THOMAS KHURANA (ED.)

THE FREEDOM OF LIFE
HEGELIAN PERSPECTIVES

Freiheit und Gesetz III

With contributions by Matthias Haase, Thomas Khurana, James Kreines, Catherine Malabou, Karen Ng, Sally Sedgwick

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The book series "Freiheit und Gesetz" is dedicated to an idea that lies at the foundation of modern practical philosophy: the notion that being free and being obligated by norms ("the law") do not stand in opposition to one another but instead bear on each other in an essential relation. This is the very idea of autonomy: laws are binding only to the extent that we have given them to ourselves. The series is devoted to the critical examination of this concept. It investigates the complexities and tensions presented by the idea of autonomy, the conditions upon which it is based, and the possible consequences of its political, juridical, and social realization.

NORMATIVE ORDERS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Works by Hegel

All references to Hegel's writings in this volume will use the abbreviations listed below. The abbreviations will be followed first by the page or section number of a German edition (in most cases the Theorie-Werkausgabe edited by Eva Moldenhauer und Karl Markus Michel) and secondly, if it differs, by the page or section number of an English translation. The authors in this volume have sometimes altered the cited English translations where they regarded it necessary. The referenced texts and editions are the following:

D: *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie,* in: G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenaer Schriften 1801–1807*, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, vol. 2, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1970 (cited by volume and page number) / *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans., ed. H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf, Albany: SUNY Press 1977 (cited by page number).

EL: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830): Erster Teil. Die Wissenschaft der Logik mit den mündlichen Zusätzen*, vol. 8 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* / *The Encyclopaedia Logic*: *Part I of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris, Indianapolis: Hackett 1991 (cited by section number).

EN: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830): Zweiter Teil. Die Naturphilosophie mit den mündlichen Zusätzen*, vol. 9 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* / *Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical* Sciences (1830), trans. A. V. Miller, with foreword by J. N. Findlay, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1970 (cited by section number).

EPG: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830): Dritter Teil. Die Philosophie des Geistes mit den mündlichen Zusätzen*, vol. 10 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* / *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Translated from the 1830 Edition, together with the Zusätze*, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller, rev. M. J. Inwood, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007 (cited by section number).

G: *Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal*, in: vol. 1 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (cited by volume and page number) / *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*, in: *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox, with an introduction, and fragments trans. Richard Kroner, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1948 (cited by page number).

GW: *Glauben und Wissen*, in: vol. 2 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (cited by volume and page number) / *Faith and Knowledge*, trans., ed. Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris, Albany: SUNY Press 1977 (cited by page number).

PhG: *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 3 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (cited by volume and page number) / *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, with foreword by J. N. Findlay, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977 (cited by page number).

PP: *Texte zur philosophischen Propädeutik*, in: vol. 4 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (cited by volume and page number) / *The Philosophical Propaedeutic,* ed. M. George and A. Vincent, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Blackwell 1986 (cited by page number).

PR: *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse. Mit Hegels eigenhändigen Notizen und den mündlichen Zusätzen*, vol. 7 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* / *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991 (cited by section number).

SF: "Systemfragment von 1800," in: vol. 1 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (cited by volume and page number) / "Fragment of a System," in: *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox, with an introduction, and fragments trans. Richard Kroner, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1948 (cited by page number).

VA: *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, vols. 13–15 of *Werke in 20 Bänden* (cited by volume and page number) / *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975, 3 vols. (cited by volume and page number).

VGP: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, vols. 18–20 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (cited by volume and page number) / *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1995, 3 vols. (cited by volume and page number).

VL: *Vorlesungen über die Logik (Berlin 1831)*, nachgeschrieben von Karl Hegel, ed. U. Rameil and H.-Ch. Lucas, vol. 10 of *Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Hamburg: Meiner 2001 (cited by page number).

VPG: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte (Berlin 1822/1823)*, ed. K.-H. Ilting, K. Brehmer and H. N. Seelman, in: vol. 12 of *Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Hamburg: Meiner 1996 (cited by page number) / *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, vol. 1: *Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822–1823*, eds. and trans. R. F. Brown and P. C. Hodgson, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011 (cited by page number).

VPGE: *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte. Einleitung 1830/31*, in: vol. 18 of *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Walter Jaeschke, Hamburg: Meiner 1995 (cited by page number) / *Introduction 1830–1*, in: *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, vol. 1: *Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822–1823*, eds. and trans. R. F. Brown and P. C. Hodgson, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011 (cited by page number).

VPR: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, vols. 16–17 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (cited by volume and page number) / *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Rev. E. B. Speirs, B. D. and J. Burdon Sanderson, New York: Humanities Press 1895, 3 vols. (cited by volume and page number).

WL: *Wissenschaft der Logik*, vols. 5–6 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (cited by volume and page number) / *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller, Amherst: Humanity Books 1969 (cited by page number).

Works by Aristotle

DA: *De Anima*, Books II and III, trans. D. W. Hamlyn, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993.

Works by Kant

EE: *Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in: *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. 20, ed. Gerhard Lehmann, Berlin: de Gruyter 1942 / First Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in: I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews, ed. P. Guyer, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000 (cited by volume and page number of the German edition).

GMS: *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, in: vol. 4 of *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften* / *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans., ed. M. Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997 (cited by volume and page number of the German edition).

KpV: *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, in: vol. 5 of *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften* / *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans., ed. M. Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997 (cited by volume and page number of the German edition).

KrV: *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, in: vol. 3 of *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften* / *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans., ed. P. Guyer and A. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998 (cited according to the pagination of the first two editions, A (1781) and B (1787)).

KU: *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in: vol. 5 of *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften* / *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews, ed. P. Guyer, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000 (cited by volume and page number of the German edition).

LIFE, SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, NEGATIVITY: UNDERSTANDING HEGEL'S SPECULATIVE IDENTITY THESIS

Karen Ng

I want to begin with what initially appears to be a fairly simple question, namely, why it is that Hegel includes the category of "life" in his monumental text, the *Science of Logic*. This question is not simply an esoteric one, and can also be posed in the following way: If the *Logic* is an attempt at providing the necessary conditions, concepts, and categories for determinacy as such—and here we can draw a provisional comparison with Kant's Transcendental Analytic—why is life *necessarily* included as a part of that story, and what does its inclusion tell us about the nature of thought? There are two things we can immediately note that will help to sharpen our question. The first is that the category of life does not appear as one category among many: life comes on the scene as the first form of what Hegel calls the "Idea," where the Idea represents Hegel's model of truth, and is the topic that concludes the *Science of Logic*. The idea behind the Idea is deceptively simple: truth is simply the appropriate kind of unity or identity between our concepts and reality, the subjective and the objective, or form and content, and Hegel also describes the absolute idea as the unity of the theoretical and the practical, the true and the good. It is one of the aims of this paper to try to understand precisely what kind of unity or identity is at stake, but here we can again provisionally understand the unity of the Idea, which finds its first expression in life, in contrast with Kant's conception of *synthetic* unity, meaning roughly that we will need to understand the relation between form and content as internally related, reciprocally

constituting, and (for lack of a better metaphor) as a "living" or "organic" unity. The key here is that life does not appear in the logic simply as one among a list of the necessary categories of thought; life is somehow the basis of Hegel's model of objectivity and truth, it is the first form of the Idea, the immediate form of reason itself.

The second thing to note is that Hegel is not concerned here with a natural, biological, or even spiritual (*geistig*) concept of life, but a *logical* one. What this means is quite complicated, but we should not oppose logical here to the material, that is, Hegel is not concerned with an "a priori" notion of life as opposed to the various "a posteriori" ones we can formulate. Instead, we can understand the problem as follows: If a biological concept of life tries to grasp the life and activity of merely natural existence, and a spiritual concept of life tries to grasp the life and activity of historical, cultural, social, political, and ethical existence, then a *logical* concept of life attempts to grasp the life and activity of the existence of *thought*, what Hegel calls, the "Concept" (*der Begriff*). The *Logic* is an attempt made by thought to grasp its own activity: What does it mean for thinking to be determinate, objective, satisfying, true? Rather than a category to be applied *to* life, life is a shape that thought itself takes, and more outrageously, it is the first form it takes *as true*, the *immediate form of truth*. Life as the immediate form of the Idea *liberates* (*befreit*) conceptual operations from their one-sided subjectivity, demonstrating concretely how thinking itself can account for the conditional structure of its own activity and take the form of objective self-determination.

