Foreword

1. The Young Hegel and what drove him

§1. Germany was fragmented and socially and economically backward

In order to understand what Hegel was doing in his Logic, we should first look at the circumstances of his life and the situation in Germany at the time.

Hegel was born in Stuttgart in 1770, just 620 km from Paris. So he was 18 at the time of the storming of the Bastille and his earliest writing, an essay on the prospects for advancing the Enlightenment by launching a "folk religion," were penned while a seminary student in 1793, shortly before Robespierre launched his own manufactured religion of the "Supreme Being." This project fell flat and Robespierre was himself sent to the guillotine shortly afterwards. Mainly under the influence of his friend, the poet Hölderin, Hegel abandoned his youthful disdain for the Christian religion and came to the conviction that, for all its faults, it was Christianity which had ultimately opened the way for the Enlightenment and modernity.

He completed his first published book, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in Jena, just as the town was occupied by his hero Napoleon Bonaparte – "The World Spirit on horseback" in Hegel's words. Napoleon was born the same year as Hegel, but died in 1821 shortly after the publication of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, which culminates in the section on World History where Hegel describes the role of world-historic heroes, "living instruments of the world mind." Napoleon introduced the *code civile* into Germany, and smashed up its feudal structures. But the first uprisings of the French proletariat against the misery of bourgeois development in France began only in the 1830s, after Hegel's death.

The industrial revolution in Britain roughly coincides with Hegel's lifetime, 1770-1830, but the Chartist Uprisings took place in the 1830s shortly after Hegel's death. So Hegel saw the revolutionary impact of capitalism and the misery it brought with it, but he never knew a movement of the oppressed, a modern social movement. Also, some of the most brilliant women of the first wave of feminism were amongst his circle of friends, and included his mother and sister, but Hegel himself never ac-

cepted the claims of feminism. In fact, he had a dreadfully misogynist and essentialist position on women.

Germany did not have a state. Until 1815, Germany was part of what was still called the Holy Roman Empire, which stretched from Nice up the French border to Calais, across to Gdansk, bordering the Russian Empire down through Prague to Rome. It was made up of a patchwork of over 300 small principalities, some Catholic some Protestant, each with their own class structure and traditions and with no solidarity between each other or from their own subjects. England to the North, Revolutionary France to the West, Imperial Russia to the East and Austria-Hungary to the South. The armies of these great powers marched back and forth across Germany, pushing the German princes around as pawns in a power game in which the Germans had no say whatsoever. None of the princes of these little states could count on their citizens to take up arms in their defence. Germany was helpless alongside its powerful neighbours, and wallowed in social and economic backwardness as Revolutionary France made history with its armies and its politicians, and the English built an empire with their money and their new inventions, whilst Germany remained spectators in history. But this was the Germany of Goethe, and Schiller and Beethoven.

Hegel drew the conclusion that the German Revolution would have to be made with philosophy rather than with guns and mobs. And it was only relatively late in life (aged 28 in fact) that Hegel resolved to become a professor of philosophy and build his own system. It was the fate of his own country, the problem of modernisation and freedom for his native Germany, which was his concern.

The Holy Roman Empire was brought to a close in 1815, just as the last volume of the *Science of Logic* went to press. And at the Congress of Vienna, in the aftermath of Napoleon's eventual military defeat, the German Federation was created with just 38 components. This situation suited Hegel, and generally speaking, the most creative period of Hegel's life was the period of the Napoleonic Wars, 1804-1815.

We should also remember that Hegel never knew Darwin. *The Origin of Species* was published almost thirty years after he died. But he was familiar with the theory of Lamarck, and he positively rejected the idea that human beings had evolved out of animals. He knew of Lyell's theory of geological formation and accepted that the continents were products of a process of formation. But he insisted that there was change but no devel-

opment in Nature. He actually knew nothing of the pre-history of humanity and as surprising as it may seem for the historical thinker *par excellence*, he claimed that:

> "even if the earth was once in a state where it had no living things but only the chemical process, and so on, yet the moment the lightning of life strikes into matter, at once there is present a determinate, complete creature, as Minerva fully armed springs forth from the head of Jupiter.... Man has not developed himself out of the animal, nor the animal out of the plant; each is at a single stroke what it is."

At the time, natural science offered no rational explanation for the appearance of organic life out of inorganic life or of the origins of the human form, language and human history. It is to Hegel's credit that he did not try to resolve the problem of what he knew little about by appealing to what no-one knew absolutely anything about. He relied almost entirely on the *intelligibility of human life* as it could be observed: no foundation myths or appeals to a natural order beyond human society or appeals to Eternal Reason or Laws of Nature. In that sense, Hegel's is a supremely rational philosophy.

His misogyny and racism, which led him to exclude women and the peoples of uncivilized nations from being creators of culture, derived from his blindness to the fact of the cultural construction of the human form itself. Although this is a limitation in his philosophy, it is one which is very easy to correct for given all that we know today, 200 years later, and has had little impact on his Logic.

§2. Hegel was a modernist opponent of liberalism

Hegel presents a contradictory figure. He was an enthusiastic proponent of the Enlightenment, indeed before his career as a professor of philosophy took off, he was briefly a newspaper editor and then for seven years, headmaster of a secondary school in Nuremberg and more or less dedicated to the ideal of *Bildung* – a German word usually translated as 'education', but carrying a much stronger connotation of personal development and acquisition of culture. He saw himself much as a foot soldier for the Enlightenment. But it was the combination of witnessing what Kant in particular, but also Fichte and Schelling, achieved as proponents of philosophical systems and as university professors, and the increasing awareness of the unsatisfactory nature of the systems of these, his predecessors in German philosophy, which impelled him to construct a philosophical system of his own.

The Enlightenment essentially entailed the expansion of individual freedom, but unlike other proponents of the Enlightenment Hegel was *not* a liberal. Hegel did not identify freedom with the freedom of individuals from constraint, rooted in an individualist conception of the subject. Now it is true that Hegel's communitarianism was to an extent sustained by an unwarranted idealisation of the ancient Greek *polis*, somewhat of a fashion of the time. But more importantly, it was his experience of life in Germany which led him to a far deeper conception of freedom.

At best, an individual only has the power of the whole community of which they are a part. A citizen of a nation like Germany, which had no state, has no freedom.

So in order to understand Hegel we have to let go of the conception of the state as an instrument of oppression or as a limitation on individual freedom, and see the sense in which the state is also an instrument of its citizens and an expression of their freedom. Hegel did not know of the idea of the state as an instrument of *class rule*, and he conducted a lifelong struggle against all those theories which promoted a liberal, or 'negative' idea of freedom. For him, the state occupied the space that it occupied for the people of Vietnam and other nations which emerged from the national liberation struggles of the post-World War Two period: that of a *social movement*. What he describes in his *Philosophy of Right*, for example, is not of course a social movement, but a state, complete with hereditary monarchy and a public service, but at the deepest level, the level which we find in the Logic, his philosophy is the philosophy of a social movement, of a people who has organized itself around a common cause as a social movement, or at least as a 'project'.

But Hegel wasn't simply a communitarian; he was deeply concerned with individuality and how the self-determination of an individual person could be realized in and through the acquisition of the culture of the whole community. His central concern was what later came to be called 'social solidarity', but his was a far deeper and more nuanced conception than that of Durkheim, for example. What Durkheim called 'organic' rather than 'mechanical' social solidarity was for Hegel only the first moment in the development of that kind of social solidarity in which individuality could flourish.

The real limitation on Hegel's conception of a social movement is that, as remarked above, he never saw nor ever conceived of, a social movement of the oppressed. He saw no reason to believe that the 'rab-

ble' could liberate themselves. Modern theories of self-emancipation are all presaged on the formation of collective self-consciousness and the state is the material expression of collective self-consciousness *par excellence*. Hegel well understood that the agency of individual human beings can only be constituted in and through social movements and the institutions such movements create. One could go further than that. Hegel was deeply concerned with the role of individuals in bringing about social change, but the conception of the individual which he developed was a radical break from those which had gone before. Even being a world-historical figure did not necessarily mean that you were conscious of what you were doing or that others would be grateful for what you achieved.

But it was this concern to find a route to modernity for Germany which led Hegel to an investigation of the source of the differing spirit of peoples and the fate of each nation. Hegel did not invent this study. Before him Kant and in particular Johann Gottfried Herder, who coined the terms *Volksgeist* and *Zeitgeist*, had made investigations into the problem. By studying the history of a people, Hegel hoped to discover why one people would make revolution or build an empire, while another people would wallow in disunity and slavery.

These ideas became important in the development of cultural anthropology in the 19th century and helped shaped ideas of people like Franz Boas, but modern nations are not subjects in that sense, and Hegel, whose interest was in the fostering of both social solidarity and individuality, realized this. At best the concept could be useful in characterisation of an ancient city state or of an isolated community perhaps, or to explain particular *aspects* of the character of different nations. In today's context such a project would be seen as reactionary, firstly because it tends to erase differences of class, gender and so on within a people, and secondly because it reeks of a kind of "cultural racism."

But remember firstly that the question was posed from the point of view of the *excluded*, in this case, the German people who were being ridden roughshod over by the European powers and denied a say over their own affairs; it does make a difference when the question is asked from below, so to speak.

But secondly, it asks a legitimate question, and it was a *first step* towards understanding the specific nature of modern social life and its relation to the psychology of the individuals who constitute a society.

And it was a radical break from trying to understand the problem of freedom through the study of eternal categories of Reason.

§3. The "Spirit of a people" was rooted in an historical form of life

Hegel's early work, particularly the 1802-03 work, "System of Ethical Life," is particularly important because in it we see Hegel working out his conception of spirit in terms of practical daily life. Taking the lead of his predecessors Kant and Fichte, and Descartes for that matter, he aimed to make no presuppositions, but instead of turning inwards to the contemplation of 'clear ideas', or making appeals to some type of mathematical reasoning, which actually take the validity of Reason for granted, he took as his given datum, ordinary, living people creating and reproducing themselves and their society.

Now it is true that this kind of consideration is absent from his later works, including first and foremost the Logic, which moves entirely in the domain of abstractions and thought forms, but there is no reason to suppose that he abandoned this view of the construction of consciousness through labour. Philosophy in general and logic in particular has to stand on its own ground and cannot appeal to other domains for its proof. But we should not misunderstand. What Hegel's early investigations led him to was not a kind of social psychology, to do with how people *acquire* an idea, but a radically new conception of what an idea *is*.

Somewhere between the writing of "System of Ethical Life" and the next version of his system sometimes called the "Philosophy of Spirit," dated 1805-06, an important change took place in his idea of spirit. Whereas up till this time he had been interested in the spirit of a times or the spirit of this or that people, and looked for its origins in the day-to-day activity of people, following the pressure which comes to bear on every builder of a philosophical system, he began to talk about "Spirit" as such. So instead of having the spirit of this or that people rooted in an historical form of life, forged through the experience of victory or defeat at war, through the raising of crops or the hunting of animals, we had *Spirit*. Spirit *manifested* itself in the activity of a people, developed as that people fulfilled their destiny, but then, if that nation faced a crisis and proved incapable of making the transition to a new principle, the further progress of Spirit would be the task of another people. Spirit entered into the affairs of a nation, but if a nation stagnated, Spirit became a dead residue, rather than a living spirit. So without any change in the conception

of spirit itself, spirit became something that pre-existed the form of life in which it was instantiated. Spirit was one and the same process which found a different form at a different time in a different people.

This move greatly facilitated the construction of a systematic philosophy. All German professors of philosophy have to have a system. It's part of the job description, and by this time, Hegel had his sights on becoming a professor of philosophy. But it moved his philosophy into a more theistic area. At the same time, it is a move which, for our secular times, is rather easily reversible. You don't need to have a conception of spirit as pre-existing human life, merely manifesting itself in human activity, to use the concept of spirit.

The other implication of this conception of Spirit was that it really emphasized the unitary character of spirit; everyone shares in the culture of a people, its language, its forms of production and distribution, its institutions and its religion. It is this shared character of spirit as Hegel conceived it, which comes to the fore, rather than a concern with distinctions and difference. But the point is: should we proceed like Fichte, beginning from the individual, and from the individual deduce the nature of the state, the society, or should we on the contrary, begin with a conception of the state, a conception which rests on people's collaborative activity, and from there deduce the nature of the individual persons. Surely Hegel was entirely correct. We all share, even if unequally, in the language, the science, the art, the productive forces, the political social institutions which are produced in our society; we constitute and modify them in our own activity. We all have our own unique take on that culture, but it remains a cooperative and shared cultural life. The same approach can bring a magnifying glass to bear on the consciousness of different classes, subcultures or natural groupings within society, but at whatever level, we have to be able to deal with individuals constituting a shared form of life and themselves as a part of that.

§4. *Zeitgeist* remains a widely accepted, if problematic, concept of Spirit

There is some basis for associating Hegel with notions of progress and a 'cultural evolution' in which all the people of the world are subsumed into a single narrative. But postmodernism itself is probably the most outrageous example of this practice. The point is that Hegel worked out an approach which can illuminate the individual psyche and its structure at one and the same time as studying the dynamics of national

institutions, politics, movements in art and philosophy and so on. If we take concepts like "Gen X" or "baby boomers" then it's problematic to suppose that such a collective consciousness or personality exists. Lumping together entire cohorts of people born in a certain decade as if they shared common goals is arrant nonsense. And the same goes for any abstract collective like 'white collar employees' or 'suburbia' which have no collective self-consciousness at all.

This brings us to the essential problem here, the 'problem of the individual'. Nowadays we commonly hear people talking about 'two levels', the level of the individual and the level of society, of institutions and social forces. On one hand, we have individuals with ideas and consciousness and personalities of their own, able to decide what they do from one moment to the next, and on the other hand, we have impersonal social forces, such as the economy governed by the invisible hand of the market, politics governed by public opinion, the few powerful individuals who control the large institutions of society, and social and historical forces and laws. Sociology is in one department of the university, whilst psychology in another, and the conceptual apparatus we need to understand human beings is split into at least two incommensurable sets of concepts. But it is just the same individual human beings whether acting as a member of an institution, as an economic agent making market decisions, or acting out social roles such as their family or community responsibilities.

What Hegel's concept of spirit gives us is a set of concepts, all interconnected with one another in his *Logic*, which deal throughout with human beings en masse. "Spirit is the nature of human beings *en masse*," said Hegel, and the study of spirit is nothing other than the study of the activity of human beings *en masse*. Just one qualification: once a people stops questioning its institutions and beliefs, then Spirit dies and cannot further develop.

'Spirit' is a word people don't like to hear too much these days. It summons up notions of extramundane substances. But it is undeniably real, and to present Hegel's Logic simply as a philosophy without presuppositions, deleting any reference to "spirit" would be kidding ourselves. Hegel without spirit would be like economics without the "market."

§5. Spirit is the "nature of human beings *en masse*."

So "spirit is human beings en masse." But it is easy to miss some of what this entails. It is well known that a person left to grow up on their

own, without contact with others, will not grow up to be a human being in any real sense. But this is only the half of it. If you dropped a million people into the jungle *together*, but without the benefit of the *material culture* built up by preceding generations, the result would be even worse. When we are talking about human beings en masse, then we are talking not only about so many human beings, and the forms of organisation and cooperation that they are involved in, but also the material culture that they have inherited and created and use together. This includes language, both spoken and written, means of production from factories and mines through to crops, and domestic animals and soils which are as much a product of human culture as are our own bodies and our basic needs. Language is part of material culture, whether written or spoken, and language is not only necessary for communication between individuals, but individuals use language to coordinate their own activity.

For Hegel, all these objects of material culture are thought-objects. It is true that they entail "externality": a word cannot be spoken in a vacuum, a building cannot be erected without the help of gravity. But a word is what it is only in connection with its use by human beings and the same is true of a chair or a key or a rosary.

One of the difficulties that Hegel had to overcome was the problem of *dualism*. Descartes operated with a mind-matter dualism, and Kant's philosophy got around mind-matter dualism at the cost of introducing a host of other such dichotomies and it was the need to overcome these dichotomies in Kant's philosophy which was one of the main drivers for Kant's critics, such as Fichte and Schelling and Hegel. For Hegel, it was all thought. We will presently come to how Hegel arrived at difference from this abstract beginning, but the idea of thought, of Spirit, shaping the world, served as a foundation upon which to build a philosophical system. So Hegel was an idealist, but what can be called an *objective idealist*. That is, thought was not for Hegel simply something subjective or inward. It is thinking, the activity of the human mind, but the content of that thinking is objective, it is given from outside the individual, it is the individual's 'second nature'. The objects around us and which are the content of our perception and thoughts are the objectifications of the thought of other people, or ourselves. We live in a world not of matter, but of thought objects, which are, like all objects, also material things. But what makes a key a key is not its shape or its substance, but the fact that there's a lock somewhere that it fits.

One of the most popular approaches to modernizing Hegel today is what is known as 'intersubjectivity'. 'Intersubjectivity' begins from the same observation that "spirit is human beings en masse," but reduces human activity to momentary, unmediated communicative actions between individuals; the human body is simply taken for granted, subsumed as part of the acting 'subject', language is comprehended as simply the performance of individuals without taking account of the objective existence of a common language prior to its performance by any individual. The entirety of material culture – technology, land, domestic animals and the material relations involved in the reproduction of the species – is simply ignored. An interpretation of human life which ignores reproduction of the species, the forces of production and the entirety of material culture self-evidently fails to capture the notion of human beings en masse. This was not Hegel's idea. In his effort to understand spirit, these 'thought objects', which we may prefer to think of as 'material culture', are very much included in the picture.

Some interpretations of Hegel take as their point of departure the master-servant relation, §§178-196 of the *Phenomenology*. Very broadly speaking, those Hegelians who take this relation as their essential Hegel and those who take the Logic as their essential Hegel form two almost mutually exclusive schools of thought. What is special about the master-servant relation is that it is an apparently unmediated relation lacking any third point to *mediate* between the two parties. On the other hand, the *Logic*, along with the entirety of Hegel's works, is all about mediation. It is really impossible to read the *Logic* from the standpoint of unmediated relations, and in fact, outside of that one passage of about 19 paragraphs, it is impossible to read any of Hegel's work without making central the relation of mediation. And in any case, the master-servant relation is about how two subjects still somehow manage to mediate their relation even when there is no third party or common language or law to mediate the relation for them.

2. The Phenomenology and 'formations of consciousness'

§1. Kant's Philosophy fragmented human beings

Another approach to understanding Hegel is to look at his work in the context of the development of German philosophy, in particular his critique of Kant.

Kant was born in 1724, and published "Religion within the limits of Reason" at the age of 70, at about the same time as the young Hegel was writing his speculations on the construction of a folk religion at the seminary in Tübingen and Robespierre was doing it his way; Kant died at about the time Hegel completed his draft "System of Ethical Life."

Kant was a huge figure. Hegel and all his young philosopher friends were Kantians. But Kant's system posed as many problems as it solved; to be a Kantian at that time was to be a *participant* in the project which Kant had initiated, the development of a philosophical system which expressed the aims of the Enlightenment; and that meant *critique* of Kantianism. We need to look at just a couple of aspects of Kant's philosophy which will help us understand Hegel's approach.

"I freely admit," said Kant, "it was David Hume's remark that first, many years ago, interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave a completely different direction to my enquiries in the field of speculative philosophy." Hume's "Treatise on Human Nature" had been published while Kant was still very young, continuing a line of empiricists and their rationalist critics, whose concern was how knowledge and ideas originated from sensation. Hume was a sceptic; he demonstrated that causality could not be deduced from sensation. One could witness the fact that one event always followed another, but this did not prove that the first was the *cause* of the second, and that the second *necessarily* followed from the first. This scepticism shocked Kant. If this were true, then there could be no science. In an effort to rescue the possibility of science, Kant set about constructing his *critical* philosophy, a kind of 'third way' between dogmatism and scepticism, whose aim was to determine the limits of knowledge, to draw a line between what was knowable and what was not knowable. This investigation led to a number of conclusions.

Hegel's critique of Kant is so extensive, penetrating all of his mature works, only a few points can be mentioned here.

§2. The Subject

The most important issue is Kant's concept of the subject which was intended to solve problems such as the Cartesian dichotomy between mind and matter and the homunculus paradox – the idea of a subject like a little man inside the head that observes our perceptions and puts them all together and makes ideas. This idea, which persists to this day, leads of course to an infinite regress, for the homunculus needs a little man inside his head as well. Kant's solution was the transcendental subject:

> 'By this "I," or "He," or "It," who or which thinks, nothing more is represented than a *transcendental subject of thought* = *x*, which is cognized only by means of the thoughts that are its predicates.' (*Critique of Pure Reason*)

So the subject for Kant was a nothing, like a point which is defined as the intersection between two lines – it is determinate and you know just where it is, but it has no width or properties of its own. This device allowed Kant to avoid the contradictions which had plagued earlier philosophers, but it led to a new range of problems. What Kant had done was to escape the problems of the subject's interaction with the material world by in effect placing the subject behind and outside culture and history. He had created an eternal changeless subject which could be analysed by the methods of philosophy, without any empirical content, at the cost of reducing the subject to a nothing.

Hegel's proposal is to place the subject *back into culture* and history: the subject would be a product and part of culture and history, rather than standing outside of experience.

§3. Dichotomy

Now, one of the consequences of Kant's transcendental subject was the resolution of the problem he inherited from the rationalist-empiricist debate: there were two kinds of knowledge, knowledge derived from two distinct sources which had to be combined somehow. On the one hand we had sensation, or what was called Intuition, which was the immediate basis for experience, the beginning of all knowledge, and on the other hand, we had Reason or Concept. Reason was needed to process the data of experience and acquire the categories through which sense could be made of experience. So we had two faculties: the faculty of reason and the faculty of intuition, and through reason we could acquire knowledge of the categories, of time and space, logic and so on.

One of the other implications, an essential part of how Kant resolved the contradiction he had inherited from the empiricists and rationalists, was that the world was divided in two: on our side was the world of appearances, in which we have constructed some meaningful image out of the stream of data from intuition, using our capacity for reason. On the other side, beyond and behind appearances, lies the thing-in-itself, about which we can know nothing.

Using his "antinomies of reason," Kant demonstrated as essentially unknowable, certain kinds of entity, transcendent ideas, the kind of things

which had tortured the minds of mediaeval philosophers and tended to reinforce the position of scepticism. Kant took just four claims, such as that the world has no beginning or that matter is infinitely divisible, and from each Kant deduced the opposite claim, that the world had a beginning, or that the matter is not infinitely divisible, and by this method he claimed to show that certain kinds of question are just silly questions, and should not be asked. Apart from that, he believed that sciences such as logic, mathematics and geometry can be developed through pure reason rather than belonging solely to the domain of appearances.

