprehending concept of the identity of thought and being. Put more directly and with the passage above in mind: the *Phenomenology* provides philosophical science with the 'undeveloped intensity' of the speculative identity (the 1807 work then is the result of the Jena writings since it brings philosophical consciousness to the level of its own historical self-consciousness through a detailed exposition of that history as the current state of the present).

*A speculative Bildung* – which has as its core the movement of speculative thinking – would *hold fast* to its own thinking and the content of its thinking (the interconnections of the path toward and of *Bildung*) in the contradiction of itself as that thought and the path on

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<sup>430</sup> PS, §3; 3: 13.

<sup>431</sup> When Hegel states at the opening of his *Logic* that 'the complete transformation which philosophical thought in Germany has undergone in the last twenty-five years and the higher standpoint reached by spirit in its awareness of itself, have had but little influence as yet on the structure of logic', the *Phenomenology* can be said to be folded into this description of current philosophical incapacity of influence in the realm of logic since the 'higher standpoint' of spirit's self-identification is reached only at the point of its absolute knowing (the dissolution of the dialectic of consciousness as structured by the distinction between the absolute and philosophical modes of consciousness that think the absolute).

which it unfolds. It would contain within itself the phenomenological path as a necessary tautological result of its own self-organization. What would be dissolved in this speculative ‘holding fast’ of *Bildung* is the structure and movement (the ‘path’) of dialectical *guidance* since the speculative path would no longer be underwritten by the dialectic of patience and impatience (as it is in the *Phenomenology*), and thus would no longer be submitted to the unfolding of the supersession of the moments that punctuate philosophical *Bildung*. This does not mean however that the movement of speculative thinking is entropic, relishing in the free-movement of thought as a conceptual ‘free-for-all.’ It suggests rather that speculation itself has its own movement of cultivation in the movement that emerges from the speculative suspension of the dialectical movement of the supersession of ordinary consciousness in philosophical *Bildung*.

The sense of the speculative can be restored here to its enigmatic identification in Hegel’s *Differenzschrift*, namely as ‘the night which is the noonday of life (*Mittag des Lebens*).’<sup>432</sup> It is with reference to Plato’s allegory of the cave – and Hegel’s own distinct dialectical classicism in mind – that the initial content of this peculiar expression and identification can be grasped.<sup>433</sup>

Recall that, according to Socrates, there are two modes of ‘day’ in the allegory of the cave, an allegory which has as its central goal the illustration of philosophical formation as

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<sup>432</sup> D, 103; 2: 35.

<sup>433</sup> I have throughout this thesis made frequent reference to Plato’s allegory of the cave; it functions, I would like to state here, as the prototypical expression of the genesis of Hegel’s own conception of dialectical movement and its transition into speculative thinking through the formation of itself in the ‘stages’ of differing, opposing and dissolving modes of thought. The whole play of the metaphor of shadows throughout Hegel’s oeuvre; the conceptual construction of *Bildung*; the invocation of ‘true philosophy’ as the highest systematic articulation of philosophy as such; the distinction between tautological movement of the thought of natural consciousness in its guises as modern scepticism and common sense and the self-movement of speculative thinking as a ‘turning’ that retroactively determines the truth content of natural consciousness and even the idea of defamiliarization in its genetic form give the allegory of the cave a central constitutive function in the formation of Hegel’s own philosophical enterprise.

the ascent from the truth disclosed in appearance and the higher articulation of truth articulated by true philosophy: there is, on the one hand, the ‘day that is a kind of night (νυκτερινῆς τινοῦς ἡμέρας)’ and the ‘true day’ which is itself ‘true philosophy’ (φιλοσοφίαν ἀληθῆ).<sup>434</sup> It is immediately apparent that Hegel performs an immanent inversion of the privileging of ‘night’ and ‘day’ in the classical paradigm: for Hegel, it is the night itself which gives rise to midday, a time in which shadows are shortest. But in that this noonday is night, the light of day is the light that enlightens the whole completely; that is to say, the light in which nothing can be seen. The most extreme radiation of light – metaphorically posed here as midday – is the light that reflects in its truth the umbrageous realm of night: the brightest light is the darkest shadow. Plato could not think this folding in of the phenomenal into the idea as the work of the idea itself since he could not grasp the immanence of the negativity of finitude as the folding in on itself and revelation of itself as infinite self-relation – which is to say, as the image of the circle of the genuine infinite.<sup>435</sup> In a peripatetic inversion of the narrative direction of the allegory, Hegel re-organizes the movement of philosophical education as one that begins within the misidentification of natural consciousness as always already immanent to the ‘spiritual daylight of the present’; Hegelian philosophy then consists of an intentional and consciously necessitated ‘return’ to the ‘nightlight void’ of the cave.<sup>436</sup> For Hegel, the ascent into the true day in Platonic philosophical cultivation is too hasty since it fails to grasp that it is *always already* within the philosophical element of truth (the allegory is wholly superfluous in a certain respect) but we are *not yet* cognisant of this immanence of the true day in its reflected form as essentially a night in which thinking momentarily strays. The identity of this temporal contradiction of the

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<sup>434</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 521c.

<sup>435</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter (‘4.6 The Speculative Infinite and the Present’).

<sup>436</sup> PS, §177; 3: 145.

philosophical knowledge of the absolute as the truth of the absolute itself is the identity of speculation as a night that is the appearance of day, and in that appearance collapses in on itself and reveals the time in which there are no shadows because there is strictly speaking no 'light' to cast shadows, in which no particularity or universality qua immediacy can dwell in assured distinction and yet, as mediated, are sustained in their distinction.<sup>437</sup>

What this dissolution of contradiction in the contradiction immediately amounts to is nothing but the *supersession of the dialectical process and movement of the becoming of truth; speculative thinking tarries in and for itself in radicalized 'homesickness'* (to use the Romantic motif) *since it knows that this state is its own self-determined state and not one in which it 'finds itself in.'*<sup>438</sup>

### 3.7 Dialectics, the Speculative and Speculative Thinking

According to the exposition of the speculative proposition and speculative thinking, there are three inter-related points that emerge as the internal structure of the sense of the movement of the proposition in its comprehension: (1) 'dialectical movement'; (2) the 'actual speculative'; and (3) the expression of this movement as 'speculative presentation'. The question raised here is the following: is there a 'speculative dialectic' immanent to the movement of the thinking that grasps the speculative proposition or does speculation remain the *Aufhebung* of dialectics? The initial response to this question rests on the assumption that the exposition of the speculative proposition expresses the specifically *speculative* comprehension of its content. Put another way: what is assumed is that the philosophical consciousness

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<sup>437</sup> This speculative night is distinct from Schelling's night of indifference in which 'all cows are black' for the reason of the necessity of its unfolding through ordinary thought and out of the nature of the state of philosophy in the present.

<sup>438</sup> '857. Philosophy is really homesickness – *the desire to be everywhere at home.*' Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, trans. David W. Wood, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007, p.155.

expounding the speculative proposition in its movement is itself a consciousness that thinks speculatively. The shift from dialectical comprehension exposed phenomenologically to speculative thinking is itself reflected in the shift from the central structure of the movement of experience – *dialektische Bewegung* – to the sense of the actualization of the speculative – *wirkliche Spekulative*. The idea of ‘dialectical movement’ returns at the level of the unfolding of speculation in the form of the speculative proposition in the following way: it underscores the mode of exposition immanent to that of the speculative proposition – viz. the form of experience as exposed in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*. Recall that in the exposition of the speculative proposition, what is centrally at stake is the experience of the comprehension of miscomprehension of philosophical cultivation and the power that ‘compels our knowing to go back to the proposition, and understand it in some other way.’<sup>439</sup> Thus, the dialectical movement which reveals itself as actually speculative is in truth the experiential movement of philosophical cultivation, the course of formation from the uneducated standpoint of immediate ‘philosophizing’ to that of *Bildung*. Without experience, the internal sense of the speculative proposition simply dissolves back into the ordinary and familiar mode of ‘reading’ the proposition. The philosophical presentation, accordingly, falls back into the external mode of knowing (and methodological assumptions).

And yet, at the point of the experience of the speculative proposition, what is speculative about experience is revealed, that is to say, *what is actually speculative about the dialectical movement*. It is in and through the presentation of the speculative proposition that the dialectical process of experience yields the form of the *speculative*.<sup>440</sup> It yields the form

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<sup>439</sup> PS, §63; 3: 60.

<sup>440</sup> As has already been noted, the term ‘speculation’ is employed throughout Hegel’s early works as the expression that articulates the unity of subject and object. The expression itself is employed with less frequency as Hegel’s work evolves and develops. Consider for example one of Hegel’s last texts, ‘On the English Reform

of the speculative because dialectical movement yields the one-sided limit of the form of the supersession (*aufgehoben*) articulated in the comprehension of the content of the proposition as always already reflected in the putative shape of a proposition.<sup>441</sup> The structure of *aufheben* in this context explicitly expresses the one-sidedness of experience itself as the movement of the transformation of the ‘inward inhibition’ through the moments that punctuate philosophical education and the ‘return’ back to the conceptual labour of philosophical comprehension. The movement of the speculative cannot be merely defined by the experiential movement conceptually condensed in the concept of *aufheben*. A deeper, *mediated* expression of the ‘opposite movement’ of *aufheben* qua *initial* supersession of the form of the proposition must, according to Hegel, be ‘expressed (*ausgesprochen*)’ and ‘set forth (*dargestellt*)’.<sup>442</sup> The imperative is orientated by the disclosed limits of a mere supersession of the form of the proposition. Through the invocation of the structure of *aufheben* in the context of the exposition of the movement immanent to the speculative proposition, the sense of ‘dialectical movement’ is displaced from its phenomenological setting as the internal structure of experience. The dialectical movement of the presentation (*Darstellung*) of the movement of *aufheben* of the form of the proposition now takes the form of the movement of the content of the proposition through the *form* itself, which is to say, in the ‘dialectical movement of the proposition itself (*des Satzes selbst*)’.<sup>443</sup> The content of this movement is the dialectical movement of concept, of speculative thinking’s actualization as the self that comprehends itself in the twofold movement of its *aufheben* in the form of propositions and the immanent transformation of that *aufheben* in the movement of itself in

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Bills’. In this essay from 1831, ‘speculation’ is actually deployed in its pejorative, mercantile sense; see PW, 256.

<sup>441</sup> PS, §65; 3: 61.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

its own form as self-disclosed. This now comes about by a defamiliarization of the internal mechanism of defamiliarization itself: viz. the dialectical movement of experience. This defamiliarization of dialectical movement occurs in dialectical movement itself and reveals the dissolution of dialectical movement as such. The speculative presentation (*spekulative Darstellung*), which emerges as the expression of the movement of the actual speculative, is no longer limited by the mere movement of dialectical movement which it properly articulates since it is no longer limited to the structure of the philosophical *proposition* as such. The dissolution of the *aufheben* of dialectical movement must be expressed in the non-propositional form of speculative presentation. But as the *Phenomenology* has exposed, this ushers in the separation of dialectical movement itself from the presentation. Without dialectical movement, the actual speculative falls back into the externally reflected philosophical method of 'non-speculative cognition.'<sup>444</sup>

The problem of the speculative dissolution of dialectical movement as *aufheben* appears, subsequently, as an *aporia* immanent to philosophical presentation itself (in its 'very nature').<sup>445</sup> But this aporetic structure of the problem of the relation of the actual speculative and dialectical movement is itself only an effect of the ambiguous structure of the *Phenomenology* as a whole. The appearance of the *aporia* is reflected in the science of the experience of speculative thinking as an initial movement into the comprehension of the self-movement of spirit. And we 'know' this precisely because of the course of dialectical movement as the course of the self-generation of thinking and its return to itself. What is not articulated however is the expression of the movement of spirit itself as it comprehends itself as its own movement, which is to say, in the actual development of its self-comprehension as

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<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid. §66; 3: 61.

its own development. Dialectical movement in the exposition of the speculative proposition, which yields the initial form of the speculative presentation, is defamiliarized only in a way as to fall back on to the logic of defamiliarization that it reveals and methodically communicates. It reveals the posited content of the subject 'in its own self' but cannot raise this self into the exposition of itself since it is framed within the phenomenological realm of its representation. It is for this reason that Hegel suspends the exposition of the speculative in its speculative form in the preface to the *Phenomenology* and opts instead to mark the necessity of the exposition of the dialectical form that will structure that work.

Thus, within the examination of the form of the speculative proposition in the preface of the *Phenomenology*, the dialectical movement of experience remains the central structure of the phenomenological movement of the proposition and the speculative sense it points toward. Experience is reflected back into the comprehension of the speculative proposition. But its reflection reveals through the inversion of dialectical movement itself (against itself) that speculative presentation is yet to be properly presented (*dargestellt*). This movement from dialectical movement to its own posited inversion can be more properly traced out in the transitions from (1) the 'dialectic' to the 'dialectical'; (2) the 'dialectical' to the 'speculative'; and (3) the 'speculative' to the structure of 'speculative thinking.'

There is an important distinction to be made from the methodological program of 'dialectics' to the sense of the 'dialectical' as the 'immanent nature' of thinking itself. In a certain sense, Hegel's philosophical enterprise does not consist of a method that could be termed 'dialectic' if by 'dialectic' what is meant is the metaphysical science of the *comparison* of pre-given and oppositional determinations of thought; a science that 'is commonly regarded as an external, negative activity which does not pertain to the subject



matter itself, having its ground in mere conceit as a subjective itch for unsettling and destroying what is fixed and substantial.<sup>446</sup> Even in the transcendental suspension of metaphysics itself, a suspension in which the dialectic is raised into the higher position of immanence to a necessary function of reason, the dialectical method is reduced to a purely abstract negative aspect in which what results from the dialectic is nothing but the illusory deception of the knowledge of the thing in itself (and reproducing the fixed, determinate oppositions structuring philosophy). The 'dialectic' is accordingly a finite *historical* thought determination which represents an externally reflected method arrogating to itself the central position of the law of objective comprehension; it appears, throughout the history of philosophy, as an immanent mode of grasping truth that does not, in itself, grasp its own internal relation and connection with truth itself. Consequently, in its historical forms, the dialectic is, for Hegel, not immanently dialectical. The *Logic* opens (especially in the 'introduction' and the 'remarks' that punctuate the transition from 'being' to 'nothing' in the first chapter) with a series of reflections on the immanent structure of the 'dialectic' as an external instrument that forms an obstacle to the subject matter of logical science itself (absolute truth).<sup>447</sup> It is through the unfolding of the dialectic qua instrumental philosophical method that the idea of the 'dialectical' emerges, which is to say, the sense of dialectical movement as the 'grasping (*fassen*) of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative.'<sup>448</sup>

It is in the dialectical movement of the grasping of opposites in their unity that the *speculative* consists. The dialectical movement of the subject matter itself (the positivity

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<sup>446</sup> SL, 56; 5: 51.

<sup>447</sup> Accordingly, the opening sections of the *Logic* are historically broader than those in the *Phenomenology* (since the latter work unfolds from the putative philosophical standpoint dominating Hegel's historical present).

<sup>448</sup> Ibid. 56; 5: 52.

emerging from within the negative) reveals the basic shape of 'the speculative (*das Spekulative*)' as the developed expression of the unity.<sup>449</sup> The speculative – or spirit qua truth – is, as we have already noted, the expression of the unity of subject and object in their identity and in the self-differentiation of speculation itself (this point is made in Hegel's major 1801 essay). It is, more precisely, the expression of its own unity in dialectical movement. Accordingly, the subject matter is self-reflexively dialectical; and the philosophical exposition of the speculative is, throughout the *Logic*, identified, in its differentiating moments, in and through dialectical movement. The employment of the expression, in the *Logic*, is consciously reflected in the second volume of the work, in the 'Doctrine of the Concept.'<sup>450</sup> The self-reflection of the unfolding of the subject of logic in the doctrine of the concept results in the return to the method of the 'dialectic' as the externally reflected model of philosophical methodology in the last section of the *Logic*, 'the Absolute Idea.'<sup>451</sup> The end of the *Logic*, accordingly, retraces the initial steps exposed at the opening of the work. But at the end of the work, what is revealed is that the dialectic itself is dialectically unfolded in the moments that structure its development and historical presuppositions: the 'dialectic' is *dialecticized* through the exposition of the dialectical movement of the subject matter (of the idea); it reveals, by extension, the general identity of the whole of the logic as a dialectical reflection of the speculative character of the immanent scientific procedure of the speculative itself. The 'dialectical' is the internal structure of the subject matter reflected in the work. But in the form of the development of the *Logic* as the initial expression of the self-comprehension of spirit, in the form of thinking, the 'speculative' has not expressed itself in its concrete self-related form (in perfect equation

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<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid. 577; 6: 246; 597; 6: 271; 599; 6: 272; 649; 6: 333; 667; 6: 355 and 681; 6: 373.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid. 831-43; 6: 557-73.

with its content). The *Logic* does not constitute the articulation of the philosophical system itself as the adequate form of the expression of the speculative in its speculative composition, which is to say, thought speculatively. (If it did, then the totality of Hegel's philosophy – the unfolding of the ontological structure of nature, the exposition of subject, objective and absolute spirit – would be contained systematically in the *Logic*.) What is presented as the 'speculative' in the dialectical unfolding of its structure and movement in the *Logic* is in fact presented as the initial articulation of the immanent structure of the movement of spirit as it externalizes itself in and as nature and returns to the comprehension of itself in and though its self-externalization in the three general forms of its own self-development (as has just been noted; subjective, objective and absolute). The *Logic*, as the presentation of the pure thought of spirit retroactively comprehended in the *supersession* of the modes of the initial philosophical comprehension of 'being' and 'thought' (a thought that, in the putative mode of logical reflection, fails to be merely *apprehended* let alone *comprehended*), is itself a superseded moment of the philosophical system as a whole. But it is comprehended as superseded when the philosophical subject of spirit comprehends itself as the agent of the organization of that supersession, which is to say, as the dynamic movement of its own self-supersession.

Speculative thinking, as the thought of the speculative in its own living and spiritual movement, is consequently only fully articulated in the exposition of the philosophical system as a whole – that is to say, as the *speculative expression of the speculative whole*. Thus, notwithstanding its signalling in the *Logic* as the central structure of the thinking that comprehends itself speculatively, speculative thinking is not ultimately articulated in the *Logic*. It is, more precisely, structurally presupposed as the philosophical result to be

actualized at the close of the philosophical system, which is to say, in the expression of the whole organization of spirit in its retroactive reconstruction of the moments of its own subjective, objective and absolute development. It is only within the reconstruction of philosophical science as the systematic organization of spirit's self-parturition that speculative thinking, as the thought of that creation, is sufficiently presented. It is, accordingly, only within the *self-supersession* of all the moments of processual supersession that the speculative thinking of spirit in and for itself emerges as the retroactively disclosed truth content of the experiential, historical and ontological dialectical development. It is only when the life of spirit returns to itself as its own self-created life that the inner sense of *spiritual movement* – the immanent structure of which is speculative thinking – is exposed as self-consciously exhibited (i.e. as 'spirit').

### 3.8 The Presentation of the 'Subject'

As the phenomenological exposition of the basic transition into speculative presentation showed, the realm of phenomenology articulates the incapacity of properly raising the philosophical subject out of the appearance of the miscomprehension of the subject of philosophy (the closing paragraphs of the preface to the *Phenomenology* resituate the discourse on speculation back into the discourse on the limits and nature of philosophy – *Philosophie* – at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>).<sup>452</sup> It is for this reason that the *Phenomenology* is an exposition of the forms of knowing truth and not the actual presentation of the content of that truth itself. Accordingly, within the limits of phenomenological science, the propositional form of speculation remains caught within the ambiguous bind of its revelation through dialectical movement and its self-incurred limit as

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<sup>452</sup> PS, §67-72; 3: 63-7.

dialectical movement. The proposition itself does not reflect the truth content of the subject itself. Spirit finds its initial expression in a mode of expression that does not properly articulate the inner sense of spirit. The constant recourse to the propositional form – a form borrowed from the pre-existing modes of philosophical expression – is a recourse that can lead to the rehabilitation of the externally reflected presupposition of the proposition as an essentially ‘empty form’ to be ‘filled’ with the subject’s content.<sup>453</sup> The subject of speculation, if it is to achieve the comprehension of its own essence, needs to express itself speculatively as the subject of its own speculation.

As was noted earlier, it is the realm of speculative philosophy itself – or *Logic* – that inaugurates the movement of the philosophical subject’s own self-comprehension. It is in the *Logic* then that spirit articulates itself in its own autonomous, absolutely free expression. It is here that the subject fully manifests itself in the element of its own activity. Consequently, it is in speculative philosophy that the subject grasps itself as and in its own creation. To speak of a Hegelian ‘subject’ however is highly problematic since it *restores* the identity and structure of the truth of the absolute to a decidedly *one-sided* expression that in itself does not sufficiently grasp the unity disclosed in the concept of *spirit*. It, more importantly, fails to *comprehend* the truth content of spirit *in its truth and as its own truth*. As was noted earlier, Hegel posits the internal structure of spirit in his ‘First Philosophy of Spirit’ in terms of the following important formulation: spirit consists of ‘*bringing itself to birth*.’<sup>454</sup> The structure and activity of spirit is *self-parturition*. The structure of self-parturition implies that *truth – which spirit alone is* – is its own self-creation; or, as Hegel put it in the introduction to his

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<sup>453</sup> Ibid. §66; 3: 62.

<sup>454</sup> SS, 228.

lectures on the philosophy of fine art, 'only the truth can create the truth.'<sup>455</sup> It is clear that the most accomplished articulation of this 'creation' of truth consists in the structure of the free activity of *thinking*.

The identification of self-parturition recalls the sense that speculative philosophy consists of exposing God's own thinking *prior* to his total externalization in creation. As an entity defined by its creation, the thinking of God prior to its creation can be grasped in terms of the comprehension of God's own self-creation. *Speculative philosophy then consists of the unfolding of spirit's comprehension of its self-parturition in the element of that self-parturition.* It is composed in its own element – in the substance of its own life – since it no longer borrows from an another element of thought that is presupposed as 'oppositional' or purely 'other' (as external). It is for this reason that the idea of the exposition of God before his creation of nature and finitude, as recoded into the proper philosophical discourse of the exposition of spirit in its own self-parturition, is initially concerned with what is meant by 'presuppositionless' philosophical science: self-parturition must be understood in terms of radical freedom. This freedom of spirit's self-parturition is, at the level of the *Logic*, initially expressed in the following way:

The essential point of view is that what is involved is an altogether new concept of scientific procedure. Philosophy, if it would be science, cannot, as I have remarked elsewhere, borrow its method from a subordinate science like mathematics, any more than it can remain satisfied with categorical assurances of inner intuition, or employ arguments adduced by external reflection. On the contrary, it can be only the nature of the content itself which spontaneously develops itself in a scientific method of knowing, since it is at the same time the reflection of the content itself which first posits and *generates* its determinate character.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> A (I), 5.

<sup>456</sup> SL, 27; 5: 16.

The 'new concept of scientific procedure' unfolds within the articulation of the spontaneous development of the content (the truth of spirit) itself in its own self-generation. Speculative philosophy then unfolds not in the dialectical movement of experience as disclosed in phenomenological science but in a movement that is itself the reflection of that which moves. Hegel, in the preface of the first edition of the *Logic*, aptly calls this mode of movement (the self-movement of spirit), 'spiritual movement (*geistige Bewegung*).'<sup>457</sup> From its initial expression in the first preface, the *Logic* is concerned more precisely with the presentation of the inner sense and content of this form of movement.