In order to come to grips with this rather programmatic story of how thinking in its objectivity and truth is first determined as life, I want to focus on a more familiar story, that of the relation between self-consciousness and life. Realizing that it may seem rather strange that his treatise on logic, so near its conclusion, suddenly requires a discussion of life, Hegel gives us two

reasons for the necessity of treating life at this climactic moment in the *Logic*. The first reason is that the treatment of life is necessary if the treatment of the Idea "shall not be an empty affair devoid of determination" (WL 6:470/762). That is, truth and objectivity in the Hegelian sense gain their determinacy *only* in connection with a treatment of life. The second reason, which will justify our focus here, is that "[t]he necessity of treating of the Idea of life in logic would be based on the necessity, itself recognized in other ways, of treating here the concrete concept of cognition [*Erkennen*]," namely, the idea of self-consciousness (WL 6:470/761). *Because* thinking ultimately must be determined in the shape of self-consciousness, the discussion of life is necessary; life, as the immediate Idea, is a presupposition of the very idea of cognition. Thus, understanding the very aim, purpose, or end of the logic, requires that we understand something about the relation between life and self-consciousness.

In what follows, I will try to show that life is necessary and constitutive for self-consciousness, and thereby, for the nature of thinking itself. That life is necessary and constitutive means that self-consciousness in fact has a *double constitution*: self-consciousness is always both a living object and a self-conscious subject, and its identity and non-identity with life—that it *is* life and yet distinguishes itself from and opposes itself to mere life, that it *is* purposive form but also has *knowledge* of that form and can determine it in different ways—constitutes its negativity. The material and logical form of this identity and non-identity with life, is what Hegel calls *speculative identity*.[1] What makes this identity *speculative* is the presence of inner negativity or *Entzweiung* (bifurcation, splitting, diremption, division), and understanding the different meanings of negativity will help us

[1] On Hegel's definition of his absolute idealism as the "identity of identity and non-identity," see for example D 2:96/156 and WL 5:74/74.

determine both the relation between life and self-consciousness, as well as the kind of thought-form that Hegel attempts to develop in the *Logic*.

This paper has three parts: I will begin by turning to Hegel's first officially published text, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, where the structure of speculative identity is first defined by Hegel as a relation between self-consciousness and life. In this early text, through a criticism of Fichte and a defense of Schelling, Hegel demonstrates how life is the first object of self-consciousness and thereby a condition for self-knowledge and experience. Section two will turn to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in order to further develop the relation between life and self-consciousness in a direction that will allow us to grasp the structure of self-consciousness as negativity. The double constitution of self-consciousness as both life and more than life will be explored through a discussion of the concept of experience (*Erfahrung*), and specifically, the role that the living/non-living distinction plays in determining the logic of experience. What Hegel calls the Concept—the activity of speculative thinking itself—reproduces the negative self-relation of self-consciousness at the level of form. In the last section, I will briefly provide a formal outline of how to understand Hegel's *Logic* as a theory of living, absolute form, one that expresses the freedom of the self as a logic of self-actualization in the demanding Hegelian sense of science (*Wissenschaft*). My hope is that the discussion of the more local, first-order relation between life and self-consciousness will help to shed some light on how thought *as such* comes to understand its own activity as purposive self-determination only in its separation and connection with life.

1. Speculative Identity: Subjects, First Objects, and the Necessity of Life

Hegel's version of determining the conditions of possibility for determinate experience and knowledge, which, despite varying terminology and formulations, remains consistent throughout his philosophy, can be found in the idea of the speculative identity of subject and object. Hegel takes great pains to distinguish *speculative* identity from ordinary, more abstract ways of considering identity, difference, and connection.[2] Rather than a matter of externally uniting subject and object, the issue is instead one of articulating both the *subject as object* and the *object as subject*, in addition to their essential relation that entails both opposition and intrinsic unity. The former is a familiar trope of modern philosophy and philosophical idealism, and consists primarily of a relation to self that can be characterized as self-consciousness, a relation of the "I" to itself and the ability of the "I" to take itself as an object if it is to be able to take anything as an object of thought at all. In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel calls this the subjective subject-object, and associates it primarily with the Fichtean notion of I=I. Although these two modes of relation—relation to self and relation to objects—are importantly taken to be different in kind, it is assumed that self-consciousness is a condition for consciousness, and that the latter cannot be without the former. This means that the subject-object relation itself, rather than being merely given or found, is a result of and determined by the relation of the I with itself, a self-relation without which the relation to objects would not be possible. As opposed to the "knowing of an other [*Wissen von einem Anderen*]," namely, mere consciousness of objects other than the self, the reflexivity of self-consciousness

[2] Hegel goes so far as to call "unity" "ein unglückliches Wort." See WL 5:92–96/90–93; PhG 3:41/23; and EL §31.

is described as a "knowing of itself [*Wissen von sich selbst*]," and this relation in which knower and known are discovered to be the same is what allows Hegel to develop the idea of speculative identity in the *Phenomenology* towards absolute knowing (*das absolute Wissen*) (PhG 3:138/104–105). What we need to understand is precisely how this "knowing of itself" is possible.

We can gain a better understanding of the self-relation characteristic of the subjective subject-object or self-consciousness by turning to Hegel's critique of Fichte in the *Differenzschrift*. There, Hegel argues that although Fichte intended for the self-positing activity of I=I—the identity of subject and object in pure self-consciousness or what Fichte calls intellectual intuition—to be the absolute foundation and first principle of his philosophical system, this principle in fact remained limited, finite, and one-sided, insofar as Fichte ultimately could not show how pure self-consciousness could be united with empirical consciousness, thereby failing to demonstrate the speculative identity of subject and object. For both Fichte and Hegel, the difference between consciousness and self-consciousness must at once be asserted and overcome: the latter can only be a self-sufficient condition of the former if self-consciousness can be shown to contain consciousness, if we can "describe the totality of empirical consciousness as the objective totality of self-consciousness" (D 2:55/122).[3] In absolute opposition, pure self-consciousness cannot be the unconditioned condition because it remains conditioned by abstraction from its opposite, namely empirical consciousness. Now although Fichte's task and the task of idealism itself is to "sublate" (*aufzuheben*) the apparent opposition between transcendental and empirical consciousness such that the latter can be deduced from the former, it turns out that Fichte's philosophy cannot deliver what

[3] See J. G. Fichte, "Second Introduction to the Science of Knowledge," in: *The Science of Knowledge*, trans. and ed. Peter Heath and John Lachs, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982, p. 33.

it promised (D 2:53, 68, 58/120, 132, 124). In Fichte's deduction, self-relation and relation to objects remain *absolute* opposites insofar as they take fundamentally different forms: the infinite self-positing activity of I=I is conditioned and limited by the opposing (*Entgegensetzen*) of the not-I. Once pure self-consciousness (I=I) and empirical consciousness (I=I+not-I) are posited as absolute opposites, Fichte can only effect an incomplete synthesis of the two, and speculative identity is merely "*postulated* but not constructed in the system" (D 2:61/126; my emphasis). For Hegel, Fichte's inability to overcome the opposition between pure and empirical consciousness means that rather than having demonstrated the self-positing of the I to be an absolutely free activity and first principle of philosophy, Fichte has instead produced nothing but "an endless sequence of finitudes" in which each positing of the "I" leads back to a conditioned condition (a not-I) (D 2:67/131). Thus, despite Fichte's intentions, self-consciousness is unable to find identity with itself, unable to truly take itself as an object, remaining on the side of absolute finitude, amounting to a mere ought of infinite striving.[4]

What is missing from Fichte's merely subjective account of self-consciousness is an appropriate kind of object relation—an objective subject-object—with which self-consciousness can attain identity. Without formulating an *object* that is at the same time a subject, namely, without being able to conceive of an object as living, an object that determines itself and thereby exhibits a kind of freedom, self-consciousness can never attain identity with itself or gain knowledge of itself *as* a self-related subject-object. Now for both Fichte and Hegel, the idea of the subject as object also takes on the further dimension of subjects being taken by other subjects as objects, meaning that self-con-