Hegel's response to these antinomies of reason was to praise Kant for his discovery but ask: why limit it to these four? Any abstract claim if subject to sceptical criticism can be transformed into its opposite. What Kant had claimed solely for transcendent ideas, Hegel claimed applied to *all* concepts. But instead of concluding that since transcendent ideas were internally contradictory therefore they were illegitimate and should not be admitted to thought, on the contrary said Hegel, this essential contradictoriness was a feature of all concepts, and winding up in contradiction was not the fault of the subjective action of thought upon an object, but was inherent in the object, the concept itself, and only thanks to this internal contradictoriness did a concept have reality and depth.

§4. Hegel Replaced Kant's transcendental individual subject with cultural-historical subject

One of the most important thing to be gained from a study of Hegel, and of his Logic in particular, is to understand Hegel's concept of 'subject'. We cannot do justice to Hegel's concept of subject without traversing the Logic until we arrive at the concept of subject by the route that Hegel wishes to take us. After that we can put a little flesh on Hegel's very sophisticated conception of the subject.

Most writers interpret Hegel by importing into their reading of Hegel Kant's concept of subject. This is wrong. Now it is true that on occasion, especially when he is commenting on Kant, Hegel does use the word 'subject' in the Kantian sense, that is to say, as meaning an individual, an individual adult citizen, to be a little more precise. This is invariably the sense in which the Kantian subject is used today, and the same sense is usually, rather kaleidoscopically, read into Hegel. Normally, Hegel simply uses the word 'person' to convey this meaning. For Hegel, 'subject' is not a philosophical synonym for 'person'. It is really important to remember this.

The word subject went through some transformations since the Romans translated Aristotle, particularly with Descartes, but the core idea that Kant has imparted with the word is the coincidence of three things: the *cogito* of Descartes which is the bearer of ideas and knowledge, the self-determining agent who bears moral responsibility for their actions, and identity or self-consciousness. All three of these entities coincide in the Kantian subject, and Hegel is true to *this concept*, but it is not an individual person.

The individual is just a single atom of the whole entity constituted by the collective activity of the community as a whole. Of course, nothing other than an individual human being can think or bear moral responsibility for actions, but they cannot do so as isolated atoms; the content of our thinking is thought-objects which are constituted by the activity of the entire community and past generations. And our actions are vain and meaningless except insofar as they take on significance through the relation of the individual to the whole community. The point is, how to elaborate this idea of thought and moral responsibility as collective activities, and at the same time develop the conception of individuality which constitutes the essence of modern society.

In the "System of Ethical Life," Hegel approached the question of labour not so much from the standpoint of how individuals *acquire* knowledge, but rather as how the universal, that is, a culture, is *constructed*. At the basic level, people work with plants, and then animals, and then machinery, and in doing so produce crops, herds and means of production which are passed on to future generations. Likewise, in using words the language is maintained and developed and passed on to future generations, and finally, in abstracting the knowledge of culture and imparting it to a new generation in the raising of children, people are constructing and maintaining their 'second nature', the universals which are the content of all thought. When an individual thinks, they think with universals actively maintained by and meaningful only within their historical community.

So to provide an adequate concept of the subject, Hegel has to let go of the idea of an individual locus of experience, with access to universal principles of Reason existing in some fictional hyperspace on one side, and on the other side, unknowable things-in-themselves. The content of experience is thought objects which have been constructed by collective activity, and in which conceptual knowledge has been objectified. The categories and concepts by means of which sensuous experience is interpreted are acquired by means of the same sensuous experience, because

the categories are objective thought forms much the same as the finite things and events given in intuition.

What is left then of Kant's thing-in-itself? Hegel was not alone in finding the notion of the unknowable thing-in-itself unsatisfactory. The thing-in-itself has no determinate content; insofar as it were to have some content then it would cease to be in-itself. But nevertheless, the thing-in-itself is the source and origin of everything that is not subjective in appearances. Now this may make perfect logical sense, but so did Hume's scepticism. Hegel characterised this position as subjective idealism.

Kant sundered reality into appearance and things-in-themselves, knowledge into the faculties of intuition and reason, religious truth into 'religion within the limits of reason' and faith – this represented a fragmented human being, a human being sundered in two by a whole series of dichotomies. Perhaps this expressed very well the spirit of the times, but for Hegel as for other critics of Kant, this was a problem. Somehow or other, these dichotomies had to be resolved and the continuity of human experience reconstituted.

§5. The Idea is adequate unity of Concept and Intuition

So let's look at how Hegel solved this problem of human beings having two faculties and two kinds of knowledge, Concept and Intuition, which have to be stuck together somehow. Hegel spells out a solution in the "System of Ethical Life." The structure of this work is an alternation between the Concept being subsumed under Intuition and Intuition being subsumed under the Concept. Hegel did not eradicate the contradiction between Concept and Intuition, but traced the process of mutual subsumption which does not merely extract knowledge from the outside world, but creates objective thought forms.

We perceive, describe, act upon and understand the world using our words, artefacts, institutions and so on, subsuming intuition under concept, whilst in practical activity, communication and experience generally we sensuously interact with thought-objects, subsuming concept under intuition, for example. We have a view about how the world should be – either ethically or theoretically, but on the contrary we find from experience that it is otherwise. The world is continuously at odds with how it should be and things continuously turn out other than we intended. The development of the individual person as well as the whole of history is the story of the resolution of this conflict.

When we use a tool, we sense it as an object, and using it constrains us to act with it in a certain way. It is a norm of labour. it might be a sledge hammer or a tack hammer or a claw hammer, and we have to use it in a certain way, and experience it. The tool is the product of reflection and continuous modification in the past, it is an objectification of that thought, so when we use it, we sensuously, intuitively apprehend a concept.

But things are never quite satisfactory. We feel a need. Our needs are never given directly from nature, there is always a gap, a gap between need and its satisfaction, and that delayed gratification is overcome, negated by labour. Without a gap between needs and their satisfaction there is no labour, activity perhaps but not labour. Labour itself generates new needs, needs met by new products. Thus intuition is subsumed under the concept. In the process the universal is being constructed. Nature is supplemented by a 'second nature' in the form of an artificial environment; along with the separation of consumption and production comes a *division of labour*, the possibility of supervision of labour – the differentiation of *theory and practice*, and a *surplus product*.

Schelling dealt with the problem of the two incommensurable faculties in Kant by simply inventing a third and declaring it to be the unity of the other two, and then speculating on its nature: did it represent aesthetic sense or was it Nature? But Hegel accepted that there are indeed two distinct entities here, and tries to understand the relation between them. Rather than *eradicating* the contradiction with a philosophical gesture, he makes the resolution of the contradiction the work of history, the labour of millennia in developing crops and herds, the arts, literature, science, new technologies, new institutions, new laws, new forms of association, and so on and so forth.

Hegel called the unity of Concept and Intuition, the Idea. But at any given moment, the Concept and Intuition are not in unity. So what does this mean? Hegel's central concept here is not a supreme, absolute kind of "master signifier," but a deficient, internally riven, incomplete, broken concept; every move it makes to try to rectify this internal contradiction only generates new contradictions, new problems. Rather than the final *outcome* of a never ending historical process, the Idea is a *process*.

Likewise, identity is a cultural product, which develops with the resolution of problems in the historical development of society. Hegel conceives of a starting point, not a 'state of nature' such as Rousseau and

Hobbes presumed, of isolated individuals who need to be brought together to form a society, but rather as a community in which individuals do not differentiate themselves from society.

Consciousness always and only existed in and through individuals, but consciousness of oneself as an agent and creator of knowledge, and as a part of an historical process of knowledge, is the product of historical development. The opening up of a gap between the consciousness of an individual and the norms and practices of the community as a whole is a contradiction which is central to the kind of relations in which the Logic makes sense. The development of individuality is tied up with the development of culture as a whole, without which individuality cannot be sustained.

That material comes from the 1802-03 system. In the 1805-06 system, some of this material was omitted; instead Hegel put a lot of emphasis on the concept of recognition, he pushed the concept beyond its limits in fact in an effort to find a solution to the problem of individuality and rights within a modern society.

At the same time, the conception of a unitary Spirit as something pre-existing society and manifesting itself in human activity replaced the former idea of *Volksgeist* and *Zeitgeist* actually constructed by human labour. But it was still a Deist, non-interventionist God. The shift was a subtle one, and the same logical structure was still there.

This brings us to the final stage of introducing Hegel's mature philosophy as set out in the Logic, and that is the *Phenomenology*.

§6. A formation of consciousness is rules of inference in a way of life or project

The *Phenomenology* is an important work as it is in this work that Hegel draws the connection between normal, non-philosophical human life and his mature philosophical system, which begins with the *Logic*. It is also the connecting link between his early work and his mature work. It is part of his mature work in the sense that it represents the completion of the series of transformations which he went through in his early work, but it is a terrible book in many ways. It is almost unreadable.

The *Science of Logic* is a very difficult read, it is true, and some passages are quite opaque, but at least it is structured, in fact it's probably one of the most structured works ever written, and this structure makes the work much easier to penetrate. The structure of the *Phenomenology*, on the

other hand, is arcane. It was written in a rush to meet the publisher's deadlines while all of Hegel's other published works were the product of many years of careful preparation. Even the Preface to the Phenomenology is different. The Preface is undoubtedly one of the best and clearest expositions of his philosophy to be found, because it was written at greater leisure, after having completed the main work. At the time of his death, 25 years later, Hegel was working on a second edition of the *Phenomenology*, but he had written on the manuscript: "Characteristic early work not to be revised – relevant to the period at which it was written – the abstract Absolute was dominant at the time of the Preface." So the *Phenomenology* cannot really be counted as part of his mature work, and it is not a part of his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, as such. It is a preface to his system, the path from ordinary consciousness to philosophy.

It would take us far too far afield to get into the content of the *Phenomenology*, but to understand the subject matter of the *Logic*, we must understand what the subject matter of the *Phenomenology* is. Hegel says it is about *consciousness*. It tells the story of the journey of consciousness three times; the first time is the story of *thinking* as it develops down through history, through a series of distinct stages; then he tells the same story again but this time instead of systems of thinking, we have *social formations*; and then the story is told again a third time from the standpoint of thought which *understands itself* to be that process and its outcome, genuinely philosophical thought that knows that it is the thought of an age.

The object whose development is being described is the same object, but from its subjective, objective and absolute perspectives. This object, whose change and development through history is described Hegel calls a *Gestalt*, sometimes translated as "formation" or "configuration of consciousness."

Gestalt is one of those German words like *Schadenfreude*, which cannot be translated but is simply imported into other languages. The normal meaning of Gestalt in German is 'figure' as in "what a fine figure of a man," referring to the overall dynamic configuration of a living thing. Goethe gave it the meaning in which is used in Gestalt Psychology, as an integral structure or indivisible *whole*, which is *prior to* its parts.

Alongside Napoleon, Goethe would be the great figure in Hegel's life, and it could be argued that with Kant and Aristotle, Goethe was his greatest philosophical inspiration. Given that Goethe, although younger

than Kant, achieved fame before Kant and was an influence on him, then Goethe's importance is clear. The admiration was not reciprocated however. Goethe quite reasonably thought that Hegel had a serious communication problem and he never managed to understand what Hegel was talking about. But Hegel certainly took from Goethe. Although the concept of Gestalt that we find in the *Phenomenology* is very different from the concept of Gestalt we find in Goethe, taken together with the importance Goethe gave to *Bildung* and the relentless struggle Goethe engaged in for a holistic science, against the analytical, positivistic science associated with admiration of Isaac Newton, Goethe's interest in morphology (a word he invented) and the concept of *Urphänomen*, we can see the stamp of Goethe on the conception of the *Phenomenology*. *Urphänomen* is a word is unique to Goethe; the prefix 'ur-' means 'proto-', or 'archetypal'; and it comes close to the 'abstract notion' in Hegel's Logic.

For Hegel a *Gestalt* is a "formation of consciousness" understood as the dissonant unity of a *way of thought*, a *way of life* and a certain *constellation of material culture*. 'Dissonant' because at any given moment in the history of any given people these elements are not identical. There are laws requiring that people should act in a particular way, but people don't act in quite that way, fashions become out of date, there are bad laws, and so on. People think of themselves as doing a certain kind of thing, but objectively they may be doing something quite new that they just hadn't noticed, and so on and so forth. So we have culture and practical activity and subjective thought all aspects of a single whole or figure, that is *Gestalt*, but always moving, always with internal contradictions.

And even there we are talking about ideal forms, to which the course of actual history conforms more or less. This question of the relation between the reality of a thing and the idea of the thing, is something Hegel deals with at length in the Logic. For Hegel, reality and the notion are just stages in the development of a thing. Nature and social life are lawful in some sense or other and to deny that would be nonsense. The purpose of science is to discover that which is lawful, that which is intelligible in its object. So the *Phenomenology* is concerned with the necessary forms of development of formations of consciousness. Although he is not talking about real consciousness in the sense of being concerned with what any given individual thought at some given moment, he is concerned with consciousness, but with consciousness as something which is intelligible, and objectively necessary.

With that qualification, Hegel is talking about consciousness, something which is empirically given. He starts with ordinary common, unphilosophical consciousness, and he takes the reader through a series of stages leading up to absolute knowledge, that is, the philosophical consciousness exhibited in the exposition of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*.

To recap, what constitutes a *Gestalt* is a *way of thinking* which includes the meaning attached to different institutions and artefacts, including words and symbols, a *way of life*, or social formation, that is, a form of practical activity, including the social institutions, and forms of practical activity whether in production, communication, family life, government or whatever, and thirdly, a constellation of material culture including the language, art, means of production, land, food and so on. Each of these aspects constitutes the others and mediates between them.

There is no mind/matter dichotomy here. Actually, at no time in his life did Hegel ever take a position on the usual problems of epistemology, the limits on the validity of knowledge, and ontology he subsumed under his Logic. All those dichotomies which had tortured the minds of earlier generations of philosophers he bypassed, by taking them as objects of critique. The question of whether and to what extent a thought-object corresponds to an object outside of and independent of thought, interested Hegel only in the sense of asking under what conditions do people think like that? For Hegel, subject and object always exist in a certain, mutually constituting, more or less adequate, relation to one another. The question is not the correspondence of the subject to the object, but of the mutually constituting subject-object taken together, that is to say, the capacity of the subject-object, or the entire formation of consciousness, to withstand sceptical criticism. Under the impact of sceptical attack the subject and object will *both* change. The object changes because it is constituted by the subject, and vice versa.

And this brings us to some remarks on the main theme of the *Phenomenology*. The dynamic in the *Phenomenology*, the driver which pushes it on from one *Gestalt* to another is precisely this vulnerability to sceptical attack, and to be exact, sceptical attack from within, in its own terms. With this work Hegel introduced the novel device of 'immanent critique'. Instead of putting up a thesis and then standing to the side and pitting counter-arguments against it, testing it from a standpoint outside the object – the *Gestalt* – under examination, he enters into the *Gestalt*, adopts its way of thinking, and subjects it to a plausible internal self-criticism, and

in this way demonstrates how every one of the *Gestalten* at a certain point fails to withstand sceptical critique and collapses. Some new *Gestalt* which is proof against this line of reasoning and can withstand the type of attack which the previous *Gestalt* could not, is then able to develop. And so it goes on.

The way Hegel organized the *Phenomenology* was based on the thesis that in any formation of consciousness there would be an agreed final arbiter of truth, some standard against which sceptical attacks against any element of the whole would ultimately come up against. So each main stage in the *Phenomenology* is associated with a criterion of truth which characterizes it, and more than a thousand years of history is represented in the passage through the series of such schemes.

It is not necessary to go the whole way with Hegel on this. More importantly, it is also not necessary to confine ourselves to the grand historical stage on which this drama is played out. The fact is that in any project or concept, just one of the *Urphänomena*, to use Goethe's expression, or forms of social practice which make up a *Gestalt*, not the entire historical form of life, just one project, exhibits the same basic features of a *Gestalt*. In any project or form of social practice claims are tested against the rationale of that project. This is how the *Phenomenology* has to be read.

We have formations of consciousness, which entail a certain line of thinking, a certain set of practices which instantiate the project and correspond to the line of thinking – the self-consciousness of participants, the objectives and world view it entails – and the artefacts around which the project is organized, from specialized language, gestures and so on, to collective property, technology and so on belonging to the project and so on. Within each project there are basic criteria and associated practices through which claims are tested, which underpin sceptical challenges to the project. Whether this works on the grand historical scale that Hegel claimed for it, is an open question, but that is one of those "in the last instance" questions that mean very little. But in the course of presenting a kind of history of civilisation and history of philosophy combined, Hegel has presented a profound approach to the understanding of human life, tied up in this notion of *Gestalt* in which he took his lead from Goethe.

§7. Logic concerns the pure essentialities of the development of consciousness

So this brings us to the point where we can pose the question of the subject matter of the Logic. Hegel says that the *Logic* concerns the pure

essentialities underlying the truth of the *Gestalten* which are the subject matter of the *Phenomenology*.

> "It is in this way that I have tried to expound consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Consciousness is spirit as a concrete knowing, a knowing too, in which externality is involved; but the development of this object, like the development of all natural and spiritual life, rests solely on the nature of the pure essentialities which constitute the content of logic." (Introduction to the *Science of Logic* §10)

In short, Hegel's *Logic* bears the same relation to the projects, social practices and concepts of a *formation of consciousness* in the *Phenomenology* as ordinary Formal Logic (or logical calculus), bears to a set of *propositions* contained in a theory. It is this question of the subject matter of the Logic to which we now turn.

3. The Subject Matter of the Logic

§1. The Logic is the Logic of Formations of Consciousness

Before making a start with the Logic itself we should clarify what the Logic is about, partly because Hegel is not exactly crystal clear on the matter himself, seemingly providing contradictory suggestions on the question, and secondly because without knowing what it is that Hegel is talking about, we can still read the *Logic* as a work of literature, but not as a work of science.

Look at how Hegel defines the subject matter of the Logic in the section of the *Science of Logic* entitled "With What must Science Begin?", dealing with the beginning of the system of philosophy, following on from the Preface to the system, that is, the *Phenomenology*:

> "The beginning is *logical* in that it is to be made in the element of thought that is free and for itself, in *pure knowing*. It is *mediated* because pure knowing is the ultimate, absolute truth of *consciousness*. The phenomenology of spirit is the science of consciousness, and consciousness has for result the *Notion* of science, i.e. pure knowing. Logic, then, has for its presupposition the science of manifested spirit, which contains and demonstrates the necessity, and so the truth, of the standpoint occupied by pure knowing and of its mediation. In this science of manifested spirit the beginning is made from empirical, *sensuous* consciousness and this is *immediate* knowledge in the strict sense of the word; in that work there is discussed the significance of this immediate knowledge. Other forms of consciousness such as belief in divine truths, inner experience, knowledge through inner revelation, etc., are very ill-fitted to be quoted as examples of immediate

> knowledge as a little reflection will show. In the work just mentioned [i.e., *The Phenomenology of Spirit*] immediate consciousness is also the first and that which is immediate in the science itself, and therefore the presupposition; but in logic, the presupposition is that which has proved itself to be the result of that phenomenological consideration – the Idea as pure knowledge." (*Science of Logic* §93)

The first thing to note here: despite claims to the contrary from many of his interpreters, but also with support from Hegel himself at times, the Logic does *not* begin without presuppositions. The presupposition for the Logic is the development of philosophical consciousness – "the Idea as pure knowledge." This is a really crucial point. Without people capable of philosophical thought, you can't have a logic. See how distant this is from Kant's reliance on the existence of a Pure Reason to which all individuals have access. See how different is Hegel's idea from the idea of a Logic which stands outside and separate from its object, and is 'applied' to the object.

Secondly, and related to the point above: "the Logic is the truth of the Phenomenology." That is, Hegel has taken us through the immanent development of consciousness, its *own* internal movement, and in the end consciousness negates itself, and consequently passes over into something else, which is its truth. In this case, consciousness develops up to the point of absolute knowing, where it comes to know itself as a necessary process of development, as the work of Spirit, we might say, and consequently, its *truth* is the pure essentialities of manifest spirit, the Logic. Putting it another way, the Logic is what turns out to be the *essential phenomenology*. We will come across this type of transition later, in the Logic itself.

Thirdly, what we find here is the explanation for a maxim that we will come back to again: the claim that "'there is nothing, nothing in Heaven, or in Nature or in Mind or anywhere else which does not equally contain both immediacy and mediation." (*Science of Logic* §92) The Logic, even the very first concept of the Logic, Being, or the immediate, is mediated. As we have seen in the *Phenomenology*, the beginning of philosophy is mediated by the long drawn out process through which consciousness eventually arrives at philosophy, or at least at philosophy in its Hegelian form, "absolute knowledge." But two different processes are entailed, on the one hand, the derivation or proof of the simple concept from which the Logic will begin, which lies *outside* the Logic, and on the other hand,

the exposition of the internal development of that concept itself which is the *content* of the Logic.

Fourthly, we see that manifested spirit, of which the Logic is the truth, is a science which refers to an empirical content, manifested spirit, or consciousness. Like any other science, Hegel's *Logic* must have an empirical domain in which its claims can be exhibited and tested. The *Phenomenology* presents this empirical domain. That the narrative presented in the *Phenomenology* is an idealised or notional narrative does not take away from this fact; all sciences have as their object idealised or necessary (as opposed to contingent) forms of movement. In this sense what the Logic has to deal with is not only mediated, through the development of a science, but also immediate, in that it is given in experience.

Finally, to repeat the qualification made above. The empirical domain in which the subject matter of the Logic is to be validated is consciousness, consciousness in the extended meaning which Hegel gives to it, inclusive of thinking, social practice and culture. Hegel explains the idea of a *Gestalt* by means of a grand historical narrative, but there is no reason or value in restricting the concept of *Gestalt* to entire social formations or historical epochs. In fact, such an interpretation cannot withstand criticism, because at no time in human history to date has the entire world been embraced in a single social formation. And Hegel would not say any differently. Even in his mature system with its theory of world history, he never proposed that the whole world constitutes a single configuration or shape of consciousness. The *Weltgeist*, or "World Spirit" actually moves around, and animates developments in different countries at different times. But the domain of international relations he describes as a 'state of nature', that is to say, a field of mutually alien subjects *not* sharing a common culture or system of social practices.