Recent orthodox Hegelian scholarship, which busies itself with making philosophical sense of what Hegel's speculative project means by being consciously 'presuppositionless,' does not raise the permeated relation of presuppositionless philosophy and the subject of spirit as self-parturition.<sup>458</sup> This orthodoxy is concerned with the clarification of Hegel's philosophical project in its methodological core. The distinct problem with such clarification is of course illuminated by the failure to begin to construct a discourse on the meaning and structure of the identity of spirit as precisely the 'spontaneously developing content' that gives sense to philosophical methodology. Hegelian scholarship restores to the orbit of Hegel's enterprise precisely that which he strictly forbids. Accordingly, the question of the relation between the dialectical movement of experience as elaborated in the *Phenomenology* and the 'spiritual movement' posited as the content of speculative philosophy itself is treated only externally, which of course means that they are not treated in their dialectical interconnection. To understand what is meant by the self-parturition of spirit then one must have some sense of the general structure of what Hegel identified as the philosophical whole,

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid. 28; 5: 17.

<sup>458</sup> The most accomplished example of this is without doubt found in the work of Stephen Houlgate. See Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, pp.54-71.

that is to say, what he called the 'system of science', since, as has already been noted, spirit is itself the inner sense of science as such, which is to say, spirit is identical to science. The corollary to this is, for Hegel, the following: the actual comprehension of spirit occurs only at end of the systematic unfolding of the whole of science. Consequently, the *Phenomenology*, which constitutes the first part of the system, and the *Logic*, which in its expanded form is the 'first sequel' of the *Phenomenology* (thus the first sequel to the first part of the system), do not express the speculative whole of spirit and its self-comprehension as the self-parturition of science as such. That said, the emergence of *Logic* in its new form, as the inner logical expression of the truth content of spirit's absolute method (the spontaneously unfolded scientific method of itself), expresses in its initial form, the structure of spirit's self-comprehension and self-parturition. The first sequel of the first part of the system of science is, in that it retains the dialectical form of the *Phenomenology*, structured in a twofold sense: it is at once the transition into the content of 'spiritual movement' through the dissolution of dialectical movement and the initial transition into the actual speculative comprehension of what moves in spiritual movement. Accordingly, the 'first sequel' is itself the reduplication of the internal ambiguity of the *Phenomenology* as introduction to the system of science and first part of the system; the *Logic* in its expanded form is simultaneously the expansion of the experience of philosophical consciousness and the spiritual movement of spirit itself as the subject of what is, in the first part of the system, configured as phenomenological experience. Thus, the true 'first part' of the system of science contains within itself both the *Phenomenology* and the expanded form of the *Logic* as the transition from out of the *Phenomenology* and into the true realm of spirit's truth. The *Logic* is, by extension, the *prequel* to the second part of the system, which is to say, the exposition of the philosophies of



nature and spirit. It is for this reason that the *Logic* is divided into two volumes: the first volume contains the retention and transformation of phenomenological movement through the doctrine of being and essence; whereas the second volume contains the initial expression of spirit's internal self-comprehension and retroactive determination of its phenomenological and logical development (in the form of 'thinking').

The invocation of 'speculative thinking' from the very first page of the *Logic* expresses in advance of the place of its proper philosophical exposition, the initial step into the exposition of what is meant by that thinking. It is then within the 'system of subjective logic' – the exposition of the concept – that the sense of what Hegel noted in his earlier Jena writings (the self-parturition of spirit) finds its proper place of philosophical exposition. It is here that we begin to have a sense of what the Hegelian subject *is* from its pure articulation as the essential, self-related 'I', through the modes of its subjective reflection, and to its idea in life, cognition and the absolute as its own '*concrete existence that is itself free.*'<sup>459</sup>

The first important step into the realm of the pure concept consists of the transition of the '*dialectical movement of substance*' as 'the immediate *genesis of the concept.*'<sup>460</sup> The movement of substance, because of its expressly dialectical nature, consists of its self-transition into its reflected ground – the truth that is its other is its own determinate ground. With this self-reflected becoming of itself as real essence, substance determinately progresses into the pure positing of itself as the unity of itself with and for itself. That is to say, the nature of substance itself, as articulated in its own becoming, yields the identity of the true unity of itself as the concept. Thus, it is the concept that is the truth of substance (retroactively determining the truth content of substance in its true identity). The structure of

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<sup>459</sup> SL, 583; 6: 253.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid. 577; 6: 246.

the exposition of this movement is clearly set out by Hegel (in true dialectical fashion): the exposition of the genesis of the concept is the abstract result of the exposition of the concrete dialectical movement of that genesis within the unfolding of real essence (substance). Through the forward motion of the philosophical presentation, the anteriority of the concept is revealed. The distinction however between this dialectical movement of the concept as it genetically unfolds through the development of substance (as its abstract result) and that of the unfolding of the concept in and for itself (of the 'concept of the concept' as Hegel puts it), is that it is in the realm of the concept that the essence of dialectical movement as the immanent activity of the concept itself (as its own self-identity) begins to take shape. The structure of unity developed in the exposition of being and essence and into the real essence of self-reflected substance are forms of inadequate unity (as self-comprehended unity). It is in the very first elaborations of the structure of the concept in its own exposition that this inadequacy begins to emerge, and more importantly, begins to emerge in nuanced distinction to the immanent movement of *aufheben*. It is clear for example that the movement of *aufheben* constitutes the structure of the salient moments of the development of substance in the opening sections of the concept in general. The moment in which substance is fully superseded is that in which its own self-supersession yields the *consummation* (*Vollendung*) of itself as superseded essence. With this supersession (configured in Hegel's recapitulation as the 'third' stage of the dialectical movement of substance's self-actualization), substance folds into its non-substantive other, namely, *subject*.<sup>461</sup>

The structure of the comprehension of the emergence of the concept qua subject is twofold: first, it unfolds through the developmental progression of the philosophical presentation (the subject is the 'abstract result' that emergence from necessary immanent

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid. 578-80; 6: 246-9.

dialectic of substance returned to itself); and second, the subject is the retroactively determined origin of self-reflected substance; the concept simply is the substance as the ‘*cause (Ursache) of itself*’, which is to say, as the freedom of its own self-creation.<sup>462</sup> With this twofold movement of the exposition of the concept in and for itself, the *Logic* returns, in part, to the basic inner sense of the moments that punctuated the first two doctrines. So, the initial unfolding of the concept as pure individual I reflects the basic form of the ontological structure of simple being (‘the *I* is, *first*, this pure self-related unity’), or pure being and its transitions through becoming into its other (determinate being).<sup>463</sup> The distinct quality of this ‘return’ however is permeated with the sense of retroactivity as the movement that renders intelligible the two doctrines in their conceptual sense, that is, as negated moments of the subject’s own conceptual labour. Accordingly, negation still occupies the central motor of the concept’s self-exposition. It is however, a movement that results in the reflection of itself as the dissolution of negation as a dynamic, progressive and retroactive logic of determination since what the subject at the end of the *Logic* will consist of, as the very beginning of the *Logic* noted, is the idea of the concept as methodologically self-unfolding; and this self-unfolding is more properly identified as ‘spiritual self-movement (*geistiger Selbstbewegung*), the dialectical soul (*dialektische Seele*) that everything true possesses and through which alone it is true.’<sup>464</sup> Or, as Hegel states earlier in the *Logic* (anticipating its close): ‘the indwelling pulsation of self-movement and spontaneous activity.’<sup>465</sup>

The internal structure of this movement is the structure of the *thinking* (the ‘dialectical soul’) of the spiritual self-movement since it is thinking itself that comprises the highest

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid. 582; 6: 251.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid. 583; 6: 252.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid. 835; 6: 563.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid. 443; 6: 78.

activity of spirit which is alone the absolute truth (and is nothing but the 'subject matter of logic'<sup>466</sup>). It is the structure of thinking then that gives true sense to what is speculative about and consummated in spirit's self-parturition. It is speculative thinking, as the internal sense of the unfolding of spirit in its twofold form through the *Logic*, that constitutes the truth of spiritual self-movement as its own free movement. It is also speculative thinking, retroactively determining the structure of logical progression that also constitutes the self-supersession of supersession itself as the truth content of spiritual self-movement, which is to say, the unity of the containment of itself in the notions of its other. Speculative thinking consists of the supersession of itself in its own *living form*.

### 3.9 The Living Form of Speculative Thinking

Note has already been made of the central character of speculative thinking: it holds fast thinking and contradiction in the contradiction itself. This 'holding fast' is the conceptual expression of the specific unity articulated in speculative thinking. More importantly, the unity expressed in 'holding fast' is initially reflected in the ontological structure of life. The unification of identity and difference in their contradiction as a vital unity is what gives immanent sense to what is *living* in identity, spirit, and its speculative thinking. Something is 'alive only in so far as it contains contradiction within it, and moreover is this power to hold and endure the contradiction within it.'<sup>467</sup> To live, according to Hegel, is to hold fast to that which contradicts life itself. It is then to contain, at the outermost point of its extremity, that

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid. 761; 6: 469.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid. 440; 6: 76. Recall also one of the most famous passages in the *Phenomenology*: 'the life of spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it.' PS, §32; 3: 36. The structure of this life that contains within itself what contradicts it is a life of holding fast the contradiction in the contradiction. The life of spirit is the speculative life; the central activity of this life is speculative thinking.

which is putatively configured as uncontainable. Speculative thinking, as the structure that brings life into contact with its other and through its other, is the activity and the living pulse of spirit. In order to make more sense of what is essential in speculative thinking (holding fast) and in what sense this essence relates to the central structure of *aufheben*, the ontological structure of *living* needs to be elucidated since it is only within this element that spirit qua the comprehension of its own self-parturition – which is to say, of the comprehension of its life – is properly disclosed.

Although the ontological identity of what is ‘living’ runs through the whole of both the *Phenomenology* and (especially) the *Logic*, it only comes into full conceptual fruition – in the ontological status of ‘life’ – in the first chapter of the third section of the second volume of the *Logic* (as the initial concrete articulation of the ‘Idea’). As a conceptual category developing in the logical transitions, ‘life’ expresses a moment in the logical articulation of the absolute idea (the self-reflected expression of the initial form of concrete self-identity). It does not, accordingly, give full ontological sense to what is meant by ‘living’ as it unfolds as the very ‘pulse’ of the ontological identity of spirit. Thus, we can postulate that ‘life’ is the comprehensive philosophical category of spirit at a particular stage of its self-development in the logical form of the absolute idea, and ‘living’ is the ontological identity of the process of life in its unfolding and in the thinking that grasps this unfolding as its own. What ‘lives’ is, accordingly, what comes into life through the movement of thinking that imbues the thought of ‘life’ (a determinate *Gedanke*) with its internal, vital essence.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> It is the distinction between the comprehensive speculative exposition of ‘life’ and a less definitive ontological notion of ‘living’ that creates the condition for thinking ‘life’ after Hegel. An example of this shift from ‘life’ to ‘living’ via a delicate categorial distinction between the two terms can be found in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Naukhoff, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Consider the distinction between the critical disclosure of the *culture* of ‘*promoting faith in life*’ (ibid. 28) and the declaration ‘*to live dangerously!*’ (ibid. 161). One could also cite some examples in Kierkegaard’s work in which ‘living’ is categorially distinguished from ‘life’: ‘How, then, can the esthetic that is incommensurable

The concept of 'life' in its categorial development in the *Logic* comprises of a moment that initially appears to exceed the 'domain of logic as it is commonly conceived.'<sup>469</sup> Importantly, with the concept of 'life', the logical exposition of the absolute returns to the phenomenological method of defamiliarization and the dialectical negation of the distinction between 'ordinary philosophy' and 'true philosophy' as immanently permeated philosophical standpoints. Accordingly, with the category of 'life', logical thinking is in the realm of the actual self-transformation of its own pre-given determinations (pure formal determinations of 'thought') since it is in the concept of 'life' that 'being' and 'thought' are self-reflexively constituted: life as *immediate* absolute universality is neither object nor subject of thought but rather is the concept as substance of life in and for itself.<sup>470</sup> Another way of identifying concept qua substance in the form of life as immediate idea is encapsulated in the peculiar expression 'logical life.'<sup>471</sup> What emerges as 'logical life' here is itself the reflected form of the wider conception of the movement of speculative thinking as the comprehension of movement as the '*existing* contradiction itself.'<sup>472</sup> And this comprehension is reflected in the higher unity of the life of spirit as the unity of itself and its opposition in the disunity of that

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even for portrayal in poetry be represented? Answer: by being lived...Everything I am talking about here certainly can be portrayed esthetically, but not in poetic reproduction, but only by living it, by realizing it in the life of actuality.' Søren Kierkegaard, *The Essential Kierkegaard*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, p.69. And: 'one does not become a Christian by hearing something about Christianity, by reading something about it, by thinking about it, or, while Christ was living, by seeing him once in a whole or by going and staring at him all day long. No, a *setting* is required – venture a decisive act' (ibid. 408). I would also like to make note here of Marcuse's conflation of the category of life with the 'living' in his construction and analysis of Hegel's ontology. I believe that folding the sense of 'living' into a full ontological conception of life – which for Marcuse, is the result of the reinterpretation of Hegel's *Logic* – cuts away the problem of the critical mediation of Hegel's thought in the mid-late nineteenth century. As an ontological analysis of the presuppositions of theories of historicity in the 'philosophy of life' (Dilthey), Marcuse's work is distinctively potent. That said, in relation to the larger historical development of thought after Hegel's death in 1831, the delicate distinction between 'life' and 'living,' a distinction Hegel never properly thematizes, remains a point that requires critical exposition. Importantly, in the work of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, a strong 'ontological concept of life' is not properly disclosed. *A fortiori*, one could argue that such an ontological conception is a point of contest for Nietzsche and Kierkegaard.

<sup>469</sup> SL, 761; 6: 469.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid. 763; 6: 471.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid. 762; 6: 470.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid. 440; 6: 76.

opposition. This unity is 'reborn as the pure offspring of spirit' (an offspring, one must immediately add, which is itself the origin of its own birth).<sup>473</sup> Life, in its logical form as immediate idea (as in itself immanently self-related absolute universality), is however distinct from the living form of speculative thinking in that, at the categorial level of its unfolding, it is not the self-comprehension of itself in its own self as the life that lives, if you will, spiritually (the life of spirit) and as the supersession of its own mediation.<sup>474</sup> Put another way: life, in its logical form qua immediate idea, *does not live*. It does not 'live' in so far as the form of the concept does not fully correspond with the form of its thought; or, more precisely, it does not correspond with the form that thinks the concept itself in the contradiction of its own concept. As Hegel is fully aware, a thinking that *simply* overcomes the abstractions prevalent in the dialectical interpretation of one categorial moment of spirit qua absolute truth is itself a reflection of that limit itself. The thinking appropriate to the comprehension of spirit in and for itself in its self-differentiation, and speculative restitution within that self-differentiation (its immanent self-contradiction) is a thinking that no longer reflects the moments of self-differentiation and self-development, but is the thinking of the *whole* as it is in its dynamic identity as the identity of itself and its contradiction in the contradiction. Thus, speculative thinking is the living form of the thinking of the whole itself as the absolute idea of spirit's actual living self. It is the pulse of spirit's own self-creation; it is the speculative life of its own existence qua absolute living self-created life.

This lack of identity between speculative thinking and its own philosophical expression is condensed perfectly into a moment of the organic development of life in the

*Philosophy of Nature:*

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid. 762; 6: 470.

<sup>474</sup> Life is, as Hegel states elsewhere, the 'self-realizing *spontaneous* movement'; PP, 140; 4: 30 (emphasis mine).

The living creature is always exposed to danger, always bears within itself an other, but can endure this contradiction which the inorganic cannot. But life is also the resolving of this contradiction; and it is in this that the speculative consists: it is only for Understanding that the contradiction is unresolved. Life, therefore, can be grasped only speculatively; for it is precisely in life that the speculative has existence.<sup>475</sup>

It is in the exposition of the philosophy of nature that life begins to conceptually substantiate itself into deeper forms of existence. And yet, as the significant lack of the discourse on the conceptual identity of speculation itself (as the identity of spirit) in the second part illuminates, the philosophy of nature only signals, through a presupposed logical identification of speculation, its own incapacity to raise itself into the comprehension of what Hegel in the *Philosophy of Spirit* will refer to as 'spirit's living unity (lebendigen *Einheit des Geistes*)' of life, the speculative and their speculative comprehension.<sup>476</sup> We now come to two interdependent issues: first, the form of speculative thinking in relation to the formation of the philosophical form of its expression; and second, the reflection of the philosophical system as itself the expression of the 'living' form of speculative thinking as the speculative, living whole.

### 3.10 The Philosophical System as the Presentation of the Whole

The comprehension of spirit in its own self-comprehension as absolute truth requires the form of its own *absolute self-expression* in order for the content of the whole to shine forth. This amounts to the following: speculative philosophy requires a speculative form that reflects the speculative thinking that unfolds in its immanent content. Apropos our philosophical focus,

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<sup>475</sup> Enc. II, 274; 9: 338.

<sup>476</sup> Enc. III, 4; 10: 13. The terminological and conceptual absence of 'speculation' or the 'speculative' is neither innocent nor fortuitous. The *Philosophy of Nature*, because of the subject matter it unfolds, cannot itself consciously reflect on its own speculative content qua speculative since this is the subject matter, at the level of abstract apprehension, the *Logic*, and at the self-conscious level, the *Philosophy of Spirit*.



this suggests that the speculative form in which the result of speculative philosophy as sufficiently reflected consists of the speculative *sichaufheben* of the structure and movement of the *aufheben* of the moments that constitute the course of the development of spirit. It, accordingly, calls upon the identification of spirit as its own *self-supersession*; as the supersession of the moments that punctuate the recollection of its development as superseded moments. And yet, and this is crucial, in order to reflect its own development as self-comprehended, spirit must express itself in a speculative form that is no longer the experiential movement of retroactively identified moments of dialectical progress. Rather, the speculative form must raise itself out of the dialectical form of identification, misidentification and transformation: speculative truth 'must possess in its own self a *content* adequate to its form.'<sup>477</sup> The philosophical form that signals this speculative form is the form of, as has already been noted, the *system of science*.

In a certain sense, the 'system of science' was never fully elaborated as a univocal philosophical text self-consciously composed as a complete philosophical work. What we have in the last edition (1830) is the combined collection of Hegel's lecture notes on the moments that structure the philosophical system and student and colleague notes drafted during the delivery of the lectures (especially those of Leopold von Henning and Ludwig Boumann). The *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* then is a work of academic *collage* resulting in an 'outline (*Grundrisse*)' that served most prominently as a system of notes prepared for philosophical tutelage.<sup>478</sup> It is for this reason that the three volumes lack (much

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<sup>477</sup> SL, 594; 6: 267.

<sup>478</sup> This does not present an obstacle for William Wallace who, in his 'Bibliographical Notice', identifies the work as 'the only complete, matured, and authentic statement of Hegel's philosophical system.' Enc. I, p.xxxi.

to the relief of some Hegelian scholars<sup>479</sup>) the more detailed philosophical analyses found in the *Logic* and the *Phenomenology*. That said, the *Encyclopaedia* does aim at a holistic articulation of philosophical systematicity as the expression of the whole movement of spirit's progress and self-manifestation through the exposition of its concatenated parts (parts augmented in the collected lectures on religion, art and the history of philosophy). The question for us here is as follows: what precisely is the formal nature of the *Encyclopaedia* according to Hegel, who, one must immediately add, seldom reflects on the encyclopaedic form of his major texts?

The first consciously reflected employment of the idea of the encyclopaedic form emerges within the expressly *pedagogical* context of Hegel's development as university tutor in Nuremberg (the Greek παιδεία – lit. 'rearing of a child' – is reflected in the expression).<sup>480</sup> The object of the '*Enzyklopädie*' is reserved strictly for the higher class. It is, accordingly, reflexively constituted by the central subject-matter of the higher class: speculation, speculative thinking and the 'positively rational.' The preliminary point to note then is that the encyclopaedic form is presupposed on a certain level of philosophical development (through an exposition of the immediate, objective forms of familiar social life – the 'ethical substance' of 'objective spirit' – to the dialectical comprehension of the 'determinate thoughts' constituting the higher categories of theoretical science – namely 'cosmology', 'natural theology', 'psychology' and their critique in Kantian philosophy). The pedagogical development through the 'lower' and 'middle' classes is the preparation of the higher class. It is only from the context of the comprehension of the true subject matter of philosophical

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<sup>479</sup> See J. N. Findlay's remarks in his foreword to part one of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*; Enc. I, vii.

<sup>480</sup> PP, 139-40; 4: 9-10. For an extensive biographical exposition of Hegel's development 'as educator', see Frederic Ludlow Luqueer, *Hegel as Educator*, New York: Macmillan and Co., 1896 (especially chapters 4 and 5).

science – the speculative thinking of the speculative – that the truth content of the lower and middle classes can be properly organized. The second point to take note of is that the encyclopaedic form is the organizing principle of the whole content of the speculative at its self-consciously reflected level. It is this identity of ‘self-conscious’ reflection that the philosophical sense of encyclopaedia is mobilized. At the point of the higher class, Hegel makes a clear phenomenological distinction between two forms of encyclopaedia: the ‘ordinary (*gewöhnlichen*)’ and the ‘philosophical (*philosophische*).’<sup>481</sup> The putative form of the encyclopaedia consists of the externally reflected connection (the ‘story’) of ready-made (‘just as we find them’) sciences.<sup>482</sup> Accordingly, an ordinary encyclopaedia comprises an ‘aggregate’ of forms that lack internal comprehension.<sup>483</sup> A philosophical encyclopaedia, which on an immediate level identically resembles the form of the standard form of the encyclopaedia (similarly to the identical reflection of the speculative proposition to the general form of ordinary propositions), consists of the expression of the immanent development of the actual subject matter of all the sciences in their *interconnection* (*Zusammenhang*).<sup>484</sup> It is, and this is crucial, (a) the form that is itself a reflection of the concept that unites its content and (b) the philosophical organization (the organization of the concept) of the fundamental concepts and categories of the sciences that punctuate the theoretical development of the subject matter.<sup>485</sup> What is unique to the higher class is not the mere recognition of the subject matter – the absolute truth of spirit – as such, but rather the comprehension of its twofold identity as the reflexive inter-connection of its ‘form’ (that of the philosophical encyclopaedia) and ‘content’ (the philosophical concept of spirit) in is

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<sup>481</sup> PP, 140; 4: 10.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> Enc. I, 21; 8: 61.

<sup>484</sup> PP, 140; 4: 10.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

formal exposition. Consequently, the phenomenological reflection on the form of the encyclopaedia in the context of the pedagogical development of philosophical science yields the internal sense of speculative thinking as the most accomplished result of the basic dialectical presentation of the double coding of the encyclopaedic form and speculative content.