[4] Fichte writes: "Man must approximate, *ad infinitum*, to a freedom he can never, in principle, attain." (Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, p. 115)

sciousness requires recognition from other self-consciousnesses in order to become a self-consciousness at all, thus inserting the idea of a relation to others at the heart of our relation to self.[5] However, although the intersubjective relation of recognition is a necessary and constitutive aspect of self-consciousness, Hegel argues that it is not sufficient, and inserts the further condition behind the relation of recognition that the first object of self-consciousness is in fact *life*, an object that is also a subject, one which already expresses a kind of infinity and freedom.[6] Without this objective subject-object which has the same form as the subjective subject-object, and yet *is not* simply another I, the "I does not become *objective* to itself," and furthermore, the I cannot engage in the relation of recognition with another self-consciousness in a way that does not treat the other I as a dead object, whereby merely external, coercive, and instrumental relations with others are possible (D 2:56/123; my emphasis).[7] Fichte's inability to conceive subject-object identity on the side of the subject (I only *ought* to equal I) leads directly to his inability to conceive the object as subject (the first object for Fichte is a not-I, a dead object or *Anstoß*), the result of which is a misconstrual of our self-relation, our relation to objects, as well as our relation to others. Indeed, in a language that recalls

[5] See J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, trans. Michael Baur, ed. Frederick Neuhouser, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000, esp. p. 31; and PhG 3:144/109–110.

[6] See PhG 3:139ff./106ff.

[7] Thus, Hegel accuses Fichte of conceiving of the political state "not [as] an organization at all, but a machine; and the people is not the organic body of a communal and rich life, but an atomistic, life-impoverished multitude. [...] [W]hat binds them together is an endless domination" (D 2:87/148–149). Paul Redding argues that Fichte's failure to produce an objective subject-object amounts to a theory of recognition in which others are viewed as lifeless things, rather than intentional subjects. See his *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1996, p. 55. Of course, in the initial struggle for recognition, Hegel also conceives the first relation to the other in terms of master and slave, a relation in which the other is reduced, if not to a dead object, then at the very least to an object of use and mere means. That this is always possible is not, and cannot be, precluded by Hegel's requirement of a first object, but without being able to conceive this kind of form, the instrumental relation becomes the only option, rather than a constant threat. See PhG 3:145–155/111–119.

his critique of the Kantian categories, Hegel claims that the Fichtean synthesis and relation of causality takes place only as "domination," that for Fichte, nature essentially has the character of "death," and that "Reason [for him] is nothing but the dead and death-dealing rule of formal unity" (D 2:75, 77, 79/138, 140, 142). The failure of the I to attain knowledge of itself essentially amounts to the failure of conceiving an appropriate first object, a living object, one that, like self-consciousness, effects the relation of subject and object within itself.

The idea of an object as subject is less familiar and more difficult to articulate, but crucial for understanding the connection between the thought of life and conceptual activity. Why must the object also be taken as a subject and how can this be done? The first dimension that the objective subject-object both introduces and highlights is the element of *Entzweiung*—diremption, division, dichotomy—that the speculative must maintain along with the claims of identity.[8] In opposition to the fixed, absolute *Entzweiung* that Hegel diagnoses as the fundamental problem of a philosophy and culture defined by reflection, Hegel also identifies a different kind of necessary *Entzweiung* that is definitive of all organic life, and the *Entzweiung* of the living is primary and definitive of the subsequent shapes of *Entzweiung* as self-relating negativity.[9] The living, objective subject-object divides *itself* into subject and object, a division expressed in the organism through desire, drives, self-movement, self-preservation, need, contradiction, self-dispar-

[8] Hegel writes that the claims of identity and the claims of separation which generate *Entzweiung* not only have "equal right," but "equal necessity" (D 2:96/157).

[9] "The sole interest of Reason is to suspend [*aufzuheben*] such rigid antitheses [between the subjective and the objective—K.N.]. But this does not mean that Reason is altogether opposed to opposition and limitation. For necessary dichotomy [*notwendige Entzweiung*] is a factor of life. Life eternally forms itself [*bildet sich*] by setting up oppositions, and totality at the highest pitch of living energy [*in der höchsten Lebendigkeit*] is only possible through its own re-establishment out of the deepest division [*Trennung*]. What Reason opposes, rather, is just the absolute fixity which the intellect [*Verstand*] gives to the dichotomy [*Entzweiung*]." (D 2:21–22/91)

ity, and pain.[10] The positing of an objective subject-object demonstrates the real opposition present within speculative identity: although the subjective and objective must have the same form (both are "subject-objects"), they also remain separate and opposed; they are *two terms* that cannot be reduced into one. Self-consciousness finds both identity and non-identity with the living object, a relation that will continually determine both its relation to self and its relation to other objects of thought.

Secondly, the necessity of the objective subject-object also amounts to a Hegelian defense of Schellingian philosophy of nature together with transcendental philosophy against Fichte's merely subjective version of idealism, a necessity that can be thought in connection with the kinds of questions and problems surrounding Kant's third *Critique*. In his introduction to the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797), Schelling develops an argument for the necessity of a philosophy that explores the possibility of nature as the realm of experience, demonstrating why this idea shows itself to be necessary for the very idea of philosophy. What brings us to the idea of a philosophy of nature is the Kantian problem of *fit* or *identity* between our cognitive operations and nature, and whether and how that fit required for experience can attain the status of necessity, the status of law. Like Kant, Schelling argues that mechanism not only precludes the possibility of explaining either freedom or organic nature, but further, that mechanism ultimately cannot explain the idea of *necessary connection* between cause and effect.[11] Since causes and effects remain externally and uni-directionally related in mechanism, this relation can only establish either *external* necessity (at best, as a subjective, even if transcendental requirement; at worst, mere force of habit and a fiction), or, and

[10] See PhG 3:139–142/106–108; WL 6:473–486/764–774.

[11] F. W. J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature as Introduction to the Study of this Science 1797, Second Edition 1803*, trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988, pp. 23ff.

because of this merely external connection, remains entirely contingent and without the force of law. We are necessarily led to the idea of nature's purposiveness not only in order to resolve the problem of cognitive fit, but we are also necessarily confronted with a form of this kind of necessary connection within nature itself in the shape of a natural purpose.

When faced with an organic product, Schelling defines living organization precisely as Kant does:[12] an organism is something that produces itself, is the cause and effect of itself, and expresses a self-organizing, necessary relation between part and whole, individual and species. At the basis of this organization is a *concept* and a kind of form (what Kant called a purpose), but a concept that is necessarily connected with its object and cannot be thought in distinction from it. That is, the kind of unity and organization at stake must be internal, immanent, intrinsic, and objective. Thus Schelling writes of the organism: "Not only its form but its *existence* is purposive."[13] Furthermore, the necessary connection, reciprocity, and even identity between concept and object, form and matter, in the case of a natural purpose, cannot be attributed to anything external to the product itself—an artist, an intelligent designer, an intuitive understanding—but is nothing other than the self-(re)producing activity that constitutes the form and existence of the object. Purposiveness thought as external, as the effect of some external cause such as an artist, a discursive understanding, or divine intelligence, destroys the very idea of life.[14] Also like Kant, Schelling initially frames the necessity of the idea of a philosophy of nature in terms of a problem about judgment: On the

[12] See Ibid., pp. 30–31. In later formulations, Schelling also defines nature as absolute, infinite activity, one that clearly mirrors the infinite activity of Fichte's I=I. See his *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith R. Peterson, Albany: SUNY Press 2004. For Kant's definition of a natural purpose, see §§64–65 of the *Critique of Judgment* (KU 5:369–376).

[13] Schelling, *Ideas*, p. 31.