So we take the *Gestalten*, which make up the object domain over which the Logic is validated, to be the concepts or 'projects' or the self-conscious systems of social practice that make up a whole formation of consciousness.

§2. The Logic is the foundation for a presuppositionless philosophy

Now the opposite thesis, that the Logic is the foundation for a presuppositionless philosophy, will be defended.

Hegel expends a lot of energy emphasizing that philosophy cannot set off from arbitrary presuppositions or axioms. Any finite science is on-

ly a part of philosophy and therefore has a beginning and consequently, finds the content of is subject matter given to it from elsewhere. But philosophy cannot enjoy such a luxury; it forms a *circle*. It is self-construing, and must generate its own beginning. Let's look at this passage:

> "Philosophy, if it would be a science, cannot 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 based on grounds 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. The understanding *determines*, and holds the determinations fixed; reason is negative and *dialectical*, because it resolves the determinations of the understanding into nothing; it is positive because it generates the universal and comprehends the particular therein." (*Science of Logic*, With What Must Science Begin?, §§8-9)

"It can be only the nature of the content itself" which determines the character of the science, namely, the *Gestalten* given in the *Phenomenology*. But no science simply abstracts its principles from empirical observation. It is still necessary to posit the principles which underlie appearances, and in the case of the *Phenomenology*, we know already Hegel's idea of the underlying dynamics at work in the *Gestalten* is internal sceptical critique of the *Gestalt*'s ultimate conception of truth.

Whether and to what extent formations of consciousness really pass away as the result of sceptical critique is something that could be called into question. But for example, when Galileo formulated the laws determining the speed at which objects rolled down an inclined plane, the laws he came up with did not correspond to the actuality in which a *multiplicity* of processes were at work which would remain unknown to physical science for some time. But Galileo got to the essence of the process and his discovery stands today as well as it did 400 years ago. The same is true of the Logic. It is not empirically abstracted from observation of *Gestalten*, but is developed according to its *own method*, which in turn rests on the idea of *immanent critique*. The usefulness or otherwise of the science which results is for us to judge.

So the Logic must be developed by beginning with an empty concept – just thought, not thought *of* something else already given, just thought – and then allowing the content to develop through the process of *immanent*

critique, critique which at each step, draws only on the concepts derived previously and drawing in nothing from outside.

This method Hegel calls dialectic. Dialectic is negative because its sceptical critique undermines and destroys the given shape of consciousness, by showing it to be self-destructive. But Hegel claims that dialectic is not only negative but also positive in that it not only negates the original proposition, showing a given concept to be "untrue," but it also brings forward a new concept which constitutes the truth of what had gone before. Thus there is a sense in which we can agree that the Logic is to be a presuppositionless science. All that is required is to determine a concept from which to begin which can be asserted, without making any presupposition and importing nothing extraneous that does not arise from the method itself.

So in a sense the claim that the Logic is an internally generated, presuppositionless science which deals only with the relations between concepts, turns out to be the same as the claim that the Logic deals with the pure essentialities of the manifested spirit exhibited in the *Phenomenology*, because of Hegel's rather idealistic claim that it is the action of sceptical criticism of the ultimate criterion of truth which generates the destruction of one formation of consciousness and its eventual replacement by another. But when we recall what Hegel means by 'formation of consciousness', the accusation of 'idealism' is not as damning as may it may be thought to be at first.

§3. The Logic studies the inner contradictions within concepts

Now at this point it is fair to ask what it means to say that a *concept* is internally contradictory or that it can be shown to be 'untrue'. Surely, in the context of logic, it is only *propositions* which can be true or untrue. Take a concept, 'prosperity' for example; how can we say that 'prosperity' is true or untrue, how can the very *concept* itself be tested against a reality?

The way Hegel deals with this depends on the following explanation that Hegel offers in connection with the concept of 'Being': "Being itself and the special sub-categories of it which follow, as well as those of logic in general, may be looked upon as definitions of the Absolute, or metaphysical definitions of God." (*Shorter Logic* §84) Think of it this way: take any concept and put it in place of *x* in the proposition "*x* is the absolute." So in the above example, we say: "Prosperity is the absolute." Now that's a proposition which can be subjected to criticism and tested against reality. This is what Hegel means by the critique of a *concept*. So to say that a

concept is *untrue* simply means that it is *relative* and not absolute, it has its limits, it is true only up to a certain point, it is not 'absolute'.

Also, it is one thing to grasp what is meant by the truth of a concept, but what is meant by the truth of a *social practice* or project? Well, the object is a *Gestalt*, which is the unity of a way of thinking, a way of life and a cultural constellation, so whichever aspect of the *Gestalt* you have in mind, the question can be reframed as whether the given shape of consciousness is self-identical. It is an open question what may cause a shape of consciousness, or project, to become internally unsustainable, but it is reasonable to suggest that it means that what people are doing corresponds to what they think they are doing and how they represent what they are doing. The untruth, or dissonance between a concept and the representations and social practices which correspond to it, is no more on one side than another. A social practice is untrue if the activity does not correspond to its self-consciousness and self-representation. So if we have a maxim like "Prosperity is absolute," then the truth of this shape of consciousness is tested out in the reality of a form of life organized around the God of Prosperity. Even in this example we can see that a vast field for social critique opens up around the concept, as soon as it is treated as something *concrete* in this way.

So a first approximation to the form of movement represented in the Logic is that Hegel puts up a judgment or a maxim, such as in the form of "*x* is absolute," and then understanding that the claim in question is not an abstract set of words, but corresponds to some concrete form of life, he subjects it to critique. Nevertheless, corresponding to the basic idea of the *Phenomenology*, which depends on the thesis that social life is intelligible, the critique of each concept is executed logically.

But first let us clear up some possible *misconceptions*. When we're talking about critique of a concept, 'Being' for example, we are not talking about the 'thought of being', or 'Being' as a subjective thought form filed away in a brain cell, and what happens to you when you think of Being, or some such thing; we would be talking about 'Being' as the essential character of a formation of consciousness. Critique of Being then means critique of the viability and vulnerability to sceptical attack, of a certain condition of existence. The brilliance of Hegel's discovery here is that he is indeed able to reproduce the character of formations of consciousness through an exposition which is entirely comprehensible as a logical critique of a series of claims for a concept as absolute truth. It's a kind of two part harmony, simultaneously logical and social critique.

§4. Avatars

Another observation. The translation of Hegel is complicated by the fact that in German all nouns bear capital initial letters, whereas in English and other European languages, the initial capital is reserved for proper names. But when Hegel is translated into English it is common for many of the abstract nouns to retain their initial capital, having the effect of endowing the abstract entities with personality. And Hegel *does* treat abstractions as if they were *personae*. It is comparable to the use of proper nouns for political parties or social groups when discussing public opinion, social climate and so on. Given that there is nothing ungrammatical when it is written in German, there was never any need for Hegel to justify the practice. It is quite consistent with Hegel's philosophy, although it is not possible to fully justify this until we have come to the Subjective Logic in our study of the Logic. But if we were to ask ourselves what are these entities which populate the pages of the Logic: Actuality, Notion, Necessity, Concept, etc., etc., then the answer is that they are formations of human consciousness nothing else; they are not actually personages, but the pure essentialities of personages. There is no Cartesian extensionless hyperspace in which concepts can exist; they occupy the same space in which human beings live.

The alternative ways of reading Hegel would be either to presume that Hegel was *deifying* abstractions in a quasi-religious sense (which does have a certain amount of truth in it) or that the practice of talking about abstractions as if they were human subjects was thoughtless or simply playfulness (which is not justified).

§5. The problem of "Moving Concepts"

Just as a great deal of misunderstanding arises from reading Hegel through the kaleidoscopic lens of a Kantian subject, so also a great deal of mischief arises from reading the Logic through the kaleidoscopic lens of a Cartesian thought-space. The usual "Introduction to Hegel" includes an exposition of Hegel's Logic as a presuppositionless philosophy; often presuppositionless to the extent that not even spirit or consciousness is presupposed. This is, as we have seen, in direct contradiction to what Hegel says in a number of key texts, about the connection between *Phenomenology* and *Logic*. Writers can believe that this claim is defensible because they do not see that anything need be presupposed in the existence of concepts, and believe that a concept can exist independently of being thought of by someone. But *where* do concepts exist? For that we

can only fall back on Descartes, to some extensionless thought-space inhabited by thought forms.

Typically the first 3 or 4 categories of the Logic are elaborated (few writers ever go further than the first 3 or 4 categories, other than by just listing them) by claiming that if the reader thinks of a certain concept – so here we are talking about a subjective act of summoning up these thought forms out of their extensionless hyperspace into the awareness of a living human being – and then contemplates them, then the concept "slides into," or "disappears into" or thought (of an individual thinker presumably) "leads itself to" or "becomes" or is "led by its own intrinsic necessity" to contemplate another concept. So we get a mixture of concepts which move and, without any distinction, the subjective attention of a thinking person which moves from one concept to another.

And all this without any consideration as to what language the thinker knows and whether in thinking of 'Being' they are an English speaker, or whether the thinker in question has ever studied philosophy, or whether they may have been a student of Husserl or Heidegger or Sartre and be familiar with a concept of 'Being' quite different from what a student of Hegel might be thinking. And then we are asked to believe that the thinker, in beginning to contemplate the word "Being," B-E-I-N-G, will be led, by necessity through the 204 concepts which constitute the *Science of Logic*, of *necessity*. If Kant is accused of putting too much store in the reliability of Pure Reason, he had nothing on this. It is unlikely that anyone who has had the first two transitions in Hegel's Logic demonstrated to them for the first time, could get further than the third on their own, simply reliant on "pure reason."

And in what space do these moving concepts move? A puzzling question for even a philosophically trained person, but to talk about how a concept *moves* without settling how it can have a location in the first place is nonsensical. Maybe what is meant by concepts moving is that they change 'shape', but it still remains to explain what would be meant by the 'shape' of a concept. And yet almost every book on the Logic will tell you that concepts move, with generally very little explanation as to what is to be understood by a concept and the space in which it exists, to be able to justify such a claim.

Now it is more plausible to say that the attention of a thinker will move from one concept to another. That is at least a plausible claim and certainly, if we think of something long enough and critically enough, we

will tend to be led to think of something else, and this kind of movement at least comes close to the kind of movement Hegel is talking about. But this is not acceptable for science, and certainly not for philosophy. We are talking about a philosophical system worked out in the wake of criticism of Descartes and Hume and Kant and Fichte. If we are going to take the *self-reported stream of consciousness* of individuals as the object for science, then we can't call it Logic and it will probably have a great deal of trouble standing up to scrutiny as a branch of psychology too. Stream of consciousness is *not* the object of Hegel's Logic.

So to reiterate, Logic is the study of the pure essentialities of shapes of consciousness, or *Gestalten*, the objects which were in turn the subject matter of the *Phenomenology*. These *Gestalten* are the unity of a way of thinking (or ideology), a way of life (or project or social practice) and a constellation of culture (i.e., language, means of production, etc.). Hegel's Logic stands in the same relation to the social practices or projects of a formation of consciousness as formal logic stands to the propositions of a formal theory.

The presuppositions of the Logic are human beings who have come to absolute knowing, that is to say, to Hegelian philosophy, understanding that they are products of and participants in the whole spiritual journey of human kind to self-knowledge, and that the truth of that journey lies in the pure essentialities of manifest spirit. The Logic is able to present itself in the form of a self-construing method of logical critique, because this historical development of shapes of consciousness is intelligible and can be explicated in its essentialities, by means of what would be in the context, reasonable arguments.

On this basis it is now possible to see why the Logic has an important place in the development of Hegel's philosophical system as a whole, and equally a place in the development of *each* of the sciences. For each science, together with its object, has developed as a part of the unfolding of those same formations of consciousness. The sciences are *themselves* projects, or *formations of consciousness* and if it is valid, the Logic ought to give us guidance on the trajectory of each of the sciences under the impact of scientific scepticism.

This brings us to a few remarks on the scope and usefulness of the Logic.

§6. The Logic concerns *real* situations, not mathematical abstractions

What is the difference between Hegel's Logic and the kind of logic which figures in mathematics or to take a less cut-and-dry contrast, the kind of logic implicit in the rules of evidence used in court proceedings?

Hegel's Logic differs from the kind of logic known to positivism and most other forms of philosophical discourse in exactly the way Hegel's understanding of concepts differs from the narrow, formal logical, mathematical conception of concept, which is closely tied to set theory and depends on the *attributes of a thing* rather than the thing itself.

In a court of law, the point is to first discover whether a particular *factual* claim is true, and in very general terms, participants will endeavour to establish an agreed or compelling basis in fact, and call upon logic to be able to determine whether a given conclusion can be drawn from those facts. Mathematics is similar, but is not troubled by the need for agreed facts, which is the job of particular sciences, being concerned only with the rules governing consistent sequences of symbolic propositions within a theory beginning from an arbitrary collection of axioms.

The point is that each of these sciences (jurisprudence and mathematics) constitute a *Gestalt*. They are methods of arriving at truth which recognise certain criteria for reasonable belief, and the scope of questions which may be asked and answers given. As a result of historical and cultural change, and changes in the ethos of the societies of which they are a part, as well as the special, historically articulated institutions of which they are a part (legal practice, universities, and so on), these criteria will *change* and be subject to revision and concretisation. It is *this* process of change which is the subject of Hegel's Logic. So there is a strong sense in which Hegel's logic is a meta-theory in relation to jurisprudence, mathematics, formal logic, natural science, or any other formalized procedure for determining the truth.

Secondly, formal or mathematical logic takes for granted the validity of putting outside of itself the facts and axioms which it uses. Formal thinking, that is to say, thinking with *forms* abstracted from their *content*, is able to do this, because like Kant, it operates with a transcendental subject in this sense. For formal thought, an entity is an x with *attributes*; in Aristotlean terms this x is called the 'subject', to which various predicates can be attributed. For modern formal thought, there is nothing left when attributes have been stripped away and logic operates simply with the di-

chotomous, Boolean logic of 'has/has not' any given attribute. But on the contrary, Hegel's logic is concerned with the *concept itself*, what it essentially *is*, and the method of considering an object from the point of view of its contingent attributes is just one, limited *Gestalt*, which is valid up to a certain point, but beyond that point it is untrue and bankrupt.

So finally, it can be seen from the above that the Logic is a metatheory of science in the sense that it is concerned with the logic entailed in how sciences change what they take to be given without presupposition and what kind of questions and answers they admit.

This passage from the *Science of Logic* expresses something of this kind which is important about the Logic:

> "It is only after profounder acquaintance with the other sciences that logic ceases to be for subjective spirit a merely abstract universal and reveals itself as the universal which embraces within itself the wealth of the particular – just as the same proverb, in the mouth of a youth who understands it quite well, does not possess the wide range of meaning which it has in the mind of a man with the experience of a lifetime behind him, for whom the meaning is expressed in all its power. Thus the value of logic is only apprehended when it is preceded by experience of the sciences; it then displays itself to mind as the universal truth, not as a *particular knowledge alongside* other matters and realities, but as the essential being of all these latter." (*Science of Logic* §71)

Or, as he put in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*: "In this treatise we take for granted the scientific procedure of philosophy, which has been set forth in the philosophic logic." (§2ad.)

Also, it is not just science. The Logic deals with the Logic underlying the trajectory of any project or social practice that is in some way organized around a shared conception of truth and shared aims, and that's a very wide domain.

Very broadly speaking, Hegel's logic differs from formal logic in that it deals with genuinely complex situations, situations which cannot be circumscribed, situations where the constitution of the situation itself is part of the problem, where it is impossible to draw a line between problem and solution, between the object of study and the subject of study, in other words, all genuinely human problems, as opposed to abstract, analytically impoverished, formal, in-group problems.

4. The three divisions of the Logic: Being, Essence & Notion

After this long preamble, let us now turn to the Logic itself, but rather than simply starting from the beginning and working line by line through to the end, it is best to read Hegel by beginning with the whole triadic structure of the book, and then moving inwards to follow the logical argument step by step only once the overall structure is clear.

The Logic is made up of three sections: The Doctrine of Being, the Doctrine of Essence and the Doctrine of the Notion. Let's start with Being.

§1. Being is the concept in-itself, not yet conscious of itself

Firstly, where necessary we should put out of our minds for the moment, any preconceptions we may have about the meaning of the concept of 'Being', and any other of the concepts we will come to in turn, which we may have learnt from the Phenomenologists or Existentialists. The subject matter of these theories is quite different from that of Hegel's Logic and it can be very confusing if you try to follow Hegel's argument with the concepts of Marxism or Phenomenology or Existentialism in mind. It is another one of those *kaleidoscopic lenses* which just cause confusion.

In the days when Hegel became a professor, professors of philosophy were required to present a Logic, a Metaphysics and a Philosophy of Nature. 'Ontology', the study of Being, theories about the kinds of thing which can exist and the nature of existence, normally falls under Metaphysics. The series of lectures that Hegel developed for his Ontology became what we now know as his 'Doctrine of Being', the first part of the Logic. This illustrates the observation that Hegel replaced Ontology with Logic.

From what we have already said we know that Hegel sees that the Logic arises as the truth of the *Phenomenology*, and that the Logic expresses the pure essentialities of the phenomenology, that is, the truth of manifest spirit. Further, we know that for the Logic he is looking for a concept which presupposes nothing outside of itself, a concept which imports no content from outside, rests upon no axioms. One can't help but be reminded of Descartes' search for a proposition whose truth and certainty rests on nothing else, and is in that same sense, presupposition-

less. But Hegel's solution is different because he has already, in the *Phenomenology*, elaborated the nature of consciousness, so he does not look for his starting point in inward, personal contemplation, but rather in the nature of manifest spirit.

The outcome of Hegel's search for a starting point for his philosophy is Ontology, but instead of beginning with a list of the various kinds of things which can be deemed to be, he conducted a logical critique of the *concept of Being* itself, and with a dialectical unfolding of the contents of the concept of Being.

I should mention here as an aside that all Hegel's major works have the same structure: he identifies the simple concept or notion which marks the unconditioned starting point for the given science, and then he applies the method, the model for which is given in the Logic, in order to elaborate what is implicit in the given concept; he develops "the peculiar internal development of the thing itself."

In the case of the Philosophy of Nature, he begins from the concept of space, and claims to unfold the philosophy of Nature through critique of the concept of Space. The truth of Nature is *Spirit*, which appears in the form of Soul, the starting point of the Subjective Spirit. The science of the Soul for Hegel is Anthropology, then Phenomenology, then Psychology. The truth of Subjective Spirit is Right. The Philosophy of Right, likewise, takes the form of a logical critique of the concept of *Right*. This is how Hegel conceives of philosophy as a "circle of circles."

So, the Logic begins with a critique of Being, what is contained in the concept of 'Being'. The Logic is really the study of concepts; the Concept is the truth of Being, whilst Being is the Concept still 'in itself'. The Third Book of the Logic is the Doctrine of the Notion ('Notion' or 'Concept' are the same thing), that is, the Concept *for* itself. But in the Doctrine of Being, the Concept is still just 'in itself'.

This concept of 'in itself' is derived from Kantian philosophy, meaning what the thing is independently of and prior to our knowledge of it. We are talking about shapes of consciousness, so we mean the concept under conditions where the shape of conscious has not *yet* unfolded and become conscious of itself. The "yet" implies of course that should the shape of conscious which is "in itself" further develop, then it may become *self-conscious*. But it is not *yet* self-conscious.

So we have something possibly contradictory here: a shape of consciousness which is not consciousness of itself, but may become so. So

we must have here an *observer* perspective, because if we are talking about a shape of consciousness which is not self-conscious, then the only terms we have in order to describe it are observer terms.

But what does it amount to? It is an idea or a form of social practice or a project which cannot yet even be described as emergent. People are acting in a certain way, but they are not conscious of acting in any such particular way. So we have for example, people who have been kicked off their land and have found a living by selling their labour by the hour, but they still think of themselves as peasants who may have fallen on hard times perhaps, but they have no concept of themselves as proletarians, for example.

So this is what Being is, and we will see presently that Hegel is able to demonstrate the nature of Being by a critique of the concept of Being.

If there is to be some thing amidst the infinite coming and going, the chaos of existence, the simplest actual thing that can be is a Quality, something that persists amidst change. And if we ask what it is that changes while it remains of the same quality, what changes when the thing still remains what it is, then this is what we call Quantity. But a thing cannot indefinitely undergo quantitative change and remain still what it is, retain the same quality; at some point, a quantitative change amounts to a change in Quality, and this Quantitative change which amounts to a Qualitative change, the unity of Quality and Quantity, we call the Measure of the thing.

Thus there are three grades of Being: Quality, Quantity and Measure. We apply these categories to things that we regard as objects, the business of the positivist sociologist, the observer. Even a participant in a not yet emergent social change or social group, has to play the role of sociologist to be conscious of it.

So unlike with Kant, the thing-in-itself is not existent in some yonder, beyond the limits of knowledge, but rather is something which is *not yet* self-conscious. There is no hard line between appearance and the thing-in-itself. What is in-itself today, may make its appearance tomorrow. What the empirical sociologist describes today, may speak for itself tomorrow. Like what Betty Friedan called "the problem that has no name."

So that's Being, existence which is *in itself*, not yet self-conscious. We will see below how Hegel goes about demonstrating the dynamics of a movement which is in itself, through critique of the concept of Being.

§2. Essence is reflection

Next we come to the Doctrine of Essence. Essence for Hegel is not quite what it means for other people. When feminists talk about "essentialism" for example, meaning believing that women differ from men because of what is in their biological nature, or when the ancient philosophers debated what was the "essence" of this or that thing as opposed to what was contingent or inessential. For Hegel, Essence is this process of "peeling the layers off the onion," of searching for what is behind appearance, of probing reality, but in no way did Hegel think that there was some fixed end point to that process; Essence is just that *process* of probing the in-itself and bringing to light what was behind.

Essence is reflection. So if we have something going on in the world, maybe or maybe not, some emergent project, some emergent new form of social practice, or some new thought that is doing the rounds, maybe not yet corresponding to any apparent change in social practice, some new art form, some detectable change in fashion, then this may come to light in terms of meaningless observations, measurement of quantity and quality, but people try to make sense of it, people reflect on it. And this is what we're interested in.