The transition from the ordinary encyclopaedia to its self-reflective philosophical form is a transition that occurs through the dialectical movement of philosophical science itself as it unfolds *phenomenologically* through the distinction between what appears qua 'ordinary' and what appears (through the exposition of the ordinary) qua 'philosophical.' The phenomenological form of the dialectical movement from ordinary to philosophical is however not an 'object' of the *shift itself* to the encyclopaedic form. Put another way (and recalling the second chapter): the movement of *defamiliarization* (and what is at stake in the internal shift of the encyclopaedic form is nothing but the movement of its defamiliarization) as the methodological result of the unfolding of the movement of consciousness itself in its structure in the ambiguous truth disclosed by experience is not an object structuring the unfolding of the transitions in the philosophical encyclopaedia.<sup>486</sup> The philosophical sense of the 'philosophical encyclopaedia' – the sense that underpins the encyclopaedic claims of the interconnection of the philosophical sciences in the philosophical system – is accordingly a *dialectical* result of the methodological movement of phenomenological science and its condensed exposition of the ambiguous truth content of experience itself as articulating the

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<sup>486</sup> That the 'Phenomenology of Spirit' is a constitutive moment in the *Encyclopaedia* appears initially as problematic at the level of comprehending its place in the system; Enc. III, 153-78; 10: 199-229. That said, the restriction of the *Phenomenology* to the first stage of spirit's unfolding (to 'subjective spirit') is apposite: it suggests that Hegel drops the methodological movement of the *Phenomenology* as expressed in 1807, choosing instead to fold it into the logical method of the philosophical system as a whole (recall that Hegel's *Logic* commences with a recapitulation of the methodological movement of defamiliarization – a movement that in itself is reflected throughout the work).

network of the ontological, historical and putative forms of knowing and truth in their permeation.

The encyclopaedic form of the philosophical sciences then constitute a paradox: what appears as the form of the living whole of spirit in its self-reflected expression is in fact exposed by the *finite* articulation of the encyclopaedic form as infinite manifestation of spirit's universality (an essential characteristic of the encyclopaedic form is that it grows through an appropriation of that which stands initially as its 'outside' – the pure movement of the encyclopaedia then is spuriously infinite). But it is through the very expression and exposition of its finitude that the finite understanding of the infinite logic of the encyclopaedic form is folded in on itself; or, as Hegel puts it in the first book of the *Logic*, the finite understanding of infinitude is itself brought to its own self-related finitude: the 'ceasing-to-be' of pure finitude itself 'ceases to be.'<sup>487</sup> It is the immanent self-reflexive structure of the encyclopaedia in its philosophically comprehended form that properly reflects the conceptual labour constituting speculative thinking since what the philosophical encyclopaedia expresses in the form of an 'outline' of the encyclopaedia of philosophical sciences is the holding fast to what appears to reflective consciousness as a 'paradox' or a phenomenological ambiguity. It is in the form of the philosophical encyclopaedia that the sciences, the moments structuring the development of spirit, are in themselves always already the superseded points of spirit's comprehension, which is to say, the infinite holding fast of itself in its finite, particular moments (the comprehensive knowledge of the interconnections of logic, nature and spirit).

It is in this sense that Hegel's famous proposition – 'the true is the whole' – is speculatively illuminated. The 'whole', which appears in the preface to the *Phenomenology*

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<sup>487</sup> SL, 130; 5: 141. The structure of finitude's self-relation will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

as the posited philosophical result of a speculative philosophy it is immanently preparing, is not only grasped in the moments that punctuate its processual becoming (the becoming of itself qua process), but truth is grasped *in* its speculative unfolding through the conceptual reconfiguration of itself as its own self-comprehension. At the speculative level, the essence of the whole is not only philosophically penetrated and its sense ‘held fast’, but that the movement of this penetration in its interconnected moments is traced, organized and reflected in the thinking that grasps its own movement as and within philosophical penetration. The whole is its own truth comprehended completely; it is the self-completion of itself in and for itself. It is for this reason that Hegel articulates the ‘whole of philosophy’ (and not the particular totalities of its moments) as a ‘circle of circles.’<sup>488</sup> The total, single circle (the unit) of philosophy in its particular expression does not, as a consequence of its retroactively comprehended particularity, sufficiently reflect the expansion of the philosophical expression of the *systematic* whole. The single circles are the determinate forms of philosophy. The exposition of their concatenation – the circle that unfolds from within itself and widens – is dialectical. The comprehension of that dialectical movement as the self-movement of philosophy itself is its speculation – the suspension of the dialectical movement in the thinking of spiritual movement. It is for this reason that ‘system’, ‘whole’, ‘encyclopaedia’; ‘speculation’ are all philosophical forms of the self-comprehension of speculative philosophy grasped at the end of philosophical science reflected in the shape of the systematic philosophical encyclopaedia.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Enc. I, 20; 8: 60 and SL, 842; 6: 571. Gérard Lebrun develops the distinctively speculative dimension of the ‘circle of circles’ in contradistinction to the dialectical insufficiency of the single circle (or ‘cycle’) in the last chapter of his *L’Envers de la Dialectique: Hegel à la lumière de Nietzsche*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004.

<sup>489</sup> A full historical and conceptual account of the idea and systematic form of the ‘encyclopaedia’ as it operates in Hegel’s thought would require a more detailed examination of its relation to earlier models, especially the eighteenth century French materialist *Encyclopédie*. Of distinctive note is the form Diderot and d’Alembert’s takes, namely, it functions as a ‘*recueil*’ of the particularities of the arts and sciences, that is, a dictionary of

### 3.11 The *Aufhebung* of Dialectical Movement: *Sichaufheben*

The unfolding of the subject matter of speculative philosophy – the truth which is alone spirit, spirit as the unity of subject and object in their permeated contradiction – is, as Hegel consistently notes, *dialectical* in its immanent nature. The movement of absolute unity – the speculative – is comprehended in the dialectical process in which it is formed. Thus, the dialectical unfolding of the speculative is structured *dialectically*. This reflection of dialectical movement in the formation of the speculative reveals, through the self-reflection of the identity expressed in dialectical movement (*of* the speculative *in* its contradiction), the immanent structure of the self-comprehension of the speculative itself. The basic shape of this self-comprehension is articulated as ‘speculative thinking.’ Speculative thinking, as the thinking of spirit’s own thought, is the comprehension of infinite self-relation in the dynamic of its own truth content as infinite self-related identification. This infinite, which dissolves the given determinacy (a ‘thought’) of the ‘infinite’ as pre-eminently a deflated temporal structure of endless repetition (‘as an abstract away and away for ever and ever’<sup>490</sup>), is *internalized* as the immanent structure of thinking’s self-relation. It is because spirit is its own thought that the true infinite, the circle of circles, is systematically actualized. The systematic actualization of the infinite self-relation and self-comprehension of spirit – of everything that returns to itself and determines the inner sense of the ‘self’ – reveals the

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sorts. For a useful introduction, see John Lough, *The Encyclopédie*, London: Longman, 1969. Note should also be made here on Novalis’ so-called ‘Romantic Encyclopaedia,’ which was composed in a series of fragments in the last years of the eighteenth century (I only make note of it here as Hegel would not have been cognisant of this work). What is striking about Novalis’ project is its transformation of the encyclopaedic form to that of a conceptual activity. This is reflected in Novalis’ neologism ‘encyclopaedistics.’ This suggests that the form, transformed into conceptual activity, becomes a distinctive form of thinking, one in which the other forms of thinking are contained and reflected (significantly, the entries on ‘encyclopaedistics’ are often preceded by references to the idea of philosophy as a general science of the concepts of objects). See Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia: Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, trans. David W. Wood, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.

<sup>490</sup> Enc. I, 49; 8: 95.

circular identity of the *Aufhebung* of its own processual development. In this form, the *aufheben* of spirit is its own *Aufhebung*: the self-supersession of the supersession that punctuates its own development and reconstruction. What was initially exposed as the ‘self-supersession’ of spirit in its particular moments, is at the level of its return-into-itself as comprehension of its self-parturition, superseded into the inner form of its own determination – that is to say, superseded into the shape of self-supersession. This return of supersession into itself as the inner sense of spirit’s self-parturition expresses the internal import of ‘spiritual movement’ as self-consciously consummating the dialectical movement that structured the philosophical presentation of spirit in its systematic unfolding. Accordingly, the following is postulated: *self-supersession articulates the Aufhebung of dialectical movement.*

The initial shape of self-supersession is not only another grammatical form of the expression *aufheben* but rather is the expression of the transition of supersession itself into the transformation of a determinacy. Self-supersession is, accordingly, a central moment in the development of the dialectical process in Hegel’s thought. It appears at particular moments of self-reflexive change. Some examples from across Hegel’s oeuvre can easily demonstrate this. One example has already been illuminated and concerns the movement of the experience of the understanding in the third chapter of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>491</sup> Many other examples are discernible in the *Logic*. Consider for example, the immanent sense of the transition of the reflective movement of becoming as the transition from ‘being to nothing’ in the exposition of the categorial unfolding of ‘illusory being’ in the second book of the *Logic*: the reflective movement of the becoming of essence ‘supersedes itself in its passage (*hebt in*

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<sup>491</sup> See sub-section ‘2.9 The *Aufhebung* of Experience/The Experience of *Aufhebung*.’



*seinem Übergehen sich auf).*<sup>492</sup> The movement of illusory being qua 'self-superseding' finds its most accomplished expression in the exposition of the movement of self-related substance qua 'absolute essence containing all actuality and possibility *within itself*.'<sup>493</sup> The ontological structure of substance is self-superseding. As has already been noted, the exposition of substance itself (in its most advanced conceptual form) folds in on itself revealing the immanent contradiction of its true consummation, namely that it is, as a consequence of its structure qua self-superseding and infinite reflection-into-self, *subject*. The comprehension of the ontological structure of the self-supersession of substance is grasped in its entirety at the level of the reflection-into-self of the subject; that is to say, the self-comprehension of subject that retroactively grasps the ontological development of being from its initial expression to its most developed self-articulation. The total movement of substance, which has unfolded dialectically, is fully comprehended only at the level of the subject that is itself the self-reflected truth content of the development of substance as 'its *creation*, and in this creation its own self.'<sup>494</sup>

The twofold structure of speculative thinking ('*of...and in*') is clearly reflected in the identification of the subject as initially the idea of the universal, infinite spirit. Substance, which unfolds in its own immanent necessity, is apprehended in this preliminary way as the presentation of the inner sense of the subject but not as the comprehension of the subject manifested in and for itself in its own thought (the creation of its own self).<sup>495</sup> The 'self-

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<sup>492</sup> SL, 400; 6: 24.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid. 578-9; 6: 247.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid. 605; 6: 279.

<sup>495</sup> It is worth noting that the most accomplished system of substance, as Hegel notes, is found in Spinoza's philosophy. The invocation of the relation to this system of thought, which expresses the self-subsistence of substance as infinite indeterminacy and in which thinking is immanently posited, is reflected into the structure of speculative thinking as the more developed form of systematic thinking that contains within itself the historical shapes of its development (Spinoza's system as one of its 'moments'). The structure of speculative

supersession' of substance in all its moments repeats the self-same movement of *aufheben* as the structure of the immanent dialectical movement; it is not however the self-comprehension of the 'self' itself as the self-reflected, self-contained and 'self-fulfilled' subject qua concept of the concept. The self-supersession of substance does not contain within itself *at a self-comprehended level* the movement of its own systematic expression. It does not express from out of itself and back in on itself the movement that is its own, what was called, in the first preface of the *Logic*, 'spiritual movement.' The structure of this movement, which emerges out of the apprehended structure of self-supersession consists of the self-comprehension of self-supersession as its own movement. Self-supersession as the immanent sense of the movement of infinite spirit consists of the comprehension of the 'self' that not only manifests the double ontological movement of its reflection-into-self, but is the speculative expression of the comprehension of that movement. Self-supersession as the internal activity of spirit itself is the self-comprehended movement of itself in its *return-into-itself as return itself*; its determinacy is expressed in the specific movement that folds dialectical movement back in on itself. Another way of expressing this movement of the reconstruction of spiritual movement as the anterior sense of dialectical movement is found in the expression '*in sich zurückgebogen*' – the 'bending back into itself' of spirit; or, the movement of speculative *recurvature*.<sup>496</sup>

There are principally two sets of topographical articulation of *zurückgebogen*: first, it emerges in the doctrine of being and the doctrine of the concept in the *Science of Logic*; and second, it is employed in the first part of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* ('logic') and its last part (*Philosophy of Spirit*). It is, accordingly, absent as an expression of

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thinking, reflecting the transition from substance to subject, consists of the raising of itself through the 'immanent dialectic' of the initial standpoint. Ibid. 581; 6: 251.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid. 604; 6: 278.

the structure of spirit's self-movement from the 'Doctrine of Essence' and the *Philosophy of Nature* since in essence and nature, the movement of being is the negative reflection of itself and the extreme externalization of spirit into its other.<sup>497</sup> I will consider its articulation in the *Logic* since it is here, as I have signalled above, that the actual movement of *zurückgebogen* is developed.

In the first part of the first place in which *zurückgebogen* is employed – namely, the doctrine of being – the expression is deployed specifically within the context of the abstract exposition of the concept of infinitude as it emerges from the immanent of the concept of the self-relation of the finite, which is to say, when the finitude of the finite itself *ceases to be*. From this conceptual plication of finitude itself – and the conceptual plication of the linear movement of the philosophical exposition itself – infinitude is represented: 'the image of true infinity, bent back into itself (*zurückgebogen*), becomes the *circle*, the line which has reached itself, which is closed and wholly present, without *beginning* and *end*.'<sup>498</sup> The conceptual plication of the infinitude of the self-relation of the finite itself – which is to say, the abstract result of the dialectical unfolding of finitude itself in direct contradistinction to the erroneous 'philosophical' assumption of the absolute and direct opposition of finitude and infinitude – gives rise to the dissolution of the (external), pre-given distinction between 'beginning' and

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<sup>497</sup> The term is in fact mobilized in the doctrine of essence as presented in the first part of the system. Importantly however, the term is mobilized as the description in which the moments of essence – at the point of the reciprocal relation of cause and effect (thus the dissolution of their abstract opposition) – fold in on each other and are developed into the concept of the principle of freedom (its abstract form) since what the result of self-reciprocation of cause and effect yields is the circularity of their immanent relation and inter-permeation and *not* the dogmatic presupposition of their external opposition and linear progression from one to the other; another name for this self-reciprocation – and this evokes properly the emergence of the principle of freedom – is *necessity*; Enc. I, 217-20; 8: 299-306. In this transformation of cause and effect, or action and reaction, through the immanent transition of reciprocation itself into pure necessity, the exposition rehearses the basic contours mapped out in the abstract presentation of the true infinite in the *Logic*: 'the rectilinear movement out from causes to effects, and from effects to causes, is bent round and back into itself (*zurückgebogen*), and thus the progress *ad infinitum* of causes and effects is, as a progress, really and truly suspended.' Ibid. 217; 8: 299-300.

<sup>498</sup> SL, 149; 5: 164.

‘end’ (the initial ‘borrowing’ of determinate moments internal to the structure of ‘narration’ are here dissolved).<sup>499</sup> In this context, the logic of the movement of ‘bending back’ reflects the abstract immediacy of the geometrical model of the infinite, namely the circle. The sense of the ‘circle’ itself will be redeployed at the end of the *Logic* in the figure of the ‘circle of circles’ (which itself is expressed within the logical expression of the ‘concept of the concept’ in the context of the end of the ‘Subjective Logic’). Accordingly, the doctrine of being performs the movement of *zurückgebogen* abstractly, that is, within the context of ontological immediacy and through the exposition of the tautological repetition of being.

The second part of the first place in which *zurückgebogen* is employed appears in the context of the end of the preliminary articulation of the universal concept, which is to say, the comprehension of the concept as the absolute infinite in its abstract form (so as it is apprehended). But at the level of *this* abstract moment, we have gathered the understanding that the pure infinite concept is composed as the ontological self-reflection of the becoming of being into essence and the becoming of essence into concept; at the level of concept, as is true at the level of the abstract presentation of philosophical thinking (noted above), the movement of this becoming is a movement that folds back in on itself the moments from which it emerged; what ‘becomes’ at the level of the concept is that becoming is itself the concept’s own self-movement.<sup>500</sup> This is why, from the point of its abstract universality, the concept is posited immediately as absolute self-identity. It is the unfolding of the ‘immanent

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<sup>499</sup> Recall, *ibid.* 588; II: 260. I would like to add here the following: Hegel’s *Logic*, although it occupies a specifically demarcated position in Martin Heidegger’s conception of the history of ontology (namely, as its culmination), nevertheless anticipates – *in abstract form* – Heidegger’s project of fundamental ontology: ‘If we are to understand the problem of Being, our first philosophical step consists in not μῦθόν τινα διηγείσθαι, in ‘telling a story’ – that is to say, in not defining entities as entities by tracing them back in their origin to some other entities, as if Being had the character of some possible entity’, Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Blackwell Publishing, London, 2008), p.26.

<sup>500</sup> It is in this precise sense that the relation of process and result as briefly touched upon in the opening passages of the preface to the *Phenomenology* should be understood. The result is grasped in the identity of the process from whence the result emerges. In this movement, the result is effectively bent back on itself.

character' of itself: 'The determinateness, as determinate Concept, is *bent back into itself* (*zurückgebogen*) out of externality; it is the Concept's own immanent *character* (*immanente Charakter*)'.<sup>501</sup> The concept is identical to its own conceptual recurvature.

What was presented over the course of the first two books of the *Logic* as the immanent dialectical movement of substance reflected-into-self, emerges in the passage of the specific movement of the subject (the concept) as expressed qua 'bending back into itself' in terms of the specific immanent *character* of the subject itself. What is expressed in the subject's character is no longer the structure of the philosophical exposition of the course of substance (dialectical movement as ontologically and philosophically constitutive of one another) but rather is the reflection of the subject with its own self as the universal that is its own inner identity. Character is the expression of the concept's 'free relation to itself.'<sup>502</sup> It is, more precisely, the particular expression of the universality of the subject in the process of its own self-comprehension (the self-consciousness of its own character).<sup>503</sup>

What the subject is in its own self defines its character as the immanent constitutive movement of itself. Self-supersession qua the structure of the movement that 'supersedes' the dialectical movement of the course of the subject's substance is accordingly the self-reflected comprehension of the immanent activity of infinite spirit itself at the level of its idea. The upshot of this is the following: what is apprehended in the philosophical exposition

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<sup>501</sup> SL, 604; 6: 278. The expression 'character' evokes, perhaps, the residual influence of the moral theory of Schiller's *Aesthetic Education*; it is however employed in a more expanded sense, not simply limited to the unity of man in the age of modern life.

<sup>502</sup> SL, 604; 6: 278.

<sup>503</sup> I would like to add here the following: the terminological deployment of 'character' appears as an initially limited expression of 'spiritual life (*geistigen Lebens*)' in the second book of the *Logic* in the context of the transition into the third book (ibid. 562; 6: 227-8.) Hegel clearly states that the proper place of the comprehension of the inner sense of spiritual life is in the realm of the idea (which is to say, the third book of the *Logic*). This permeated reflection of 'character' and the concept of the subject is more clearly posited in the introductory remarks on the 'general division' of the *Logic*: 'although essence is already the inwardness of being, the character of subject (*der Charakter des Subjekts*) is to be expressly reserved for the Notion.' Ibid. 61; 5: 58.

as the *aufheben* of being in its immediacy and the reflected 'self-supersession' of substance qua essence and internalization of its immediacy is here folded back into itself as the movement of the totality of the progression reflected in the philosophical exposition. That said, the movement of this 'return' does not consist of the pure restitution of what was initially posited qua immediate being. Rather, what 'returns' is that of the subject 'back into itself.' What is grasped at the level of the exposition of essence as the internalization of being is here reflected-into-itself as the immanent character of the subject grasping the course of the dialectical movement of itself as initially an *externalized* movement. What was posited earlier as 'spiritual movement' is accordingly the speculative expression of 'the speculative' as it grasps itself in its own thought, which is to say, as speculative thinking. The internalization of the spiritual movement, of spirit's life as passed from out of its development back into itself as the self of that passage, is not simply articulated through the dialectical notion of the 'negation of negation' as the formation of the 'true' object that emerges from out of it and guarantees the negative progression of the course of being. Rather, spiritual movement is the supersession of the moments that punctuate the structure of supersession from its transition from its simple expression reflected in the simple moments of immediate being to the self-reflected structure of substance as its own 'self-supersession.'

Put another way: *spiritual movement is the speculative self-supersession of the dialectical development of aufheben from itself to 'self-supersession' in the form of the expression of its own immanent character as the speculative recurvature of itself into the moments that were initially and methodically exposed.*<sup>504</sup> It is for this reason that speculative thinking – whose central character is the twofold activity of holding fast to itself in its own

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<sup>504</sup> I am, in certain respects, trying to deepen and complicate, as Adorno puts it, 'the awkward qualification that the whole in turn lives only in the individual moments.' Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, p.91.

contradiction – reflects purely from within itself the character of infinite spirit. Speculative thinking holds fast the structural logic of *aufheben* and its transition into its self-reflection *in* the transition itself, which is to say, as its own activity (its own self-supersession) and as the logic of its own self-parturition.





## The Productive Disunity of *Aufheben* and *Sichaufheben*

*Der Geist ist zwar schon im Anfange der Geist, aber er weiß noch nicht, daß er dies ist.*<sup>505</sup>

### 4.1 Introductory Remark

The last three chapters correspond to three ‘shapes’ of *aufheben* that, as I have tried to show, unfold in Hegel’s philosophical work from his proto-phenomenological 1801 essay, the *Differenzschrift*, to his ‘mature’ philosophical system and its principle articulation of the idea of ‘speculative thinking’ as the speculative suspension (‘holding fast’) of the dialectical movement of experience, a suspension that is nevertheless reflexively formed from out of that dialectical movement and finds its proper expression in ‘spiritual self-movement.’ The three ‘shapes’, inter-connected and inter-related, are: (1) the abstract positing of ‘*Aufhebung*’; (2) the experiential *aufheben* qua dialectical movement; (3) and the spiritual self-movement of thinking’s *sichaufheben*.

The conceptual transition from abstractly posited ‘*Aufhebung*’ to speculative *sichaufheben* via the phenomenological exposition of *aufheben* functions as a reflection of the processual structure of conceptual comprehension in Hegel’s philosophical project as a whole.<sup>506</sup> It is at the point of the self-reflexive, retrospective determination of *aufheben* (from its *sichaufheben*) that the conceptual ‘disintegration’ of the unity of the reconstructed development of *aufheben* commences. The disintegration is brought into sharp relief when

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<sup>505</sup> Enc. III, 21: 10: 33.

<sup>506</sup> The movement from abstractly posited *Aufhebung*, to speculative *sichaufheben* via the negation of experiential *aufheben* is, as a result of its totalization, recognized as the conceptual movement in its particular moments of development. So, we retroactively recognize in the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology*, the basic dynamic of this movement immanent to *aufheben* and the formation of its meaning and structure.

the distinction between the experiential *aufheben* and speculative *sichaufheben* are considered in the actuality of their distinction. What this distinction initially yields is an antagonistic relation between two interdependent temporal forms of spirit. The temporal distinction immanent to spirit consists of the relation between the retroactive determination of dialectical movement as having *always already* occurred (thus, a superseded form) and a content that is *not yet* self-consciously determined as its own absolute content, which is to say, in its own movement.

The exposition of this temporal distinction immanent to spirit will, over the course of this chapter, deepen in complexity through the exposition of three forms of the actualization of absolute spirit: first, the relation of phenomenological experience and time as the expression of absolute spirit's dissolution of the dialectic of consciousness; second, the transition from objective spirit into absolute spirit in 'universal history'; and third, in the relation between absolute spirit's expression in the form of philosophy and philosophy's 'return' to the self-comprehended absolute. From out of this threefold exposition of the actuality of absolute spirit, we move to a detailed reflection on the relation between the two central temporal forms of Hegel's historical and ontological conception of spirit: the finite and the infinite. This conceptual deepening of the immanent temporal distinction of spirit is focused through a reconstruction of the twofold temporalization of the absolute at its most general level. This is exposed in the two 'tenses' that structure Hegel's philosophical presentation of the absolute: the *perfect present* (the 'always already' of the absolute) and the *future anterior* (the 'not-yet' but 'will-have-been' of the absolute).