[14] See Ibid., p. 33.

one hand, purposiveness only makes sense in relation to a judging intellect, and it appears to be a subjective requirement of human judgment that it judges according to certain ideas and principles concerning the organization of nature. On the other hand, the very idea of nature's purposiveness not only *forces* itself upon us, but is intended to convey that nature is purposive *in itself*, and necessarily so, where this necessity comes not merely from us qua lawgivers of nature, but from within nature itself as inherently self-organizing.[15] Schelling is explicit that judging according to purposiveness, the apprehension of the unity of concept and object or form and matter in the living product, is not a matter of choice, but that we are "in no way *free*" and "absolutely constrained" to attribute purposive form to certain products that display themselves *as* purposive.[16] Purposiveness is precisely not a kind of form that we can impose, but one that imposes itself on us. Certain objects demand to be apprehended in a certain way and we "must therefore confess that the unity with which you think is not merely *logical* (in your thoughts), but *real* (actually outside you)."[17] This objective, real, and not merely logical subject-object forces itself upon our thinking, and the speculative identity of subject and object can be seen as another way of stating the principle of purposiveness as *objective* and *constitutive* of the possibility and actuality of experience and knowledge of nature.

Returning to the critique of Fichte discussed above, we can now determine more precisely how the objective subject-object

[15] As Schelling moves further away from Kant and continues to develop the philosophy of nature, the autonomy of nature is not only placed alongside the autonomy of reason, but, in a sense, the former comes to encompass the latter. See for example Schelling, *First Outline*, p. 17.

[16] Schelling, *Ideas*, p. 33. That there is a certain necessity attached to the way in which we judge living things does not entail that we cannot be mistaken in our judgments and perceptions, nor that we cannot misrecognize living objects, which we certainly do all the time. It is crucial to note, however, that *systematic* mistakes or misrecognitions concerning the living would have consequences for our conceptions of the self, ones that would result in corresponding misrecognitions with respect to human life in general.

[17] Ibid., p. 32.

is a necessary condition for the subjective relation of subject and object characteristic of self-consciousness. The I cannot become objective to itself without being confronted with an *object*, and not merely another *subject* (another self-consciousness), that is also self-related. This is because the subject itself, prior to its constitution as self-consciousness, *is* originally an objective subject-object, a living organism that relates to itself insofar as it displays purposive form. Self-consciousness thus finds itself on both sides of the speculative divide, and Hegel writes in the *Differenzschrift*:

> It is only because the object itself is a Subject-Object that I=I is the Absolute. For it is only when the objective is itself I, only when it is itself Subject-Object, that I=I does not change into I ought to be equal to I. (D 2:97/157)

> [T]he subject can become objective to itself because it is originally objective, that is, because the object itself is Subject-Object, or the object can become subjective because originally it is just Subject-Object. Both subject and object are Subject-Object. This is just what their true identity consists in, and so does the true opposition they are capable of. When they are not both Subject-Object, the opposition is merely ideal and the principle of identity is formal. (D 2:99/159)

In these somewhat convoluted passages, "subject-object" simply stands for life or living self-relation. Life is the underlying, forgotten condition of self-consciousness or the Fichtean I=I, first, because the self-relation of self-consciousness is simply a species of the subject-object relation that makes it possible (no life, no self-consciousness), and secondly, because the subject with the capacity for self-consciousness *must* be, first and foremost, a living object. To state everything at once, self-consciousness must be faced with a living object in order to grasp itself

as *doubly constituted*: it is only in facing a living object that is *not* self-consciousness, and yet displays the same purposive form *as* self-consciousness, that self-consciousness is constituted in its necessary identity and non-identity with life, and becomes objective to itself. Thus, being a subjective subject-object or self-consciousness means first, identity and non-identity with the objective subject-object, and second, identity and non-identity with oneself, a self-relation conditioned by our encounter with the living object *in addition* to other self-conscious subjects. This identity and *Entzweiung* between subjects and objects also entail that objects are not originally determined by the subject; rather, Hegel is suggesting here that the objective subject-object is primary and the condition of possibility of self-consciousness. There is thus a priority of the object qua living, or an asymmetrical relation of dependence between subject and object:[18] Whereas the subject as object is dependent on the object that is also subject for its possibility, insofar as it *is* such an object, the reverse is not the case. The living object retains a certain independence and recalcitrance insofar as it is not dependent on the subject for *its* possibility, although it is the case that only the subject can have *knowledge* of living objects (one way that self-consciousness expresses its negative relation to life), a knowledge that we now see is essential for its self-understanding.[19]

At this stage, we can sum up the idea of speculative identity as follows: First, speculative identity entails that the subject

[18] On the idea of the primacy of the object, see Theodor W. Adorno, "Subject and Object," trans. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, in: Brian O'Connor (ed.), *The Adorno Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell 2000, pp. 137–151. Jay Bernstein also argues that "is living" is a material, a priori predicate (Jay Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001, p. 303).

[19] Schelling makes a similar argument concerning the asymmetrical relation of dependence and conditioning between self-consciousness and the living object, suggesting that the "I" can only intuit itself as active in the succession of inner and outer experience if it can intuit or be affected by another self-moving principle or living organization. See F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)*, trans. Peter Heath, Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia 1978, pp. 124, 127.

must be understood as object, that the subject must become objective to itself in self-consciousness. This relation is possible only if the subject is faced with an object that is also a subject, a living object that shows itself as necessary in determining the subjective relation of subject and object characteristic of the self. *The living object is the first object, the object that first constitutes self-consciousness as both subject and object.* Secondly, speculative identity and the *Wissen von sich selbst* that warrants the description, "absolute," entails that subject and object must have the same *form*, a form that is itself a relation between subject (or concept) and object. In order to understand what Hegel means by the identity of concept and object, form and content, and ultimately, what he means by the self-determining Concept and the Idea, we must be able to grasp a kind of form that is intrinsically connected with its matter, an internally purposive form that organizes and determines itself. Life is thus both materially and logically necessary for the self-relation characteristic of both self-consciousness and conceptual activity: materially, because I must be affected by, faced with a living object in order to become objective to myself; logically because without an object that has the same form as the subject, namely, self-actualizing, purposive form in which concept and object coincide, the subject can neither take itself as the object that it is, nor can it constitute experience and knowledge as its own.

2. Life and the Logic of Experience: Doubling, Division, Disparity

Differences between Hegel and Schelling of course began to emerge as Hegel developed early versions of his own system in Jena after Schelling's departure,[20] developments that culmi-

[20] See the *System der Sittlichkeit* and the *Jenaer Systementwürfe*.

nated in 1807 with the publication of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* which presents a more sophisticated account of negativity that exists only in outline in the *Differenzschrift*. Although I am not concerned here with precise details of Hegel's complicated relationship (both personal and philosophical) with Schelling, for our purposes, I want to note three aspects of the speculative identity thesis that remain highly significant and largely intact in Hegel's mature system. The first is the very idea of a subject-object itself and the kind of self-relating form characteristic of life, self-consciousness, *and* their essential relation. This purposive, self-relating, and as we will see, *negative* form, will eventually be developed into what Hegel calls *absolute form*. At stake in all the terms that Hegel calls absolute—*Wissen*, *Idee*, *Geist*, *Verhältnis*, and especially *Form*—is essentially the same thought: The form of the activity of knowing, thinking, grasping, constituting, must be developed such that it has the same form as what is known, thought, grasped, and constituted. This is why Hegel describes freedom as "being at home with oneself in one's other [*in seinem Anderen bei sich selbst zu sein*]" (EL §24Z2). As we saw above, this form cannot have a merely subjective character, but must show itself to be objectively necessary in the nature of the object or thing itself (*Sache selbst*). In the *Phenomenology*, this thought amounts to the necessity of conceiving not only subject as substance (subject as object), but also substance as subject (object as subject).[21] In the *Logic*, Hegel continues to refer to the Idea, or the unity of concept and objectivity, as the "*subject-object*," which is the very form of reason itself (WL 6:466/758).[22]

[21] As Marcuse notes, "Life is the first form in which the substance is conceived as subject and is thus the first embodiment of freedom. It is the first model of a real unification of opposites and hence the first embodiment of the dialectic." (Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, Amherst, NY: Humanity Books 1999, p. 38)

[22] See also EL §§214, 162.