When people reflect on things, they do so only with the aid of what they already know. So reflection is a good term. In German, Essence is *Wesen*, meaning "the was." It is Being now, but reflected in the mirror of old concepts. It's like what Marx was talking about in the "Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte":

> "The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language." (*18th Brumaire*, I)

So Essence is a whole process, which begins with the simplest kind of reflection on quantitative and qualitative changes, the discovery of difference and eventually leads up to a new concept, an adequate concept befitting a unique form of social practice. The final emergence of the new concept is a kind of leap; it can't be given by any kind of formula because the notion arises out of this process of reflecting what is new in an *old mirror*. But Hegel outlines the Logical stages through which the genesis of

a new concept can go, broadly a series of counterposed propositions, a contradictory struggle of Fors and Againsts, an 'on the one hand and on the other hand'. In the course of its genesis, the new phenomenon, if such it proves to be, penetrates and sheds light on everything else, every other aspect of life, summoning it up for an opinion on the matter.

The grades of Essence are as follows.

Firstly, we have Reflection, or Reflection into Self. The process of Reflection is described as the dialectic of Matter and Form. This means that at first a quantitative-qualitative change which oversteps the bounds of Measure and announces itself as a new Thing; the question is: is this a new Form of the same material or a completely new kind of material? Are the daily demonstrations in Belgrade just further expressions of discontent or is this an organized campaign in preparation for a coup?

At bottom, Form and Matter are the same thing. As a form of self-consciousness this is the dilemma as to whether you are just doing the same old thing in a new way, or whether this is a new thing showing itself in the shape of an old thing. The idea of a matter is a substrate that underlies different forms; wherever you propose a different *kind* of matter, it can be reduced to the same old matter in a different form. "Matter" is just an abstraction.

The second division of Essence is Appearance. Appearance is the dialectic of Form and Content. This can be seen as the struggle of the new content to find a form adequate to itself; it is manifested in the succession of a whole series of forms, each bringing forward new content and ultimately proving to be inadequate to its content.

The third division of Essence is Actuality, which is the dialectic of Cause and Effect. The entity arises as the effect of something, but then it is also in its turn, the cause of things. Each effect is also a cause, just as much as every cause is also an effect. As the cause-effect chain extends out everywhere in all directions until it feeds back on itself, this culminates in the notion of Reciprocity, that everything together forms a complex of mutually causing effects all inseparable from one another. Simple propositions turn out to have ramifications when they come under criticism, simple proposals become concretized and a new concept becomes actualized. But still remains a form of reflection, and even the infinite network of cause and effect, and the increasing adequacy of form and content, do not yet constitute a notion of what it is.

This is the process of a new type of self-consciousness struggling to find itself, so to speak, still testing out all the old categories, trying to find a fit. The process of genesis is always the struggle between opposing propositions, like Empiricism and Rationalism, two opposite currents in the history of philosophy, but although their struggle is characteristic of just certain periods of history, it never goes away; to this very day a new problem in science will find itself rationalist and its empiricist proponents. The struggle between Empiricism and Rationalism was overtaken by the struggle between Dogmatism and Scepticism, which moves into the limelight. That's the nature of Essence: a series of oppositions which persist, but as one moves into the limelight it pushes others to backstage. It is the genesis of a Notion out of its abstract Being; it is the truth of Being; it is what is essential in the coming-and-going of Being, Being stripped of what is inessential.

§3. The Notion is the concept conscious of itself

The third part of the Logic is the Doctrine of the Notion. Notion is a translation of the German word *Begriff* which is also translated as 'concept'.

As an aside, we should take notice of how Hegel uses the word 'abstract'. By 'abstract' Hegel means undeveloped, lacking in connections with other things, poor in content, formal and so on, as opposed to 'concrete', which means mature, developed, having many nuances and connections with other concepts, rich in content. He does *not* use the words abstract and concrete to indicate something like the difference between mental and material, or any such thing.

The Doctrine of the Notion begins with an *abstract* notion, and the process of the Notion is that it gets more and more *concrete*.

Think of the Notion as a new idea, like at some point in 1968, somewhere in the US, a woman reflecting on the relation between the position of women and the position of Black people, coined the word 'sexism'. This was a new idea, in everything that had gone before since people like Mary Wollstonecraft talked about the impact of gender roles on women in the 18th century, this idea had been in gestation, but it hadn't quite crystallized. Or take Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity; when Einstein proposed it in 1905, it was a complete break from anything that had been talked of before, but it also resolved a heap of problems that physicists had been facing up till then. So these are examples of an abstract Notion: projects, simple ideas that correspond to a

new shape of consciousness, a new form of social practice along with its representations and self-consciousness.

There is not a gradual shaping of this new abstract Notion in Essence; it comes as a complete break. It is like the judgment of Solomon, settling the argument with something that really seems to come from left field. It is a breakthrough, a new connection, which launches a new science, out of the confusion that preceded it.

The Notion is the unity of Being and Essence, because it makes sense of the original observations, the facts of the matter, as well as all the disputes and alternative explanations. In that sense it is a negation of the negation, and immediate perception is reconstructed on the basis of the new conception.

The Notion is also the truth of Essence, in that it is what emerges as the final conclusion which settles the series of disputes which make up Essence. The Notion, the *concept* of the thing, comes closer to what would normally be meant by the 'essence of a thing'; Hegel uses the word 'essence' for the whole process, and the truth of that process of Essence, he calls the Notion.

Being and Essence, which are together what Hegel calls 'The Objective Logic', make up the *genesis* of the 'Subjective Logic', which is the Doctrine of the Notion.

The first section of the Notion is Subjectivity, or the Subject. And here for the first time we get a glimpse of Hegel's conception of the subject: it is not an individual person in any sense at all, but a simple element of consciousness arising from social practices which implicate the whole community, reflected in language, the whole social division of labour and so on.

In a sense, for Hegel, there is only *one* concept. But that *one* concept, the Absolute Idea, is only the outcome of a whole, long-drawn-out historical process, a process in which different individual concepts are posited at first as abstract notions, and then enter into a process of concretisation in which they merge with everything else, take on all the implications of their own existence. The Absolute Idea, which is the final product, is the result of the mutual concretisation of all the abstract notions, the objectification of each one on every other.

In this conception, issues come up about Hegel having a master narrative, about totalising everything, and of practicing a kind of philosophical colonialism. To get Hegel's whole system, then you do have

to push this idea through to the extreme so you get the Absolute Idea externalizing itself as Nature and Spirit proving to be the truth of Nature and so on, all of which is a kind of philosophical theology. But we can get all we need out of Hegel's Logic without swallowing the Absolute Idea; the Absolute Idea can be taken as a kind of hypothetical end point, a kind of Utopia which can be used as a signpost, but should not be taken as something existent.

The first section of the Notion, the Subject, is very complex and very important. Think of it for the moment in terms of the pure essentialities of a single *unit* or 'molecule' of a shape of consciousness.

The structure of the Subject is Individual-Universal-Particular, which are referred to as *moments* of the Notion. That is, the subject entails a specific, all-sided relation between the consciousness of finite, mortal *individuals*, the *particular* forms of on-going activity and social relations entailed in the relevant social practice, and the *universal*, eternal products through which the Subject is represented.

The divisions of the Subject are the Notion, the Judgment (which is a connection between two moments) and the Syllogism (in which a judgment is mediated by one of the three moments).

The process of the Doctrine of the Notion is the abstract notion becoming more and more concrete. This process of concretisation takes place through *objectification* of subjectivity, that is, through the subject-object relation. The first thing to grasp about the Object, which is the second division of the Doctrine of the Notion, is that the Object may be other subjects, subjects which are objects in relation to the Subject or subjects which have become thoroughly objectified. Objectification is not limited to the construction of material objects or texts; it's a bit like 'mainstreaming', or being institutionalized. The process of development of the Subject is a striving to transform the Object according to its own image, but in the process the Subject itself is changed and in the process of objectification becomes a part of the living whole of the community.

The subject-object relation goes through three stages, the *mechanical* relation in which the subject and object are indifferent to one another and impact one another externally, the *chemical* relation, in which there is an affinity between subject and object, and the object presents itself as processes rather than things. The third division of the Object is *Teleology* (or Organism), where the subject-object relation becomes a life process in which each is to the other both a means and an end.

The unity of Subject and Object, the third and last grade of the Doctrine of the Notion, is the Idea. The Idea can be understood as the whole community as an intelligible whole, it is the summation of the pure essentialities of a complete historical form of life. It is the logical representation of Spirit, or of the development and life of an *entire community*, in the form of a concrete concept.

Again, it is not necessary to swallow this idea whole. If you don't accept that a community, at any stage in history whatsoever, can be encompassed in the single concept, then this doesn't invalidate the whole of the Logic, of which the Absolute Idea is the end point.

That in brief summary is the series of concepts making up the Logic. To complete this initial review, let us make a couple of points of overview before we start going through these concepts one step at a time.

§4. Being and Essence constitute the genesis of the Notion

The first point to consider is the difference between the two "Volumes" of the Logic: Objective Logic – Being and Essence, and the Subjective Logic. The Objective Logic is the genesis of the Subjective Logic, genesis in the sense of being the process leading to the birth of the Notion. So the Objective Logic logically precedes the Subjective Logic, it is the objective (i.e., not self-conscious) process which precedes the emergence of the Notion as a self-conscious abstract notion, its prehistory. On the other hand, the Subjective Logic is the process of development of the Subject itself, that is, its successive concretisation, beginning from the first simple, undeveloped embryo of a new science or social movement or project or whatever.

So we should take note here of what each of the two "volumes" correspond to in Hegel's conception of science and history. Let us take the *Philosophy of Right* as an example. The concept of Right is here the Notion of the science, corresponding to the starting point of the Subjective Logic, and it is from the Notion of the science, namely, Right, that the science makes its beginning. The *Philosophy of Right* then corresponds to the Doctrine of the Notion. Hegel makes the key distinction by saying that in the *Philosophy of Right*, he is concerned with "the peculiar internal development" of Right, and this means that he "must develop the idea [of Right], which is the reason of an object, out of the conception." So the *Philosophy of Right* is not constructed as a history of right, either positive or idealised; once the concept of Right has come into the world and implanted itself as the resolution of a range of pre-existing conflicts and

conditions, then its future course is an unfolding of what is to be *found in the conception itself*.

The three books of the Logic each constitute a distinct science – Ontology, the science of Being; Essence, the science of Reflection; and the science of the Concept. Each begins with a simple, abstract concept and unfolds the content from that conception.

This *unfolding* of what is in a conception, is quite distinct from the process of *genesis* which led up to the creative leap in which the conception is born. Once the situation has produced a conception, it is relatively unimportant how it came about. So this is a very important corrective to the conception of Hegel as an historical thinker. Hegel did not commit the genetic fallacy. It is possible to understand the various conflicting forces which lay behind a thing coming into being, but the scientific study of *the thing itself* means to grasp it as a *concept* (which a study of its historical origins contributes to but is not equal to) and then to determine what follows from, or unfolds from the concept.

So the starting point of a science is the Notion which forms the subject of the science, not Being. This is worth mentioning because there is a widespread fallacy about the relation between Marx's *Capital* and Hegel's *Logic*. Some writers have put *Capital* up against the *Logic*, and in an effort to match them, and start by equating the commodity relation with Being, on the basis that the commodity relation is the "simplest relation" or on the basis that the commodity relation is immediate. But the first thing to be done in a science, according to Hegel (and Marx followed Hegel in this), is to form a *Notion of the subject*, the simplest possible relation whose *unfolding* produces the relevant science. In the case of *Capital*, this abstract notion, the *germ* of capital, is the commodity relation. In the case of the *Philosophy of Right*, it was the relation of Abstract Right, that is *private property*. The problem of the *origins* of value or of the commodity relation is a different question, and Marx demonstrates his familiarity with the Doctrine of Essence in the third section of Chapter One, where the money-form is shown to emerge out of a series of relations constituting historically articulated resolutions of the problem of realizing an expanded division of labour.

The Objective Logic and the Subjective Logic *both* begin from a kind of simplicity. In the case of the Objective Logic, the simple starting point is *unreflective immediacy*, which immediately gives way to a new immediacy. In the case of the Subjective Logic, the simple starting point is an idea, an

abstract concept, a relation which is the outcome of a long process of gestation but remains from beginning to end the subject of the science. The science is not mindless of externalities, and in trying to understand the necessity of the thing, the writer will be mindful of all the relevant events, relations and so on, but these relations go to forming a more and more concrete conception of the thing. In the case of studying the history of emergence of a thing, the point is to learn from the mistakes and conflicts and false starts of the past in order to arrive at a simple and clear concept of the thing which is to form the starting point of the science. This will entail, probably, sifting through a mass of documentary material and critically working over it to arrive at the simple starting point from which it can all be reconstructed.

§5. Each division has a distinct form of movement or development

Each of the three books of the Logic constitute a self-standing science, beginning with an abstract concept, and unfolding what is contained in that notion. The three sciences are the science of being, the science of reflection and the science of the concept. Each of these three sciences manifest a distinct form of movement.

In Being, the form of movement is *seriality*. That is, a concept passes away and has no more validity, it is then replaced by another, which in turn passes away. It's just one damn thing after another, a transition from one to the next to the next.

In Essence, in the passage from one relation to another, the former relation does not pass away but remains, although pushed to the background, so the form of movement is *diversity*.

In the Notion, the movement is *development*, with each new relation incorporated into the concept and all the former relations merged with it.

Hegel puts it this way in the *Shorter Logic*:

> "The onward movement of the notion is no longer either a transition into, or a reflection on something else, but **Development.** For in the notion, the elements distinguished are without more ado at the same time declared to be identical with one another and with the whole, and the specific character of each is a free being of the whole notion.
>
> "Transition into something else is the dialectical process within the range of Being: reflection (bringing something else into light), in the range of Essence. The movement of the Notion is development: by which that only is explicit which is already implicitly present." (*Shorter Logic* §161)

In each Book, there are different forms of *reference* between the opposites. Hegel describes the difference between Essence and Being thus:

> "In the sphere of Essence one category does not pass into another, but **refers** to another merely. In Being, the form of reference is purely due to our reflection on what takes place: but it is the special and proper characteristic of Essence. In the sphere of Being, when somewhat becomes another, the somewhat has vanished. Not so in Essence: here there is no real other, but only **diversity**, reference of the one to ***its*** other. The transition of Essence is therefore at the same time no transition: for in the passage of different into different, the different does not vanish: the different terms remain in their relation.
> ...
> "In the sphere of Being the reference of one term to another is only implicit; in Essence on the contrary it is explicit. And this in general is the distinction between the forms of Being and Essence: in Being everything is immediate, in Essence everything is relative." (*Shorter Logic* §111n)

5. The Doctrine of Being, or Ontology

§1. "Being is the Absolute" marks the beginning of Philosophy

Pure Being for Hegel is the pure essentiality expressing the internal dynamics of a shape of consciousness which is as yet quite unself-conscious, unaware of itself. To grasp this as an object in order to determine its internal dynamics, Hegel must *enter into it* so as to be able to execute an immanent critique. But how can he do this if Pure Being represents such a shape of consciousness, standing at the very beginning of the development of self-consciousness? The history of philosophy provides the key to this kind of critique.

Philosophy is a part of a formation of consciousness which produces concepts which are responsive to logical critique as well as voicing a conception of the Absolute proper to the given shape of consciousness. So the history of philosophy manifests just the series of concepts which he required for the Logic. However, history is subject to contingencies and externalities and even if a social formation exactly corresponded to this pure essentiality, no real philosopher is going to be able to perfectly express the spirit of their times. But Logic is not an empirical science. Provided we are clear on the object we are considering, we can conduct a kind of thought experiment to determine a series of categories corresponding to an idealised history of philosophy.

This paragraph from the Doctrine of Being in the *Shorter Logic* is relevant to us here:

> "In the history of philosophy the different stages of the logical idea assume the shape of successive systems, each based on a particular definition of the Absolute. As the logical Idea is seen to unfold itself in a process from the abstract to the concrete, so in the history of philosophy the earliest systems are the most abstract, and thus at the same time the poorest. The relation too of the earlier to the later systems of philosophy is much like the relation of the corresponding stages of the logical Idea: in other words, the earlier are preserved in the later: but subordinated and submerged. This is the true meaning of a much misunderstood phenomenon in the history of philosophy – the refutation of one system by another, of an earlier by a later. Most commonly the refutation is taken in a purely negative sense to mean that the system refuted has ceased to count for anything, has been set aside and done for. Were it so, the history of philosophy would be, of all studies, most saddening, displaying, as it does, the refutation of every system which time has brought forth. Now although it may be admitted that every philosophy has been refuted, it must be in an equal degree maintained that no philosophy has been refuted. And that in two ways. For first, every philosophy that deserves the name always embodies the Idea: and secondly, every system represents one particular factor or particular stage in the evolution of the Idea. The refutation of a philosophy, therefore, only means that its barriers are crossed, and its special principle reduced to a factor in the completer principle that follows.
>
> "Thus the history of philosophy, in its true meaning, deals not with a past, but with an eternal and veritable present: and, in its results, resembles not a museum of the aberrations of the human intellect, but a Pantheon of godlike figures. These figures of gods are the various stages of the Idea, as they come forward one after another in dialectical development.
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> "To the historian of philosophy it belongs to point out more precisely how far the gradual evolution of his theme coincides with, or swerves from, the dialectical unfolding of the pure logical Idea. It is sufficient to mention here, that logic begins where the proper history of philosophy begins. Philosophy began in the Eleatic school, especially with Parmenides. Parmenides, who conceives the absolute as Being, says that 'Being alone is and Nothing is not'. Such was the true starting point of philosophy, which is always knowledge by thought: and here for the first time we find pure thought seized and made an object to itself." (*Shorter Logic* §86n)

Now of course we cannot have the same understanding of Being as did Parmenides, and that is not really the point. We can determine the concept of Pure Being precisely in the sense *necessary* to make the starting point of philosophy, a concept which requires a thinker capable of philosophical thought, to think rigorously the first concept of philosophy which is utterly abstract in the sense that it contains nothing introduced from outside.

So what Hegel needs is not so much a real history as an *idealised* history. But in the same sense as any science sets out to determine the *necessary* movement, logic goes hand in hand with empirical observation and thought experiment, as Hegel explained in the foregoing quote.

§2. Being, Nothing and Determinate Being

The concept of Pure Being we need, then, is that concept which expresses (that something) *is*, without any qualification, without attributing any quality, any here and now, just "pure being," not to be anything, just to be. So in the terms of philosophy we are looking for the conception of the Absolute as just Being, not being anything in particular, just Being. A *capacity for philosophical thought* is required for this concept, because it is the ultimate abstraction, and the capacity for abstraction presupposes a certain development of society, so in that sense there is a presupposition. But the concept which forms the beginning of the Logic, and consequently, forms the subject matter of the Logic, is the concept of being utterly indeterminate

After having demonstrated that a beginning can not be made by the thought *of* anything, be that intuition or God or certainty or whatever, Hegel explains:

> "The foregoing shows quite clearly the reason why the beginning cannot be made with anything concrete, anything containing a relation *within itself*. For such presupposes an internal process of mediation and transition of which the concrete, now become simple, would be the result. But the beginning ought not itself to be already a first *and* an other; for anything which is in its own self a first *and* an other implies that an advance has already been made. Consequently, that which constitutes the beginning, the beginning itself, is to be taken as something unanalysable, taken in its simple, unfilled immediacy, and therefore *as being,* as the completely empty being." (*Science of Logic* §114)

So the Logic begins with the claim that "Being is Absolute." But one can no sooner consider this claim, and clarify just what is meant by this concept, Being, namely that it is utterly without determination, and that

one is asked to think an empty concept, than we are driven to the realisation that *Being is Nothing*. This is the first and classic example of this process of sceptical critique. If Being is the Absolute, then the Absolute is Nothing.

Hegel claims that philosophy proper began with Parmenides. Thales, who was alive about 140 years before Parmenides, could claim that honour, but the very early philosophers of that time were still tied up with conceptions which are not yet scientific, ideas about the priority of Earth, Fire, Water or Air, and so on. But philosophy proper began with Parmenides. According to Parmenides (c. 500 BCE):

> "'Thought, and that on account of which thought is, are the same. For not without that which is, in which it expresses itself, wilt thou find Thought, seeing that it is nothing and will be nothing outside of that which is.' [and Hegel comments] That is the main point. Thought produces itself, and what is produced is a Thought. Thought is thus identical with Being, for there is nothing beside Being, this great affirmation." (*History of Philosophy*, D1)

And according to Hegel, Being passes over to Nothing. Hegel associates the claim that God is Nothing with Buddhism. In his history of philosophy he can't really pin a philosophy of Nothing on Pythagorus, for whom the Absolute was the *One*, or any Greek philosopher of the appropriate time. So the history of Greek philosophy did not quite follow the sequence suggested in the Doctrine of Being.

However, if the truth of Being is Nothing, and as Heraclitus showed Nothing is something, then the destruction of Being has led in fact to something, and this insight can be summed up in the maxim: "Everything is Becoming" or "Becoming is Absolute": Here is how Hegel describes Heraclitus, drawing on the reports of Aristotle:

> "For Heraclitus says: 'Everything is in a state of flux; nothing subsists nor does it ever remain the same'. And Plato further says of Heraclitus: 'He compares things to the current of a river: no one can go twice into the same stream', for it flows on and other water is disturbed. Aristotle tells us that his successors even said 'it could not once be entered', for it changed directly; what is, is not again. Aristotle goes on to say that Heraclitus declares that 'there is only one that remains, and from out of this all else is formed; all except this one is not enduring'. This universal principle is better characterized as *Becoming*, the truth of Being." (*History of Philosophy*, D1)

But if Becoming is absolute, *something* must be becoming, so everything is a determinate being, not some abstraction or just a flow, but a

determinate being, or "Determinate Being is Absolute," or: "Everything is *some* thing."

> "Being is being, and nothing is nothing, only in their contradistinction from each other; but in their truth, in their unity, they have vanished as these determinations and are now something else. Being and nothing are the same; *but just because they are the same they are no longer being and nothing,* but now have a different significance. In becoming they were coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be; in determinate being, a differently determined unity, they are again differently determined moments." (*Science of Logic* §187)

So here we have the succession of the first four concepts of the Logic: Being, Nothing, Becoming, Determinate Being.

Determinate Being (or Being something) turns out to be Quality, and Quality constitutes the first main subdivision of the Doctrine of Being.

I will not continue the theme of naming the different philosophers who Hegel associates with the different categories of the Logic, because the connection gets more and more tenuous as the narrative goes on. Really, Hegel has abstracted the logic from a study of a large number of projects, or concepts, and the real history of philosophy bears only a distant relation to the course of the Logic from here on.