From the examination of the twofold temporal structure of spirit, the sense of the 'third' temporalization of speculative thinking will emerge. It is the speculative temporality

of spirit's self-comprehension and speculative suspension of the ambiguous vacillation of spirit's actuality (expressed in the perfect present) and spirit's actualization (expressed in the future anterior) that sharpens the temporal distinction between the two shapes of Hegel's philosophy (the phenomenological and the systematic). As the retroactive reconstruction of this ambiguity, speculative temporalization will redouble itself from out of experiential temporalization, thus giving a more specific and determinate form to speculative thinking. It is in relation to the exposition of speculative temporalization that the undeveloped productive disunity of *aufheben* and *sichaufheben* will be brought into conceptual relief as an outstanding problem of Hegel's philosophical project.

#### 4.2 The Actuality of Absolute Spirit (I): Phenomenology and Time

The undeveloped unity of *aufheben* and its speculatively self-reflexive form (*sichaufheben*) is conceptually deepened and systematically focused by bringing into relief the philosophical distinction between experience, as principally unfolded in the opening chapters of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, and speculative thinking, as developed in the *Logic*.

The unified movement of the process of the formation of unity (what I called in the introduction 'the unity of unity') is reflected, at the end of the *Phenomenology*, in the distinction between the 'still more complex movement'<sup>507</sup> of self-consciousness as the unity *with* consciousness in general – or as Hegel puts it '*what consciousness knows in knowing itself*'<sup>508</sup> – and the knowledge of the dissolution of consciousness in the comprehension of spirit as science of the appearance of knowing in the form of absolute knowing (the 'shape'

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<sup>507</sup> PS, §103; 3: 136.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

of the phenomenologically unfolded ‘absolute spirit’).<sup>509</sup> The positing of a ‘more complex movement’ finds its expression in the self-reflexive form of self-supersession. It is in the third chapter of the *Phenomenology* that this form of supersession is initially registered (as was discussed in our second chapter). It is within the third chapter and the final chapter that the expression *Sichselbstaufheben* (and indeed *Sich-Aufheben*) is formally employed.<sup>510</sup> It is, however, only in the last chapter, that is, through the recapitulation of the movement of spirit in the context of the comprehension of itself as the content and form of the movement of its self-supersession (*die Bewegung des Sichselbstaufhebens*), that the expression returns as the self-comprehended form of *absolute spirit*.<sup>511</sup> It is at precisely this point that Hegel introduces the problem of the relation between spirit, time (*Zeit*) and the *existence* (*Dasein*) of the concept of spirit’s self-comprehended *sichaufheben*; or, as has already been noted, the existence of the concept of the speculative identity of spirit and science (‘spirit...is science’).<sup>512</sup>

The existence of the concept of spirit is not disclosed prior to the exposition and unfolding of the path of the appearance of the shapes of spirit and the comprehension of the miscomprehended moments of itself that punctuate the path. Consequently, the existence of the concept of spirit as nothing but the self-reflected identity of substance and subject is grounded on the *completion* of the labour of spirit’s self-consciousness; or, as Hegel puts it, ‘the completion of its work of compelling its imperfect ‘shape’ to procure for its consciousness the ‘shape’ of its essence.’<sup>513</sup> It is only in the context of its self-completion that spirit can be said to exist as itself in ‘time’ and the ‘actual world.’ In so far as the

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid. §798; 3: 583.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid. §141; 3: 115 and §162; 3: 133.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid. §799; 3: 583.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid. §800; 3: 583-4.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

existence of the concept of spirit as self-consciousness proceeds from its *anterior* expression, time and the actual world are, as Hegel shows, simple forms of the undeveloped concept which is, temporally, not yet the self-comprehended and self-reflexive form of spirit that knows itself in the unity of self-consciousness and consciousness. That is to say, the existence of the concept of spirit is in truth based on the development of the undeveloped content of the simple, inward substance of the 'in itself' of appearance.<sup>514</sup> Time is, accordingly, 'one-side' of the dialectic of spirit's existence; it is the basic appearance of itself as the pure in itself (reflected in pure intuition). It is, as Hegel will develop in more detail in the *Logic*, what is always already 'there' as the pure 'there' of the self-identical present.<sup>515</sup> At an impoverished conceptual level, spirit is said to appear necessarily 'in time.' It appears in time precisely because it does not comprehend time as a pure 'in itself' that is so because it is *for* spirit as an un-grasped concept of spirit's own self-comprehension: '[spirit] appears in time just so long as it has not *grasped* its pure concept, i.e. has not annulled time.'<sup>516</sup>

And yet, the comprehension of its own time – that is to say, spirit's comprehension of the 'in itself' of time as a time that is 'for itself' – does not render spirit's existence as above or beyond time at the level of its *temporal* form ('an "above me," an indeterminate beyond' as Hegel once put it).<sup>517</sup> Time qua the undeveloped notion of substance in itself is simply one side of the dialectic of spirit's temporal actuality as *history* (*Geschichte*); a side that finds its most accomplished theoretical expression as an a priori form conditioning sensuous existence (thus immanent to the transcendental subject) in Kant's 'Transcendental Aesthetic.' When spirit grasps the limits of the pure a priori form of the aesthetic of time, what is superseded

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<sup>514</sup> Ibid. §801; 3: 584.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> LHP III, 422.

('hebt...auf') is not spirit's essential temporalization but rather its 'time-form (*Zeitform*).'<sup>518</sup>

It is in this sense that time appears as the 'destiny and necessity of spirit' since time remains the 'yet-to-be' superseded form of spirit's actualization in its absolute form, which is to say, time not as a transcendental a priori form of the condition of experience but as the processual production of spirit itself.

Accordingly, spirit *miscomprehends* itself 'in time' because it does not grasp the sense in which time is for itself; that is to say, it does not comprehend the *temporalization* of its own self-movement.<sup>519</sup> In making the transition into the comprehension of this self-movement, Hegel restores to the conceptual foreground the experiential content of movement itself. Hegel recalls that spirit's experience is 'the process in which spirit *becomes* what it is *in itself*'; and it is only as this process of reflecting itself into itself that it is in itself truly spirit.'<sup>520</sup> The return of the dialectical movement of experience is spatially reflected in the figure of the 'circle that returns into itself' and raised into the 'result' of the *Phenomenology* as a whole: the comprehension of the appearance of 'substance is subject.'<sup>521</sup> With this structure of return, and with the disclosure of time as pure undifferentiated, undeveloped 'whole' (qua 'in itself') *in* which differences are contained, the temporality of history is

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<sup>518</sup> PS, §801; 3: 584.

<sup>519</sup> This point is taken up by Heidegger in section 82 of *Being and Time*. What Heidegger fails to sufficiently grasp is the *ambiguous* structure of experience as 'comprehension of miscomprehension' and as the movement of the shift from subject to object and from object to subject. It is for this reason that Heidegger comprehends *Aufhebung* in terms of the suspended result of the 'vacillation' of subject and object in Hegel. The reason for this is clear: Hegel's philosophy constitutes a distinctive development in the philosophy of time, distinctive precisely because it attempts to overcome the opposition of subject and object temporally. But it does this 'in time,' thus making Hegel's philosophical project the most accomplished expression of the 'vulgar' notion of time (in this sense, Heidegger performs an immanent Hegelian critique of Hegel's philosophy). Heidegger however does not expose the way in which the experiential temporalization of spirit is unfolding precisely within the limits of its being 'in time.' This is something I will try to expound in more detail below. For a philosophically robust reflection on the relation of Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology and Hegel's philosophy, see Jacques Taminiaux, 'From One Fundamental Ontology to the Other: The Double Reading of Hegel,' in *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, trans. Michael Gendre, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

<sup>520</sup> PS, §801; 3: 585.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*

properly revealed. Actual history is, according to Hegel, the temporality of the movement of the conceptual *labour* of the self-comprehension of spirit.<sup>522</sup>

This 'temporality of the movement of conceptual labour' can be grasped in terms of the temporality of spirit's phenomenological self-comprehension through the path of the unfolding of consciousness. History is, in a strong sense, *our* experience of the movement of the comprehension of miscomprehended forms of the absolute. This could be put another way: the time of the collective subject of the 'we' of the *Phenomenology* is temporalized not as a pre-existing social form (the in itself of a 'community' that always already exists), but rather, is itself the temporalization of the experience of the becoming of spirit's self-comprehension of its supersession of 'pre-existing social forms.' Accordingly, the 'religious community' that is presented as the most accomplished form of the miscomprehension of spirit's existence as the concept of its own self-comprehension, does not express itself in the form of the phenomenological community.<sup>523</sup> Here, Hegel once again brings the reader back to the introduction of the *Phenomenology*. It is through 'observation (*Beobachtung*)', he notes, that spirit comprehends itself in the state of the immediate unity of itself within itself, that is, with the unity of itself qua *thinking* (*Denken*) and itself qua *being* (*Sein*).<sup>524</sup> At the comprehension of the structure of its movement as a *necessary* circle, spirit comprehends itself in the unity of its immanent differentiation between the natural (private) and observing (public) consciousness. The phenomenological 'we' then is the community that finds itself at first in the experience of its own historical present as the immediate present; it is the subject

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<sup>522</sup> Ibid. §803; 3: 586. Conscious reflection on history 'comes on the scene', like other crucial expressions deployed in the *Phenomenology*, more prominently in the opening and closing sections of the work. As a terminological reflection of the form of the circle, history – which is the expression that names the totality of the phenomenological path as a path of conceptual labour – is initially set out as the basic organization of the science of the appearance of consciousness, and is retroactively comprehended as the movement immanent to that organization.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

that reflects on the immediacy of its immersion in the subject-matter, the 'life' into which it has always already 'ventured' (to recall the opening reflections of the *Differenzschrift*) since it is always already immanent to it as an immediate ethical substance in which the 'natural assumptions' imposed therein are given as 'ready-made' forms of thought.

It is the self-comprehension of its own experience (spirit's experience of its experience qua dialectical movement) that temporalizes spirit at the level of history. The distinction between the 'beginning' of the circle and its 'end' (return into itself) at the level of the meaning and structure of history (and at the level of the distinction between the 'introduction' of the *Phenomenology* and its final chapter), is that, for natural consciousness and its initial immanent dialectical critique, history appears as the interconnection of the shapes of consciousness as 'stations' punctuating the path that is yet to be traversed from the opening standpoint (the standpoint of the purely negative experience of a 'path', that is, the standpoint of pure philosophical self-arrogation).<sup>525</sup> This is why history appears, within the limits of the introduction, as an immediately posed and externally reflected model of identification of the totality of the *Bildung* of consciousness. It figures, *in a certain sense*, in terms of a mere unfolding of a narrative structure (Hegel refers to this as *historisch*) that forms, in advance of the phenomenological analysis, the progression and trajectory of absolute knowing.<sup>526</sup> The 'story' of progression as 'history' immediately posited is a mere a priori form of conceptual apprehension; it does not comprehend its own structure. It is, accordingly, a temporalization of the self-movement of spirit's comprehension. The 'story' is a mere reflection of the pure in itself of time at the phenomenologically disclosed level, that

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid. §78; 3: 73.

<sup>526</sup> I stress 'in a certain sense' since Hegel only begins to form a clearer conceptual distinction between *historisch* and *Geschichte* in the preface to the *Phenomenology*. The distinction will be taken up and continued in the *Logic* and the philosophical system as a whole.



is, as a simple *historicist* form of philosophical representation. The structure of the time of the story – a container ‘in’ which the moments that methodically structure the narrative are ‘poured’ – is a decidedly *non-experiential* time since the ‘story’ is pre-determined as a self-identical form of presentation (as a ‘pure’ negative for the consciousness that apprehends itself as wholly philosophical). Time, at the phenomenological level of the unfolding of spirit’s self-comprehension, is *temporalized experientially* as history through the dialectical movement of what appeared initially as the time of ‘history (*Geschichte*).’ By this I do not mean that ‘time’ is a philosophical term that can be grasped in its determinate historical form, that is, as purely historically *isolated* conceptions of time (this would restore a Reinholdian conception of philosophy as endless idiosyncratic insight-opinion).<sup>527</sup> Rather, ‘time’ as a pre-given historicist term is not sufficiently temporalized (it is a de-temporalized concept of time). This could be put another way (invoking Hegel’s mode of philosophical expression): a given ‘time’ is an inert, ‘fossilized’ notion, a ‘thought (*Gedanke*),’ that functions as an obstacle curtailing its philosophical experience. As we have seen, it is only phenomenological self-reflection that discloses the status of the calcification of concepts and thoughts in their immediacy (which is to say, precisely as ‘calcified’). Accordingly, it is experience that temporalizes time at the level of history, giving meaning to the one-sided limit of time as pure in itself that ‘collapses rather within itself’ precisely because it fails to comprehend its limit as ‘pure in itself’ necessarily *anterior* to the actuality of spirit in its absolute self-comprehension.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> See chapter 1 for a presentation of Hegel’s critique of Reinhold’s historicist conception of philosophy.

<sup>528</sup> PS, §803; 3: 587.

As an experientially constituted temporalization of history, spirit's actualization of its self-comprehension is attained only at the level of the *ambiguity* (*Zweideutigkeit*) of its truth. Hegel demonstrates this in the following condensed formulation of the identity of spirit:

Spirit...has shown itself to us to be neither merely the withdrawal of self-consciousness into its pure inwardness, nor the mere submergence of self-consciousness into substance, and the non-being of its difference; but spirit is *this movement* of the self which empties itself of itself and sinks itself into its substance, and also, as subject, has gone out of that substance into itself, making the substance into an object and a content at the same time as it cancels this difference between objectivity and content.<sup>529</sup>

With spirit's self-comprehension we are raised to the *ontological* articulation of spirit as self-identical to its movement. That said, the *ambiguity* (*Zweideutigkeit*) of its experience at the level of the presentation of the *Phenomenology* restricts the philosophical exposition since what we have is the positing of the ontological shape of spirit. This ambiguity is expressed in the negative 'neither...nor' that structures the twofold direction of reading from the pure infinitude of the 'withdrawal of self-consciousness into pure inwardness' to self-consciousness's 'mere submergence' into the pure totality of substance. Spirit is the twofold movement of this transition from substance to subject and from subject to substance at the dialectical level of their experience (that is, at the level of their inter-permeation). It is for this reason that Hegel immediately notes that 'spirit', as the ontological expression of the result of the twofold movement of substance into subject and subject into substance, does *not* constitute a '*tertium quid* (*ein Drittes*).'<sup>530</sup> At the level of the *Phenomenology* then, absolute

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<sup>529</sup> Ibid. §804; 3: 587-8.

<sup>530</sup> PS, §804; 3: 587-8. Readers following the unfolding of the *Phenomenology* closely will find this disavowal of the 'tertiary' structure of 'spirit' in relation to substance and spirit odd since prior to the final chapter, the structure of the 'third' figured as a constitutive organizational feature of the development of consciousness at many moments in the *Phenomenology*. There is accordingly a delicate shift from the theoretical demonstration of the movement of spirit at the level of its miscomprehended forms and the philosophical *sense* of the structure of spirit as essentially ambiguous or twofold. See for example 3: 100, 165, 167, 173-6, 296, 366, 370, 395-9,

spirit is the posited term of the philosophical disclosure of the truth of spirit as the knowledge of its own truth, which is to say, as the comprehension of the truth of its self-parturition. Hegel refers to this comprehension of self-parturition as ‘comprehended history (*begriffene Geschichte*)’ in the last sentence of the *Phenomenology*.<sup>531</sup> Importantly, ‘comprehended history’ is not the result of the *Phenomenology* alone; rather, it is the posited result of the unity of the comprehension of the form of history as the interconnection of the appearances of consciousness in their *contingent* form and the comprehension of that history in the philosophically organized form of the science of the appearance of contingently appearing forms of knowing in their necessary interconnection. There is nevertheless a pure ‘historicist’ side to experience, that is the *necessarily contingent* ground of its dialectical exposition (the ‘historical’).<sup>532</sup> One could also refer to the ‘necessary contingency’ of the actual as ‘the Calvary (*Schädelstätte*) of absolute spirit.’<sup>533</sup> The philosophical comprehension of this contingency qua necessary is the ‘inwardizing’ of absolute spirit in its course through to its *Bildung*. It is at this point that the perennially employed orthopaedic metaphor, rendering figuratively meaningful the movement at the heart of Hegel’s sense of philosophical experience (emerging originally from the ‘calcification [*verknöcherte*]’ of the

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411-4, 421, 465, 482, 502, 557, 561-8 and 579. The distinction between the tripartite structure of theoretical presentation and the philosophical sense of the essence of spirit as irreducible to number is perhaps a distinction Hegel appropriates from Friedrich Schiller’s *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. See chapter 1, sub-sections 1.2 and 1.3.

<sup>531</sup> PS, §808; 3: 591.

<sup>532</sup> ‘The factual immediacy in which the actual at first exists, and which presents only a contingency over and against its possibilities, is the ground for the fact that the necessity in the movement of the actual remains “relative.” Actuality can never free itself from the contingency of its starting point and presupposition, but carries this within itself throughout. Necessity therefore is at bottom contingency!’ Marcuse, *Hegel’s Ontology*, p.97. Althusser, a few decades later, will make the same point apropos Spinoza’s nominalism as the core of his epistemology. Knowledge is productive in the sense that it is not derivative of either the subject or of fixed, pre-established criteria. This results, for Althusser, Spinozan knowledge can be understood in terms of ‘the necessity of its contingency.’ Louis Althusser, *Essays in Self-Criticism*, trans. Grahame Lock, London: NLB, 1976, p.45. I first came across this reference in Vittorio Morfino, *Plural Temporality: Transindividuality and the Aleatory Between Spinoza and Althusser*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014, p.4.

<sup>533</sup> PS, §808; 3: 591.

philosophy of his historical present), is transformed dramatically into the indeterminate formless form of the Schillerian 'foam (*schäumt*).'<sup>534</sup>

The actuality of absolute spirit as the dissolution of the inertia of both its contingent forms and the phenomenological supersession of those forms through the exposition of their interconnection is reconfigured, at the level of form, as spirit's *effervescence*, which brings back into sharp relief the central philosophical task underpinning the historical present: 'in superseding determinate thoughts from their fixity so as to give actuality to the universal and impart to it spiritual life (*begeistern*).' This, accordingly, does not occur at the level of the *Phenomenology* since this work presents only the structure of the ambiguity of the truth of spirit's experience as the effervescence of the comprehension of the speculative identity of spirit's presence as truth of knowledge in its absolute form. From the phenomenological standpoint, the actualization of absolute spirit is an outstanding task; the *Phenomenology* is *not yet* the philosophical system *in toto* (since it is ambiguously structured as simultaneously the introduction to science and science itself), but nevertheless, always already unconsciously is the 'system' as its self-consciously reflected movement as experientially ambiguous (as introduction of science and science itself). The experiential temporalization of spirit's history at the point of its phenomenological disclosure as the 'comprehended history' of 'absolute spirit' is systematically developed in its negatively reflected form (as the substance of the historical present) in its objective form in the second part of spirit's development in the

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<sup>534</sup> Ibid. Schiller's metaphor of 'foam' is employed again in his famous 'Hymn to Joy'. Hegel's ontology of spirit as presented in its most general outline at the end of the *Phenomenology* with recourse to Schiller's 'Friendship' perhaps anticipates in philosophical form the final movement of Beethoven's ninth symphony. For a philosophical presentation of Beethoven and Hegel, see Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Cambridge: Polity, 1998, pp.10-28. For an interpretation that refuses the subsumption of Beethoven's music (especially the third symphony) into a *received* generic miasma of cultural Hegelianism (which is to say, without any serious philosophical exposition on the part of the author), see Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

*Philosophy of Spirit*. The actuality of absolute spirit is disclosed, systematically, through the transition from out of spirit's comprehension of 'world history.'

#### 4.3 The Actuality of Absolute Spirit (II): The Transition from World History

It is in the third section of the *Philosophy of Spirit* that Hegel presents the basic movement and self-comprehension of absolute spirit at the level of its systematic disclosure. As is well known, the basic tripartite structure of the development of absolute spirit consists of the transition from art to philosophy through religion as distinct competing forms of articulating the absolute. Notwithstanding the abbreviated conceptual form of the third section (not to mention the total lack of expanding additions [*Zusätze*]), the third and final section of the 1830 edition of the *Philosophy of Spirit* gives us the most condensed philosophical expression of the structure of absolute spirit. The initial representation of absolute spirit is rendered intelligible through its positing in relation to the subjective and objective spirit: its first and second expression are for absolute spirit 'the road (*Weg*) on which this aspect of reality or existence [the raising of consciousness to the level of its absolute idea] rises to maturity (*ausbildet*).'<sup>535</sup> Absolute spirit is the becoming-mature – which means the becoming self-conscious – of subjective and objective spirit. One could call this 'becoming-mature' more precisely the *phenomenological character* of the movement of the presentation of absolute spirit at its general level. Immanent to this phenomenological character of the transition of absolute spirit is the phenomenological character of the relation between the three moments that reveal the form of absolute spirit.

It has already been stated that the activity of spirit, at the point of its most general self-realization, is the *Aufhebung* of the substance-subject opposition. The subject of spirit is

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<sup>535</sup> Enc. III, 292; 10: 366.

the *Aufhebung* of substance in and through thinking and the substance of spirit is the self-movement of its *Aufhebung* of the subject. What spirit grasps in this *Aufhebung* is that the dissolution of the opposition is its own labour and product; spirit generates itself in the supersession of itself. Thus, it is the structure of *sichaufheben* that more precisely describes the structure of the movement of spirit. And it is only spirit that grasps the identity of itself as the self-comprehension of its own absolute status: '*The Absolute is Spirit* – this is the supreme definition of the Absolute.'<sup>536</sup> We have already seen in what way such propositions – viz. speculative propositions – should be grasped. It, moreover, has been noted that the expression through which speculative propositions are produced is philosophical science (since it is science that actualizes the objective knowledge of truth). Accordingly, the comprehension of the speculative proposition is the comprehension of spirit itself as philosophical science (giving rise to another speculative proposition: *spirit is science*). As the realm in which the *truth* of spirit's self-comprehension is unfolded, it is only within the space of absolute spirit that *sichaufheben* can be grasped as the true self-movement of spirit's conceptual actualization; it is only within the concept of spirit that the actuality of spirit is realized.<sup>537</sup>

Accordingly, subjective and objective moments of spirit are *retroactively* configured as the path of the development of the absolute. Thus, absolute spirit constitutes the *aufheben* of the 'path' according to the putative schematization of Hegel's philosophical process. And yet, this *aufheben* produces the immanent path of spirit's return-to-itself in the form of the place of its expression. It is only within the context in which spirit *expresses* itself, which is to say, in the element of its self-manifestation, that the path of spirit is raised into the

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<sup>536</sup> Ibid. 18; 10: 29.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid. 292; 10: 366.

immanent path of actuality. The 'path' is no longer deployed as an allegorical model, but rather is the inner sense of spirit itself in its self-active movement. In order to properly grasp the unity of spirit's expression, it is important to grasp its place within the system as a whole, that is, within the *transition* from the last stage of objective spirit: 'World History (*die Weltgeschichte*).'