Secondly, although Hegel's version differs in many respects from Schelling's, Hegel never abandons the idea that a philosophy of nature is a necessary part of his philosophical system. The idea that mind is continuous with life, though perhaps not seamlessly or without significant opposition, diremption, and negativity, and the thought that one cannot be properly understood without the other, remains intact in Hegel's mature system and plays an important role in making sense of the transition not only between logic and nature, but also that between nature and spirit. The very possibility of these transitions and the possibility that the parts of the system form a systematic, interconnected, self-organizing whole hinges on a proper understanding of the role of life. Hegel never abandons the idea that the form of the living already exhibits both infinity and a kind of freedom, displaying the kind of self-identity and relation that is the aim of each aspect of the system, as well as that of the system as a whole. There is a sense in which Hegel is, throughout his work, single-mindedly interested in grasping objects that can also be articulated as subjects, or the finite qua infinite; philosophical science is only interested in determining the truth of its objects insofar as they can be said to have a living, self-actualizing form. Whether the object under investigation is self-consciousness, nature, spirit, the soul, the state, or thinking itself, grasping the truth of the object requires distinguishing between "forms of the infinite" and "forms of the finite." In short, philosophy grasps the truth of its object(s) insofar as it can distinguish between the living and the non-living (EL §24Z2).

Finally, Hegel never abandons the idea that if reason is to gain knowledge of itself, its first object must be life, an object that displays living form. In order to find itself, consciousness discovers in the course of its phenomenological development that its proper object must be something infinite, "that infinity itself" must become "the *object* of the Understanding" (PhG

3:134/101–102).[23] This is the conclusion of the dialectic between force and understanding that brings us to the standpoint of self-consciousness: Faced with the inverted (*verkehrte*) world, the understanding must learn to think and hold together contradiction and inner opposition (*Entgegensetzung in sich selbst*), an achievement that marks the first appearance of infinity in the *Phenomenology* and the first step in overcoming the one-sided perspective of *Verstand*.[24] Hegel calls this simple infinity "the absolute Concept," or "the simple essence of life," one that is the first object of self-consciousness qua desire (PhG 3:132/100).[25] This appearance of infinity and life is the first stage in developing "*what consciousness knows in knowing itself*" (PhG 3:136/103), and Hegel writes in the Encyclopaedia:

> [In the stage of] consciousness as *understanding* [verständiges *Bewußtsein*], [consciousness] finds its solution in so far as there the object is reduced or elevated to the *appearance* of an *interior* that *is for itself*. Such an appearance is the *living* creature [*Lebendige*]. In the contemplation of this, self-consciousness is ignited; for in the living creature the *object* turns into the *subjective*; there consciousness discovers its own self as the essential of the object, it reflects itself out of the object into itself, becomes an object to itself. (EPG §418Z)

As mentioned earlier, self-consciousness will require more than the encounter with life in order to fully become objective to itself, namely, it will require the encounter with another self-consciousness that culminates in an entire cultural and ethical world that knows itself to varying degrees which Hegel calls spirit (*Geist*). What is highlighted in these later, phenomenological accounts is that self-consciousness requires a double

[23] See also PhG 3:186/146: "it [reason] seeks only its own infinitude."
[24] PhG 3:130–131/98–99.
[25] See also PhG 3:139/106.

conditioning: a first, living object that is constitutive, immediately repressed (mediated, negated, literally eaten up), but always returns in more or less destructive forms, interrupting and making up the process of *Bildung*; *and* a second object in the form of another doubly-constituted I. This marks a distinctive but often forgotten feature of Hegel's idealism that prevents it from falling into the kind of "frictionless spinning" problems with which it is often associated.[26] That is, the fact that self-consciousness requires a first object with which it both immediately identifies and misidentifies, in which it finds immediate satisfaction and yet also necessary dissatisfaction, is crucial for understanding the subsequent satisfactions and dissatisfactions that self-consciousness faces in its communal life with other doubly constituted self-conscious beings. As we will see, these identifications and misidentifications, satisfactions and dissatisfactions, generate an internal "friction"—experience—without resorting to notions of the "given," and this is what Hegel will call negativity. The negativity of self-consciousness consists in its double constitution as both life and more than life, as both life and spirit (*Geist*), where these two terms can only be understood in both their unity and eternal opposition.[27] Different parts of Hegel's system will mediate this fundamental

[26] The phrase "frictionless spinning" comes from McDowell, and the problem he has in mind concerns the possibility of empirical content acting as a constraint on the spontaneity of our conceptual capacities. McDowell's solution to the "see-sawing" between coherentism and the myth of the given is to enlist Kant's insight concerning the inseparability of concepts and intuitions as a third option, arguing that conceptual capacities are already at play in *actualizations* of our receptive capacities. However, McDowell does not specify, beyond merely pointing to a broadly Aristotelian notion of second nature and calling for the "partial re-enchantment" of nature (as if these were solutions to a problem rather than the very site of such problems), what the logic of this actualization actually entails, nor does he discuss the Hegelian concept that is most central for understanding this logic, namely, negativity. See John McDowell, *Mind and World*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1994.
[27] An absolute ceasing of this *Entzweiung* in either direction would entail natural and/or spiritual death. The domination of one term over the other, particularly the misrecognition or non-acknowledgement of life, necessarily produces pathological symptoms and distortions in individual and collective self-knowledge—i.e., ideology. See for example Frederick Neuhouser, "Life, Freedom, and Social Pathology," in: A. Hon-

identity and non-identity between life and spirit in different ways, but what generates content and determinacy in each case is always the structure of double constitution, the irreducible negativity of life and self-consciousness as self-mediating, subject-object relations. While recognition and sociality are surely essential aspects of the constitution of reason, the meaning of these concepts, along with the freedom and self-determination of the Concept itself, cannot be properly understood without the context and development of this double constitution, and the necessity and priority of the living object not only represents a "realist" or "materialist" moment in Hegel's thinking, but is crucial for grasping what he takes to be the proper content of philosophical science, a content that displays an objective and not merely subjective (or even intersubjective) necessity. The issue is not simply one of whether or how our concepts are answerable or not answerable to experience,[28] but one of

neth and G. Hindrichs (eds.), *Freiheit: Stuttgarter Hegel-Kongress 2011*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 2013.

[28] This is why Pippin is wrong that the "general philosophical problem in the post-Kantian tradition," and for Hegel in particular, is "the problem of 'returning' to the empirical world, once one rejects empiricism or a naturalist realism in favor of original constitutive conditions" (Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989, p. 259). Pippin is also sensitive to finding a solution to the "frictionless spinning" problem, and the above statement signals that he is aware that his reading of the *Logic* in *Hegel's Idealism* may leave Hegel vulnerable to this charge. His answer generally hinges on interpreting self-actualization and the freedom of the Concept in terms of self-legislation and the absolute autonomy and authority of socially, historically instituted reason—the normative domain—to determine what should count *as* a constraining reason, that any idea of constraint is itself an autonomous determination *within* the space of reasons. See Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008, p. 103; see also Robert Brandom, "Freedom as Constraint by Norms," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16:3 (1977), pp. 187–196; and Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002, ch. 10. All of these interpretations, in one way or another, only articulate normative authority on the side of the subjective subject-object, making the subjective subject-object absolute at the expense of the objective subject-object, thereby missing the deep significance of the self's double constitution, as well as misinterpreting Hegel's notion of speculative identity. That they all articulate the subjective subject-object as an intersubjective, social, and historical development does not alleviate the problem in any way since the living object is a condition inserted

how the contradictions and configurations of subject-object identity in their living, historical development *are* what make up experience and how this relation can be determined in "its actuality and truth [*seiner Wirklichkeit und Wahrheit*]" (PhG 3:39/21). But as we saw above, this subject-object identity is not only determined on the side of the subject, but, in a very real sense, also has a life of its own.

We can further develop the idea of speculative identity, or the identity and non-identity of life and self-consciousness, by turning to the project of the *Phenomenology* as a whole, its relation to logic or science (*Wissenschaft*), and how the distinctions between the infinite and the finite, living and non-living, play crucial roles in the progression of self-consciousness that Hegel calls experience (*Erfahrung*). Phenomenology—the "exposition of how knowledge makes its appearance [*die Darstellung des erscheinenden Wissens*]" (PhG 3:72/49)—constitutes the philosophical-historical development of consciousness through a series of shapes to the standpoint of science, namely, a standpoint that expresses the true relation or speculative identity of subject and object. Since consciousness itself *is* a kind of subject-object identity, and each shape of consciousness presents this identity on the side of the subject and object in a different form, what consciousness constantly loses along the path of its development as it moves through these different shapes is itself: Every time a shape of consciousness, a configuration of subject-object identity, is found to be one-sided, contradictory, or otherwise unsustainable, consciousness not only loses its object, but loses itself along with its entire world, its entire form of life.[29] Hegel also calls this "way of despair" the "detailed history of the *education* [Bildung] of consciousness," and the goal of the

behind the intersubjective relation, a condition that determines the very form that any possible social-historical normative authority can assume.