§3. Quality, Quantity and Measure

These first moments of the Logic: Being, Nothing, Becoming and Determinate Being belong to the category of Quality:

> "Quality may be described as the determinate mode immediate and identical with Being – as distinguished from Quantity (to come afterwards), which, although a mode of Being, is no longer immediately identical with Being, but a mode indifferent and external to it. A something is what it is in virtue of its quality, and losing its quality it ceases to be what it is." (*Shorter Logic* §90n)

So what we have to do with here is the dialectic of Quantity and Quality, which involves the Limit and takes us to the category of Measure.

Everything is in perpetual change; but through all this change don't we also have constancy? or is this constancy an illusion? Hegel says that an existent thing is first of all a Quality. If that Quality of a thing changes, then the thing is no longer the same, a 'qualitative' change has taken place.

The Limit is the first conception of this boundary between something being what it is or not. "Through the limit something is what it is, and in the limit it has its quality," (*Science of Logic* §246) but this limit is the *principle* of the thing, which it therefore shares with the other thing, the negation of the negation of the limit. So through the limit they share, two things show themselves to be *in principle* one and the same.

Things can change, and yet we say that they remain what they are, just more or less of what they were before and remain so. This aspect of a thing which can change, but does not thereby constitute a change in its substratum, we call *Quantity*. So for example, if we are considering whether or not something is a fish, we might consider all sorts of predicates which can be attributed to the thing, such as size, shape, colour, weight, location and so on, and no matter how things may vary, they would not cause us to deny or confirm that we have a fish; it would just be a large fish, or a round fish, or whatever. All these attributes are then Quantities. On the other hand, there may be predicates which can be attributed to the thing such that if they are changed then this will cause us to deny that we have a fish. Qualities like having scales, gills, a backbone, and so on, are not things which an animal can have more or less of; take away a fish's gills and it would no longer be the same kind of animal.

Now there are limits to this distinction between Quantity and Quality. We find that if we vary the size of something, or the degree of its adaptation to breathing air, beyond a certain point, then what were formerly seen as solely variations in Quantity and not touching the very nature of the thing itself, become transformed into Qualitative changes, and this is the famous transformation of Quantity into Quality.

Measure is defined as the unity of Quantity and Quality: something remains what it is up to a certain Measure, but beyond that Quantity becomes Quality; that is the measure of a thing.

A social practice of some kind may come to notice, for example, universities have observed over a period of time that more and more students do more and more paid employment. Surely beyond a certain point being a (full-time) university student loses the meaning it used to have and universities have to start redesigning their courses, their campus services, their arrangements for contact with staff and so on. But some *Measure* is needed before a decision is made to radically reconceive the idea of the university. The limit is key. How can a 'student', as opposed to a 'worker doing part-time study', be defined? What should be counted?

These questions of measure have to be answered before we can start to think about whether something needs to be done and what.

Without going into the vast passages on natural science and mathematics in this part of the Logic, there are a couple of critiques which have eternal relevance.

The first of these is Hegel's critique of the Newtonian concept of *force*. He points out that the discovery of so-called new forces, was nothing more than a reduction of the reality of a thing to that of another thing as if this solved some problem. This is what Hegel calls something 'having its being in another'. Like for example explaining the rise in the population of the cities by reference to the attractive force of the cities. This explains nothing. He also critiques the popular notion of *attraction and repulsion*; these are simply *forms of motion* constituted by acceleration towards a point, and to define a force – and centrifugal force is the classic example for this, universally recognised as an illusion – is to explain away that acceleration, is a non-resolution of the problem.

A modern day example of this positivistic pseudo-science would be Francis Fukuyama's discovery of a 'drive to recognition', supposedly located in the human soul which drives people to do all sorts of things in search of 'recognition'. All the Freudian inventions come under the same rubric.

§4. In the sphere of Being it's just one damn thing after another

So, in summary, the Doctrine of Being can only go as far as sorting objects according to their attributes. This is because in the Doctrine of Being we have an observer perspective, there is no self-consciousness in the formation of the object. Attributes are *inessential* however; subjects may take or leave attributes and still be what they were. As far as we can go is Measure; that is to say, for any given object, we have its measure, between this and that size, this or that colour, to be found in the following parts of the world, and so on and so forth. This is the measure of things and it is as far as we can go with Being. To go beyond this requires some reflection: what are the essential features as opposed to the inessential features? what is real and what is only apparent? what is in the eye of the beholder and what is genuinely objective? In the Doctrine of Being, prior to and independently of reflection, we cannot answer these questions. This is the stuff of opinion polls, sociological surveys and pseudo-scientific quantitative research. Science which never gets to the *essence* of

the thing, science which is never able to grasp the thing immanently, in its own terms.

That is why in the sphere of Being, it's always just one damn thing after another. You can take an opinion poll every day, and all you get is the Government's approval rating for today, the next day, the next day, and so on. Just one damn thing after another. To get any more than that, you have to have some theory about what is going on, and that is not given in your "observations," in your Qualities and Quantities.

Working in the sphere of Being, *the point is* lack of reflection, we strive to be objective and to *not* introduce our preconceptions into measurements. But of course that is always asking the impossible, Quantities and Qualities are always theory-laden, and that takes us to the Doctrine of Essence.

In terms of shapes of consciousness, in the sphere of Being we are talking about social practices and forms of representation and lines of thought which are happening, but they are happening under obsolete headings or under yet-to-be-coined names, so to speak. People are just trying to manage their lives, and have no thought of (for example) the nature of full-time university study or the reasons for its demise.

6. The Doctrine of Essence: Mediation or the Truth of Being

§1. Identity, difference, diversity, opposition, contradiction and ground

Hegel says that the Doctrine of Essence is the most difficult part of the Logic; it could be argued that in fact the Third Book is more difficult, but the Second Book is the most enjoyable and everyone will be able to relate this part of the Logic to real issues in social life. You will also find that the relations found here are recapitulated at a later stage.

Essence is about a new shape of consciousness or form of social practice becoming self-conscious. It is all about those phases in the emergence of a social movement when people have not yet quite figured out who they are, still searching for identity. What is given in the sphere of Being is just as it is, but with more and more reflection, diversity comes to light, contradictory explanations present themselves, responses to the situation repeatedly prove unrealistic or self-defeating, and are shown to have been based on wrong conceptions of the situation. Es-

sence is to do with the whole range of logical forms that are tested out during this complex and contradictory process of an emergent form of social practice arriving at an adequate conception of itself.

The very first moments of Essence, called the moments of Reflection, are maxims which express those first glimpses of the self-consciousness of a social practice.

The first moment of reflection is Identity:

> "The maxim of *Identity*, reads: Everything is identical with itself, A = A: and negatively, A cannot at the same time be A and Not-A." (*Shorter Logic* §115)

This is like when a group of people come together for the first time, and you will often hear people say things like: "We're all here for the same reason," or "We all know why we're here," and amongst those who study group dynamics this is sometimes called the stage of Politeness, because everyone is at pains to avoid difference and celebrate identity. It can be likened to the first stages of the Women's Movement when women emphasized the idea that all women suffered from the same problems, and obliterated differences of class, ethnicity and so on.

This maxim is not only easily subject to critique, but in any emergent formation of consciousness, it invariably *is* subject to critique. As part of the very celebration of identity, people celebrate the Diversity of people who have been brought together under the same measure. Hegel observes:

> "Maxim of *Diversity*: To ask 'How Identity comes to *Difference*' assumes that Identity as mere abstract Identity is something of itself, and Difference also something else equally independent ... Diversity has, like Identity, been transformed into a maxim: 'Everything is various or different': or 'There are no two things completely like each other." (*Shorter Logic* §116n)

So the essential identity of the group is expressed in their diversity, but the essence of this diversity invariably turns out to be Difference. "We are such a diverse group, all interested in the same problem, and we will all be able to contribute in our own way," people might say. But this is wishful thinking.

Essential difference means Opposition. This is reminiscent of that phase in the Women's Movement which underlay the emergence of so-called Third Wave feminism, that not only are women diverse and different, but some women have interests *opposed* to those of other women.

This is also associated with the stage when differences in an emergent social movement begin to take on the form of opposing groups and perspectives.

Essential opposition arises from the bringing together of the opposition with the original identity – not just ships in different oceans, but *Contradiction*. If we are all fighting for the same thing, but we have opposite claims, then this has to be resolved. Contradiction is different from opposing views on a matter because the opposite poles of contradiction are *incompatible*, and a *power struggle* must ensue.

Essential contradiction is Ground, and Hegel explains:

> "The maxim of **Ground** runs thus: Everything has its Sufficient Ground: that is, the true essentiality of any thing is not the predication of it as identical with itself, or as different (various), or merely positive, or merely negative, but as having its Being in an other, which, being the self-same, is its essence." (*Shorter Logic* §121)

Contradiction must be resolved if the project is to continue towards a concept of itself, and both sides of the contradiction, must bring forward the *Grounds* of their position and argue their case. In this way the essential Ground of the contradiction itself can be brought to light, both theses be affirmed, and form the basis for a provisional self-definition of the Thing. This is the really productive phase of Essence.

One of the truisms of this kind of work is that as a campaign grows it not only passes through these various stages, which have been categorized differently by different theorists, but every meeting, or every time a new person joins, the whole process has to be recapitulated, at least in a telescoped form. The same is true of how we should read Hegel's *Logic*. The processes are elaborated in the *Logic* one after the other, but in the development of a formation of consciousness, all these processes are continuing one inside the other, compounding each other, rather than just succeeding one after another.

Another point about Reflection which is worth recalling at this point. When a social formation reflects on itself, we have what is newly emergent in the sphere of Being reflected in the categories and ideas of an earlier moment. That is why the result is contradictory, and because the process is continuing, compounding itself, these contradictions, and the continual movement from identity to essential identity, from diversity to essential diversity, from difference to essential difference and from con-

tradiction to the essence of contradiction which is ground, this process is continuous.

§2. The Thing: dialectic of Matter and Form

These are the moments of Reflection, the basic form of reflection which generates the contradictions to be resolved in the process of Essence and the formation of a new Concept. The first stage of Essence, Reflection, is also called the Thing, which is the dialectic of *Matter and Form*.

The Thing is the first attempt at self-definition as a distinct entity with various properties. According to a trend of the times, self-subsistent qualities were referred to as 'Matters', and this provides the opportunity for Hegel to present a critique of the positivistic practice of discovering new Matters. Let us not go back further than phlogiston, the matter of heat, after which we had electrical and magnetic flux, ether that carried light waves, and so on. This process of inventing Matters, as a pretence of having explained some phenomenon, ought not to be just dismissed; 'discovery' of a matter may be a legitimate step in the understanding of a phenomenon. We have a continual procession of genes which explain human behaviour, newly discovered diseases with unknown etiology which explain social problems, an unending series of subatomic particles which rationalize practices in the domain of experimental physics. The point Hegel is making here is that saying that heat is caused by the loss of phlogiston or that the increase in suicide is due to the spread of depression *explain nothing*. But the naming of a new syndrome or new matter or whatever, is a step towards the development of an adequate concept of the thing. Further reflection on supposed differences located in different Matters, will eventually resolve into a *practical* distinction.

From here, Hegel enters into a critique of the notion of Matter itself.

> "Matter, being the immediate unity of existence with itself, is also indifferent towards specific character. Hence the numerous diverse matters coalesce into the one *Matter*, or into existence under the reflective characteristic of identity. In contrast to this one Matter these distinct properties and their external relation which they have to one another in the thing, constitute the *Form* – the reflective category of difference, but a difference which exists and is a totality.
>
> "This one featureless Matter is also the same as the Thing-in-itself was." (Shorter Logic §128)

In other words, the logic of the discovery of Matters is that at various points, Matters are resolved into Forms of one and the same Matter, and this process continues to the point where everything is just a form of one and the same abstract, indifferent Matter, just like the Thing-in-Itself of Kantian philosophy, beyond and outside experience, just a blank substratum of existence. Matter is a philosophical abstraction representing everything that is outside of and independent of thought, just like the Thing-in-itself; it can *explain* nothing because it is a nothing.

This brings us to the Kantian Philosophy which Hegel identifies with Appearance.

§3. Appearance: dialectic of Content and Form

The second Division of the Doctrine of Essence is Appearance, which is the dialectic of *Form* and *Content*. The claim of Kantianism is that Appearance is absolutely separated from the Thing-in-Itself. Hegel's aim is to refute this and show how the Thing-in-Itself is given in Appearance, there is a continual movement from the Thing-in-Itself into Appearance and no hard and fast line between appearance and the thing-in-itself.

> "The Essence must appear or shine forth. Its shining or reflection in it is the suspension and translation of it to immediacy, which, while as reflection-into-self it is matter or subsistence, is also form, reflection-on-something-else, a subsistence which sets itself aside. To show or shine is the characteristic by which essence is distinguished from Being – by which it is essence; and it is this show which, when it is developed, shows itself, and is Appearance. Essence accordingly is not something beyond or behind appearance, but – just because it is the essence which exists – the existence is *Appearance*." (*Shorter Logic* §131)

The point is that Appearance is objective too, just as much as the content of Reflection is objective, and Hegel says that Kant's mistake was to put Appearance solely on the subjective side. But Existence and Appearance are stages in the self-determination of a shape of consciousness.

Appearance for Hegel is the domain of laws; so, in the flux of things, as they enter Essence as reflected Beings, as a continual flux of *Existence* (the first division of Appearance), Appearance is what remains stable in that flux. Appearance is the *correlation* or the relation of essential Existence. This is not just a subjective process.

Hegel describes Appearance as dialectic of Form and Content, the transformation of form into content and vice versa, the repulsion of form by content, and the search of a content for its adequate form, and so on.

> "Form and content are a pair of terms frequently employed by the reflective understanding, especially with a habit of looking on the content as the essential and independent, the form on the contrary as the unessential and dependent." (*Shorter Logic* §133n)

Every content must have a form, every form must have a content, but form and content may be at odds with one another. Like a campaign against the harmful effects of drugs which takes the form of a 'war on drugs'. So it is certainly wrong to say that form is indifferent to its content or that content is indifferent to form. When a content and its form come into conflict with one another, then we can see their reciprocal *revulsion*. Like a person who is appointed to a job that they are not really fit for – a kind of explosion can result. In order for the content to show itself, it has to find a form in which it is adequately expressed, for it is form that appears; but neither is less essential than the other. The search of a content for an adequate form, the struggle for a content to realize itself in an appropriate form, brings us to Actuality.

What we are looking at here is a new project or form of social practice finding a form in which it can be conscious of itself. A content must exist in *some* form, so if we are looking at an emergent social practice that is only beginning to reflect on itself, and for which there is as yet no adequate concept, then so long as an adequate form has not been found for it, the relevant shape of consciousness will be mistaken for something else, that is, be expressed in a false form, and as a result, will be distorted and misunderstood. If we are dealing with a reality, the content will shed an inadequate form, and go on shedding forms, until a form adequate to the content is arrived at. The content then appears. The way Hegel looks at this is that the Content has found its true Form. The sceptic could say that the content which lies behind the form at any given moment is unknown and inaccessible. But content *without* a form is meaningless; the dialectic of content and form is a process, and content shows itself in form. When we see that the content is itself active, and that the relation between form and content is not an arbitrary or subjective one, but that the content ultimately shows itself in some form, then the line between existence and appearance is broken down. Existence passes into Appearance and Content passes into Form, continuously.

The content is accessible only through the form in which it is manifested. Appearance is the correlation of form and content, because at any given moment, content and form are not identical. This is the analysis which Hegel makes of what is called *law*. The formulation of a law indi-

cates on the one hand that we haven't got to the content, but on the other hand, we can describe the way the content is manifested. That's why the dialectic of form and content is described as the 'world of appearances'.

§4. Actuality: dialectic of Cause and Effect, Reciprocity

The third and last division of Essence is Actuality. Actuality is the dialectic of Cause and Effect, and its subdivisions are Substance, Causality and Reciprocity. In this stage, the emergent shape of consciousness is still yet to find an adequate Notion of itself, but is becoming more and more concrete, implicating every aspect of social life. In this section of the Logic, Hegel uses the opportunity to make a critique of a range of misconceptions to do with Freedom and Necessity, Blind Necessity, Free Will, the maxim that "Anything is possible," Causality and so on.

In Actuality, Essence and Existence have become identical and this identity is immediate; every aspect of Being has been incorporated in Reflection, and is part of the picture, so to speak. All the myriad of things and events around us, everything which is existent, is intelligible. So Hegel argues against the counterposing of the Ideal and the Actual. He conceives of Actuality, not as senseless and unintelligible, and the opposite of the ideal, but on the contrary, *everything that is actual, must* in that measure be rational, that is to say, *intelligible*. This conception of the world of indefinitely complex seeming contingencies, as nevertheless intelligible, is summed up in the maxim "All that is real is rational; all that is rational is real." The converse of this maxim is the dictum: "*All that exists deserves to perish*," (Goethe, *Faust*) for not everything that exists is rational, and those elements of reality which have no basis in Reason, he says, sooner or later pass will away. He calls this conception: infinitely *intelligible reality* – Substance, and he associates Substance with Spinoza.

This myriad of relations manifested in Actuality as Substance, is made sense of by the relation of Cause and Effect, which according to Hegel is a limited point of view, which science must transcend. In Hegel's view, to say that something is caused by something else, is to say that is has its being in another, and therefore fails to capture the Notion of the thing itself, because the question of its existence has been simply moved to something else, its *cause* and its conditions.

An emergent social movement concretizes itself through all of its actions having some effect in the world, and ricocheting back on itself, and

through the reactions of others, the emergent movement gets a more objective understanding of itself.

The relation of Causality sets up an infinite regress, and the chain of cause to effect, which in turn becomes cause, etc., etc., which eventually bends back on itself. There seems to be no proper starting point, everything is the cause of everything else and the effect of something else. This conclusion, that a certain set of circumstances do not have any one of those circumstances as the cause of the others, but all together constitute a reciprocal relation of causation, is called *Reciprocity*. It is often regarded as the end of the investigation. If poverty is the cause of unemployment, urban decay, poor health and dysfunctional schools, each of which is in turn the cause of unemployable workers, bringing up unruly children in a decaying neighbourhood, endlessly extending the cycle of disadvantage, then there is nothing more to be said. To finger any one point in this complex as the cause would be foolish; so says Reciprocity. Hegel exemplifies this with the question of the nature of the Spartans:

> "To make, for example, the manners of the Spartans the cause of their constitution and their constitution conversely the cause of their manners, may no doubt be in a way correct. But, as we have comprehended neither the manners nor the constitution of the nation, the result of such reflections can never be final or satisfactory. The satisfactory point will be reached only when these two, as well as all other, special aspects of Spartan life and Spartan history are seen to be founded in this notion." (*Shorter Logic* §156n)

This failure of Reciprocity leads us to the doorstep of the Notion. Only by grasping Actuality and the infinite network of cause and effect under an adequate Notion of what is going on, can the basis for a real science be created. Otherwise we remain mired in the conundrums of Reciprocity.

Let's look at how Hegel deals with the notion of Free Will.

> "When more narrowly examined, free choice is seen to be a contradiction, to this extent, that its form and content stand in antithesis. The matter of choice is given, and known as a content dependent not on the will itself, but on outward circumstances. In reference to such a given content, freedom lies only in the form of choosing, which, as it is only a freedom in form, may consequently be regarded as freedom only in supposition. On an ultimate analysis it will be seen that the same outwardness of circumstances, on which is founded the content that the will finds to its hand, can alone account for the will giving its

> decision for the one and not the other of the two alternatives." (*Shorter Logic* §145n)

The narrow view of free will, associated with this stage in the development of the idea, is that of making a decision between this or that option, but misses the question of where the options *come from* and the supposedly free will was left only the task of figuring out which of the given options is the better. So Free Will turns out to be an illusion, but only because of the limited terms, that is of decision theory, in which it is conceived.

This brings us to the notion of "freedom and necessity." The following observation presages Hegel's views on the State.

> "A good man is aware that the tenor of his conduct is essentially obligatory and necessary. But this consciousness is so far from making any abatement from his freedom, that without it, real and reasonable freedom could not be distinguished from arbitrary choice – a freedom which has no reality and is merely potential. A criminal, when punished, may look upon his punishment as a restriction of his freedom. Really the punishment is not a foreign constraint to which he is subjected, but the manifestation of his own act. In short, man is most independent when he knows himself to be determined by the absolute idea throughout." (*Shorter Logic* §158n)

Which leads to the famous aphorism about Freedom and Necessity, that Freedom is the understanding of Necessity, or that "Freedom is the truth of Necessity."

Freedom in fact essentially *depends on* Necessity. The truth of Substance is the Notion, Freedom concrete and positive. In a realm of arbitrariness and irrational contingency, there could be no freedom.

> "Necessity indeed, *qua* necessity, is far from being freedom: yet freedom presupposes necessity, and contains it as an unsubstantial element in itself. (*Shorter Logic* §158n)

§5. Development is the struggle of opposites which do not disappear

Before completing this section, we should reflect on the form of movement in Essence. What we see throughout Essence is pairs of opposing determinations: Matter and Form, Form and Content, Existence and Essence, Positive and Negative, Likeness and Unlikeness, Whole and Parts, Inward and Outward, Possibility and Contingency, Freedom and Necessity, Cause and Effect, only some of which we have touched on

here. The successive concretisation of the growing self-consciousness of a project takes place through this succession of opposing determinations. In each case the opposition between them is made relative, as the counterposing of the opposite determinations leads to a deeper conception which comprehends the opposition within its new terms. So the opposing determinations do not disappear, but continue and in specific circumstances may come to the fore again. But in the process of Essence, we see a succession of polar oppositions, and as each opposition is sublated, their opposition is relativized and pushed into the background by new axes of polarisation.

7. The Subject: Universal, Particular and Individual

§1. The subject is neither an individual nor a group but a relation

The category of Subjectivity makes its appearance here as a logical category, specifically, the first division of the Notion. Subjectivity is a relation, and a relation which entails the consciousness of human beings. The Subject is the living being which is aware of that Subjectivity; that could be a person, aware of their own subjectivity, or it could be group of people, who share a conception and constitute it together. But rather than 'group', we should say a *relation* amongst people, since there should be no implication in the notion of subjectivity that people see themselves as a group or are, through the relevant subjectivity, seen by others as a group. The word 'subject' connotes an entity rather than a relation or activity. So we should reserve the word 'subject' for when that subjectivity is referred to itself and constitutes itself as a self-conscious entity. The word 'subjectivity', which is the word used by Hegel here in the *Logic*, then has the broader meaning, in connection with a shape of consciousness, which goes to constitute the mind of one or many human beings, but does not necessarily have the meaning of one or a group of human beings.