World history is the expression in which absolute spirit is *apprehended* from out of the exposition of the limits – the *finitude* of temporal restrictions – of individual moments of historical development. It is important to note here the distinction between the expression of world history and the ethical order of the political present. The distinction rests between the appearance of finitude and the thinking of the infinite (temporal forms whose logical and ontological character will be discussed below). As an appearance internal to the structure of spirit, the ethico-political world presents the diremption of the ethical substance of civil society (the substantial expression of which is private property relations) as the most accomplished articulation of the failure to raise itself to philosophical apprehension. The political present simply *restates*, in the context of the objective spirit, the diremption of subject and object since the political dimension of the ethical order has not articulated itself as a self-conscious history of itself from out of the immanent reflection of its own finitude. The Prussian constitutional monarchy remains, from the perspective of world history, caught 'in time'; which is to say, it is the abstract statement of the particularity of its own history from within the finite and restricted spiritual substance.<sup>538</sup> The form of the political present is simply one moment in the elaboration of the apprehension of world-spirit qua world history. The constitutive function of the 'state' is, immanent to Hegel's system, the highest expression of the *incapacity* of the speculative actualization of state and religion, that is, the speculative

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<sup>538</sup> Ibid. 277; 10: 347.

identity of subject and object at the objective historical level. This incapacity rests on the externally posited 'mutual recognition' of nation states, reflected in the abstract statement of 'international law', which has as its logical presupposition the practical promise of mutual recognition in the form of the persistence of civil society.<sup>539</sup> The dialectical result of such a positing is the infinite *hiatus* structuring recognition itself: abstractly posited 'inter-state recognition' *misrecognizes* the 'unity' articulated in 'internationalism' since it is formed on the external relations of state difference. The state in civil society does not recognize its own misrecognition; moreover, it does not, through this recognition, apprehend the initial phenomenological unity of the state with the broader ethical context of the *world*.<sup>540</sup>

The transition to take note of in the unfolding of the last section of the objective spirit is the passage from 'state' to 'world.' The formation of this distinction is one of the tasks of the philosophy of history since it is only within the context of philosophical history that the *dialectical interconnections* of the differences of nation states is properly raised into an object of reflection. The principle articulation of the totality of these interconnections is 'world.' In contradistinction to this, the state is the *principle* of the self-conscious ethical order, which is to say, the principle of its self-relation and the relation with its other (internationalism).<sup>541</sup> As principle, the 'state' is not raised systematically into the category of 'world' by way of the opposition of itself with the world; rather, from the immanent unfolding of the finitude of the form of the principle of the state as a form of determination in the development of its result as universal, world history. The becoming of the 'world' through the restriction of the moment of 'state' is, accordingly, mobilized by the initial apprehension of the 'end of history' thesis, which is to say, the initial positing of an a priori logical form – the 'plan of Providence' – that

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<sup>539</sup> Ibid. 276; 10: 346.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid.



grounds (as a boundary) the nature and limits, thus legitimacy, of properly historical categories.<sup>542</sup> 'World' is, emerging from this, an initial category of 'history-writing (*Geschichtsschreiben*).'<sup>543</sup> This is immediately acknowledged by Hegel in the context of the initial dialectical reflections on the particular modes that structure the sense of history-writing.

The shift from the dialectical exposition of the moments of objective spirit into the activity of writing should not be overlooked. Immanent to the development of the 'Anthropology', the formative education of the soul is reflected in the stages of pedagogic education through the pure, simple unity of the alphabet that the child learns (pure language [*Sprache*]) to the internalized mechanical habit of writing (*Schreiben*).<sup>544</sup> Writing, as the highest mode of expression of the natural soul, is the paradoxical experience of the dissolution of the particularities of its construction (the components of language) in the universal element of its complete habituation. And yet, writing is the process through which the paradox of *habituated universalism* is itself apprehended in its immediate form. History-writing is, as we have noted, the initial expression of the apprehension of the expressive form of absolute spirit as the comprehension of itself in universal history. And its initial expression is twofold in character: there is, at the level of immediate history writing, two forms of presentation: subjective (as the individual's expression in the ethical substance) and objective (as the ethical substance's dissolution of the ontological apprehension of the individual qua individual).<sup>545</sup> The philosophical judgement of these two forms is, for Hegel,

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<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid. 277; 10: 347.

<sup>544</sup> Cf. for example, Ibid. 60-61; 10: 82 and 146-7; 10: 191.

<sup>545</sup> This dissolving character of language – language as universal equalizer – is developed in Hegel's 1802-3 'System of Ethical Life' and his 1803-4 'First Philosophy of Spirit': 'Only as the work of a people is speech the ideal existence of the spirit...speech is a universal, recognized in itself, and resounding in the same way in the

the limit of their relation to the subject-matter, namely the movement of history as itself the speculative movement of spirit. With the two forms of history-writing, what is left is the modern distinction between the finite, subjective cognition and the abstractly infinite 'being.' The exposition of the limits of history-writing consists of the liberation of spirit from the external element of habituated expression. This does not mean that spirit ceases to write; rather, it suggests that history-writing does not 'merely [brood] *over (über)* history as over the waters'<sup>546</sup> but instead unfolds within history-writing as the negative element through which spirit grasps itself in a form of expression that at once registers the limit immanent to writing (i.e. the general nature of judgements) and the transformation of those judgements through the process of their dialectical defamiliarization, the immediate expression of which is articulated in the speculative proposition.

At the level of world history, the apprehension of absolute spirit in the self-cognition of its speculative recurvature from out of the moments of its objective development is accomplished in the expression of God become *word*. It is at the point of universal history that the dialectical structure of the 'becoming-word-of-God' qua absolute spirit is properly articulated. It is, moreover, at this point that the systematic place of the general exposition of the relation of state and religion is expounded. The important point to be made is that the expression of the coalescence of state and religion is located in the historical *past* (it developed 'earlier than philosophy').<sup>547</sup> The *form* in which this unity was preliminarily expressed was the poetic one, the form attributed to the 'poetic imagination (*dichtende*

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consciousness of all; every speaking consciousness comes immediately to be another consciousness in it.' SS, 244.

<sup>546</sup> Enc. III, 281; 10: 352.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid. 290; 10: 363.

*Phantasie*).<sup>548</sup> The philosophical reflection on the emergence of art (as natural religion) within the context of the formation of absolute spirit is articulated in terms of the immediate unity of the creation of the natural soul (as expounded in ‘subjective spirit’) and the contemplation and worship of this creation in the unfolding of the state qua ethical substance (as expounded in ‘objective spirit’). It is through the universal equalization of history-writing as the expression of the dissolution of *nationalized* consciousness that bridges the move from objective into absolute spirit; and this transition yields from within itself the necessity of an absolute expression of spirit’s self-comprehension and consummation of its essentially dirempted state in its most accomplished and *present* objective expression.

#### 4.4 The Actuality of Absolute Spirit (III): Philosophy and ‘Return’

Philosophy is the highest form of the expression of absolute spirit. In that it ‘looks back (zurücksieht)’ on its development, it is nothing less than the comprehension of its own unfolding of that development.<sup>549</sup> This retroactive gaze is structurally identical to the speculative suspension of speculative thinking since absolute spirit, in the form of its philosophical expression, ‘seizes (*erfaßt*)’ its concept.<sup>550</sup> As the highest articulation of the unity of what through the development appeared as non-unity, philosophy restores to itself the standpoint of the ideal reflexive form of the speculative whole of historical and cultural life. That said, with this ‘restoration’, philosophy does not ‘return’ to what it ‘always

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid. (translation slightly modified).

<sup>549</sup> Ibid. 302; 10: 379.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid. The retroactive observation cannot consist of the mere aggregation of the historical and ontological content disclosed by a philosophy that takes itself as always already outside the existence and essence of being, thus in the privileged position to cognize the moments that structure its development. ‘Looking back’ consists of philosophy’s own self-recognized activity since at the end of the system, it seizes, thus conceptually comprehends, the concept that is its own. Accordingly, ‘looking back’ is another expression of spirit’s self-reflection; the philosophical comprehension that the content of its development are its own. When spirit looks back, it observes itself.

already' was prior to the philosophical presentation of its dialectical unfolding (as an a priori form simply to be 'captured', so to speak, in the dialectical present). Rather, the true result of the dislocation of dialectical and speculative movement is condensed into the ruptural expression of the *in-exactitude* of the 'return-into-itself' of speculative philosophy.

Perhaps the most enigmatic and abbreviated expression of this return within the context of the 'inexact' can be discerned in the first chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. After disclosing the basic movement of dialectical development from within the form of sense-certain consciousness, Hegel offers the following insight into the nature of the 'return' to the immediate within the generic movement of dialectics: 'this first, thus reflected into itself, is not exactly (*nicht ganz genau*) the same as it was to begin with, viz. something *immediate*.'<sup>551</sup> This structure is reflected at the most general level in relation to the identification of philosophy as the science that looks back on and recovers that which it always already was in the moments of its becoming. What 'returns' to be more precise is, accordingly, a philosophizing that was never wholly 'always already there' in a *pre*-historical temporal form (as a passed present that is self-identical as *pure* past). The 'return-into-itself' that emerges from the negative reflection disclosed in the experience of the forms of consciousness is in truth a return to that which never properly was; it is, accordingly, a return that immediately dissolves the putative understanding of 'return.' That said, what 'returns' is not a pure 'novelty' that functions as a 'beyond' to experience – and thus is *true* – since any 'novelty' for Hegel is the product of experience.<sup>552</sup> The 'not-exactly-the same' of the return is in and of itself an inexact expression. Its indeterminacy is of course a simple reflection of

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<sup>551</sup> PS, §107; 3: 89.

<sup>552</sup> Hegel, in elaborating his idea of philosophical instruction at university, reminds F. L. von Raumer of the German saying 'what is new is not true, and what is true is not new' within the context of a dominant cultural 'mania' for 'thinking for oneself' as an independent, wholly private individual; an individual whose thought is not 'common property (*Gemeingut*).' L, 340; B (II): 99-100.

the indeterminacy at the core of sense-certain immediacy and the imprecision of its expression and recourse to empty universals ('this', 'here', 'now', etc.). That said, what is circumscribed under the expression of the 'not-exactly-the-same' is a dialectical reflection *for us*, that is, for those following the experience of the unfolding of consciousness. What is rendered delicately different is the imprecision of *our own* standpoint as a result of our dissolution of the sense-certain consciousness.<sup>553</sup>

This generic presentation of the dialectics of experience can be taken up directly into the general phenomenological character of Hegel's philosophical project as a whole: speculative philosophy as developed by Hegel is 'not-exactly-the-same' as the history of speculative philosophy as a whole (the whole history of philosophy) since it restores to philosophy an unconscious speculative kernel that was expressed as a latent possibility immanent to it. But the disclosure of that which was 'contained' in philosophy is deepened at the level of its miscomprehended *actuality*. That is to say, the movement of the self-reflexive comprehension of philosophy in Hegel consists of a descent into the umbrageous space of the cave from out of the naive assumption that thinking had at one point touched the spiritual day (what Plato never grasped was that the ascent out of the cave was in truth a descent deeper into a cave that one never recognized one was already in).<sup>554</sup> The 'possibility contained' in each philosophical standpoint is in truth a 'possibility' that is never possible in itself; it was,

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<sup>553</sup> The focus on the 'inexact' in the dialectic sheds some critical light on Žižek's comprehension of the transition from 'negation' to 'negation of negation' as a transition that in a sense does not take place but is registered in subjective perspective. Taking recourse to the Jewish *Witz* of Rabinovitch in the Soviet Union, Žižek notes: 'The thesis is the first argument ("I want to emigrate because I am afraid of the pogroms that would follow the collapse of Soviet power"), the bureaucrat's objection is the antithesis ("Soviet power is indestructible"), the synthesis is *exactly the same* as the antithesis – the bureaucrat's reply becomes its own opposite, it becomes the reason itself.' Žižek, *The Most Sublime Hysteric*, p.25. Hegel's presentation in the first chapter of the *Phenomenology* is slightly more subtle and, perhaps enigmatic, in its conceptual move.

<sup>554</sup> I am, accordingly, in direct disagreement with the one-dimensional, externally reflected reconstruction of Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a kind of emergence into the spiritual daylight of the present, an interpretation that is championed, in the Anglo-American world, by H. S. Harris, who, in the first volume of his monumental study of Hegel's development, invokes the allegory of the cave. See, Harris, *Toward the Sunlight*, p.xxxii.

accordingly, never ‘contained’ in the putative sense (as immanently waiting). Rather, the possibility of philosophy as the expression of the actuality of absolute spirit is reconstructed from out of the experience of the dissolution of the opposition between a ‘philosophical’ mode of thought (immediate ‘actuality’) and its *unphilosophical* core (the actuality that was not contained as a positive ‘possibility’). What is formed in and as experience is the unphilosophical character of what is immediately thought as wholly philosophical (the most accomplished expression of this sense of philosophy always *begins* with the principle of the absolute whole). Consequently, the movement toward *Bildung* (in its experiential and speculative forms), as I have tried to show throughout this thesis, is the movement of the return of the unphilosophical as a distinctively *non-repressed* kernel of the knowledge of the philosophical expression of the absolute as retroactively philosophical; ‘non-repressed’ precisely because for Hegel – if our reference to Freudian analysis can be excused – there was no ‘primal scene’, no ‘genesis’, of philosophical *self-constructed* expression that regulates, in advance, the self-movement of spirit’s self-comprehension.<sup>555</sup>

If what ‘returns-into-itself’ as (1) the ‘not-exactly-the-same’ as the initial immediacy and, at the same time, (2) the partial self-same determinacy from out of the dialectical reflection of the mediation of immediacy is nevertheless a return-into-itself of philosophical consciousness, of spirit in the unfolding of its experience, then to what does the ‘return-into-itself’ of philosophy *return*? According to Hegel, philosophy ‘returns’ to the ‘*spiritual* (*Geistige*).’<sup>556</sup> In the preface to the *Phenomenology*, the ‘spiritual’ is explicitly disclosed in its speculative, ontological sense:

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<sup>555</sup> The self-construction of both the original philosophical act and of the absolute finds its most accomplished expression in Fichte and Schelling’s idealism. Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p.35 and Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p.13.

<sup>556</sup> Enc. III, 313; 10: 393.

The spiritual (*Geistige*) alone is the *actual* (*Wirkliche*); it is essence, or that which has *being in itself*; it is that which *relates itself to itself* and is *determinate*, it is *other-being* and *being-for-self*, and in this determinateness, or in its self-externality, abides within itself (*sich selbst Bleibende*); in other words, it is *in and for itself*.<sup>557</sup>

Philosophy returns to the possibility of the spiritual as an actuality that emerges from out of the reconstruction of the initial possibility qua *immediately assumed actuality*. What was ‘possible’ prior to the ‘actual’ is, in relation to the retrospective character of philosophical reconstruction, never properly possible. The possible from out of which the actual emerges presupposes a direction of development from simple to complex (a Thomist method) when, for Hegel, the movement of the return to the beginning from whence the process commenced, reconstructs the complexity of what was assumed as either ‘all-too-simple’ (organic, vegetative life – the seed from whence the tree and fruit emerge) or ‘simply complex’ (that is, as the principle of the absolute indifference of the absolute).<sup>558</sup> Against this basic opposition of possible and actual, of simple and complex, Hegel’s thought emerges within an identification of the present. *The present in which Hegel’s philosophy consciously reflects is a present differentiated and alienated from out of and against itself*. Thought that reflects this structure of internal diremption is however not wholly self-consciousness of its own presence and its status as the actual, *spiritual present*. This means something precise (and decidedly *non-Aristotelean*) for Hegel: spiritual actuality is not ‘prior’ in time to both the possibilities that are ‘contained’ and its speculative actualization; the ‘spiritual’ is the moving

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<sup>557</sup> PS, §25; 3: 28.

<sup>558</sup> Hegel, in a letter to Niethammer (October 23, 1812), makes much of the generic movement from simple to complex within the context of philosophical instruction: ‘The customary demand placed on the teaching of introductory philosophy is indeed that one should begin from what exists, and should from that point lead consciousness to what is higher, i.e., to thought. Yet in concepts of freedom, the existent and immediate are present and are at once already thought without any prior anatomy, analysis, abstraction, and so on. Thus in these doctrines a beginning will in fact be made with what is sought: with the true, the spiritual, the actual.’ L, 276.

context in and through which the dialectics of possibility and actuality (the dialectic that states that the ‘actual is always produced from the potential by the actual’) are dissolved in that, as was noted above, an absolute ‘first’ is overcome by a speculative supersession of ‘beginning’ and ‘end.’<sup>559</sup> It is in this sense that the ‘return’ to the ‘not-exactly-the-same’ qua the immediate potentiality consists of a return to an immanently self-differentiated actuality. In order to attain a deeper understanding of Hegel’s dialectics of possibility and actuality in the spiritual comprehension of the actual, the transition from the two inter-related temporal forms of spirit to the ‘third’, reconstructive, determinate form of their speculative temporalization needs to be disclosed.

#### 4.5 The Three Temporal Modes of Spirit

Hegel’s philosophy can be understood at its most general level in terms of the attempt to *speculatively* comprehend the *speculative* character of the present in its ‘wholeness’ – to comprehend ‘what truly is’ – from out of its abstract and dialectical analysis and movement. The specific temporal character of the speculative comprehension of the speculative whole has hitherto been presented in terms of the temporal distinction between the inverted forms of

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<sup>559</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1049b25. The principle of ‘generation by synonyms’ (if ‘a’ makes ‘b’ then a must always already in some sense be ‘b’) is rendered absurd in Hegel’s speculative philosophy since it does not contain within it the ontological conception of construction and reconstruction. Accordingly, readers of Hegel must be wary of his habitual metaphorical invocation of organic development (the ‘seed into the fruit’); the function of these metaphors, which more often than not emerge at the beginning of Hegel’s works, is to provide a putative and naively exoteric conception of dialectical and spiritual movement. They are insufficient metaphors in relation to the speculative identity of ‘general culture’ precisely because they are restricted ontological or natural phenomena. Within the context of absolute spirit, which is to say, within the context of the most accomplished expression of spirit, the basic model of development from simple to complex no longer holds sway since the movement is from *assumed* complexity to spiritual complexity. Perhaps the clearest limit of Aristotle’s dialectic of potentiality and actuality in relation to Hegel’s reconstruction of its terms, is that the scope of Aristotle’s philosophical presentation is circumscribed solely by an ‘ousiological’ (substance based ontology) inquiry. For a dense and systematic presentation of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* as ‘ousiology’ see Giovanni Reale, *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, trans. John R. Catan, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980 (see especially pp.215-24) and Werner Marx, *The Meaning of Aristotle’s ‘Ontology’*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954.



the *actuality of essence as possible* and the *possibility of existence as actual*. The direct opposition of what appeared as ‘possible’ and ‘actual’ has been complicated through the permeation of possibility and actuality and the temporal relation between the ‘apriority’ of the actual and the ‘aposteriority’ of the possible as conditioned by the actual. For Hegel, the dissolution of possibility and actuality as externally reflected (thus non-related) differentia dissolves their characterization as ‘a priori’ and ‘a posteriori’ relative to one another. What is thought in its place is the more difficult dialectical relation of their contradictory passage from and to each other. Accordingly, the temporal character of spirit is disclosed as its immanent movement. To put it another way: the distinction is in this sense made between the temporality of the ‘always already’ of the actual, as the context in which spirit is moving, and the ‘not-yet’ actualization of the actual at the different moments of articulation (its ‘possibilities’).<sup>560</sup> In relation to these two temporal modes, the distinct temporality of their philosophical comprehension emerges. It is this ‘third’ mode of temporality that renders philosophically intelligible the two, dialectically revealed temporal modes of spirit (‘always already’ and ‘not yet’). The exposition of the third temporality is mediated by the two interconnected modes of spirit in its dialectical movement; they are, to put it phenomenologically, ‘stations’ in the movement of the temporal becoming of the spiritual.

At the level of the ambiguity of the truth of experience disclosed in the *Phenomenology*, spirit is ontologically identical to the structure of experiential comprehension: spirit is the twofold vacillation of the ‘always already’ (what actually is) and

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<sup>560</sup> It is the de-temporalized temporal logic of the future anterior that organizes Louis Althusser’s critique of the political impoverishment of Hegel’s philosophy; see Louis Althusser, ‘On the Young Marx’, in *For Marx*; and Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, ‘The Errors of Classical Economics: An Outline for a Concept of Historical Time’, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster, London and New York: Verso, 2009. Althusser does not develop the temporality of the future anterior in its dialectical sense, that is, in relation to the ‘not-yet.’ This gives us a decidedly one-sided interpretation.

the 'not yet' (what will be) reflected in the structure of its experience. As I tried to show above, this twofold dynamic of spirit at the phenomenological level expresses itself more precisely as the *history* (*Geschichte*) of its unfolding. The philosophical system, especially its first logical part, does not however remain caught within the infinite movement of ambiguity. Rather, it attempts to expound at the ontological level, the knowledge of the speculative truth of experience. It can be said that Hegel clarifies this precisely in relation to the sense of history: the speculative thinking of spirit does not consist of comprehending the narrative unfolding of what happens (*Geschehen*), but rather, it is mobilized by the attempt to comprehend the truth of history in the contradiction of spirit's historicity; that is to say, to 'hold fast' to the thinking of contradiction and itself in the contradiction. The speculative suspension of the dialectical movement of experience in spirit's speculative self-comprehension (its 'holding fast') is *not*, despite appearances, an *atemporal*, or *detemporalized*, moment of spirit's unfoldment (speculative suspension qua suspension of dialectical movement). Rather, the speculative suspension of dialectics is temporalized in and through speculative thinking itself. That is to say, spirit's self-comprehension of dialectical movement as a moment of its own speculative spiritual movement is temporalized in spirit's recollection of its dynamic unfolding and its systematic exposition. The patience required at the phenomenological level (following the negativity of experience through the comprehension of miscomprehended forms of the absolute) is *redoubled* and *reflected back into itself* at the speculative level: speculative thinking is the patient reconstruction of itself from out of the *patient experience of unphilosophical impatience*. Accordingly, the movement of speculative thinking disclosed in the *Logic* retroactively determines phenomenological, dialectical patience as a distinctly impatient mode of non-philosophical

comprehension (since it gives us only the twofold movement of the ambiguity of experience at the experiential level); it is distinctive in that it patiently revealed the negative dimension of its own immanent impatience from out of the experience of consciousness.<sup>561</sup>

In a certain sense, the *Logic* retroactively *spatializes* the experiential temporalization of spirit as the self-contained circle that 'returns into itself' as a single, retraceable model.<sup>562</sup> In lieu of the suspension of the phenomenological circle, the *Logic* articulates its own speculative temporalization in the intensive spatial metaphor of the 'circle of circles.'<sup>563</sup> The speculative circle, as I tried to disclose in more detail in the third chapter, expresses itself through the *redoubling* of the dialectical circle of experience. In this redoubling, the dialectical circle is deepened at its own level and reveals from within itself the temporal form of the knowledge of its truth. What is deepened is, accordingly, the immanence of dialectics

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<sup>561</sup> It should now be clear that *aufheben* cannot simply be reduced to a one-dimensional historicist sense of 'leap-frogging': 'The story of German Idealism is the story of Kant and the aftermath. By aftermath I mean the *Aufhebung* of critical philosophy in the speculative idealisms of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. The latter, of course, took himself to be the *Aufhebung* of Fichte and Schelling as well as Kant, to say nothing of Plato and Aristotle, Anselm and Aquinas, Descartes and Spinoza, and so forth... The unkindest cut of all for Hegel was to be himself outtrumped by Feuerbach, Marx, and Kierkegaard. The various ways in which [Hegel's] massive *Aufhebung* was *aufgehoben* in the 1840s make up one of the most fascinating stories in the history of philosophy.' Merold Westphal, 'Kierkegaard and Hegel', *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alistair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.101. This 'progressivist' understanding of historical development mollifies the antagonistic points structuring history itself. Accordingly, such an understanding gives way to an image of history as a pleasant, rolling flow of deflated 'variations' of, in the context of the history of ideas, a primordial unity called 'philosophy.'