[29] As Heidegger suggests, consciousness suffers a "constant death." See Martin Heidegger, "Hegel's Concept of Experience," in: *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002, pp. 120–121.

entire process is for knowing to find itself, "where Concept corresponds to object and object to Concept" (PhG 3:73, 74/49, 50).

But how exactly is this to be achieved? By what criterion (*Maßstab*) do we determine whether or not the correspondence between Concept and object has truly been effected? Reflecting on the method of his phenomenological exposition, Hegel defines the activity of knowing as the process by which consciousness distinguishes itself from something, namely an object, and at the same time, relates itself to that object. The determinate aspect of this relation, or the determinate form of this relation, is what Hegel calls *knowing* (*Wissen*).[30] However, as with the case of self-consciousness above, what we seek to know is knowing itself, "knowledge is *our* object," and hence, what ensues along the path is a continual activity of comparison of consciousness with itself as it distinguishes itself from and relates itself to objects of varying forms, where every transformation in the form of the object (or form of knowledge) entails a transformation of the form of the corresponding consciousness (PhG 3:76/53). This self-relating dialectical movement, insofar as "*the new, true object arises* [entspringt] *from it*," is what Hegel calls experience (PhG 3:78/55; translation modified).[31] But this presents us with a kind of paradox concerning the problem of the criterion of correspondence, for if the comparison is a comparison of consciousness with itself, the criterion must also lie within this same consciousness, and we seem to be moving around in a circle. How do we know if the new, true object has arisen, and what are the conditions for *this* meaning of experience?

This is a large and complicated problem that reverberates throughout Hegel's system, but we can begin to get a handle on what is at stake if we return to the issue of consciousness' double conditioning or double constitution. To be clear, the ques-

[30] PhG 3:76/52–53.
[31] See also PhG 3:38–39/21.

tion is: How can the criterion for the comparison (*Vergleichung*) of consciousness with its object fall within consciousness such that this comparison generates a determinate content ("a new, true object") constituting what Hegel calls experience? The first thing to note is that in order for such a comparison to be possible, there must be a *disparity* (*Ungleichheit*) between what is being compared, between consciousness qua criterion or measure, and consciousness qua object or measured.[32] This disparity, "which takes place in consciousness between the I and the substance which is its object is their distinction, the *negative* in general" (PhG 3:39/21; translation modified). The negative is "what moves [*Bewegende*]," the power of the division and real opposition present in speculative identity, in the relation and disparity between subject and object. While Hegel emphasizes that the negative is simply the subject, the self, the "energy of thought, of the pure 'I'," he also reminds us that "although this negative appears at first as a disparity between the 'I' and its object, it is *just as much the disparity of the substance with itself* [...] *and Substance shows itself to be essentially Subject*" (PhG 3:39/21; my emphasis). Thus, what the negative expresses is the living division and diremption (*Entzweiung*) at the heart of the speculative identity of subject and object: First, the I expresses the tremendous power of the negative on account of being divided against itself; the I is doubly constituted, first, as/by a living object, and secondly, as/by a self-conscious subject, and it is in this internal disparity and *real* opposition between the self as object and the self as subject, the paradigmatic manifestation of which is the opposition between the natural and spiritual life of the self,[33] that it bears the negative within itself, that

[32] See Heidegger, "Hegel's Concept of Experience," p. 126.
[33] On the relation and opposition between spirit and life, and the difference between a phenomenological, naively teleological perspective in which spirit leaves life and nature behind, and a critical, genealogical, and counter-teleological perspective in which the oppositions between life and spirit continue to determine spiritual life, see Christoph Menke, "Spirit and Life: Toward a Genealogical Critique of Phenomenology,"

it *is* the very power of the negative. Because the opposition is real and negativity lives within the doubly constituted I itself, this disparity is such that it is capable of generating its own determinate content and has the power to develop a new object without importing "external" criteria, for example, intuitions or other notions of sense-data that are untouched by contributions from or relations to the I. Experience simply is and is possible on account of this negativity and contradiction present within the living I, which, as both life and spirit, is itself already a subject-object relation. This is the sense in which the comparison of consciousness with itself already provides and continually constitutes its own criterion, its own measure, its own law. Only the living bears the negative within itself, and only that which bears the disparity, division, and opposition of subject and object (spirit and life) within itself, can, through a comparison with itself, generate determinate content so as to constitute experience.

Furthermore, as internally divided or *entzweit*—literally split in two—the I not only *is* two objects, but also *has* two objects. This is crucial for understanding Hegel's concept of experience as one in which a new, true object emerges. Qua negative, the I also relates negatively to its object which at first presents itself as an independent other or what Hegel calls the in-itself (*Ansich* or *Ansichsein*). In the opening chapters of the *Phenomenology*, "mere being in sense-certainty, the concrete thing of perception, and for the understanding, a force," make up the first three in-itself forms of the object that present themselves as something other than consciousness and independent of its activities (PhG 3:137/104). In all of these cases, the object is marked with "the *character of the negative*," or, has a one-sided or finite form

Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal 27:2 (2006), pp. 159–186. On the idea that nature is simply a presupposition of spirit that spirit "leaves behind," see Robert Pippin, "Leaving Nature Behind: Or two cheers for 'subjectivism'," in: Nicholas H. Smith (ed.), *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*, New York: Routledge 2002, pp. 58–75.

that does not reflect the truth of self-consciousness, corresponding only to a *verstandesmäßige* or natural form of consciousness (PhG 3:139/105; translation modified). But an ambiguity (*Zweideutigkeit*) arises in the very determining of this in-itself, for as soon as the object is determined *as* the in-itself, it is thereby also determined as the in-itself only *for consciousness*. The second object, is therefore the "*being-for-consciousness of this in-itself* [*das* Für-es-Sein dieses Ansich]," a *new* object that arises in the very movement of determining the first object, and furthermore, constitutes a transformation of the first, independent object into something that is for consciousness, something that has the form of consciousness (PhG 3:79/55). The transition from the first object to the second object, or experience, is, in effect, a movement between finite and infinite form, between the form of an object that corresponds to a limited form of consciousness (for example, but not limited to, *Verstand*) and the form of an object that corresponds to the living Concept (*Begriff*).[34] Through the transformation that takes place between the first and second object that Hegel calls experience, and in losing the first object, consciousness itself is transformed, and undergoes a kind of education and development.[35] This process of transformation from grasping objects as dead to grasping them as alive, is also what allows us to grasp the object, and hence ourselves, as self-standing, self-determining, and free. The ambiguity in consciousness is thus also reflected through an ambiguity in the object: life is not only the *first* object but also in a sense the "last,"[36] insofar as we return to our beginning or presupposition (*Voraussetzung*), namely life, now as posited (*gesetzt*) and self-determined, as a "new, true object" with the form of the self. This movement is what Hegel calls

[34] On the inherent ambiguity of consciousness, see Heidegger, "Hegel's Concept of Experience," pp. 125, 127, 136–137.

[35] Though there is also plenty of forgetting and regression along the way. See for example PhG 3:180/141 where Hegel discusses reason's "forgotten path."

[36] I want to thank Fred Neuhouser for drawing my attention to this point.

absolute method, or the "circle of circles"; as "cognition [*Erkennen*] rolls onward from content to content," consciousness moves from life as immediate and finite to life as self-determined and infinite (WL 6:569, 571/840, 842).