With these qualifications, the word 'Subject' can be used where perhaps it is more precise to use the word 'subjectivity', which is consistent with Hegel's usage, with Subject carrying the connotation of a subjectivity being a personage of some kind, an active agent in the development of a shape of consciousness. This understanding of the notion of 'subject' carries the *structuralist* understanding, in which a person can be the *carrier* of a

shape of consciousness, without necessarily knowing themselves to be such a carrier. But to the extent that the Subject has *self*-consciousness, and to some extent shares in 'absolute knowledge', that is to say, the philosophical insight that the universal is an historically formed shape of consciousness in which they are a participant, and their subjectivity has its subsistence in that universal, does the Subject transcend this kind of unconscious agency. These are the distinctions which are dealt with in the *Phenomenology*.

This conception contrasts with Kant's usage in which a transcendental, individual subject uses their personal access to Reason and Experience to actively produce their own consciousness. Hegel's insight into the cultural and historical location of shapes of consciousness, transcends this individualism.

The *abstract notion*, or subject, is the first concept of the Doctrine of the Notion, which develops up to the Idea, the concrete whole of a form of social life. This first abstract concept which constitutes the starting point for a science is of crucial significance for Hegel. Finding the correct starting point and then allowing the concept to unfold itself by the method of immanent critique, demonstrating what lies *within* that simple concept constitutes the method of science; and the Logic forms the model for this method. In this case, the abstract notion or subject, which has arisen out of everything that has gone before, forms the starting point of the science of the Idea.

In that sense, just as the molecule is the 'unit of analysis' for chemistry, and the single cell the 'unit of analysis' for biology, the subject is the 'unit of analysis' for the study of *formations of consciousness*, that is to say, the simplest thing which demonstrates all the properties of the whole, the basic thought-object which constitutes the building block of social life.

As we have seen, the development leading up to the emergence of the Notion does not have the form of a transcendental subject which simply takes on attributes or a small concept which gets bigger and bigger. The Abstract Notion is itself the germ or prototype or *Urphänomen* or embryo of a developed, concrete relation. What went before created the conditions of possibility of the notion, and asked the question, so to speak, but the positing of the Notion is a sharp break, something new.

Prior to the emergence of the Notion we see every imaginable combination of other pre-existing notions in ultimately *failed* attempts to reflect what was emergent in Being. Like the judgment of Solomon, or a

Declaration of Independence or the *Magna Carta*, the Notion emerges out of the throng of disputation and lays the basis for further development.

> "It might perhaps seem that, in order to state the Notion of an object, the logical element were presupposed and that therefore this could not in turn have something else for its presupposition, nor be deduced; just as in geometry logical propositions as applied to magnitude and employed in that science, are premised in the form of *axioms*, determinations of cognition that *have not been and cannot be deduced*.
>
> "Now although it is true that the Notion is to be regarded, not merely as a subjective presupposition but as the *absolute foundation*, yet it can be so only in so far as it has *made* itself the foundation. Abstract immediacy is no doubt a *first*; yet in so far as it is abstract it is, on the contrary mediated, and therefore if it is to be grasped in its truth its foundation must first be sought. Hence this foundation, though indeed an immediate, must have made itself immediate through the sublation of mediation." (*Science of Logic* §1279)

A Notion has from the very beginning three moments, Individual, Universal and Particular. Think of when a new word (*Universal*) is coined which becomes known to an (*Individual*) person who now coordinates their (*Particular*) activity with others having in mind the new word. The same kind of visualisation works for the new judicial precedent, or programmatic declaration that initiates a social movement, a project of some kind, a new technical invention, and so on.

In the beginning these breakthroughs are abstract in the sense that they are untested, their implications are yet to unfold and even those participating through their action in the new relation may not be fully committed to the new idea, which might disappear tomorrow. The new abstract Notion takes its place amidst other competing Notions, and only by merging with those other notions can an abstract, new Notion concretize itself.

§2. The subject is the truth of being and essence

Hegel says:

> "Thus *the Notion is the truth of Being and Essence*, inasmuch as the shining or show of self-reflection is itself at the same time independent immediacy, and this being of a different actuality is immediately only a shining or show on itself." (*Shorter Logic* §159)

After the whole series of failed projects, chimeras, false dawns and disappointments which constitute the pre-history of a thing, the various efforts of an emergent form of social practice to understand itself and

find a form in which its content can be fruitfully developed, eventually this self-same material, the material of reflection, gives birth to something that *does not pass away*, something permanent, something which does not flee at the first sign of enemy fire or disintegrate in internal dissension, but actually absorbs fire and grows stronger from internal debate. But its material is gathered from reflection, so in that sense it is the truth of Essence.

The Notion is the truth of Being in a double sense, since Essence is already the truth of Being. But also, as the reflected form of Being which does not pass away and proves to be persistent, it is in that sense the truth of Being, it's what Being turned out to be.

The Notion is both immediate and mediated. It is mediated because it is the outcome of a protracted process of reflection and is itself a form of reflection, but it is also given sensuously and immediately.

This takes us back to the conception first formulated by Hegel in his early 1802-03 manuscripts, *System of Ethical Life*, of the Idea as the unity of Intuition and Concept. The new Notion is perceived in the same way as any other thing, *sensuously*. Given that we live (predominantly) in a 'second nature' made up of artefacts, every thing in this world interconnects with other things, finds its use in relation to other things and through the co-operative activity of people using elements of the culture, all of them given to us immediately, in Intuition or sensation. At the same time, as we have seen, the Notion is a *product of thought* and exists only insofar as it is meaningful. The claim that the Idea is the unity of Intuition and Concept is reproduced in the claim that the Notion is the unity of Being and Essence.

Subjectivity throws Being into a new light. It is not that what was only sensuous perception becomes conceptual, Being is always *theory laden*. There is no such thing as Pure Being, that is, immediacy which is not also at the same time mediated. But Subjectivity throws Being into a new light. Being is the same but not the same. Likewise, the contradictory series of determinations in Essence is made sense of from the standpoint of Subjectivity, which has sublated all the contradictions that led up to its emergence.

The Doctrine of the Notion is made up of Subject, Object and Idea. The Idea is the unity of Subject and Object, the process in which the *objectification* or institutionalisation of the Subject continues to drive the development of the active and living subject. This development of the

Subject itself, the inner development of the subject which continues within and alongside its objectification, has the form of the movement towards an all-round developed relation between individual, universal and particular. For the moment, we will just be concerned with the inner development of the Subject, or Notion; later we will turn to the development of the Subject-Object relation.

§3. The concept is the identity of the individual, universal and particular

Hegel's exposition of the three moments of the Notion and their relations is obscure in the extreme. Let us take a look first at the Universal Notion:

> "*The universal* ... is *that simplicity* which, because it is the Notion, no less possesses *within itself the richest content.* First, therefore, it is the simple relation to itself; it is only *within itself. Secondly,* however, this identity is *within itself* absolute *mediation,* but it is not something *mediated.*" (*Science of Logic* §1327)

The universal is given to us by a word or symbol or tool or body shape or whatever which represents the Notion – "in free equality with itself in its specific character" (*Shorter Logic* §163). It is simple and immediate because in it as such there is no relation, no activity entailed in it, without particularity and without individuality. But the entire content is implicit, in that as part of a language or other culturally constructed system of meanings or its potential connection with other universal forms in some particular system of activity, in which it shows itself to be meaningful, in fact, the very carrier of meaning. It is *absolute mediation* as on its own it is just a dead thing, like a word from the language of a long lost civilisation, and the mediation is entirely *within itself*; it is what it is independently of its use or presentation by any person, but as such it is a nothing. Take a word out of its language and the context of its use by people and it is nothing, but the meaning is still there, implicitly; it is like the unknown lock which can be opened by a key found on the road. As Universal Notion, it is eternal, it is that which is instantiated in *every* particular.

The Universal Notion is *not* to be understood as a contingent attribute uniting an otherwise arbitrary set of objects, as in set theory, but as a *self-subsistent genus*.

Hegel likened the first, abstract Universal, Particular and Individual Notions to the first moments of reflection:

> "Universality, particularity, and individuality are, taken in the abstract, the same as identity, difference, and ground. But the universal is the self-identical, with the express qualification, that it simultaneously contains the particular and the individual. Again, the particular is the different or the specific character, but with the qualification that it is in itself universal and is as an individual. Similarly the individual must be understood to be a subject or substratum, which involves the genus and species in itself and possesses a substantial existence." (*Shorter Logic* §164)

In the simplest formal terms, the universal is a unique genus or quality, the particular is the specification of the genus with any number of qualifications up to the point of limiting the category to a single instance, and the individual is just one concrete instance. But Hegel does a great deal with this relationship.

In the above, he points out that the universal "contains" the particular and individual, i.e., a *concrete* universal cannot have an existence separate from its instantiation in particular individuals; that in successive instantiations, while the universal is always just as it is, the particular is always different and in fact it is the specific difference which makes it a particular; that the particular is always nothing other than individuals, not something side by side with individuals; the individual is individual in the sense of the ancient conception of a substratum to which indefinitely *many* predicates inhere; and the individual is ground, because it is the only substratum in which the universal can be manifested and developed. The category of Ground is given in the maxim "Everything has its sufficient ground." If we ask how the Particular is a Particular *of* a given Universal, then the ground ultimately lies in the Individual.

As an intermediary between the formal syllogistic relation and the meaning of these relations in terms of formations of consciousness it is useful to take the Universal, Particular and Individual as designating a social movement or formal organisation, as an example of a self-constituting universal, a social practice performed by individuals organized around an ideal. The principle is the Universal, the Particular is the different groups and activities expressing the principle in different times and places and the Individual is the individual people executing these activities, belonging to different social groups constituting the movement and thinking with the relevant universal conceptions.

In these terms the Universal is the word or name or shape by which the movement is recognised and represented, the banner around which

people rally. The Particular is the different instantiations of the movement, the branches, groups, events and so forth only in and through which can a movement be said to exist; and the Individual, a person participating in the movement through the various particular instantiations of it. In this realisation of the idea, the movement is the Notion, and as such it must have a name or some kind of representation or definition (Universal), there must be Particular groups adhering to this name or principle, and those Particular groups must have Individual members or adherents who know themselves to be adhering to a Particular group instantiating the given Universal.

For example, an advocate of the principle of solidarity, a writer perhaps, who purely and simply *expounds* the idea of solidarity without seeing the need to actually set up groups, campaigns, unions and so forth or make the effort to mobilise and win over individuals to the idea, can be said to take as their motto: "The Universal is Absolute."

On the other hand, the frenetic, full-time activist who sets up campaigns, self-help groups, parties and so on, without bothering about how each of these endeavours furthers the now long-forgotten reason for it all, can be said to take as their maxim: "The Particular is Absolute."

And finally, the advocate of People Power and public opinion, who has no confidence in ideology or parties and institutions, can be said to take as their rule: "The Individual is Absolute."

Every movement has these characters in their ranks and their role is almost obligatory. All of these claims have an element of truth. But if followed one-sidedly obviously they lead nowhere, because they are all *abstract*; but they are the three essential modes of existence of an idea.

The second section of Subjectivity presents a series of *Judgments* in which one of the moments is joined to the subject in a Judgment which comes successively closer to a Notion of it. The third section of Subjectivity presents a series of *Syllogisms*, in which a Judgment is mediated by one of the moments, which express the Subject more or less defectively, but get closer and closer to the Notion. There are about 12 Judgments and 10 Syllogisms, and we will only touch here on the most prominent points in the development.

The Judgments reproduce at a higher level the categories of Being and Essence, and are the Qualitative Judgment, the Judgment of Reflection, the Judgment of Necessity and the Judgment of Notion. Each of the Judgments expresses only partially what it is that brings something under

the Notion, each Judgment is a successively more concrete characterisation of the subject as it becomes clear. This process of judgments is the registering in self-consciousness of the process unfolding in the Objective Logic and therefore recapitulates the categories of Essence in the form of more and more adequate notions, but at this stage, still notions which are one-sided and deficient.

(a) In the *Qualitative Judgment*, the subject is ascribed a single quality, the relevant social practice is said to be good or bad, or novel or whatever. Hegel presents a logical critique of any such judgment, hinging around the point that equating an individual with a particular is always faulty.

(b) In the *Judgment of Reflection*, the subject is given in connection with other things, so that it is not just seen as having some quality, but as *having a place in a system of social practice*, connected with other practices, of being useful for something, or whatever.

(c) In the *Judgment of Necessity* is the subject taken under its genus, rather than just as sharing with others a contingent property but belonging to some living whole.

(d) In the Judgment of the Notion, these three judgments are brought together. Hegel gives the following example:

> "This (*the immediate individuality*) house (*the genus*), being so and so constituted (*particularity*), is good or bad. This is the Apodeictic judgment. All things are a genus (i.e. have a meaning and purpose) in an *individual* actuality of a *particular* constitution. And they are finite, because the particular in them may and also may not conform to the universal." (*Shorter Logic* §179)

This most developed Judgment has risen to a concreteness where individual, universal and particular are brought together in characterizing the thing. In the case of each of these judgments, which are after all just making *one* judgment in relation to some form of social practice, Hegel demonstrates the deficiency of the Judgment, its limitations. This demonstrates the action of sceptical critique as an existing formation of consciousness which is not yet fully conscious of itself, tries to define itself: no it's not this or that quality, or just this or that connection with other things, and it may be this kind of thing, but that doesn't exhaust what it is, and so on. All these deficient judgments are reflected in one-sided forms of practice, that are still guided by conceptions reflecting the fact that the specific character of the relevant social practice has not been fully grasped, or in taking up a social position which obstructs the development of the notion. For example, people acting in relation to the thing

taking account of just one attribute (that the event was amateurish, for example) or in terms of its relation to other social practices (that it was unofficial, for example), but eventually the individual, particular and universal aspects of the thing are brought together with a recognition of the thing (that this is a spontaneous protest by new adherents, for example).

§4. Each moment mediates between the other two

The next level of development of the Subject involves bringing all three moments, individual, universal and particular, into proper relation, and Hegel calls these three-way relations Syllogisms. The form taken by these Syllogisms is that of a judgment mediated by one of the three moments of the Notion. As with the judgments, each of these syllogisms is deficient in some way and open to criticism. Only when all the different possible combinations are brought together and concentrated in a single syllogism which gives weight to every aspect of the relation between Individual, Particular and Universal, may the conception "capture the notion."

Like the Judgments, the Syllogisms also reproduce the categories of Essence: the Qualitative (or Immediate) Syllogism, the Syllogism of Reflection and the Syllogism of Necessity. Each Syllogism unites the Universal, Individual or Particular Notion, with a Judgment.

The first *Immediate Syllogism* is the *determinate syllogism* (I-P-U), in which the Individual is brought under a Universal by virtue of coming under a Particular. This is the most straight forward and immediate of syllogisms. The deficiency arises from the fact that the individual's relation to the Universal may be fortuitous, as the individual is only participating in the Universal by virtue of one Particular, for example:

"He's got such a nice way with people; he'd make a good politician."

The second Immediate Syllogism is the *Qualitative syllogism* (P-I-U), in which a particular is subsumed under the Universal only because one of its individuals are under the Universal. This is an obviously incomplete claim as other individuals are excluded from consideration. There are altogether four such Qualitative Syllogisms.

"I'd never let an Indian doctor operate on me; look at that Dr. Patel."

Hegel says that the Qualitative Syllogisms deal with Particularity abstractly, whereas the *Syllogism of Reflection* extends this abstractness to encompass *all* Individuals. So we have the *syllogism of allness* (also I-P-U), that an individual which is under a particularity comes under the universal

because *all* individuals under that particularity come under the universal. The deficit is that the major premise (that all such individuals comes under the universal) *depends on* the conclusion, namely that the individual in question comes under the particular.

> "You can't tell me you're a footballer! You're only 5'6" and no footballer is that short!"

The second Syllogism of Reflection is the *syllogism of induction* (U-I-P), deduces the universal from the particular, because all the particular individuals come under the universal, the deficit of which is that the particular is never complete, and does not cover *all* possible individuals, for example:

> "There's more and more crime nowadays; you hear about a murder almost every day on TV."

The third Syllogism of Reflection is the *syllogism of analogy* (I-U-P), lifts an individual to the status of a universal and deduces from a particularity of one individual to another similar, but the similarity may not be such as to justify the analogy, for example:

> "Vietnam has proved that a small country defending its territory can defeat the USA; it's only a matter of time in Iraq."

In each Syllogism of Reflection, an effort was made to make a generalisation based on incomplete information, leading to unsafe conclusions. The next and third category of Syllogism are the *Syllogisms of Necessity*, in which this limitation is to be overcome.

The first Syllogism of Necessity is the *categorical syllogism* (I-U-P), and here instead of an arbitrary character of an individual, which may or may not unite it with another individual, being taken up, the genus which concretely unites it with other individuals is the middle term. The deficit of this syllogism is that even though particularity of an individual is deduced from its genus, without having a Notion of the genus the syllogism is still open to error.

> "He's a professor of neuroscience; he must know what consciousness is."

The second Syllogism of Necessity is the *hypothetical syllogism*, A implies B, A is, therefore B is. But in this B has its existence in B and the conditions which made A necessary are not necessarily the same conditions which make B follow from A. The deficit in the syllogism is therefore that the necessity of B must be known in itself, not mediately through A, for example:

"The fuel gauge says we're half full; we can't have run out of petrol."

And so on. We can all recognise these one-sided lines of argument; in every case they fail because they have not yet grasped the relevant *notion*, but it is only in and through such deficient judgments, which prove in practice to be deficient, that the notion consolidates itself and becomes a fact, not the outcome of a line of argument, but an objective fact.

§5. Hegel presents the Subject as a critique of formal logic

We should remind ourselves at this point of the basic thesis of the *Phenomenology*: that formations of consciousness have to re-examine their basic rationale whenever their way of life is called into question. So in this section, Hegel has looked at how a range of seemingly justified statements may fail the test of logical examination. All the syllogisms he examines are deficient, but nonetheless, we see a positive outcome, in the form of a developed notion.

The same thing happens in the sphere of social practice; every judgment mentioned earlier, including the syllogistic judgments, is a proposition which is meaningful only if it is expressed in practical activity. So the formal logical critique mirrors a practical critique, manifested in incremental change to forms of activity as well as subjective consciousness.

The concretisation of the Concept takes place through objectification and further development which happens through the development of both subject and object together, and the sublation of relatively abstract notions by more and more concrete notions, that incorporate into themselves a wider and wider sphere of social life. This subject-object development, where a formation of consciousness develops through the embedding of a new concept into every aspect of life is called *the Idea*.

It can be helpful in understanding this part of Hegel's Logic to take a voluntary organisation as the relevant social practice or concept, with the policies and principles written into the organisation's constitution and rules and the leadership body responsible for carriage of these principles understood as the Universal, the various occupational, geographical or whatever branches or sections of the organisation taken as the Particular, and the members, whether rank-and-file or officials, as Individual. This is a valid concretisation of the idea of a Subject in the sense considered in the Logic, suffering only from the deficit of being overly formal and mechanical. With this analogy, which is somewhat more than an analogy, the notions, judgments and syllogisms of the section on Subjectivity, render

themselves as typical of the forms of consciousness encountered within such formal organisations.

Lenin's insistence in 1901 that to be a member of the Party an individual had to participate in one of the Party's branches or activities is rational in this light. One-sided claims like an organisation is only as good as its members, forgetting the necessary mediating role of branch and national leadership are seen to be partial truths. On the other hand, the idea that individual members might have a say in the appointment of district officials certainly deserved more consideration than it received at the time. Or the idea that an individual delegate should represent their own branch or electorate when participating in debates on national policy. A mature organisation which has undergone the complete development of Subjectivity which Hegel envisages here must fully develop the mediating role of branches and sections in the relation between the leadership and membership; national leaders must take a close interest in representing the views and interests of ordinary members in relation to the particular interests of branch officials, and local officials are diligent and well-informed in conveying national policies and issues to the membership, and so on and so forth. Each of these demands for the development of a mature social formation can be expressed in the form of the criticism of a Syllogism. Full development means that every imaginable form of mediation between Individual, Particular and Universal is developed. As a result, the thinking of individuals participating in such a formation of consciousness, thinking formed and expressed through participation in relevant organisations and relations, may be mature and rounded and avoid one-sidedness, such as particularism, elitism, dogmatism, activism and so on.

8. Subject, Object and Idea

§1. The Subject Develops from Abstract to Concrete

The three books of the Logic are laid out in a logical sequence, and they describe a process of development, but the realized process of development does not take the form of a temporal *succession* of these categories. The categories of Being which come into being and pass away, *continue* to come and go indefinitely. The succession of oppositions which overtake one another in Essence continue to generate polar opposite pairs of determinations. As these unfold, a new form of social practice develops self-consciousness, with a succession of new qualities, new entities, new relations, both incidental and necessary, registered in thoughts

and purposive activity and representations, and judged and people may draw from these experiences a more concrete understanding of the new social practice as it develops. So in terms of time, all these relations are happening at the same time, although there is a logical dependence of the later categories on the former.

The development described in the Doctrine of the Notion is the development of a Concept.

In the first place, what is described is what is *necessary* in the development, as opposed to what is contingent or accidental or as the result of some caprice, so the logical process differs from the historical process in that respect.

Secondly, the subject domain of the Logic is *shapes of consciousness*, or more precisely, the *components of shapes of consciousness*, which are concepts. But a concept is to be understood, in the same way as a shape of consciousness, as a regular system of activity which is organized around some conception which may be understood by the participants as an entity of some kind, that is, it is reified. Self-consciousness here implies that people involved in that system of activity bring together the forms of activity, their individual understanding of what they are doing and the representation of the activity into a consistent stable relationship. The series of judgments and syllogisms represent the moves towards the formation of that stable and mature relationship, and it is that consistent, worked-out relationship which brings about a stable reification.

Finally, in tracing the development of these relationships within a formation of consciousness, three different aspects are always involved: the relations and collaborative activity of people which is integrated into the formation of consciousness, the consciousness of the individual people involved and the representations – words, symbols, artefacts and so on – used in the collaboration.

This means that the process is exhibited in subjective thoughts (insofar as they follow what is necessary), social movements (or projects, self-conscious systems of practice sharing a conception of what it is people are doing) and the representations or systems of cultural artefacts, and the Logic is open to interpretation in *each* of these domains.