<sup>562</sup> The development of the notion of the spatialization of movement in its geometric development from simple thought (line) to complex self-forming nature (change qua 'curvilinear motion') finds its genetic articulation in Hegel's *Habilitationschrift*; see especially M, 189-92.

<sup>563</sup> It is important to note that the structure of the circle as a spatial metaphor of the general architectural form of philosophical comprehension is not unique to Hegel's work. It is, on the contrary, a debate that functions in the context of post-Kantian idealism. The 'circle,' as Fichte notes at the end of his *Wissenschaftslehre*, comprises the formal expression of the general structure of the self-positing 'I', the connections it generates between its product, its agency and its activity. Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p.226. Fichte notes, in direct contradistinction to Reinhold's reflections on the self-legitimizing structure of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, that this circular logic of the self-positing 'I' does not comprise a 'vicious circle' in that the 'I' recognizes its own structure in the positing of itself (ibid.). Reinhold notes: 'The foundation of the *Critique* can only be proven from the *Critique* itself through a vicious circle.' K. L. Reinhold, 'The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge' (1791), in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, trans. George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000, pp.92-3. On the Fichtean circularity of the self-positing 'I' at the structural level of philosophical presentation, see also Fichte, *Early Philosophical Writings*, p.117.

itself to speculative immanence: experience is the immanence of the self-consciousness of the dialectic of consciousness. Speculative thinking is the self-conscious identification of the suspension of the movement of the experiential immanence, which is to say, a suspension in which the experiential immanence is determined by the speculative immanence. It is for this reason that Hegel's *Logic* is bracketed metaphorically by two forms that spatially reflect the deepening of its own dialectically exposed presuppositions: at the opening, Hegel identifies his work as a reconstruction of the philosophical *sanctum sanctorum* ('holy of holies [*Allerheiligstes*']) and at its close, he reconfigures philosophical methodology as a 'circle of circles.'<sup>564</sup> These two images in a certain manner are self-reflexively related at the structural and conceptual level. That said, with the geometric metaphor of the 'circle of circles' we are brought more directly into the structure of the temporal recurvature of 'return.' If the phenomenological circle that returns into itself constitutes a self-contained expression of the ambiguous truth of the dialectical movement of experience (it returns at a self-comprehended level to an expression and comprehension of experience that was never properly speaking actualized in the immediate actuality of spirit), then with and to what does the 'circle of circles' return if not the redoubling of the experiential return?

As a speculative reflection of dialectical movement, the 'circle of circles' returns to the spiritual as the systematically reconstructed basis on which the present is self-consciously comprehended. The temporality of the speculative circle in its speculative thought is the temporalization of the hitherto spatially reduced present that becomes itself in the redoubling

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<sup>564</sup> SL, 25; 5: 14. This project finds its initial inception as early as the Frankfurt writings. See ETW, 193; 1: 283.

of its experiential actualization.<sup>565</sup> What this means is the following: the present is reconstructed as a present that is actualized *only* at the speculative level, that is to say, it is a wholly philosophical present in which the distinctions of the present in its apprehended and dialectically comprehended forms are retroactively determined. With this then, we come to the initial positing of the temporalization of speculative philosophy that is its own: speculative thinking is the temporalization of its own comprehension of the times that are immediately apprehended and the experiential temporalization of history as the dialectical movement of the dissolution of pure apprehension. Speculative thinking is then, in part, temporalized by the movement of itself from out of the retroactively spatialized dialectical temporalization of the 'time-forms'. I say 'in part' because its temporalization is deepened at the level of its comprehension of its own speculative suspension of the dialectical movement by its *spiritual self-movement*. This twofold structure of the temporality of speculative thinking (as emerging from out of the comprehension of the spatialization of experience as the dynamic absolute presupposition of its own comprehension) is what properly temporalizes it: it is at once the time of its unfolding at the level of the becoming of the suspension of the dialectical movement and the reconstruction of itself from out of that becoming in its suspended form. This twofold temporalization of speculative thinking renders intelligible its principle function as 'holding fast', to 'seize' and to 'look back': to 'hold fast' in the speculative manner is to grasp the dialectical movement as its presupposition (negative reason) and the self-conscious determination of that movement as a moment immanent to its self-parturition. The actuality of spirit, at its absolute level, is then only actual in spirit's speculative thinking of itself. Only speculative thinking can grasp the

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<sup>565</sup> Hegel is fully aware of the limits of the metaphors as constitutively *spatializing* the temporal. At the level of the invocation of the 'circle of circles', the spatialization of experiential temporalization of spirit in the *Phenomenology* is speculative disclosed.

actuality of the speculative content of 'the spirit alone is actual' from out of its dialectical disclosure as a 'speculative proposition.'

The *thinking* of the content is distinct from the exposition of the essential dialectical movement of the proposition: with the speculative thinking of the proposition, thought comprehends itself in the abjection of the 'decried unity (*verrufene Einheit*).'<sup>566</sup> Accordingly, speculative thinking is not limited by the ambiguous structure of the twofold movement of the perfect present (the always already) and the future anterior (the not-yet-but-will-have-been) in that it is the speculative suspension of that twofold temporalization from the standpoint of the disclosure of the speculative idea in its speculative thinking. To think speculatively is to move from out of the dialectical movement of its twofold temporality as the ontology of the present, which is to say, as 'what is' and 'what will have been what is.' It grasps instead that the speculative present is the infinite self-reflection of the infinitude of itself from out of the dialectical moments that dissolved the basic oppositions immanent to time. The temporalization of speculative thinking, at its most abstract level, can be discerned more precisely in the threefold distinction of the finite, the infinite and self-finitude in Hegel's *Logic*. And it is in this context that the 'decried unity' of speculative thinking is laid bare.

#### **4.6 The Speculative Infinite and the Present**

The ontological core of the temporal distinction between what has been codified under the grammatical tenses of the 'perfect present' and the 'future anterior' are philosophically rearticulated in the distinction between the temporal categories of finitude and infinitude. These temporal categories are inter-related through the exposition of the self-relation of the

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid. 144; 5: 158.

infinite qua self-superseding finitude, a finitude that comes about initially through a presentation of what could be called the 'finitude of finitude,' which, as Hegel will show, is equally comprehended and expressed as 'infinity.'

The preliminary point to take note of is a strictly Hegelian one: finitude and infinitude are not externally reflected categories that are absolutely opposed to each other as a priori temporal forms that at once determine the absolute (infinite) and the non-absolute (finite). This external opposition is dialectically dissolved in increasingly complex conceptual forms in the *Logic* through a focusing of their inadequate philosophical comprehension. This focusing has two inter-connected forms of presentation: first, the disclosure of the impoverished conception of finitude, disclosed in the two modes of its abstract ontological identification 'ceasing-to-be' and 'coming-to-be.' What is rendered 'finite' according to Hegel's dialectical exposition is the very notion of finitude in this impoverished sense. What the immediate sense of finitude cannot capture is the sense in which finitude brings itself into finite resolution. This conceptual paradox is directly reflected in the transformation of Hegel's prose from abstractly isolated declarations of precarious grammatical structure (consider the first sentence of the first chapter of the *Logic*) to more concrete and immediately recognizable propositional forms. At the point of the exposition of the basic ontological structure of finitude and the revelation of its internal limit, the distinctive form of the *polyptoton* is employed: what a finite conception of finitude cannot comprehend is the finitude of its own finitude at the point of one of its 'sides', or, more precisely, the way in which its 'ceasing-to-be ceases to be' (*Vergehen vergeht*).<sup>567</sup> This is of crucial importance to Hegel since it is at this difficult point of conceptual comprehension that 'the image of true

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid. 130; 5: 141.

infinity' is initially disclosed.<sup>568</sup> Infinitude is not posited as the *indeterminacy* of an externally reflected opposite determination (viz. the finite) in which finitude is rendered intelligible (determinate), but rather is itself identical to a finitude that brings itself to finitude. Infinitude is *self-finitude*, which is to say, self-reflected finitude.<sup>569</sup>

It is only in this sense that the identity of infinitude is comprehended in terms of its 'self-superseding': it is self-superseding because finitude supersedes itself *in* and *against* its own finitude from the point of the internal revelation of its inner sense. Thus, the 'infinite' qua 'self-superseding finite' is the speculative result of the immanent dialectical unfolding of the finite in and for itself. The employment of the polyptoton is significant in that it registers the absolute limit point of the processual internalization of the dialectical movement of comprehension. To experience the polyptoton on its own (which is to say, in complete isolation from the philosophical presentation) is to experience pure, inert tautology; its pure isolation contains within itself the total annihilation of the basic sense a single proposition has (especially in its 'general nature') since the single expression – 'ceasing-to-be' – is itself doubled and recoded from within itself. Accordingly, the comprehension of the ontological meaning of the polyptoton is possible only on the basis of having followed the conceptual development, the process, from whence the 'result' expressed in the polyptoton form

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<sup>568</sup> Ibid. 149; 5: 164.

<sup>569</sup> For all its detail, Houlgate's extensive exposition (350 pages restricted solely to discussing under 90 pages of Hegel *and* the historical reception of those 90 pages have generated) on the opening sections of Hegel's *Logic* completely ignores this reflection of the conceptual development of Hegel's thought in the form of his dialectical presentation. According to Houlgate, the idea of 'immanence' is affirmed in terms of a basic assumed notion of processual, narrative development; he completely fails to reflect on the possibility that 'immanence' is itself critically and dialectically formed within the immanent development of Hegel's development, a development one might add (and here the structure of 'recurvature' is crucial) that is not based on the presupposition of a linear, mono-directional reading (the reader will recall the irony of Houlgate's 'immanence' in that it assumes the position of external interpreter), but rather consists of a 'toing and froing' that on first reading appears to 'get nowhere.' Incidentally, one could add here that the notion of what I have tentatively called 'recurvature' is not a category that merits reflection for Houlgate. For all its assumed fidelity to the unfolding of the *Logic* as it *actually is*, Houlgate ignores the obscure and unfamiliar points of terminological and conceptual articulation in the sections he examines.



emerges.<sup>570</sup> From within the context of its conceptual formation, the polyptotonic form registers the conceptual self-relation ontologically disclosed in the *recurvature* (*zurückgebogen*) of finitude (the ‘bending back’ of finitude in on itself). Thus, the polyptoton can be understood in terms of formally registering (at the level of philosophical presentation) the movement of recurvature at work in Hegel’s *Logic* (which, the reader will recall, is a form of movement immanent to the philosophical system only; it does not operate in the *Phenomenology* as a terminologically disclosed category of movement).<sup>571</sup>

The second temporal form that is exposed in Hegel’s exposition of the interconnection between finitude and the infinite is the impoverished and indeterminate sense of ‘infinity’ as an endless unfolding of finite determinations (determinations which function as limits to the assumed indeterminacy of infinitude). This understanding of infinity is condensed in the well-known Hegelian notion of the ‘bad infinite.’ There are principally two dimensions to the problem of this impoverished ontological status of the infinite: first, it grasps the infinite as a transcendental a priori form that in and of itself cannot be properly disclosed (remaining

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<sup>570</sup> It is worth noting that the polyptoton is an intensification of the abbreviated conceptual form of the speculative proposition. The polyptotonic form no longer even registers the basic grammatical form of ‘subject copula predicate’ discussed in Hegel’s preface and examined in detail in our third chapter.

<sup>571</sup> I have not come across a study that explicitly examines the polyptotonic structure of Hegel’s philosophical presentation. I have hitherto only come across a description of the logical structure of the polyptoton in relation to a rhetorical variation of its use: that of *antanaclasis*. ‘For Hegel the concept’s two-sided logic of equivocation is designed to account for both meanings of measure – the antanaclasis is explicit: terms of natural science and mathematical measure are displaced, repeated with a difference, in the shift between analogic realms of politics and morals, a shift that is possible because each realm is itself already equivocal, not only itself, has an other as its truth, is identical and different from every other. Logic is precisely not the exclusion of ambiguity: shallowness in science and superficiality in philosophy mean omitting the difference of different terms, and then taking them as identical.’ Andrew Haas, *Hegel and the Problem of Multiplicity*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000, p.150. It is peculiar that Haas does not draw our attention to the form of the polyptoton in Hegel’s work; more importantly however, it is strange that Haas does not expand the concept of antanaclasis itself and especially its historical relation to rhetorical punning and, by extension, to the limits of Cicero’s pun ‘*tollendum esse Octavium*’ as a limited articulation of ‘*Aufheben*’ and the ‘delight’ of the speculative possibilities of German. Moreover, Haas fails to recognize the original sense of antanaclasis that Hegel makes use of in his exposition of the movement of being itself in the *Logic*, namely the sense of ‘bending back’ that the Greek term expresses. Accordingly, the antanaclasis of Hegel’s philosophical presentation cannot be grasped as a ‘repetition with a difference’ but rather as the articulation of the extreme transformation of the limit of repetition with a difference into recurvature (*zurückgebogen*).

indeterminate); and second, the structure of the bad infinite ('and on...and on...') yields from within itself a wholly un-temporal mode of self-identification: the temporality of the bad infinite is distinctively spatial, thus 'temporal' only in relation to its non-temporal core (as externally posited in relation to 'space'). The spatialization of infinity at the level of a pure repetition of the untruth of its presupposition deflates its ontological specificity as a temporally unfolded category. Put another way – a way consciously reflecting on the more general categorial distinctions structuring the conceptual transitions in which the categories of the finite and the infinite are first properly exposed – the infinite cannot be conceptually and ontologically reduced to the realm of *pure magnitude* (of the order of quantity), but rather needs to be comprehended in its *qualitative* determinacy as reflected from out of its immediate determination and the yielding of its immanent opposition (the exposition of 'qualitative infinite' is the third stage of the development of 'determinate being' in 'The Doctrine of Being').<sup>572</sup> This qualitative articulation of being, which will be structured more determinately in the context of the second volume of the objective logic ('The Doctrine of Essence'), finds its initial structure of *self-reflection* in the initial, abstractly exposed idea of the 'finitude of finitude.'

Hegel's conceptual focus is organized by the continued separation of these two modes of the understanding of the temporal forms of finitude and the infinite. Similar to the exposition of the finite, the unfolding of the sense of the infinite qua indeterminacy yields from within itself its own directly posited opposition, namely the immediate sense of finitude. What cannot be thought in these two notions of finitude and the infinite is their inter-permeation:

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<sup>572</sup> But insofar as it emerges within the realm of thought in the form of magnitude, Hegel follows the way in which quantum results from out of immediately posited quality (sections 2 and 3 of the first book of the *Logic* are 'Magnitude' and 'Measure' respectively).

As regards the finite, it is readily conceded that it is the null; but its very nullity is the infinity from which it is thus inseparable. In this way of conceiving them, each may seem to be taken in its *connection* with its other. But if they are taken as *devoid* of *connection* with each other so that they are only joined by ‘and’, then each confronts the other as self-subsistent, as in its own self only affirmatively present (*einander gegenüber*).<sup>573</sup>

The instrumental recourse to the connective function of conjunction reflects the basic limits of an externally reflected mode of comprehending the relation between finitude and the infinite. The restitution of external reflection is based on the anxiety of grasping the dialectical permeation of the two temporal modes in their inter-connection, which is to say, within the unfolding of their immanently reflected connection. Hegel refers to this restitution of external reflection in terms of the public denunciation and ‘disrepute’ of the objectivity disclosed (a result of the neutralization of transcendental philosophy): the infinite, which yields from within itself the twofold self-relation of the internal connection of finitude and infinitude, appears in the form of the ‘decried (*verrufene*) unity.’

The disreputable sense of the infinite is its internal dynamic as the *self-superseding finite*. This sense is exhibited by Hegel as early as the short note (placed in between the end of the ‘General Division of Being’ and the first chapter) announcing the basic content of the first section of the ‘doctrine of being’ (‘Determinateness (Quality)’): determinate being, in its passage from the determinacy of being in itself, is configured in such a way ‘that [determinate being] as finite being supersedes itself (*sich aufhebt*) and passes over into the infinite relation of being to its own self, that is...*being-for-self*.’<sup>574</sup> The self-supersession of the finite is the infinite that ‘embraces both itself and finitude.’<sup>575</sup> What is most difficult in

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<sup>573</sup> SL, 143-4; 5: 157.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid. 81; 5: 82.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid. 144; 5: 158.

comprehending this ‘decried unity’ consists of grasping the passage of the infinite and finitude qua self-superseding finitude from a status whose ‘truth is in itself already *present* (*an sich schon vorhanden*)’ to its ontologically superseded determinacy as always already ‘present’ in the temporal sense.<sup>576</sup> There is a remarkably difficult expression that punctuates this transitional moment in Hegel’s presentation of the infinite qua ‘consummated return into self, the relation of itself to itself’, an expression that has received very little philosophical reflection in the historical reception of Hegel’s *Logic* and in recent Hegel scholarship. The ‘true infinite’ finds its initial temporalized articulation in the following: ‘*Es ist und ist da, präsent, gegenwärtig.*’<sup>577</sup> The infinite is *there* (as a determinacy); it is *present*.

Two points need to be made: first, the true infinite qua ‘present’ reflects the conceptual development of the idea of the infinite and its externally reflected opposition to finitude. The ‘present’ of the true infinite stands in contra-distinction to the assumed idea of the ‘bad infinite’ as an a priori form of spatial determination assumed as a temporal one (the ‘bad infinity of an ornament’ as Walter Benjamin once put it), which is to say, as a pure ‘*beyond*.’<sup>578</sup> The infinite is not a transcendental beyond (a *horizon* that regulates as a boundary the limits of the finite), but rather is *present*. Second, the true infinite is in fact present in two inter-related ways: (1) it is present (*präsent*) in so far as it is something that is immanently linked to the conceptual development of the thinking of being in its unfolding as the ‘qualitative infinite’ (this could be grasped in the sense that it is conceptually ‘to hand’); and (2) it is present (*gegenwärtig*) in the temporal sense of ‘currency’, which is to say, as the

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<sup>576</sup> Ibid. 143; 5: 156 (translation slightly modified).

<sup>577</sup> Ibid. 149; 5: 164. Miller’s translates it as follows: ‘It *is* and *is there*, present before us.’ (Once again, Houlgate shies away from any attempt at an exposition of these difficult conceptual developments in the immanent unfolding of *precisely* the development ‘from being to infinity.’)

<sup>578</sup> Ibid. 149; 5: 164. See Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life*, trans. various, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006, p.202.

‘state’ in which thinking is always already *in medias res*.<sup>579</sup> The ‘present’ of the true infinite has then an immanent twofold temporal character: it is first temporalized in the experience of its conceptual comprehension in thinking and second, it is temporalized in the objective mediation of the substance in which that thinking unfolds. The opposition between ‘thought’ and ‘being’ does not help us get a sense of the permeation of these two temporalized forms of the present (only negatively as what the ‘present’ is *not* – viz. direct ‘opposite’ of fixed determinations).

In order to grasp the way in which these two temporal forms of the present (conceptual and ontological) are inter-connected (and not simply connected by an externally reflected conjunction), the dialectical presentation of the movement of the categories need to be grasped in their *speculative* form and permeation. The twofold immanent differentiation of the present of the true infinite is only grasped in its specificity as precisely a unity of differentiated temporal forms in so far as speculative thinking itself is configured as the self-comprehending spiritual self-movement that articulates and determines the ontological and conceptual *whole*. Without the function of speculative thinking as itself the thinking of the ‘decried unity’, the delicate distinction of the two forms of the present cannot be ‘held together’ in the speculative sense as *differentiated forms in their difference*.<sup>580</sup> This implies the following: the ‘first’ reading of the *Logic* follows the dialectical movement of the presentation; the second reading consists of a ‘speculative re-reading’ of the dialectically

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<sup>579</sup> The reader will recall that Hegel’s Jena writings begin with a reflection on the ‘state’ of philosophy in the ‘present’. Note also the distinction between these two forms and the ‘affirmative’ present (*gegenüber*) expressed within the limits of the conjunction of finite and infinite.

<sup>580</sup> It is worth stressing here the formal philosophical presentation in the exposition of the true infinite. Once again, speculative thinking is presenting itself no longer in what was determined in terms of the ‘speculative proposition’ in the preface of the *Phenomenology* (which amounted to a formally un-differentiated presentation of the proposition in its ‘general’ nature), but rather it is formally differentiated at the level of the philosophical presentation itself.

informed and reflected reading.<sup>581</sup> Speculative re-reading is not reducible to the temporality of 'tarrying' as the core of the methodological imperative of phenomenological science announced in the preface to the 1807 work. Speculative re-reading consists of the organization and self-comprehension of the dialectical unfolding of tarrying in each moment of development of the absolute. It consists, accordingly, as the *re*-temporalization of the temporality of the unfolding of the comprehension of miscomprehension in the dialectical movement of experience (what was retroactively configured as spatialized speculation).

The speculative comprehension of experience internalizes dialectical movement as a retroactively suspended moment, thus as a *schematized* part immanent to the speculative whole.<sup>582</sup> This re-temporalization of the experiential temporalization of the dialectical

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<sup>581</sup> The expression 'speculative rereading' is employed by Gillian Rose in *Hegel Contra Sociology*; she uses this expression three times apropos Hegel's relation to Kant and Fichte: Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p.1, p.185 and p.199. The expression is itself operating within Adorno's notion of 'skoteinos'; Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, pp.89-148. (Interestingly, Rose uses the expression on one other occasion when she discusses Althusser's neo-Kantianism which functions, nevertheless, as an immanent 'rereading' of Marx. The ambiguity of Althusser's 'speculative' relation to Marx is perhaps a symptomatic reflection of Rose's own problematic relation to Marx as the bugbear of her reconstruction of neo-Kantian Hegelianism. Importantly, Marx is a *Fichtean* – that is, he does not fall into the philosophical container of neo-Kantianism elaborated by Rose.) That said, it is directed only at the philosophical antecedents of Hegel's philosophy (Hegel speculatively rereads Kant and Fichte), and it is not an immanently deployed philosophical form of self-expression at the level of Hegel's thought itself; which is to say, Hegel, for Rose, does not speculatively reread his *own* philosophical enterprise. Without such a 'rereading' directed against its own dialectical movement, Hegel's philosophy gathers its philosophical import from the 'dubious' historical fortune of posterity. Thus, Hegel's own 'rereading' of Kant and Fichte remains caught in the spurious spatialization of the temporality of the speculative (a purely 'finite/infinite' as Hegel likes to put it). Accordingly, such a speculative rereading is speculative only in a decidedly impoverished sense of 'speculative' qua transformation and unification of the past in the present (of Hegel's thought). This of course leaves the 'present' intact as an empirical reality, totally void of speculative depth.