In connection with the double nature and transformation of consciousness and its objects, a process through which consciousness continually actualizes its own form, it should also be noted that phenomenological exposition, the presentation of knowledge or science qua appearance, is in fact already "the *conduct* [Verhalten] of *science* in the face of phenomenal knowledge" (PhG 3:75/52; translation modified). That is, the experience of consciousness is not *mere* appearance, but already takes place as the relation between appearance and essence, or more specifically, the relation between the appearance of knowing and actual, speculative knowing.[37] As Heidegger writes, the path of the presentation "moves back and forth constantly in the interstice that obtains between natural consciousness and science" (or, the interstice between death and life), meaning that far from being alien to phenomenology, the form that belongs to the speculative is already present in the experience of consciousness, and speculative thinking will have the phenomenological development of consciousness as its presupposition, a development that constitutes a deduction to the standpoint of science.[38] As such, Hegel is clear that, "[b]ecause of [its] necessity, the way to Science [i.e. phenomenology—K.N.] is itself already *Science*, and hence, in virtue of its content, is the Science of the *experience of consciousness*" (PhG 3:80/56).

The path of consciousness concludes in absolute knowing, a standpoint of living, internally negative speculative identity in which the *fixed* opposition of consciousness is overcome. The phenomenological development of consciousness becomes

[37] See also PhG 3:80–81/56–57 where Hegel describes absolute knowing as the point where appearance becomes identical with essence.

[38] Heidegger, "Hegel's Concept of Experience," p. 108. See also WL 5:17–18, 43/28–29, 40.

actual knowing and *pure thinking*—speculative logic—when the ambiguity, negativity, and double constitution of consciousness and its objects take the form of thought, the form of the Concept,[39] moving no longer in the realm of appearance, experience, or representation (*Vorstellung*), but within thought-determinations (*Denkbestimmungen*) themselves, or, to put it differently, within the coincidence of essence and appearance that Hegel calls actuality (*Wirklichkeit*).[40] In absolute knowing, spirit has won the form of the Concept, and this Concept, which now corresponds with its object or is the very "*form of objectivity*" (PhG 3:583/486), also has the form of the self.[41] Hegel describes this self-like form in several ways, and develops an account of this form through a description of its content.[42] First, this content is *free*, and free not only in the element of thought, but as Hegel stresses, free in its being (*Sein*) and existence (*Dasein*) which is *immediately* thought.[43] This "*certainty of immediacy*" not only brings us back to the beginning of the *Phenomenology*, namely to the shape of sense-certainty,[44] but will also bring us forward to the beginning of the *Logic* in the form of pure being (PhG 3:589/491).[45] The continual return of immediacy and its immediately being taken up in mediation is another expression of consciousness', and now *thought's*, negativity and

[39] Note that this ambiguity and negativity is not overcome in absolute knowing and speculative logic, but simply begins to take a different form. We can also say more precisely that in logic, *form itself* takes on this character of ambiguity (qua double-natured) and negativity, and that this has its basis in the idea of thought as living.

[40] See EL §§2–3, §24Z2, §6.

[41] Hegel also describes life as "self-like," or *selbstisch*, which normally means selfish (EN §337). On the idea that the structure and unity of the Concept is the same as the structure and unity of the self, what Brandom calls the semantic thesis of idealism, see his "Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism: Negotiation and Administration in Hegel's Account of the Structure and Content of Conceptual Norms," *European Journal of Philosophy* 7:2 (1999), pp. 164–189.

[42] The following is a gloss on PhG 3:588–589/490–491.

[43] Recall what Schelling said above of the organism: "Not only its form but its *existence* is purposive."

[44] See PhG 3:82–92/58–66.

[45] See also EL §86.

double constitution, what Hegel will refer to as the double aspect of logic's beginning. Secondly, the content, as free, is nothing other than the self-alienating self (*sich entäußernde Selbst*) *or* the immediate unity of its self-knowledge, meaning that both internal diremption and essential unity are part of the self's constitution. Thirdly, the content, insofar as it consists of the very movement of the self's continual self-alienation and self-sublation (*sich selbst aufzuheben*), consists in negativity. In its freedom, this negative movement is also necessary, and consists of a diversity of content that is determined through *relations* (*Verhältnisse*). The idea of relation and the possibility of determining the proper kind of self-relating form that can overcome the antinomy between freedom and necessity—Hegel already speaks here as if the freedom and necessity of the self amounted to the same—will be the task of the transition between the Objective and the Subjective Logic. Finally, the content of this self-like form qua negative is simply the Concept (the Concept is both the form and content of logic, just as consciousness is both the form and content of phenomenology), and its activity, its very life, can now be properly described as science. In contrast to the way of despair that took us through the varied shapes of consciousness as it suffered constant loss and death,[46] science, or the life of the Concept, will instead proceed, still via the negativity of the self, through the organic, self-grounded and self-determining development of thought-forms or determinate concepts, ones that generate their own content due to the living disparity of thinking with itself. That is, in absolute knowing, the life and experience of self-consciousness becomes the life of the Concept.

[46] Which is to say that the *Phenomenology* can also be read as a work of mourning, though mourning would only be possible on account of the fact that we can experience things, others, and ourselves as living, and hence, as that which can suffer death and be lost. Speculative logic is then the mode of thinking that does justice to that thought, the antidote to instrumental reason *par excellence*.

3. Life and the Logic of Logic: Absolute Form

We can now begin to have an idea of what it means when Hegel says that thought itself, and the very form that it takes, namely, the Concept, is *living*. First, thought is living insofar as it takes the form of the negative, a negativity that can only be understood in connection with the original double constitution of the self. Thought's negativity consists in a disparity within itself as both thought and being, form and content, ground and grounded, all of which are an expression of thought's *own* constitution as both life and spirit, or with Marx, life-activity and conscious life-activity. The form of thinking is not dependent on "external objects" for content, but generates and *is* its own content insofar as it is a living, spiritual object—this is the proper way to understand the object dependence of thought and why the object of knowing, as the process of this whole movement, is simply itself (i.e., life/spirit activity trying to understand life/spirit activity qua *thought*). Secondly, thought is said to be living because it gives shape to itself, actualizes itself, and gives itself its own content through this negative process. The activity of thinking posits the form of its own self-relation, or the relation between thought and being, in indeterminately many ways. As internally purposive and self-organizing, the self-relation of thinking as it moves through its development of thought-determinations is one of *self-determination*.[47] It is with this in mind that we should understand Hegel's claim that "*freedom* reveals itself as the *truth of necessity* and as *the relational mode* [Verhältnisweise] *of the Concept*" (WL 6:246/578). This form of speculative thinking is the form of thinking proper to the living self, and what drives the movement of thought-determinations are not "the abstract forms of

[47] See WL 5:61/63.

the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*,"[48] determinations that fall outside the activity of speculative thinking altogether, but the negativity of "the determinations themselves according to their particular content" (WL 5:62/64).[49]

Thus, the priority of the object discussed above in connection with Hegel's *Differenzschrift* is now shifted into a methodological argument concerning the necessity of the diverse *content*—or, what Hegel will call the *Sache selbst*, the matter, thing, or fact itself—and its development in the exposition and negative movement of speculative thinking.[50] In the transition from phenomenological to logical exposition—a transition that will itself eventually bring about a return of the problem of life and self-consciousness[51]—it is not only content that takes the lead, constituting the determinate character of the progression, but curiously, Hegel notes that the content, in fact, "remains *one and the same*" (EL §3). That is, throughout the various forms that consciousness takes (feeling, desire, intuition, representation, etc.),[52] and even now in the transition to the activity and form of pure thinking, the content or object under investigation stays the same, namely, it is simply the nature and truth—the actuality—of the doubly constituted self as it comes to gain self-knowledge in infinitely many forms. This is again why phenomenology takes place between natural consciousness and science, between appearance and essence: Although consciousness *seems* to engage with a variety of heterogeneous content on its path of despair, this is only because in each case, the particular form of consciousness attaches itself to a particular content and gives rise to a particular (new) object, generating

[48] Thus, Hegel writes: "For this reason it must be said that nothing is *known* that is not in *experience*." (PhG 3:585/487)

[49] On the movement of determinate negation in logic, see WL 5:49–51/54–55.

[50] See EL §1, WL 5:16/27.

[51] See WL 6:484–548/772–823.