§2. Sublation

The relation between the earlier and the later relations in the Logic is that of sublation, *Aufhebung*; Hegel uses the term 'sublation' throughout

the Logic, including the relation in which one determination *passes into* another in the sphere of Being, the relation in which one opposition is *overtaken by* another in the sphere of Essence, and the way in which, in the Doctrine of the Notion, successive determinations are *taken up* by the subject.

Aufhebung means taking something beyond its own limits and 'negating' it, that is to say, by *maintaining* what was necessary in the former relation while *terminating* that which is no longer tenable. This expresses the basic organizing principle of the Logic. It's like when something is done away with because it is outmoded, but its real meaning is carried on in a new form.

The form of sublation which subjectivity undergoes is a process of objectification, on top of which there is a continuous reassertion of subject and object in new forms which have the effect of sublating the distinctions between different subjects into higher or more robust forms of internal relation.

This is related to an aspect of Hegelian thought which can be confusing. Hegel talks about a process and its 'truth' as more or less the same thing, so he will talk about something which obviously doesn't have the attributes which would be expected of the thing. To the non-Hegelian this seems to be flying in the face of plain facts.

For Hegel, there is ultimately only *one concept*, the Idea, which we can understand as the whole of the social life of a community, and the specific concepts relating to this or that special activity are ultimately just aspects or special moments of the totality.

But first, let us follow the subject-object relation in terms of how Hegel outlines the structure of the Object.

§3. Objectification: Mechanism, Chemism, Teleology (Means and Ends)

Subject-Object is a relation; subject and object are not different kinds of thing, but simply that the subject stands in relation to other subjects as to an object. So the subject-object relation is the relation between a system of social practice and others which are relatively foreign to it, lie outside of it. But the normal situation is that means of mediation between subjects do exist in a community, and we are not dealing with a confrontation of the kind of the master-servant narrative, in which no means of mediation exists.

Hegel looks at three grades of subject-object relation: Mechanism, Chemism and Teleology. You can visualize these relations in terms of relations between projects, social movements and institutions, such as a town plan, feminism, legal system and science, or different ethnic communities within a multicultural society, and so on, as well as concepts like computer communication, therapy, childhood, or whatever, a relation between one project (the subject) which is new, or "abstract," and others which are already institutionalized and constitute the existing social context.

Firstly, Mechanism. This is how Hegel describes Mechanism:

> "As objectivity is the totality of the Notion withdrawn into its unity, an immediate is thereby posited that is in and for itself this totality ... In so far as it has the Notion immanent in it, it contains the difference of the Notion, but on account of the objective totality, the differentiated moments are *complete and self-subsistent objects* which consequently, even in their relation, stand to one another only as *self-subsistent* things and remain *external* to one another in every combination. This is what constitutes the character of *mechanism,* namely, that whatever relation obtains between the things combined, this relation is one *extraneous* to them that does not concern their nature at all, and even if it is accompanied by a semblance of unity it remains nothing more than *composition, mixture, aggregation* and the like. *Spiritual* mechanism also, like *material,* consists in this, that the things related in the spirit remain external to one another and to spirit itself. A *mechanical style of thinking, a mechanical memory, habit, a mechanical way of acting,* signify that the peculiar pervasion and presence of spirit is lacking in what spirit apprehends or does." (*Science of Logic* §1543)

This brings to mind a multicultural society in which the 'ethnic mosaic' metaphor applies, that is, a collection of self-sufficient communities mutually indifferent to one another, which may interact, but in the way of external impact on one another, in which neither community modifies its own nature, just adjusts its activity to accommodate or resist the impact of another community; or sciences, each of which is pursuing its own research program, perhaps using the findings of another as instruments in their own work, but remaining separate branches of science; or a social movement that regards all other movements as irrelevant to themselves, that turn up to protest against something and happen to find other social movements there as well, and may go so far as agreeing the date and place of the protest, but no further.

Hegel follows the development of Mechanism through the concept of mechanical objects to mechanical processes to systems of mechanical relations, particularly where one object creates a centre around which others revolve. He likens Mechanism to systems of government in which the components are united mechanically, and traces the development of relations between individuals (I), organisations (P) and the state (U) using the idea of Syllogisms, an approach he uses again in the *Philosophy of Right*.

The second section of Objectivity is Chemism, where the subject and object have a selective *affinity* to one another based in each's own nature. So here the subject and object are not wholly external to one another, but recognise a relation within themselves, like social movements that recognise that both are fighting a common enemy, and in making common cause strengthen that affinity and even merge. Again Hegel follows the development from Chemical Object to Chemical process, and uses the Syllogisms developed earlier to trace the relation between Individual, Universal and Particular through which these processes develop, gradually dealing with the one-sidedness of the Subjective Syllogisms.

Hegel wants to derive the notions of the Physics, Chemistry and Biology of his times logically and is preparing the basis for his Philosophy of Nature in this section, but its usefulness in this respect is questionable. There is a fine line between intelligibility and rationality which Hegel often transgresses. But he does sketch out a plausible, escalating series of categories through which a subject objectifies itself, and ideas drawn from the natural sciences serve nicely for this purpose: a subject is abstract at the beginning and finds the outer world foreign and indifferent to it, and in that sense is a concept in-itself. Then through the discovery of affinities it develops relations with all the other subjects in the community, and there is a certain amount of the *melting-pot* under way.

Hegel did not have at his disposal a viable natural scientific theory to explain the appearance of teleology in the natural world of plants and animals, but the teleology was undeniably *real*. Kant had recognised this problem as well and concluded that it went beyond the valid limits of knowledge to deduce from the appearance of the teleological character of the organic world that there was a Designer or Final Cause behind it or otherwise to explain it. Hegel's aim was to demonstrate that the emergence of teleological relations was logically *necessary*. But he was opposed to any theory of evolution, whether inheritance of acquired characteristics or survival of the fittest, to do this job.

Hegel held that in Nature there was no development in time, but this does not exclude relations of logical priority in Nature.

> "The more the teleological principle was linked with the concept of an *extramundane* intelligence and to that extent was favoured by piety, the more it seemed to depart from the true investigation of nature, which aims at cognising the properties of nature not as extraneous, but as *immanent determinatenesses* and accepts only such cognition as a valid *comprehension.* As end is the Notion itself in its Existence, it may seem strange that the cognition of objects from their Notion appears rather as an unjustified trespass into a *heterogeneous* element, whereas mechanism, for which the determinateness of an object is a determinateness posited in it externally and by another object, is held to be a *more immanent* point of view than teleology." (*Science of Logic* §1595)

Hegel concluded that the End emerges as the truth of Mechanism and Chemism, that a Notion *strives* to objectify itself.

> "End ... is the *concrete universal*, which possesses in its own self the moment of particularity and externality and is therefore active and the urge to repel itself from itself. The Notion, as End, is of course an *objective judgment* in which one determination, the *subject*, namely the concrete Notion, is self-determined, while the other is not merely a predicate but external objectivity. But the end relation is not for that reason a *reflective* judging that considers external objects only according to a unity, *as though* an intelligence had given this unity *for the convenience of our cognitive faculty*; on the contrary it is the absolute truth that judges *objectively* and determines external objectivity absolutely. Thus the End relation is more than *judgment*; it is the *syllogism* of the self-subsistent free Notion that unites itself with itself through objectivity." (*Science of Logic* §1599)

So here the subject finds in the object, in other subjects, its own End, or as it is sometimes said, the Subject finds its own essence outside of itself. Thus the development here is one in which the Subject is to become *in and for itself* through the process of mutual transformation of object and subject, which is the basis for the Idea.

The process of Teleology is the dialectic of Means and Ends. We have two maxims: on the one hand, "the end justifies the means," and on the other, "the movement is everything the end nothing." Both these maxims are limited and one-sided. The subject strives to realize its End, at first by inadequate means, and the Realized End expresses the disharmony between the Means and the *Subjective* End; this leads to a reconception of the End and determination of a new Means more ade-

quate to the End. Finally, *there can be no contradiction between the Means and Realized End*, ultimately the Subject realizes that the Means and End are identical.

§4. Mediation and the Cunning of Reason

Hegel shows how it is the mediation of actions by means of the artefacts and the objectified practices of a community which ensures that whatever may be a subject's aims in some action, it is the development of Spirit, the working out of the inner problems of a whole social formation, which is the outcome. This idea of Reason manifesting itself in human actions, independently of the subjective intentions of those pursuing their own ends in the given action, Hegel calls the "cunning of reason," and it appears both in the *Logic*, and his *Philosophy of History*.

For example, individuals may bring a dispute into the legal system but it is decided with reference to the body of written law and the judgment of the courts having mind to the further development of the law, not just the resolution of the immediate issue in dispute. Likewise, when people use tools acting on some material to achieve their ends, they must perforce use these tools according to their affordances and therefore in line with the constraints of both Nature and the historically developed forces of production. So the outcome which results discloses the possibilities inherent in Nature and the social forces of production, which may or may not be what the subject had in mind in taking up the tools to realize their own ends. The Realized End therefore is a merging of the intentions motivating the subject's actions and objective tendencies inherent in the culture.

The 'Subject' here means not just an individual, but any project, human enterprise or formation of consciousness which arises within the fabric of a community. Thus the universal requirements of Nature and History manifest themselves in the finite actions of individuals and social movements, thanks to the fact that no subject can achieve its ends in the natural or social world except by using the universal products of that wider world. As Hegel put it:

> "Reason is as cunning as it is powerful. Cunning may be said to lie in the intermediative action which, while it permits the objects to follow their own bent and act upon one another till they waste away, and does not itself directly interfere in the process, is nevertheless only working out its own aims" (*Shorter Logic*, § 209n).

The subject and object are each mutually independent totalities, but the means, that is, the object, is "superior" in the long run:

> "That the end relates itself immediately to an object and makes it a means, as also that through this means it determines another object, may be regarded as *violence* in so far as the end appears to be of quite another nature than the object, and the two objects similarly are mutually independent totalities. ... the *means* is superior to the finite ends of *external* purposiveness: the plough is more honourable than are immediately the enjoyments procured by it and which are ends. ... (*Science of Logic* §1614).

So whilst a person can do as he or she chooses, as a natural and a cultural being our ends are, in the final analysis, found to be given to us:

> The *tool* lasts, while the immediate enjoyments pass away and are forgotten. In his tools man possesses power over external nature, even though in respect of his ends he is, on the contrary, subject to it" (*Science of Logic* §1615).

As Hegel says in the "Philosophy of History":

> "It is not the general idea that is implicated in opposition and combat, and that is exposed to danger. It remains in the background, untouched and uninjured. This may be called the *cunning of reason*, — that it sets the passions to work for itself, while that which develops its existence through such impulsion pays the penalty and suffers loss" (*Philosophy of History* §36).

Individual human beings and the formations of consciousness in which they act are thus, for Hegel, forms by means of which *Geist* unfolds itself.

Marx appropriated this idea in *Capital*:

> "Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces ...
>
> "An instrument of labour is a thing, or a complex of things, which the labourer interposes between himself and the subject of his labour, and which serves as the conductor of his activity. He makes use of the mechanical, physical, and chemical properties of some substances in order to make other substances subservient to his aims" (*Capital*, Volume I, Chapter 6.1).

Lev Vygotsky agreed. In the context of comparing mediation by tools and mediation by symbols, he says:

> "With full justification, Hegel used the concept of mediation in its most general meaning, seeing in it the most characteristic property of mind. He said that mind is as resourceful as it is powerful. In general, resourcefulness consists in mediating activity that, while it lets objects act on each other according to their nature and exhaust themselves in that activity, does not at the same time intervene in the process, but fulfils only its proper role. ... man acts on behaviour through signs, that is, stimuli, letting them act according to their own psychological nature" (LSVCW v. 4. p. 61-2).

§5. The Idea is the unity of Life and Cognition

With this final section of the *Logic*, we see the return of the original idea that Hegel presented in the *System of Ethical Life*: the Idea as a process in which the contradiction between sensation and reason is overcome through a long drawn-out process of differentiation and re-integration, objectification and internalisation, with a continual interchange between means and ends.

So the Idea is a dialectic of Life and Cognition, it is both a learning process and a life process. Truth is the correspondence of Subject and Object, but both subject and object have been conceived of as part of a single process of development.

In the section on Life, Hegel discusses the relationship of Individual and Genus: the Genus can live only in and through the finite mortal individuals which realize it, and conversely the individual finds *its truth* in its Genus.

> "That is to say, the process of the genus, in which the single individuals sublate in one another their indifferent immediate existence and in this negative unity expire, has further for the other side of its product the *realized genus,* which has posited itself identical with the Notion. In the genus process, the separated individualities of individual life perish; the negative identity in which the genus returns into itself, while it is on the one hand the process of *generating individuality,* is on the other hand the *sublating of it,* and is thus the genus coming together with itself, *the universality* of the Idea in process of *becoming for itself.*" (*Science of Logic* §1676)

The category of Life leads to the category of *Cognition*: "Life is the immediate Idea, or the Idea as its *Notion* not yet realized in its own self. In its *judgment*, the Idea is *cognition* in general." (*Science of Logic* §1677) In the section on Cognition, Hegel takes up the Idea of *the True* and the Idea of *the Good*, and the unity of the True and the Good, which is the Abso-

lute Idea. In the section on the True, Hegel deals with the relation between *Analytical Cognition and Synthetic Cognition*, and Definitions and the Division of subject matter in a science.

Hegel sees Cognition as a Syllogism in which the first two terms are Analytical and Synthetic Cognition, but even this formulation shows itself to be defective:

> "Similarly, [the unity of analytic and synthetic cognition] finds propositions and laws, and proves their *necessity,* but not as a necessity of the subject matter in and for itself, that is, not from the Notion, but as a necessity of the cognition that works on given determinations, on the differences of the phenomenal aspect of the subject matter, and cognizes *for itself* the proposition as a unity and relationship, or cognizes the ground of phenomena from the *phenomena* themselves." (*Science of Logic* §1721)

Likewise Hegel requires that the definition of the concepts in a science and the division of the subject matter in a science be determined immanently from the Notion of the science, not arbitrarily or subjectively introduced from without.

The final concept of the *Logic* is the Absolute Idea which appears as the unity of the Theoretical Idea and the Practical Idea, that is, the identity of a practical form of life with its own self-understanding, a *concrete* identity arrived at through the long-drawn out process described. The chapter on the Absolute Idea, like the final chapter of the *Phenomenology*, and like the "Twelve Days of Christmas," is a recapitulation of the whole structure leading up to itself, emphasizing the idea of concreteness as sublation.

And in a final unbelievable leap of Hermetic magic, the truth of the Idea is Nature:

> "The Idea, namely, in positing itself as absolute unity of the pure Notion and its reality and thus contracting itself into the immediacy of being, is the totality in this form – nature." (*Science of Logic* §1817)

§6. Hegel's critique of the individual/society dichotomy

So what we have seen is that Hegel presented a critique of all aspects of social life by an exposition of the logic of formations of consciousness, which does not take the individual person as its unit of analysis but rather a *concept*. A concept is understood, not as some extramundane entity but a *practical relation among people* mediated by 'thought objects', i.e., artefacts.

If we understand that human beings live in an environment of thought-objects constructed by their own purposive activity, and that thinking, insofar as it is correct, reflects the objective relations between these thought-objects, then this would seem to be a viable approach to science, and the basis for a genuinely self-construing method of science.

Looked at with the benefit of 200 years of hindsight, the philosophy has its problems, this is undeniable, but recent currents of philosophy, such as "post-humanism," which pride themselves in having "deconstructed the subject," invariably make the target of their critique a Kantian or Cartesian individual subject, overlooking Hegel's solution of this problem, often by dismissing Hegel on the basis of side-issues without confronting his achievement in overcoming the aporias in Kant's notion of the subject or the Cartesian dichotomy. And Hegel built a philosophy which overcame the contradictions inherent in Kantian individualism without the sacrifice of an *ethical theory*, without the sacrifice of a concept of genuine individuality, whilst retaining a strong concept of Freedom.

In the Logic, Hegel resolves the individual / society dichotomy *as a problem in social science* by means of the Individual / Universal / Particular relation. This is not the same issue as the problem of how a subject conceives of itself in relation to the whole community. That is a problem of the historical development of consciousness, which is dealt with in the *Phenomenology*. But the *Logic* does suggest a solution to this problem as well. We see that Subjectivity is a multiplicity of processes and relations in which individuals collaborate with one another in particular forms of social practice organized around different universals. This approach is far more fruitful than setting up two poles – the individual and 'society' (whatever that means) – and then trying to draw some connection between them. By taking the concept, in the sense described already, as his 'unit of analysis', rather than the individual person, Hegel has produced a powerful and nuanced conception of the human being. Note how far also he has come from the initial investigations into the psychology of peoples; this is something radically different.

This approach allows us to see that the individual may have a whole variety of different conceptions of truth and their capacity to verify their own truth, reflected in the multitude of conceptions of the Absolute outlined in the *Logic*. So the relation of the individual to society which is developed in the Logic is, on the one hand, the relation between a person and the state, and the various mediating forms of association, developed

in the *Philosophy of Right*, and on the other hand, the very decentred, shifting view of subjectivity constructed through participation in a multiplicity of self-conscious projects, or systems of social practice.

§7. Spirit, Substance and Subject

Hegel's philosophy is certainly very strange and difficult to grasp. But we need to remember that his ideas were developed in response to specific and difficult problems in philosophy which were demanding resolution at that time. The problems at issue were chiefly those that arose from Kant's attempts to rescue science from an impossible relativism. So we should not lightly condemn Hegel, but rather give him credit for having produced a science, although a science with some important difficulties. We should take him at his word when he says that Spirit is the nature of human beings en masse. All human communities construct their social environment, both in the sense of physically constructing the artefacts which they use in the collaborating together, and in the sense that, in the social world at least, things are what they are only because they are so construed. The idea of spirit needs to be taken seriously. It may seem odd to say, as Hegel does, that *everything is thought*, but it is no more viable to say that everything is matter and if you want to use a dichotomy of thought and matter instead things get even worse.

No-one else has produced anything that can rival his *Logic*; and he left no room for imitators. It should be taken seriously.

9. The Subject and culture: logic and ontology

§1. Hegel has overcome the mind-matter dichotomy with Logic

One of the problems which Hegel deals with in the *Logic* is the problem of the Cartesian dichotomy between the mental and the material and the various dichotomies which Kant generated in his effort to overcome the Cartesian dichotomy, especially the dichotomy between appearance and thing-in-itself and the dichotomy between sensation and concept.

These dichotomies suggested by Descartes and Kant have considerable support in our ordinary everyday intuitive conceptions of the world. In general people do suffer from the Cartesian illusion of having access to thought objects which are in some sense mirror images of real objects, with a mental world which is something quite distinct from the material world it reflects. The intuitive power of this idea is undeniable. But care-

fully thought through it just doesn't hold up. Likewise, the idea that we live in a world of appearances constructed by ourselves out of processes which are in principle inaccessible to thought and walled off from appearances, but which impart the regularity and necessity from which we fashion appearances. The idea that we apply reason, to which our minds have direct access, to the material of sense perception also seems a very reasonable solution to the problems presented by Descartes. But again this conception does not stand up to criticism, and there is a widespread conviction that there is something fundamentally wrong with any dichotomy, that is to say, any conception which *sorts the world into two kinds of thing with a sharp line between them* with no mediation or common root.

However implausible Hegel's ideas are in places we need to keep in mind that he does overcome the limitations of these intuitively very appealing systems of thought.

So far as it is possible to generalize in this matter, where Hegel comes across a dichotomy, he accepts that the dichotomy is real, refuses abstract declarations which either abolish the dichotomy or arbitrarily subsume it under a third, and studies the *dialectical relation* between the two concepts, and the form of mediation, a relation which is different in each case.

§2. Dichotomy

Just in terms of numbers, how does Hegel respond to *di*-chotomy? In a sense he does replace di-chotomy with *oneness* in that he begins each of his major works with a single concept, be that Being or Space or Right, and unfolds out of that single concept all the distinctions which are implicit within it, through a process of differentiation or *diremption*. So each dichotomy comes into play already with its roots in an earlier unified conception, and rather than having to be stitched back together or brought into relation, that relation is already implicit in the original conception.

In another sense he replaces di-chotomy with *tri*-chotomy and there is a lot to be gained by a comparison of Hegel's work with that of Charles Sanders Peirce who was a strong advocate of trichotomy.

But 'trichotomy' is literally to cut in three, and that is not what Hegel does. He does not sort the world into three kinds of thing. The number three comes up quite a lot in Hegel, but it is the trichotomy contained in the three moments of the subject: Individual, Particular and Universal, which are of significance here. Does this triplet, which is the basis for all those syllogisms, which Hegel uses to elaborate the relations between var-

ious groups of concepts, really constitute a *trichotomy*, or on the other hand, does it succeed in allowing the subject matter to develop its own distinctions whilst retaining the unity and integrity of the original subject matter?

Let's consider some object, say the Cussonia tree at Melbourne University. "Tree" is a *universal*, but the specification of the variety and genus of the plant, its location in a university and the name of the university, all *particularize* the thought down to an *individual* tree, and even if the plant does not exist and is a figment of the imagination, you know the tree through all those particularities.

The words "Cussonia," "tree," "Melbourne" and "University" which are inscribed on the page belong to the English language and as words are *universals*; they exist materially only as marks on paper, vibrations in the air, an unlimited variety of material forms, but are what they are independently of the particular material form or the individual existence or otherwise of this particular instantiation of them.

Finally, the momentary thought which exists as you contemplate the words is an *individual* thought. All of these moments are valid categories of thought, and none of them depend on whether the tree exists.

But the same categories encompass the tree itself. The careful breeding of this variety in Zimbabwe, its transportation to Melbourne and its planting and maintenance by the University, constitute the practical activities which produced that tree, as part of the culture and history which produced that tree in that place and no other. The particularity mentioned above as moments of a thought-object pure and simple, arises from the practical activity which constitute that *particularity*. It is always activity and relations between people that constitutes particularity.

Words summon up universals which are perfectly real and material. "Tree" for example would continue to exist even when the last tree has been cut down, although *some* particularity would have to be involved at some stage. Likewise, "university."

And the tree itself is an individuality as is the thought of it.