<sup>582</sup> I contest Rose's expression of 'speculative experience' (an expression Hegel never uses thus rendering its 'retrieval' problematic) as the articulation of the disclosed contradiction between the ontological order of the present (what is) and the dialectically posited future ('what ought to be') even though it aims at a form of unity of the phenomenological processuality of experience (dialectical movement) and the central aim of Hegel's metaphysics (the truth of the absolute in its speculative identity). Although, what makes Rose's philosophical reconstruction of Hegel's thought distinct is precisely that she attempts to render, immanent to Hegel's enterprise, the dialectical sense of 'speculative experience' as a unity immanent to the disunity between experience and speculation. Peter Osborne has recently rehabilitated the expression in the more focused context of a 'philosophy of contemporary art.' Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, London and New York: Verso, 2014. For Osborne, speculative experience functions as the conceptual expression that reflects the formal movement of the comprehension of his central 'speculative proposition': 'contemporary art is postconceptual art.' Ibid. 51-3. The problem (but also the distinctive philosophical character) with Osborne's philosophical presentation is based on the undisclosed relation between a Benjaminian notion of the speculative (as the openness of historical time) and Hegel's immanent self-reflexive

process is, if rendered unified *solely* at the level of fulfilment of the future anterior (the consummation of what 'will have been' as what is 'always already' present), a smoothing over of the immanent *disjunction* between the two forms (dialectical and speculative).<sup>583</sup> The reconstruction of the two forms of the temporality of the absolute – the finitude of its dialectical moments and the infinite of its speculative self-relation – yields the absolute primacy of the immanent antagonism of the two central philosophical modes of Hegel's philosophical enterprise as a 'whole', viz. its dialectical presentation and unfolding (a presentation that is absolutely necessary in relation to the exposition of the dialectical sense of the content of the speculative identity – the 'dirtying of its hands') and its speculative result as the suspension of the dialectical movement reflected in the presentation. This can be put another way: Hegel's philosophy, from the standpoint of the reconstruction of the distinction between *aufheben* and *sichaufheben* consists of a deepening of the absolute primacy of an absolute contradiction internal to itself at the point of its own *present* as the speculative presentation of the true infinity of spirit. Accordingly, Hegel's philosophy does

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dialectical movement of experience at the level its expression in the phenomenologically disclosed speculative proposition (as the speculative suspension of dialectical movement in the expression of the spiritual). This is all the more problematic if Hegel's speculative philosophy is positioned (according to Osborne) as the most accomplished expression of the *de-temporalization* of the absolute as 'time-denying eternal present.' See Peter Osborne, 'Small-scale Victories, Large-scale Defeats: Walter Benjamin's Politics of Time', in Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (eds.), *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, p.87; and Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*, London and New York: Verso, 1995, p.42.

<sup>583</sup> Žižek raises this temporality in his strictly Lacanian interpretation of Hegel: 'Here we encounter Lacan's version of Hegel's basic axiom: the subject (of desire) is not substance - not a thing which persists in time but an entirely non-substantial eventual entity which disappears even before it appears, which appears in/through its very disappearance, as a result of its very failure to be. This is why its structure involves a specific temporality - the temporality of something that never is but always only *will have been*.' Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, p.322. The distinction with this and my interpretation of 'productive disunity' is that the problem lies in the transition from what *was* to what *will have been* (rather than what 'never is' and what 'only will have been'), that is, a distinction between the perfect present and future anterior. The point to be drawn from out of this is the following: the 'speculative whole' as the pure past of the self-parturition of spirit never properly occurred at the level of appearance. Rather, what appears is the *incapacity* of its self-parturition, that is, its incapacity to 'be' (ontologically and historically self-identical) the process of its 'coming-into-being' (becoming) in the *present*. Reconstruction then is the abbreviated articulation of the disunity of the dialectical and speculative present, the *present present* as Hegel notes in the *Logic*.

not eternalize the present *as such* (the speculative expansion of the temporal form distinguished from the past and the future), but rather unfolds a dirempted conception of the present as conceptually reflected in an immanently dirempted self-relational infinite, an infinite that is, above everything else, ontologically identical to a self-reflected and self-superseding finitude.

What has been disclosed here as ‘absolute primacy’ is in fact the absolute *end* of Hegel’s philosophical enterprise at its conceptual and processual level, which is to say, at the level of the structure of the thinking unfolded therein. All that is left for us now is to consider what the undeveloped unity of Hegel’s philosophy finally consists of.

#### **4.7 The Productive Disunity of Hegel’s Philosophy: On Reconstruction**

Above all, Hegel’s philosophy consists of a conscious effort to express the necessary unity of all the contingent and turbulent moments of the historical and cultural life of the present into the absolute truth of the *speculative whole*. He begins to attain a clearer expression of this ‘necessary unity’ when he grasps the necessity of what appears in its immediacy as wholly *unnecessary*: the everyday, the familiar.<sup>584</sup> The folding of philosophy back into its relation with and in the everyday forms a determinate connection between the necessary unity and what initially appeared as ‘contingent moments.’ In a letter to the German classicist J. H. Voss dated (by Hoffmeister) March 1805, Hegel describes this connectivity in terms of ‘the

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<sup>584</sup> ‘The times seem unfavourable for philosophy, because with so much expended effort only a thought of the supersensible has been achieved, the first raw beginning. But this thought ought to be exhibited in the best-known things, e.g., fruit, and not in the religious sense in general.’ M, 252; 2: 560. Hegel’s point is dialectical: he does not attempt to provide a kind of general system of thinking that maps itself onto all objects, rather, he attempts to show in what sense the ‘highest’ things are fully mediated by the ‘lowest,’ thus dissolving the hierarchy structuring (and calcifying) thought.



general constellation of the age (*allgemeine Konstellation der Zeit*).<sup>585</sup> It is from within the experience of this 'general constellation', Hegel explicitly notes, that the necessity of an equally general 'hope for a more effective activity of art and science taking hold (*eingreifenden Betätigung der Kunst und Wissenschaft*) of general culture (*allgemeine Bildung*)' arises.<sup>586</sup> In light of this experience, speculative philosophy functions at three inter-related levels: first, it is the science that comprehends the nature and status of the disunity of the age; an age, as Hegel put it in 1801, in which 'the might of union vanishes from the life of men.' Second, philosophy is the science that grasps the necessary relations between distinct disciplines (the sciences) and cultural forms from within the context of its own self-reflection as cultural form (since its self-identity is not immediately given).<sup>587</sup> Third, speculative philosophy is the science that grasps the totality of the 'general constellation' *through* (immanently) the twofold comprehension of the reflection on the age in its initial appearance (in itself) and the dialectical movement of philosophy and the non-philosophical.<sup>588</sup> Importantly, it is *only because* the spirit of the age appears in a state of internal self-division against itself – the structure of a constellation functioning as a model that discloses the shape of the paradox of a self-contained disunity – that speculative philosophy gathers its dialectical and spiritual sense.

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<sup>585</sup> L, 107; B (I): 100. By 'constellation' I take Hegel to mean the following: the astrological sense of a configuration or position of planets or celestial bodies in regard to one another, as supposed to have 'influence' on terrestrial things, especially their position at the time of a person's birth. Thus, the 'constellation of the age' is its 'supposed' connection of disciplines, forming an assumed 'whole' and having direct effect on man's 'fate.' What is precisely at stake for Hegel is revealing the *internal* sense of the *interconnections* of the 'points' in the constellation, thus negating their externally reflected structure as an assumed whole.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> Recall that in the opening of the *Differenzschrift* Hegel is mindful of the partial necessity of the historical (*historisch*) treatment of philosophical systems.

<sup>588</sup> 'Philosophy is the queen of the sciences, as much because of herself as because of the interaction between her and the other sciences. Just as the mobility conveyed to the other sciences stems from philosophy, whose essence is the concept, so philosophy receives from them the form of completeness of content. Just as philosophy pushes the sciences to compensate for their conceptual deficiency, so they drive philosophy to give up the lack of realization stemming from its abstraction.' L, 106; B (I): 98-99.

As a cultural form that preliminarily reflects the disunity of 'general culture', philosophy is initially (and crucially) the ideal reflexive form of the total comprehension of the general form of the divisions of culture. Accordingly, Hegel's philosophy does not function as a mere sanguine attempt to 'overcome' the divisions by elaborating a utopian philosophical cultural life in which oppositions have been absolutely negated. Rather, a constitutive function of Hegel's philosophical enterprise is that it *deepens* the divisions immediately apprehended and are initially understood as habituated preconditions of thought (this conceptual deepening of division is crystalized in the *Phenomenology* in the expression 'the way of despair'). Read retroactively from the standpoint of Hegel's later works, the 'hope' for a 'more effective activity of art and science' declared in the letter to Voss operates as a generic cultural idiom thinly veiling the deepening of the despair of the divisions that structure the 'constellation.'<sup>589</sup> Consequently, a significant philosophical move internal to the unfolding of speculative philosophy is the re-vivification of what appears at the level of immediacy as lifeless, that is, lacking the self-movement of spiritual life (the 'meagre shred or a disordered heap of dead bones' as Hegel puts it apropos the tradition of logic prior to his own).<sup>590</sup> The revivification of the lifeless however consists initially of the intensification of the status of the *lifelessness* of the lifeless; Hegel's philosophy does not replace the 'dead' with the 'living' (which is conditioned on their externally reflected opposition), but rather it

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<sup>589</sup> It is a far cry from the *süßern Hoffnungen* of the 1796 poem to Hölderlin. M, 86; 1: 230. I would like to add that this idiomatic mobilization of hope is in some senses radically dissolved at the philosophical level in the idea of 'despair.' What phenomenological science develops is the diremption of hope as temporalizing operator of culture in that it proposes a radical immanent negation of the spatiality of the *utopian dream* of philosophical or cultural immediacy. Contra Bloch, Hegel's dialectic is not utopian since 'cultural work' is developed by the deepening of despair and not, as Bloch argues, hope. History for Hegel is the disjunction of itself and its idea; the living present that alienates itself from its immediate form (*historische*) and its speculative kernel (*Geschichte*). It is, accordingly, a dialectical contradiction of the temporality of the present perfect ('always already') and the future anterior ('not-yet-but-will-have-been'). Bloch's temporalization of hope is limited, if I understand him correctly, to one-side of this dialectical contradiction: to the temporality of the 'not-yet.' See Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg, Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1988, pp.50-1.

<sup>590</sup> SL, 31; 5: 19.

pushes into its phenomenological and logical end, the points that pre-reflexively constitute an 'opposition' (such as the categories of 'dead' and 'living' Hegelian historicists are so fond of recalling).<sup>591</sup> One of the central features of Hegel's philosophy – and indeed, a constitutive function of his conception of philosophical comprehension – is that consciousness is not aware of, as the saying goes, *how bad things really are*. The intensification of the 'lifeless' at the level of its lifelessness consists of a higher level reflection of the oppositions that habitually construct thought.

In light of this redoubling of the oppositions at the level of each of the 'sides' that punctuate their structure, the philosophical painter who daubs his 'grey on grey' constitutes a wholly necessary limit experience to the cultural sense of the social import of the philosopher as either the thinker of the subjective withdrawal from the 'commotions of every kind [both] within us and around us' and notwithstanding all the turbulence, the philosopher's 'head quietly keeps its nightcap on and silently carries on its operations beneath it.'<sup>592</sup> Or, the philosopher, caught in a state of excitement about the truth of the substance of the absolute, fails to grasp in what sense his own thoughts, cultural life and historical standpoint are wholly *mediated*. Hegel's philosophy ventures out into 'general culture' and comprehends its discontents precisely because it consciously configures philosophy as the bringing to consciousness of the mediated state of immediate knowledge.<sup>593</sup> The philosophical monochromatic 'grey on grey' does not constitute a pure resignation in light of the incapacity

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<sup>591</sup> There is a tendency in Hegel scholarship to read the historicist principle in the singular direction from 'dead' to 'living.' A clear example of this can be found in Angelica Nuzzo's general comprehension of Hegel's logic: 'If Hegel's Logic of the Concept...inherits its determinations (concepts, judgments, syllogisms) from general logic, its peculiar character consists in setting the "dead bones" of logic into living motion, showing their inner life and their specific cognitive validity.' Angelica Nuzzo, "...as if the truth were a coin!" – Lessing and Hegel's Developmental Theory of Truth,' *Hegel-Studien*, Vol. 44, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2009, p.132.

<sup>592</sup> LHP (III), 425.

<sup>593</sup> 'Immediate knowledge is thus everywhere mediated, and philosophy does nothing but bring this to consciousness – demonstrating the mediation which in point of fact is already present there', *ibid.* 422.

of philosophy to raise consciousness to the level of philosophical self-consciousness (which would consist of the becoming-philosophical of the world). Rather, it discloses the mediated ('already there') status of the latent idea of philosophical resignation as the precondition on which philosophy engages in the world of 'general culture.' It grasps the latency precisely because cultural life – the movement of ethical substance – clamours toward immediacy.<sup>594</sup> For Hegel, it was the culture of the thinking life that gave itself too impatiently and unconsciously to a pre-reflexive practice of immediate instrumentalized thought that stood as the object against which his own philosophy would be immanently formed. For us, it is the dissolution of philosophy as a dialectically reflexive cultural form that itself immanently *intervenes* and *enmeshes* (*eingreifen*) itself with and through its other within the general context of 'absolutized praxis' that renders philosophical experience meaningful and necessary. For Hegel, philosophy in its reified form could not *transcend* itself into the world of cultural life; *for us*, philosophy has been *transcended* by a cultural life that deems philosophy a thing of the past.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> This identification of philosophical comprehension as the comprehension of the positivity of immediacy will take shape in the twentieth (and twenty-first) century in the immanent philosophical critique of a 'general culture' dominated by 'absolutized praxis.' Adorno, *Critical Models*, p.291.

<sup>595</sup> Of course, the codification of 'professional' academic philosophy consists of the uncritical continuation of the reification, thus reduction, of the philosophical method of 'critique.' Instead of holding in abeyance the transcendence of reason by the understanding in relation to speculative thought in the culture of the early nineteenth century, the professional 'philosophizing' (reduced to method) of the current academic context suspends the transcendence of the history of philosophy by a constant reconfiguration of its historical structure (thus generating the conditions for endless productions of histories of philosophy). For Hegelian historicists, the irony should not be missed: 'As far as the more direct range of knowledge is concerned, to which the classes at the *Gymnasium* would have to be limited, I would like to exclude explicitly first of all the *history of philosophy*, although it often would seem to be suitable. But without prior training in speculative thought, it would be nothing but an account of coincidental, idle ideas, and the effect would be...the creation of a detrimental, disdainful opinion of philosophy', M, 324-5. We must make note of another mode of philosophizing, one that directly challenges both the 'post-metaphysical' precondition of the historical present and the academic calcification of the dialectical interplay between philosophy and its other. The other mode of philosophizing however restores a neo-classical identity between subject and idea, leaving the problem of historical and cultural mediation untouched. The neo-classical restoration of philosophy finds its most accomplished expression in the work of Alain Badiou. See Peter Osborne, 'Neo-Classic: Alain Badiou's *Being and Event*,' in *Radical Philosophy* 142 (March/April 2007), pp.19-29; and Étienne Balibar, 'What is Political Philosophy? Contextual Notes,' in *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics*, eds. Gabriel Rockhill and Philip Watts, Durham and

This thesis has consciously presented itself, out of the disclosure and exposition of the undeveloped unity of Hegel's thought, as a *reconstruction* of the dirempted kernel of speculative philosophy. A detailed explication of this term however has been held in abeyance. The reason for this is the following: the exposition of *aufheben* qua dialectical movement and *sichaufheben* qua speculative-spiritual movement constitutes the philosophical basis on which to signal and comprehend the notion of reconstruction. Accordingly, the sense of reconstruction emerges as the *result* of the explication of the delicate dialectical relation between dialectical movement and spiritual movement immanent to Hegel's philosophical enterprise. It is the result however that retroactively renders intelligible, at a more philosophically comprehensive level, the dynamic of the undeveloped dialectics of dialectical experience and speculative thinking. The sense of reconstruction as the philosophical form that attempts to reflect in ideal form the speculative whole of 'general culture' finds its preliminary philosophical expression in the productive disunity of *aufheben* and *sichaufheben*, which is to say, the *self-reflexive articulation of the dialectical contradiction of dialectical movement and speculative-spiritual movement*.

The expression 'reconstruction' emerges, in the context of Hegel's thought, initially within the intellectual development and the conceptual transitions of the early Jena writings, more precisely in the *Differenzschrift* and *Faith and Knowledge*. Accordingly, the employment of the expression is contained within the theoretical space cleared by the idealism of Fichte and Schelling (and, although to a lesser extent, the speculative core of Kant's transcendental philosophy). Before we turn to the early Jena writings, I would like to make note of the continued employment of 'reconstruction' in Hegel's work as a whole. It is,

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London: Duke University Press, 2009, pp.95-6. (My employment of the 'transcendent' here takes recourse to Hegel's illuminating and condensed reflection on the distinction between the 'transcendent' and 'transcendental' in Kantian philosophy. See LHP (III), pp.431-3.)

one must immediately note, seldom used as a self-consciously reflected term. That said, from within the context of the second preface to the *Logic*, it can be argued that the expression is used precisely in relation to the task of adequately reflecting the general philosophical architecture as a whole.<sup>596</sup> And yet, reconstruction is not the term that reflects the totality of the *Logic*; rather, it functions as a part within it. Its particularity however is of interest in that it functions as the historical recollection of hitherto instinctively assumed and ‘unconsciously (*bewußtlos*)’ apprehended forms of thought (*Denkbestimmungen*).<sup>597</sup> Reconstruction then is immanent to the process of the identification of the structure and import of Hegel’s speculative philosophy as a whole. With this in mind, we can consider its determinate connection to Fichte and Schelling’s idealist systems of philosophy.<sup>598</sup>

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<sup>596</sup> Béatrice Longuenesse grasps the general shape of Hegel’s *Logic* in terms of ‘critique’. Hegel’s ‘critique’ however is stripped of its purely Kantian sense and articulated instead, in its Hegelian formulation, as ‘the exposition of the very concepts of metaphysics...in order to call upon them to account for their own place and role in the activity of thinking.’ Béatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*, trans. Nicole J. Simek, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.4. The rhetoric of the ‘very’ gives Longuenesse’s conception of Hegel’s *Logic* a rehabilitated transcendental structure from out of the limits of transcendental philosophy in its Kantian form. This Kantian Hegelianism fails to give a sufficient account, like Houlgate’s own variant, of the phenomenological presupposition and sustained movement through the *Logic*. In a certain sense, Longuenesse grasps Hegel’s *Logic* as the dialectical logic of the movement of the concepts of metaphysics prior to their activation in thinking. Notwithstanding the commitment to the movement of dialectical logic, the restitution of thinking is an empty vessel in which the knowledge of logic is problematic to say the least.

<sup>597</sup> SL, 39; 5: 30.

<sup>598</sup> I would like to make a short note here on the sustained employment of the expression ‘reconstruction’ in the context of Anglo-American pragmatism since not only does the term function as the ‘signifier’ of a theoretical orientation, but it also serves as a model of a reified conception of the term. It is Dewey’s *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (a work published after both the first world war and again, with a new introduction, after the second world war) that ‘reconstruction’ enters, more prominently, the pragmatic lexicon. It is the post-1945 context that recalibrates Dewey’s founding principle that ‘the distinctive office, problems and subject matter of philosophy grow out of stresses and strains in the community life in which a given form of philosophy arises.’ John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1972, p.v. In contra-distinction to the intensification of social and cultural life, philosophy remains an anachronism. Its constitutive *gesture* is a ‘withdrawal from the present scene’; its constitutive *feature* (as a symptom of that withdrawal): ‘the desire to find something so fixed and certain as to provide a secure refuge [from the ‘disturbance and unsettlement that now marks the other aspects of man’s life’].’ Ibid. vii. Philosophy then is not adequate, as a reflective form, to the present. Before it even sets off, Dewey’s inquiry finds itself in a quandary: it is based on the reification of the destruction of the present as purely self-evident. This reification dialectically reflects the reification of the notion of reconstruction at work; the reconstruction of philosophy is an inert and ossified idea that simply ratifies, as a mere reflection, the basic, externally posited presuppositions of its own discourse (philosophy is in need of reconstruction because the present is in need of reconstruction). The immediate cultural sense of the present is formalized into the dominant cultural form of the present. From this, two significant problems emerge: first, the ‘past’ is itself calcified as pure history (having no sustained function on the present); second, the ‘future’ is

In the second introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, which is to say, within the introduction addressed to ‘readers who already have a philosophical system’, Fichte conceives of his philosophical conception of the original act of the self-positing ‘I’ within the initial experiment of the division of the ordinary self and the observing philosophical self: ‘think of yourself, frame the concept of yourself; and notice how you do it.’<sup>599</sup> The act of thinking itself, when reflected on, reveals itself as its own act upon itself, is for the *philosopher* a ‘fact’ in that ‘he himself has already run through the whole course of experience.’<sup>600</sup> What the philosopher can do is express his observations, which are shared with the ordinary consciousness, at the level of their relationship to consciousness. What Fichte discloses is that the act of thinking of oneself does not contain within itself ‘consciousness of self’ since this presupposes a determinate relation of the division immanent to being conscious of oneself (a determinate relation, for Fichte of the ‘I’ to the ‘not-I’). The act of thinking of yourself – which is properly aligned to simply thinking – is then a ‘mere intuition.’<sup>601</sup> It is a pure, self-reflexive act, what Fichte calls, ‘an act upon an act itself.’<sup>602</sup> This act is abstracted from the totality of the intellect, by the philosopher, as a part of the intellect.<sup>603</sup> At this point, Fichte restores the unity of philosopher and experiment of ordinary

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eradicated as a cultural or political temporalizing category. The irony of course is that reconstruction has direct connotations to both the historical past and futurity: first, in that it posits a configuration after the destruction of a construction (the sense of the prefix ‘re-’) and second, that it posits itself as a form that has not yet been achieved in the actuality of the present (since it is a philosophical work). The same presupposition is at work in Bertrand Russell’s contemporaneous work, *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1916. For a recent investigation into Dewey’s ‘reconstructive’ pragmatist project, see Philip Kitcher, *Preludes to Pragmatism: Toward a Reconstruction of Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

<sup>599</sup> Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, p.33. It is a great merit of Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre* that it brings to philosophical consciousness the act of everyday, ordinary consciousness. It does not however properly show the dialectical permeation of these two forms of consciousness.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid. 34.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid. 35.

thought in the following manner: 'This self-constructing self is none other than my own.'<sup>604</sup> This is the essential objective nature of the original act of the intellect since it is the '[making] clear to himself [of the philosopher united with the 'I'] what he actually thinks, and always has thought, when he thinks of himself; that he thinks of himself is, however, an immediate fact of consciousness.'<sup>605</sup> It is the immediacy of this self-formation of thinking – rendered intelligible only from the standpoint of its philosophical observation – that gives 'self-construction' its principle meaning. The 'self-construction' of the 'I' is the most intimate act of itself qua free.<sup>606</sup> According to Fichte, 'construction' is always already the internal act of the 'I' in its pure essence, as pre-reflexively identical to itself as the very thinking of itself.<sup>607</sup> The philosophical observer then contains within itself the observation of the construction of itself since it is its own act. Self-construction is, according to the philosophical presentation, known more precisely as *intellectual intuition*.<sup>608</sup>

As I tried to show in the first chapter, it is the distinction between the principle of the speculative identity in Fichte (the identity of the original act of the self-positing I) and its systematic exposition that anchors Hegel's critical exposition. In so far as the systematic presentation constitutes a 'stepping out' of the original act of transcendental intuition, the self-construction of the 'I', Fichte's system 'never reconstructs (*rekonstruiert*) itself again as identity and true infinity [Reason].'<sup>609</sup> The expression is not fortuitous in that Hegel reminds

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<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid. 36.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>607</sup> 'The query about objectivity is based on the strange assumption that the self is something over and above its own thought of itself, and that this thought is underlaid by something else.' Ibid. 36. Schelling develops this in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* in relation to the dialectic of individuality and the universal: 'Everyone can regard *himself* as the object of these investigations. But to explain himself to himself, he must first have suspended all individuality within himself, for it is precisely this which is to be explained.' Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p.116.