[52] See EPG for a more comprehensive account of the various forms that spirit takes, with the phenomenology of consciousness comprising only one dimension of those forms.

the appearance that consciousness has a diversity of content and many different objects. But in truth, the content and object is in each case the same, for at every stage in the progression, consciousness is only seeking, and can only find satisfaction in, something that also has the form of a self.[53] This content is *necessary*, first, because consciousness can *only* find satisfaction in an object with the form of a self,[54] and secondly, because qua negative and doubly constituted, consciousness also necessarily generates and determines its own content, which is also the element of its freedom. If the content stays essentially the same in logic, then what we get in the advance from phenomenology to speculative thinking is "satisfaction *with regard to form*; this form is *necessity* in general [...] the *Concept*" (EL §9). We gain satisfaction with respect to form in logic because the kind of form that makes up the content of logic is one that corresponds with the necessary content of consciousness that we have been considering all along, one that corresponds with the self in its negative, self-relating, self-forming character. As the activity of thought thinking itself in which form and content coincide (insofar as both consist in thinking) and through which satisfaction with regard to form is achieved, Hegel writes that logic is "the science of *absolute form*"—absolute because the form of thought coincides with the free and necessary content of the living, thinking self (WL 6:267/594; my emphasis).

[53] See PhG 3:134/101. This is a crucial reason why mechanistic and otherwise reductive, external explanations of nature or the human, even if in many ways correct and often useful (though they can also be harmful), are so literally *unsatisfying*, or seem to explain without explaining. It seems that for Hegel, a minimal requirement for a *satisfactory* explanation (of anything?) would be one that can identify the logic of intrinsic purposiveness or self-actualization in the explanandum itself. On the significance of teleological explanation for Hegel's account of explanation more generally, see James Kreines, "Hegel's Critique of Pure Mechanism and the Philosophical Appeal of the *Logic* Project," *European Journal of Philosophy* 12:1 (2004), pp. 38–74.

[54] Compare this necessity with the one Schelling noted above, namely, that when faced with a living object, we *must* attribute purposiveness to it, that in this instance, we are "absolutely constrained" and "in no way free."

That the content of logic is necessary, self-generating, and self-developing shows that, for Hegel, even the activity of pure thinking must be understood as grounded in the living form of the doubly constituted self. At the level of logic, knowledge of itself would consist in developing a kind of thought-form, or an entire system of thought-determinations, that corresponds to the logic of self-actualization, a form of thinking that can grasp the negativity, contradiction, and freedom at the heart of the thinking subject. This exposition of thought's self-development, like the *Phenomenology*, will proceed negatively, and its progression will contain "two *moments*" (WL 5:57/60). In the form of speculative thinking (which has the conclusion of the *Phenomenology* as its presupposition),[55] the disparity between subject and object, thought and being, or more accurately, Concept and *Sache*,[56] is expressed through a dialectical movement between immediacy and mediation and also contains the two moments of in-itself (*an sich*) and for-itself (*für sich*) discussed above. Logic begins as at once immediate and mediated: Immediate because it is simply the immediacy of absolute knowing, the form of pure thinking that is immediately pure being; mediated because the possibility of pure thinking is itself determined by and presupposes the entire living development of consciousness as well as its continued activity. Every thought-determination in the *Logic*, as well as the *Logic* as a whole, moves negatively through these moments of immediacy and mediation. To cite just the opening moves, pure being, the manifestation of absolute indeterminateness and immediacy, is in fact, given its absolute lack of determination whatsoever, immediately pure nothing, and in this internal disparity with itself

[55] Hegel writes: "pure science presupposes liberation [*Befreiung*] from the opposition of consciousness." (WL 5:43/49)

[56] "[Pure science] contains *thought insofar as thought is equally the thing as it is in itself* [die Sache an sich selbst], or *the thing itself insofar as it is equally pure thought*." (WL 5:43/49)

as pure being and pure nothing, is already mediated within itself as a movement of becoming.

Furthermore, the very division (*Einteilung*) of logic into objective (The Doctrine of Being and Essence) and subjective (The Doctrine of the Concept) is one effected by thinking qua Concept itself, what Hegel calls "the *judgment* of the Concept [*das* Urteil *des Begriffs*]" (WL 5:57/60). For Hegel, the notion of judgment (*Ur-teil*) is considered not as synthesis or the bringing together of externally related subjects and predicates; rather, determinacy results from a movement of original partition, splitting, and division, that is, as a movement of negativity. Hegel writes: "[J]udgment is the self-diremption of the Concept; [...] the *original division* [ursprüngliche Teilung] of what is originally one; thus the [German] word [for judgment,] *Urteil* [or: 'primordial division'] refers to what judgment is in and for itself." (WL 6:304/625; translation modified) This Hölderlinian conception of judgment as division expresses the negativity of the self, the disparity of subject and object and the self *as* a self-related subject-object at the level of logical form. Hegel organizes the very divisions (and sub-divisions, particularly in the Subjective Logic which is itself divided into subjectivity, objectivity, and their unity, the Idea) of the *Logic* itself according to this self-diremption of the Concept, one that is provisionally stated in the introduction and fully developed throughout the course of the work. In the first moment, the Concept is *in-itself*, in the element of being (*Sein*) or reality (*Realität*). Hegel calls this 'the existent Concept' (*seiender Begriff*), and the movement of the Concept in-itself makes up the content of the Objective Logic. As thinking progresses through increasingly contentful thought-determinations, the determination of being also gains increasing concreteness and determinacy, and the Objective Logic makes up what Hegel calls the genesis of the Concept. In the second moment, the Concept exists *for-itself*, or is the Concept *as* Concept, the development of which constitutes the con-

tent of the Subjective Logic. In describing the Concept that exists for-itself, Hegel notes in parentheses: "(in more concrete forms, the Concept as it is in the human being, who is endowed with thought, and also in the sentient animal and in general in organic individuality, although, of course, in these last it is not *conscious* and still less *known*; it is Concept *in-itself* only in inorganic nature)" (WL 5:58/61). In other words, the Concept for-itself is the logical, absolute form of the *same kind of form*, a form that determines its own content, that obtains in the more concrete determinations suggested by Hegel: the human being, the sentient animal, and organic *individuality*. Given that the Concept is only *in-itself* in inorganic nature, the realm of being in general, the transition from in-itself to for-itself, or from the Objective to the Subjective Logic, will require the determination of a kind of form relation, what Hegel will call an *activity-of-form* (*Formtätigkeit*),[57] that takes us from the non-living to the living, from absolute finitude and external necessity to speculative infinity and freedom. Between these two moments of the Concept is the Doctrine of Essence, a "sphere of mediation" where the various reflected determinations of the relations between the divisions of the Concept are considered.[58]

Thus, speculative identity takes us as far as determining the logic of the logic, expressing the form of form that will be developed in Hegel's logic of the Concept. In arguing that life is both materially and logically necessary and constitutive for thinking, conceptual activity from self-consciousness to the Concept has shown itself to be purposive not only all the way down (self-determining *only* in its identity and non-identity with life), but

[57] See for example EL §§159, 212.

[58] These two moments and the disparity between them are immanent determinations of the Concept itself, and the "judgment" or division of the Concept also reproduces the ambiguity and disparity noted above with respect to consciousness, now expressed as the ambiguity that obtains between logic and metaphysics, or thought and being. See WL 5:16/27, EL §24. On the ambiguity of the Concept, see Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution,* p. 25.

also *all the way up*: self-determining *only* insofar as it takes the negative, self-actualizing form of the self, an activity of form that makes up the life of the Concept. However, this satisfaction with respect to form can only be realized through the activity of speculative thinking itself, and can only be gained as a result of the movement through the thought determinations that make up the *Science of Logic*. Just as self-consciousness wins its freedom only through the purposive self-determination of experience driven by the inner and outer *Entzweiung* that constitutes the path of despair in the *Phenomenology*,[59] thinking also wins its freedom only through the purposive self-determination of thought-forms that prove themselves as the conditions of possibility for determinacy as such. The freedom of the speculative entails that self-determination is actual only insofar as the claims of both identity and non-identity in their many guises are recognized, "all else is error, confusion, opinion, striving, caprice, and transitoriness."[60]

[59] Although "it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won," in surviving the struggle for recognition, "self-consciousness learns [through experience] that life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness" (PhG 3:149, 150/114, 115).

[60] "Alles Übrige ist Irrtum, Trübheit, Meinung, Streben, Willkür und Vergänglichkeit; die absolute Idee allein ist *Sein*, unvergängliches *Leben*, *sich wissende Wahrheit*, und ist *alle Wahrheit*." (WL 6:549/824)