So really it doesn't matter whether you are referring to material objects in their capacity as material things existing outside of and independently of consciousness, or you insist on referring to objects whose sole existence is as thought objects, or the more usual case of material things which are endowed with meaning through their production and use in human life, and the transformation of entities from thoughts

to objectifications and back to thoughts again, these categories are *unaffected* and work just as well. Hegel has finessed the whole ontological problem of material objects versus thought objects, and the epistemological problem posed by gaining knowledge of things-in-themselves. Everything that matters to us passes through consciousness, at least at the time it matters to us. Our concepts constitute *our relation to the world*, and our thoughts are true only insofar as they reproduce what is objective.

Logic does not depend on a psychology; subjective thought corresponds to logic only insofar as the content of thought is objective. Hegel uses a conceptual framework which allows him to focus precisely on what is invariant in the transformations between thought-object and material object.

§3. Pragmatic Interpretations of the *Logic*

I have presented a reading of Hegel's *Logic*, in which he is understood to be talking, *not* about extramundane forms pre-existing human society, but rather the logic of formations of consciousness. This view does not on its own resolve all possible questions that could be raised about the ontological status of the categories of the *Logic* itself. Hegel's claim is that they are *self-construing*. At any given point in defining the concepts of the Logic, only concepts already defined are drawn upon.

Hegel does not place the categories of the Logic into some ontological category of meta-theory separate from and above the categories which are the substance of consciousness. But there is room for such an interpretation and most so-called orthodox Hegelians today make just such an interpretation, and like Stephen Houlgate, rely upon some kind of meta-space in which the categories of Logic exist, separate from and prior to the activity of human beings.

There are 'intersubjective' interpretations of Hegel, such as that of Robert Williams, but at least since the 1960s, all such 'intersubjective' readings of Hegel rest on supposedly *unmediated* relations between human beings. It is as if, in an effort to distance themselves as far as possible from Marx, not only are means of production excluded from consideration, but *the entirety of material culture* as well.

And of course the French interpretations have been so dominated by the master-servant narrative, that Hegel's developed thought as found in the *Logic* is often ignored. Aside from the very many excellent appropriations of Hegel which owe their approach to Hegel to the Marxist current

of thinking, an equally interesting appropriation of Hegel is that of the American Pragmatists, Peirce, Dewey and Mead.

Much of the wisdom about organizing and protest strategies today originated with John Dewey who studied Hegel in the 1880s, and became a leader of the Progressive Movement in the US; his ideas on group dynamics, group problem-solving and conflict resolution informed the neighbourhood organizers of the 1930s, '40s and '50s and via the Peace Movement of the '50s and '60s, reached the anti-corporate, environmental, anti-war movements and so on, as well as the self-help movement of the '70s and reaching the business management theory in the '80s.

Dewey abandoned Hegelianism, but Hegel left his imprint on Dewey's thought not only in the developmental approach to scientific and social problems but in the philosophical foundations of the Pragmatic philosophy itself. In his theories of social psychology, George Herbert Mead is much clearer in his Hegelian foundations, although Mead never acknowledged his debt to Hegel.

One of the main problems in this theory is that the Pragmatists took as the paradigmatic artefact the *gesture*. The gesture offers very limited scope for the development of a theory of consciousness really able to modernize Hegel's conception of a formation of consciousness. Although objective, like the spoken word, the gesture is tied to the *presence* of the agent, and blurs the distinction between the individual agent and the objective culture of the society; cultural production would be like writing on water, limiting the conception of 'second nature' to the cultivation of habits.

Charles Sanders Peirce's concept of semiosis, sign activity, has much in common with Hegel's concept of Spirit. For Peirce, signs are active in nature just as much as in culture and thought and may offer an alternative to Hegel's problematic Philosophy of Nature. Peirce's trichotomy of signs according to the manner in which they indicate the object, namely icon, symbol and index, has no equivalent in Hegel, although Peirce's trichotomy: *qualisign*, *sinisign* and *legisign*, corresponds to Hegel's moments of particular, individual and universal. Peirce's basic conception of the world is semiosis, that is to say, signalling or communication, and just like with Hegel's thought, Peirce's semiosis is an objective process in which individual thinkers participate. According to Peirce, the individual is a "concentrated group."

Peirce expressed antipathy towards Hegel, but one gets the impression that it was that kind of animosity which included the respect of one thinker towards another with whom he shared a great deal, including the fact that both were pathologically poor communicators. Both thinkers invented their own lexicon and constructed entire systems of idiosyncratic concepts; so mutually interrogating the writings of these two writers is challenging. Nonetheless, Peirce is a useful supplement to Hegel.

If we are going to appropriate Hegel for today, we don't actually *need* a psychology, but we do need at least a plausible meta-psychology which allows us to be clear about the ontological questions raised by an interpretation of Hegel.

§4. Vygotsky

The School of psychology initiated by Vygotsky and A N Leontyev in the Soviet Union of the 1920s owes a great deal to Hegel. The key concepts for Vygotsky and Leontyev were artefact and collaborative activity, which together constitute what Hegel would have called a formation of consciousness, or *Gestalt*. The idea is that people learn to control their own body and their relationship to their environment by collaborating with others in the use of artefacts, external stimuli. Through the use of artefacts, which are the bearers of cultural norms, people learn to do without the external stimulus and to do on their own what they could formerly only do with assistance. The artefact is replaced by an internal stimulus, or 'psychological tool'. The process of internalizing the use of the artefact is a protracted process of transformation, which is of interest only to the developmental psychologist. Consequently, the mind-matter dichotomy is irrelevant in this psychology, in which every object of thought is both ideal and material, but unlike behaviourism, the psyche is regarded as perfectly *real* and a valid object of scientific investigation.

Vygotsky's most well-known work, *Thinking and Speech* (1934), deals with the development of thinking with concepts from infancy up to adolescence. According to Vygotsky, it is not until adolescence that children begin to use real concepts, in the Hegelian sense, as opposed to one of about ten transitional forms of conception that precedes the true concept.

§5. The Logic offers a rational conception of emergent social consciousness

Nowadays, the human sciences are extremely fragmented; not only is research divided into sociology, political science, anthropology, psychology, law, history, linguistics, philosophy, criminology, etc., etc. On top of this we have fragmentation separating the different currents of thinking: positivists, behaviourists, functionalists, structuralists, Marxists, poststructuralists, deconstructionists and so on. This situation poses severe problems for those who want to solve social problems, rather than just build an academic career for themselves. There is an urgent need for an approach which is based on critical appropriation so that different insights can be integrated and an approach which is holistic and not hampered by the individual vs. social dichotomy or focused only on certain kinds of interaction. While no substitute for practical investigation of particulars, Hegel's *Logic* may offer a useful approach to integration and appropriation in a terminally fragmented scientific landscape.

The *Logic* is particularly well suited to the study of emergent social movements and projects. Whenever you are dealing with a group of people organized around an idea or a social project or enterprise of some kind, then Hegel's *Logic* is your operations manual. No community development worker, social justice activist, voluntary group organizer, political activist or academic with an overview of their subject matter should be without it.

The various writers who have developed theories of group dynamics all scratch around the edges of Hegel's *Logic*. It is a useful exercise to compare theories of group dynamics with Hegel's *Logic* because they give insights into the *Logic* which would otherwise be lost in Hegel's arcane exposition. But in terms of a well developed, coherent and comprehensive theory, you can't go past the *Logic*.

Jean-Paul Sartre is someone who should be mentioned for his effort to produce something like a pragmatic reading of Hegel in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Sartre makes no effort to emulate the structure of Hegel's *Logic* or suggest any correspondence between his own categories and Hegel's, but the parallels are clear enough. Sartre presumes that as soon as the white heat of struggle fades from the activity of a fused group, the objectified residue of the fused group is an institution which is irrevocably dead, an object and not a subject. This exaggeration is one-sided. *Critique* was a useful exercise, and it would be a worthwhile exercise to try

to reproduce the effort in the light of what has been learnt in the years since Sartre tried it in 1960.

§6. History and Development

The following passage in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* explains why the history of right plays no part in the work to follow:

> "The science of right is a *part of philosophy*. Hence it must develop the idea, which is the reason of an object, out of the conception. It is the *same thing* to say that it must regard the peculiar internal development of the thing itself. Since it is a part [of philosophy], it has a definite beginning, which is the result and truth of what goes before, and this, that goes before, constitutes its so-called proof. Hence the origin of the conception of right falls *outside* of the science of right." (Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* §2)

and he adds:

> "In philosophic knowledge the necessity of a conception is the main thing, and the process, by which it, as a result, has come into being is the proof and deduction. After the content is seen to be necessary independently, the second point is to look about for that which corresponds to it in existing ideas and modes of speech." (Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* §2)

Recapitulating what this paragraph says: The science of right must be developed out of the concept of right; bringing to light logically what is implicit in the concept of right. In this way the writer finds the distinctions which are natural to the subject matter, with the relations between all the concepts emerging from the subject matter itself, rather than being imposed arbitrarily from outside.

In the *Logic*, it is the Objective Logic which gives the "pre-history" of a concept, and we can see that the function of studying this pre-history is to arrive at clarity about the essence of the subject matter, to be able to present a simple definition which can be seen as the final result of that history. So any science has two distinct parts, and only the second is a genuinely scientific treatment, the first part being just an historical justification for the starting point of the science.

As Marx summarized this in the section known as "Method of Political Economy" in *The Grundrisse*:

> "Along the first path [the Objective Logic] the full conception was evaporated to yield an abstract determination; along the second [the Subjective Logic], the abstract determinations lead towards a reproduction of the concrete by way of thought. In this way Hegel fell into

> the illusion of conceiving the real as the product of thought concentrating itself, probing its own depths, and unfolding itself out of itself, by itself, whereas the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is only the way in which thought appropriates the concrete, reproduces it as the concrete in the mind. But this is by no means the process by which the concrete itself comes into being. For example, the simplest economic category, say e.g. exchange value, presupposes population, moreover a population producing in specific relations; as well as a certain kind of family, or commune, or state, etc. It can never exist other than as an abstract, one-sided relation within an already given, concrete, living whole." (*Grundrisse*, Marx 1857, p. 100)

Gaining clarity about that one concept (for example, the commodity relation) which forms the *starting point* for a science is a long drawn out process of appropriating the prehistory of a science; but once the correct starting point is finally arrived at, the science can be unfolded out of that concept. This kind of process is actually repeated every time a science runs into some crisis and has to be reinvented, so it turns out that the distinction between the Subjective Logic and the Objective Logic is *relative*.

So the scientific study of some form of social practice is distinct from the study of its history. But this still leaves the question of the developmental approach, that is to say, the conviction that every concept in a science must be understood as a process, a process whose movement is one of the forms of movement exhibited by Hegel in the various parts of the *Logic*. The opposite simply cannot withstand Hegel's critique. Development is, after all, practical, objective critique.

§7. Everything is both immediate and mediated

In summary, the contradictory answer to what seemed to be two different avenues for acquiring knowledge, reason and intuition, is that we acquire concepts the same way we acquire the data of sense perception; concepts have been 'built into' our environment by our predecessors, and in using and perceiving these objects and acquiring a sensuous understanding of their nature and interconnection with other objects we acquire *conceptual* knowledge. But precisely because reason is in the world in this sense, reason comes with bumps and scratches and like an old house, is constantly in need of refurbishment.

Hegel's use of the structure of the Syllogism: Individual, Particular and Universal, as the basic coordinates for understanding thought objects, has the benefit that the same structure works for thought objects at whatever stage of objectification or internalisation they may be at, and the

consequently the *Logic* sheds light on the dynamics of formations of consciousness, whether looked at in terms of ways of life, ways of thinking or constellations of culture.

10. Critique of the Hegelian dialectic

§1. The Spirit became a total process, pre-existing its manifestation

As mentioned above, at an early stage in his development Hegel abandoned a genuinely scientific approach in which spirit was the product of human activity, and instead introduced the idea of a spirit which pre-existed human society and *manifested* itself in human life. Although this move is easily reversed, the resulting religious flavour penetrated deeply into the entire system. This is what Marx was getting at when he said: "History does nothing," (*Holy Family*, §6.2a)

An example of this quasi-religious flavour in Hegel is the development of the Concept described in the Logic, concretizing itself until every concept merges with every other and all conflicts have been transcended in the Absolute Idea. Now this idea is quite adequate in indicating the form and direction of the process of concretisation and objectification, but it would be an obvious mistake to take too seriously the reality of the Absolute Idea. As Feuerbach put it, this "is the negation of theology from the standpoint of theology." (*Philosophy of the Future*, §21)

Hegel shared with Goethe a hostility to the positivism of the natural sciences of his times, which was associated, rather unjustly, with the name of Isaac Newton. Although each of them left a legacy of considerable value for natural science, it is fair to say that both of them were mistaken in some matters as regards Nature.

Hegel held that "there is nothing new under the Sun in Nature." Now this proposition can be justified: even the physicists who theorise about the Big Bang assume that they can determine the laws of physics applicable at *that time* on the basis of a logical deduction from what they perceive *now*. Neither modern day physicists nor Hegel suggest that nothing *changes* in Nature; obviously this is not the case. Hegel knew that the continents were the products of a process of geological development, but he thought that human beings appeared on new continents, complete with a characteristic physiology, as if springing from the ground.

Hegel shared an idea which is still very common today that the development of the human form can be sharply divided into two stages, firstly the natural process, which Hegel took to be more or less as per the

Old Testament, and secondly the cultural process. Hegel did not see any overlap or interpenetration between nature and culture in the human form and uncritically accepted the nature/culture dichotomy. Consequently he took the relations between the sexes and between the peoples of different cultures to be more or less given by Nature, rather than being a product of culture. This produced a distortion in his *Logic* because, as can be seen in the latter parts of the section on the Idea, he had to prepare in the *Logic* the basis for a logical derivation of these relations in his *Philosophy of Nature*, that is, differences *pre-existing* culture and history. In the absence of any theory to explain the cultural development of the human form itself, he *'essentialised'* these differences. Obviously this has led to distortions in the *Logic* as well as huge blind-spots in his social and political theory.

Conversely, in his critique of Hegel in the "1844 Manuscripts," Marx makes much of the fact that Hegel gives no recognition at all for human beings as *natural* beings, with needs that have their source in Nature. And as if that were not enough, he places the human being who is furthest removed from Nature, the philosopher, at the pinnacle of the whole process. In a sense the strength of Hegel's philosophy is that he makes human life absolutely a product of Mind, but there is a real price to pay for this.

Although Hegel rejected evolution in the sphere of Nature, he can aptly be called a cultural evolutionist. That is, he sees history as a kind of "survival of the fittest" in the domain of cultural development and history. This view of history has serious negative consequences in the understanding of cultural differences manifested in interactions between contemporaneous cultural groups in the modern world. The way Hegel makes one grade of social practice "the truth of" another generates a clear moral hierarchy among forms of social practice. The problem here is not that one social practice is superior to another; it is always possible to make comparisons in the relative development of specific, finite modes of social practice. The problem comes when *entire social formations* are compared, as is the case in the *Phenomenology*, but the Logic, being concerned with 'projects' or concepts, is not open to this criticism. If one wants to overcome the distortions of 'cultural evolutionism', which are by no means limited to Hegel, then Hegel provided a first rate conceptual apparatus for doing so.

Although Hegel certainly did see history as a world process, he never saw the world as a single *system* so to speak, in the same way that he did

see a state as a single system. He saw the domain of international relations as 'the animal kingdom of the spirit world', that is, a domain in which the different agents, nation-states, act in relation to one another with no mediating system of law or regulation. He was a sceptic in international law. Although the World Spirit was responsible for the development of Chinese Culture, Indian Culture and so on, as well as European culture, the Spirit *moved around* from place to place, and when it left a people, that people fell into stagnation and their part in history was over for the time being, at least as agents and creators in history. So the relation of a European culture to the culture it found in say, Australia, was the relation between modern society and an historically *earlier* and less developed form of the *same* spirit. So, this is classic cultural evolutionism and needs to be negated. But this aspect of his thinking has not left any serious residue in his Logic.

One of the main deficits of Hegel's philosophy arises from the fact that the only social movements he knew were states and emergent states. He never knew a labour movement or a women's movement, or an anti-racist movement. Apart from states, he knew only the Enlightenment modernizing movements, religious movements of various kinds, and the institutionalisation of new social practices, whether developments in technology, the economy, movements in art and literature, changes in fashion and shifts in social attitudes. The emergence of social movements which have a conscious aim to change social practices and mobilise the *victims* of those social practices which need to be changed, is something he might have learnt a great deal from, but the kind of relations and problems that are involved in such movements he was never able to take into account.

This fact is interesting in the light of the fact that Hegel became convinced that poverty was endemic in capitalism, and that the market would invariably function to exacerbate poverty and inequality, and generate the kind of social problems associated with economic injustice. It remained one of the few unresolved contradictions, loose threads, in his system.

Nevertheless, his Logic provides excellent material for tackling these problems.

§2. Hegel made history conform to the Logic, rather than vice versa

One of the problems with Hegel's system becomes evident when we turn to his works on history and the history of philosophy. Despite clear

claims to the contrary in the *Logic*, Hegel succumbs all too often and too easily to the temptation to fiddle with historical facts and the stated views of his protagonists, to make them fit into a pre-existing schema. It is always the danger of any powerful ideological system, that it tends to consume rather than foster its environment.

Even in the early stages of the *Logic* we found that the succession of early Greek philosophers, even as Hegel knew them, did not fit into the schema suggested by the logic. While he is meticulous with his critique of Kant, he is very blasé with his critique of Fichte, for example. He turned out to be an unreliable historian of ideas, even though the philosophy of history which he wrote does not justify these distortions. But this is a warning for us. A knowledge of the Logic, which provides us with a lens of a certain hue when we follow events around us, can inadvertently lead us to distort what we see. But this is a danger inherent in any theory and Hegel would be the first to warn us of this and what is more, explain to us in detail how that distortion works.

One obvious case of this may be the *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel claims to arrive at a constitutional monarchy by a process of logic. All that is real may well be rational, but many would say that he went too far in ascribing logical necessity to constitutional monarchy. Intelligibility easily slips over into rationalisation.

§3. Marx made innovations: activity, alienation, abstraction, production

Marx was a lot closer to Hegel in philosophy than is commonly realized. The sketch of the origins of conceptual thought in labour presented in the *System of Ethical Life* could easily be mistaken for the work of Marx or Engels, rather than Hegel. But even though Marx and Hegel's lives overlapped, in a strong sense Marx belongs to a different era. Whereas Hegel never knew a movement of the oppressed, one such movement, the labour movement, was Marx's principal inspiration. So when Marx says:

> "*History* does *nothing*, it "possesses *no* immense wealth", it "wages *no* battles". It is *man*, real, living man who does all that ... history is *nothing but* the activity of man pursuing his aims." (*The Holy Family*, Part 6, 2a)

he is denouncing this deification of History as well as all 'iron laws of history' in shaping events. It is certainly a condemnation of system building of the type that Hegel dedicated himself to from the *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1805-06 onwards. It can also be understood as a call to take Hegel

back to his original thesis of spirit as the nature of human beings en masse.

Consider this well-known line from the *German Ideology*:

> "The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are *the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live*, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way." (*German Ideology*, Part I, §1a)

This is a precise statement of the kind of interpretation of spirit advocated here, a pragmatic interpretation of Hegel's logical syllogism: real individuals, their activity and the material conditions, i.e., the Individual, Particular and Universal.

The *Theses on Feuerbach* spell out an interpretation of Hegel in which real individuals, their activity and the material conditions have been put in the place of Spirit. And it should be remembered that in these theses, Marx supports Hegel against Feuerbach.

The famous excerpt from the *Grundrisse* on the "*Method of Political Economy*" concerning the relation of abstract and concrete is also pure Hegel, as is the structure of *Capital*, beginning with the Commodity, the cell of capitalist relations, and then self-consciously unfolding from the concept of commodity, the contradictions of capitalist society. Pure Hegel.

There are also a couple of elements of Marx which are *not* to be found in Hegel, but which seem so Hegelian that many people think they come from Hegel.

Firstly, alienation. Alienation, as the experience of one's own labour becoming the property of a hostile and exploiting class, is a discovery of Marx, not Hegel. A present day Hegelian, like Derrida, would see *all* production as objectification and give no special status to the exploitation of wage labour.

Secondly, the idea of abstraction as an objective process, namely the money relation, is a discovery of Marx, not Hegel.

Thirdly, although it is seen that Hegel's original insight ed a kind of anthropology of labour, Hegel never went on to emphasize the production and reproduction of material life as having a privileged position in the formation of Mind, and this claim is a discovery of Marx. Hegel's idea of sceptical logical critique of the criteria of knowledge, as found in the

Phenomenology, goes to the other extreme. This is probably a case of the truth being somewhere in the middle.

Fourthly, although Hegel's advocacy of the state needs to be understood in the context of the viewpoint of a people without a state, that is, the state as a social movement, this certainly was not Marx's view. Marx did base himself squarely and consistently on social movements as the vehicle of emancipation, and was hostile, not only to Hegel's constitutional monarchy, but states in general, although it has to be said, he never worked out an alternative in any definite shape.

But these differences should not obscure the huge debt that Marx owed to Hegel. Altogether, of all Hegel's works, it is the Logic which is the least tainted by the defects in Hegel's philosophy and the most to offer for contemporary appropriation. Or as Lenin put it:

> "in this *most idealistic* of Hegel's works there is the *least* idealism and the *most materialism*. 'Contradictory', but a fact!" (Lenin CW, Volume 38)

§4. Nature is intelligible, but it is also independent of human activity

Finally, the question of a 'dialectics of nature'. According to Hegel at the conclusion of the *Logic*, "The Idea, in positing itself as absolute unity of the pure Notion and its reality and thus contracting itself into the immediacy of being, is the totality in this form – nature." (*Science of Logic* §1817)

But Hegel's idea is that the Logic exists in nature as its *intelligibility*, not its forms of movement as such. It is through a labour process and the study of nature that spirit manifests itself in the form of consciousness. People who talk about a dialectics of nature, usually have in mind just the categories of Being – quality, quantity and measure and perhaps the moments of reflection. It is hard to disagree with the claim that movement, opposition, reflection and so on, exist in nature, that is, that nature moves, changes, reflects in the sense of leaving meaningful traces, and so on. Such a claim is similar to Peirce's conception of semiosis as a natural process. But to go beyond this, for example, to talk about the dialectic of form and content, or any of the categories of Subjectivity, is stretching the point too far; these are obviously categories of thought.

The later categories of the Idea, like Chemism, or Living Individual and Life, certainly begin to look like categories of Nature, but here we have a movement from thought to nature, not the other way around.

So the idea of a dialectics of nature represents a big misunderstanding and actually has acted as a barrier to popular understanding of dialectics, not a help.