<sup>608</sup> Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, 38.

<sup>609</sup> D, 81; 2: 11.



the reader of Fichte's own insistence on the identification of 'construction' as the core aim of transcendental subjective idealism: 'Transcendental philosophy aims to construct (*konstruiert*) the empirical consciousness not from a principle external to it, but from an immanent principle, as an active emanation or self-production of the principle.'<sup>610</sup> Hegel's critical distinction between the construction of pure intellectual intuition and the systematic reconstruction of itself in the philosophical presentation is, as a dialectical reflection of the principle-system dichotomy, raised to the level of transcendental philosophy's presupposed opposition between pure, self-reflexive consciousness and consciousness of philosophical knowledge. Hegel is mindful of Fichte's presentation of the apriority of pure intellectual intuition in relation to philosophical knowledge (as its 'condition'). He notes moreover that the free activity of the self-constructing 'I' is the *condition*, but not philosophical knowledge itself since philosophical knowledge, within the Fichtean system, is the positing of the objective totality of the unfolding of the positing 'I' from out of itself, into its posited absolute opposite ('not-I') and a unification of the positing 'I' and the positing of the 'not-I' in their original divisibility within the original act. It is in this sense that philosophy functions as the retroactive *reconstruction* of the self-construction of the 'I.' It determines the absolute unity of the concept of the subject from out of its 'evolution' through the shapes punctuating the act of intellectual intuition: 'Intellectual intuition is...posited as identical with everything, it is the totality.'<sup>611</sup> Thus, the philosophical presentation (its presentation in propositions) of this totality is nothing but the idealized representation of what is always already expressed in the totality of the construction of the self-positing 'I'. It is at this point in the philosophical presentation as a formal reflection of the original totality that Fichte's

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<sup>610</sup> Ibid. 120; 2: 53.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid. 121; 2: 55.

conception of the self-constructing 'I' is undone. The propositions of Fichte's idealism at the systematic level operate as reflections conditioned on the absolute identity of intellectual intuition; as reflections however, they take recourse to a mode of absolute opposition (of absolute posited 'I' and absolute posited 'not-I') in order to render intelligible the absolute apriority of the intellectual intuition, which is to say, its priority over its reflection as speculative totality.<sup>612</sup>

The necessary reflective propositions on the original identity of subject-object at the pure subjective level of the synthesis of 'I' and 'not-I' themselves reflect the dynamics of the untruth of the absolute speculative identity at its pure subjective level. Absolute identity means the perfect, equal dissolution of the opposites in their connection. The construction of the 'I' from out of itself and the positing of its 'not-I' forms a constitutive *imbalance* between the absolute subject 'I' and the absolute posited objective 'not-I' in that the latter consists, since it is composed originally through the posited of the absolute 'I' ('I = I'), of the connection of the positing 'I' and the posited 'not-I.' That is to say, the synthesis of the self-constructing 'I' is a false synthesis of external connection, of a 'bolting together' if you will, of opposites that no longer permeate harmoniously as two sides of a single 'I' (always 'I' and 'not-I'). And in so far as the synthesis can be expressed only from the subjective side, the harmonious unity is in fact only a 'synthesis by way of domination (*Beherrschens*).'<sup>613</sup> Accordingly, no true synthetic construction of the 'I' from out of itself, through its posited 'not-I' and back to the unity of both absolutes (subjective I and objective I), is possible within the subjective transcendental idealism of Fichte's system of philosophy. Thus, no

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<sup>612</sup> Ibid. 123; 2: 57.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid. 138; 2: 75.

*reconstruction* of the self-construction of the 'I' at the level of its systematic expression is possible.<sup>614</sup>

In this sense, 'reconstruction' is an expression of the *miscomprehended* synthesis of the subjectively deduced transcendental union of subject and object in that it reflects what was originally aimed at in the 'construction.' Hegel, within the context of his exposition of Fichte's philosophy in the early Jena writings, is terminologically registering the failure of the synthesis in the conceptual reflection of the principle of Fichte's idealism back onto itself. A true 'reconstruction' (*Rekonstruktion*) would have to unveil the essence of spirit and expound how nature reflects itself in the free spirit.<sup>615</sup> It is Schelling's philosophy of the absolute that establishes a dynamic step toward such reconstruction.

Similarly to Fichte, Schelling conceives of the observation and description of the original act of the 'I' as the task of the philosopher. In that philosophy is nothing but the most accomplished form of observation of the universality of the principle of the self-thinking I, philosophy is the most sophisticated expression of the '*act of construction*.'<sup>616</sup> Because it has the absolute principle of 'I' as its self-producing object, the act of construction is the internal articulation of the absolute totality of the self-relating 'I' prior to its reflected externalization into the 'not-I.' Schelling is in agreement with Hegel in relation to the problem of the failure of identity's construction of itself as absolute totality from out of the products of mere reflection (since such a totality would arise from out of the abstraction from

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<sup>614</sup> Ibid. 138; 2: 74-5. An alternative critique of Fichte's philosophy of the original self-constructing act of the 'I' is found in Novalis and the proto-Romantic notion of 'feeling': 'Philosophy is originally a feeling. The philosophical sciences conceptualize the intuitions of this feeling./ It must be a feeling of inner, necessary free relations. Thus philosophy always needs *something given* – it is *form* – and yet *real* / and *ideal* at once, / like the original act. Philosophy does not admit of construction (*Construieren läßt sich Philosophie nicht*). The borders (*Grenzen*) of feeling are the borders of philosophy. Feeling cannot feel itself.' Novalis, *Fichte Studies*, p.13; 2: 113-4.

<sup>615</sup> FK, 182; 2: 424.

<sup>616</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p.13.

the original absolute totality).<sup>617</sup> In the context of Fichte's 'synthesis', the transition from construction to product and back to a higher level construction is impossible since the determinacy of their relation is generated as reflective expressions; what is produced is *synthesis as antinomy*. Schelling's philosophy – taking Fichte's magnum opus as one of its constitutive philosophical conditions – supersedes the principle of identity ('I = I') into the absolute principle of the speculative *whole*.<sup>618</sup> Accordingly, Schelling's system of philosophy attempts to supersede the limits of the subjective articulation of transcendental philosophy (the pure subjective self-constructing 'I') into its united objective expression. It is for this reason that in Schelling's system, principle and system are dialectically united in philosophy itself. Thus, there is no longer a determinate division between the original act and philosophical knowledge. Thus, 'philosophy and system coincide (*fallen zusammen*).'<sup>619</sup> From the outset, Schelling's system of philosophy is in truth an *absolute philosophical system*: it is the ideal reflexive form of the absolute principle in its permeated subjective and objective articulation, which is to say, the expression of the point of *absolute indifference* of the subjective subject-object and the objective subject-object.

In Schelling's philosophy then, the structure of synthesis is not mediated reflectively by the external function of connection but rather is sustained in the *absolute relation* of the distinctions between absolute identity and absolute separation immanent to the principle of absolute indifference. This implies the following: that the absolute relation also expresses the essential, equal *separation* internal to the absolute as its fundamental structure. Absolute indifference then is the essence of its own identity in the non-identity of its internal, essential

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<sup>617</sup> D, 158; 2: 98.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid. 155; 2: 94.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

division.<sup>620</sup> A philosophical system comprehends the *equal necessity* of this absolute relation, thus expressing the unity of the identity and non-identity immanent to the absolute, which is to say, as its essential structure and sense.<sup>621</sup> That said, Schelling, as was noted above, still comprehends his philosophical project through the idea of *construction*. His construction, in light of the above, must be configured in terms of the absolute self-construction of the absolute in its subjective and objective form. The question of whether he indeed attains this absolute construction is based on the sense Schelling gives to ‘construction.’

It is clear that, for Schelling, the sense of construction immanent to his philosophical enterprise exhibits a much broader philosophical import: construction is the expression employed for the articulation of the total, interconnected forms of art and science as potent manifestations – or *emanations*, to use the neo-Platonic term – of the absolute principle of the indifferent whole. The augmentation and aggrandizement of construction is a reflection of the widened terrain of philosophical speculation in the context of post-Kantian idealism. This is why Schelling’s constructive methodology expands from out of the context of the initial systematic exposition of the *Philosophy of Nature* (1797) to perhaps its most *extensive* employment in *The Philosophy of Art* (which is the systematic organization of a series of lectures delivered in conjunction with his system of transcendental idealism that Schelling gave every year from 1799 to 1803).<sup>622</sup> Construction then is *the* ideal reflexive form

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<sup>620</sup> This, for Hegel, is a fundamental insight of Schelling’s philosophy. It conditions, in a certain respect, the meaning and structure of Hegel’s idea of unity through *aufheben* insofar the latter is the self-comprehension of spirit’s identity in difference (of non-contradiction in its contradiction).

<sup>621</sup> Ibid. 157; 2: 96.

<sup>622</sup> The four chapters that divide and structure the philosophical exposition of art consist of a presentation of a point of the construction of art: in the first chapter, Schelling presents the construction of art as such (and its manifestation from out of the absolute); the second chapter consists of a construction of art’s content; the third, the construction of the form of art (from out of its content); and the fourth chapter is a presentation of the construction of the forms of art immanent to the philosophical opposition of art’s reality and ideality. For a

expressing the internal task of philosophy itself: the construction of the absolute in philosophical systematics as the construction of the absolute itself, that is, the self-construction of the absolute. It is, however, an ideal reflexive form within Schelling's *pre*-1809 writings (that is, prior to his monumental essay on human freedom).<sup>623</sup> It is the *pre*-1809 writings that shall focus our reconstruction of Schelling's idea of construction.

As has already been noted, Schelling comprehends the absolute unity of subject and object at the level of its subjective and objective indifference in terms of the 'act of construction.' Philosophy is the system of the construction of the absolute indifference. The initial step toward this comprehension consists of the 'free act' of the absolute *presence* of the principle itself immanent to thinking; without the presence of the absolute (its apriority qua always already absolute) before thought, 'we are bound to find it unintelligible.'<sup>624</sup> Accordingly, 'it is necessary to transfer oneself freely from the outset into the way of thinking.'<sup>625</sup> The step into thinking is the 'free act' from whence the principle of transcendental philosophy emerges.<sup>626</sup> For the philosophical presentation, the absolute primacy of the principle of transcendental philosophy is initially *postulated* as 'something to be freely constructed.' Insofar as philosophy is the ideal systematic expression of the

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basic historical presentation of Schelling's lectures see translator's introduction, F. W. J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Stott, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

<sup>623</sup> I have unfortunately only had the chance of consulting five of Schelling's 1809 and post-1809 writings: the essay on human freedom, his philosophical novel *Clara*, the second and third draft (1813 and 1815 respectively) of *Weltalter* and the later Berlin lectures on positive philosophy. What is distinctive about the conceptual and methodological omission of the idea of 'construction' – which figures so systematically in the *pre*-1809 writings – in these four works. I would like to posit here, albeit in somewhat broad sketched out form, the reason for the dissolution of 'construction': Schelling's thought, from 1809 onwards, became increasingly focused on the expression of the *pre*-constructive character of the absolute pre-conscious will, a will that constitutes a dynamic ontological deepening of the self-construction of the indifferent absolute 'I' in Schelling's *pre*-1809 writings. That said, the language of construction appears, albeit somewhat sparsely, in the 1815 fragment of the *Weltalter*. In some sense, this return of the language of construction, from the limits of my own reading, can be said to be something of a conceptual blip. I have not, however, done enough philosophical work on Schelling to really flesh this point out.

<sup>624</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p.29.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid.

absolute, the absolute qua principle 'is a construction of its own.'<sup>627</sup> Thus, the science of the whole is at once the expression and presentation of 'its own free construction' of the absolute itself.<sup>628</sup> In this sense, the potencies of the absolute (its punctuated stages) and their epochal (historical) unfolding is an internal form of the absolute's free construction of itself as philosophical systematicity. This philosophical journey of the absolute reaches its highest mode of expression in *the philosophy of art* as the self-conscious articulation of the absolute; art is, for Schelling, the articulation of the construction of 'the universal organon of philosophy.'<sup>629</sup>

Schelling's philosophical system reflects the basic opposition to be overcome between the real, unconscious absolute (its pre-reflexive, objective unfolding), and the ideal, self-conscious articulation of itself. Transcendental science and the philosophy of art are, accordingly, the ideal reflexive forms of the immanent opposition between what Hegel in his 1801 essay refers to as the objective subject-object and the subjective subject-object. Science and art are, one ought to note, constitutively self-reflexive in so far as they are both manifestations of the absolute itself at specific moments (especially, at the point of its genesis and at the moment of its most accomplished self-expression). One could say then that the free act of self-construction is the original genesis of its manifestation in the construction of art as self-conscious whole. In his pre-1809 writings, Schelling will, like Hegel, attempt to disclose the essential *circularity* of the absolute at the level of its philosophical presentation: the beginning of the absolute is its end and the end is the return in on itself of the

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<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid. 28.

beginning.<sup>630</sup> A full philosophical disclosure of the absolute sense of construction qua free act of the absolute's self-construction can strictly speaking only emerge from within the context of its consummated self-manifestation, or, at the end of its epochal metamorphosis. As has already been noted, the highest 'potency' of the absolute's self-construction is philosophical systematicity itself, i.e. its 'higher ideal reflex.'<sup>631</sup> The potency of the philosophical system is however contained in its real reflexive state in the artwork and the progress of the artist in the objective actualization of the absolute content of the work. Because of its essentially self-conscious form, philosophy is the only science that can properly grasp the content of the absolute as it is expressed in real form in the artwork. Thus, the ideality of the artwork contains within itself the dialectic of real and ideal that initially structures the general architecture of Schelling's philosophical system (as the unity of transcendental idealism and philosophy of art).

It is philosophy's insight into the essence of art qua manifestation of the absolute that gives it the reflected form of real and ideal. In this sense, the construction of art at the level of its own identity – the exposition of which is one of the aims of *The Philosophy of Art* – is in truth philosophy's construction of the construction of art qua potency: 'Philosophy is the basis of everything, encompasses everything, and extends its constructions to all potencies and objects of knowledge.'<sup>632</sup> What then is the relation between the philosophical construction and the constructions of the potencies of the absolute insofar as they exhibit themselves in terms of *construction*? This question is asked in that Schelling presents the

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<sup>630</sup> This circularity of the absolute as the activity of its own self-parturition and self-consummation is dissolved in the conception of the pre-conscious infinite positive will developed in *Die Weltalter*. Here, the pre-conscious act of the will bringing itself into the decision of existence constitutes the fluctuation of an eternal beginning that does not cease to emerge from out of itself, thus an infinitely becoming will caught in its own determination as beginning: 'a beginning that does not stop being a beginning, a truly eternal beginning.' Schelling, *Ages of the World*, p.182.

<sup>631</sup> Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, p.6.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid. 13.



philosophy of art as 'the highest potency' of his system of philosophy.<sup>633</sup> It implies, more precisely, the following: what is the potency of transcendental philosophy if it is the totality of the potencies it renders possible? Schelling refines the notion of the absolute's self-construction in terms of the paradoxical presentation of the ideal in the real. He posits the following formulation: 'presentation within an ideal medium in general = construction.'<sup>634</sup> In so far as philosophy is the general presentation of the modes of presentation of the absolute, philosophy is the generic construction; it is the construction on the basis of which 'construction' qua individual determination is adequately determined. The potencies of the absolute then emerge only as unified manifestations as a result of the emergence of philosophy in its most ideal, complete form.<sup>635</sup> What I am driving at here is the problem of the dialectics of completion and *incompletion*, of the potency and *impotence*, and of determination and *indeterminacy* of the absolute in its philosophical expression; that is, I am driving at the immanence of the negativity of transition and distinction internal to the movement between potencies.

The problem with philosophical construction as the basis on which all constructions of the absolute are rendered intelligible as 'potencies' is its substantial *indeterminacy* as eternal self-identity with the absolute *from the point of the beginning* ('*point of departure*') of *the construction of the absolute*.<sup>636</sup> Here we return to Schelling's identity of the presence of the absolute and the intellectual intuition of the self-thinking 'I' as its ideal, pre-reflexive expression. What philosophical construction fails to comprehend is the immediacy of the absolute in its given, unphilosophical form; an immediacy that permeates the 'point of

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<sup>633</sup> Ibid.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid. 17.

departure' from whence philosophical construction commences. This 'failure of the comprehension of the immediate' should be understood in relation to what Hegel called 'the reluctance to think the familiar.' In starting from the absolute as absolute indifference of both subjective subject-object and objective subject-object, Schelling's philosophy fails to give an account of the unfolding of that starting point itself from within the transitions immanent to the historical present, that is, from within the transitions from ordinary thought to philosophical consciousness. Rather, the task and identity of philosophy as wholly self-identical forms are a priori forms of possibility of transcendental philosophy. Philosophical construction then, as the identity of the absolute and its own formation (reflected as method), cannot properly grasp its own reality from within the non-constructed mediation of the everyday. This is why 'construction' does not operate as a consciously reflected expression in Hegel's philosophy. It no longer functions as the adequate philosophical reflection of the 'ethical substance' in which 'constructions' are basic (mere) reflections. If philosophy is to be constructed, which is to say, if its essence as construction is to make any sense, then it must first go through the *reconstruction* of its failed attempts at absolute construction. This is what Fichte's and Schelling's systems of philosophy could never comprehend (since they are principally grounded on the positivity of the original act of the absolute 'I'): they never comprehended the immanent ruptural logic of competing forms of the self-comprehension of the absolute *in* its absolute comprehension. More simply put: Fichte and Schelling's 'self-constructing' absolute does not grasp the internal experiential temporalization of historical change as expressed in reflexive form in the competing forms of absolute spirit (art, religion, philosophy). They, more precisely (and especially in the case of Schelling), comprehend the determinate moments of the absolute – its potencies – in a de-historicised continuum of

ceaselessly flowing emanation.<sup>637</sup> Philosophical construction in this sense is devoid of the *reconstruction* that faces the deepened dialectical conflict of the dialectical and speculative movement of the absolute.

This leaves Hegel's philosophy in a specific determinate relation to the absolute and its reflection of the cultural form of philosophy as its expression: it consists of grasping the preliminarily *unconstructed* status of the forms of philosophical *misconstruction* in the form of philosophical *reconstruction*. This implies the following: that philosophy has never properly comprehended itself at the level of its own self-consciousness through the reconstruction of itself in the contradiction of its higher dialectic – the dialectic of dialectical movement and spiritual movement – since it unfolds as the formation of that which was never properly *lost* (the speculative whole). The immanent presence of that which appears 'lost' should not be understood however as a ratification of a sustained 'endurance.' Rather, for the difficult and delicately reconstructed idea that the speculative whole *never properly occurred*.<sup>638</sup> Reconstruction, as the resultant philosophical concept, is the form of the comprehension of the higher-level dialectics of the speculative whole that never took place; it is, more precisely, *the reconstruction itself of the speculative whole as the whole that was never lost precisely because it never took place*.<sup>639</sup>

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<sup>637</sup> In this sense, Gilles Deleuze's philosophy is the most accomplished predecessor of Schelling's metaphysics in the 'post-68' context.

<sup>638</sup> It is at this point that my reflections come close to Žižek's. I comprehend the 'event' in its dialectical relation to the 'non-event' in order to radicalize and perhaps complicate Žižek's proposition: what 'does not take place' is the expression of a certain unbroken continuum (of philosophical reason in Hegel's early Jena writings), thus rendering it distinctively non-evental. It strikes me that the *Differenzschrift* is absolutely decisive in developing, in embryonic form, the basic coordinates of this dialectic. For a basic overview of the concept of the 'event' see Slavoj Žižek *Event: A Philosophical Journey Through a Concept*, Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2014. Consider also the following: 'The story of [Hegel] is telling in his account of a dialectical process is not the story of how an original organic unity alienates itself from itself, but the story of how this organic unity never existed in the first place, of how its status is by definition that of a retroactive fantasy – the Fall itself generates the mirage of what it is the Fall from.' *Less than Nothing*, p.952.

<sup>639</sup> The notion of 'reconstruction' here should not be grasped in its hermeneutical sense (as the philosophical comprehension of 'tradition' as the ground of an ontology of history). Gadamer's sense of an Hegelian

This is the productive disunity of Hegel's philosophy. It demands that the reconstruction of Hegel's philosophy brings into sharp philosophical relief the dialectics of the truth of the speculative whole and the ambiguous truth of experience as the essential philosophical *preparation* for a deepened understanding of the dialectics of the transformation of 'general culture', which is to say, the transformation of historical life *in its philosophical comprehension*. The sense of this productive disunity is formed, to end finally with Hegel's words, '*mit der Bestimmung, daß sie das Scheinen innerhalb seiner ist.*'<sup>640</sup>

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hermeneutics as 'reconstruction' does not provide an immanent exposition of the conceptual development of the expression in Hegel's work, choosing instead to usher in a notion that, due to its lack of historical mediation (which is a conceptual irony considering Gadamer's avowed Hegelianism on precisely the point of the '*thoughtful mediation with contemporary life*'), falls into an immediately assumed sense: reconstruction simply means to 'reconstruct' (to rebuild that which was from out of its ontological status). This of course means that Gadamer's hermeneutics reflects the post-War sense of reconstruction as cultural form (the pragmatist notion of 'reconstruction' shares the same fate). See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, London and New York: Continuum, 2011, pp.157-61. Accordingly, Gadamer's hermeneutical '*Rekonstruktion*' dissolves, in truth, into reified '*Nachkonstruktion*.' The same can perhaps be said of Habermas who, I believe, gives us the most accomplished theoretical expression of 'reconstruction' ('rational reconstruction') in its received cultural form. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1990, p.300; Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, p.14, 38, 175 and 186-8; and Jürgen Habermas, 'Reconstruction and Interpretation in the Social Sciences', in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Sherry Weber Nicholsen, Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1999. For an un-critical reception of Habermas' notion of 'reconstruction,' see Günter Dux, 'Communicative Reason and Interest: On the Reconstruction of the Normative Order in Societies Structured by Egalitarianism or Domination,' in *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action*, eds. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991. Although a detailed and sustained historical reflection on the post-Hegelian conception of 'reconstruction' is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth pointing in the direction of where one can find a delicate conceptual distinction between *Rekonstruktion* and *Nachkonstruktion*. It is in Adorno's work that one can find the embryonic articulation of the distinction. See especially the closing sections of *Minima Moralia*, the lecture courses on Hegel and the notes on Beethoven (Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Cambridge: Polity, 1998.). For a dialectically naïve deployment of 'reconstruction' as post-War cultural form, see See Nicholas Hewitt (ed.), *The Culture of Reconstruction: European Literature, Thought and Film – 1945-50*, London: MacMillan, 1989. A final reference to the emergence of the idea of 'reconstruction' as philosophical 'method.' In the prefatory remarks to his *Philosophies of Difference*, François Laruelle identifies his project of the immanent critique of the philosophical legacies of 'thinking difference' in terms of 'reconstruction.' François Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-philosophy*, trans. Rocco Gangle, London and New York: Continuum, 2010, pp.xiii-xiv. It is, however, only in these remarks that Laruelle identifies his theoretical practice as 'reconstruction.' Thus, an exposition of what is meant by the term must follow the complex philosophical manoeuvres in the work, leading to the conception of 'non-philosophy.'

<sup>640</sup> Enc. III, 22; 10: 34.

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