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## *Self-Understanding and Self-Realizing Spirit in Hegelian Ethical Theory*

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Throughout his writings, Hegel continuously claimed that Kant's assertion that we could derive moral content by universalizing our maxims was essentially an empty idea. In particular, in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel seemed to interpret Kant as claiming that moral impermissibility was based on rational impermissibility, and rational impermissibility was equivalent to contradictoriness. Thus Hegel argued that Kant's claims are empty because it is just as consistent (that is, rational) to will that 'Property shall everywhere be respected' as it is to will that 'Property shall nowhere be respected.' Later in his lectures on the history of philosophy, Hegel explicitly states as a proposed solution that if we were indeed to base ethics on rationality, we must also include some idea of self-realizing Spirit to give it content.<sup>1</sup>

This might be called the 'received view' of Hegel's critique of Kant. According to the received view, Hegel supplements his charge of formalism with a proposal to generate content for ethical maxims out of some historicized notion of community or with some view of divine destiny or with some amalgam of the two. Indeed, the very appearance of a phrase like "self-realizing Spirit" reinforces this and is often enough to make philosophers of an Anglo-American persuasion simply close the book (or cease reading the article) when it surfaces. Besides, by now this kind of

charge of formalism against Kantian ethics has been thoroughly rejected by most recent Kant scholars. Hegel, it is said, mistakenly thought that the categorical imperative was supposed to generate all maxims from the principle of non-contradiction. However, the categorical imperative only *judges* the maxims on which we act; it does not produce them. It is more of a procedural principle than a substantive principle.<sup>2</sup> The categorical imperative expresses the supremacy of reason in deciding whether our maxims are obligatory, forbidden, or permissible, even though the source of our maxims may come from outside of pure reason.<sup>3</sup> Hegel's criticism has thus been taken to be off the mark and with it his idea that we need a system of self-realizing Spirit to correct Kantian ethics.

In this paper I will try to offset that doubt about "self-realizing Spirit" and to defend what I take to be Hegel's non-metaphysical alternative to Kant. Although Hegel did indeed charge Kant's ethics with being merely formal and therefore empty, he also saw the Kantian moral theory as marking a great advance on other previous theories in its conception of freedom and moral personality.<sup>4</sup> His more basic criticisms of Kantian ethics were systemic, having to do with the conceptions of autonomy, social life, reason, and history. In particular, the genuine deficiency of Kantian ethics lay in its reliance on a metaphysical conception of the person as the basis of practical philosophy. In part, Hegel wanted to extend and radicalize the criticism that Kant had made of traditional metaphysics and to show that Kant himself was still guilty of what he accused others of doing. (Metaphysics is taken here to be any theory that posits abstract supersensible entities to explain the determinateness of the appearing world.) Hegel's alternative is a non-metaphysical account of knowledge and of persons, and it is this insistence on a non-metaphysical account, I shall argue, that motivates Hegel's claim for a need for a system of self-realizing Spirit.

Rather than look at Hegel's specific criticism of Kant's ethics, I wish to pursue an alternative policy: to look at his general criticisms of the *kind* of philosophy that he thought Kant embodied, since his more general criticisms have to do with any philosophy that takes the conscious awareness of objects as its central theme.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, I shall argue that his criticisms of Kantian philosophy extend to all those philosophies that rest on "scheme/content" distinctions, the idea of "conceptual frameworks," of ideas of "givenness" and so on. The result, I think, is of more than antiquarian interest but affects the whole way we see the point of moral philosophy.

My argument will have the following structure. In the first section, I will try to give Hegel's reasons for thinking that any philosophical account is deeply flawed that involves the view that individuals best understand themselves as entities whose consciousness explains the determinateness of the world. This shows up particularly when the object of consciousness is taken to be another person. In the second section, I will discuss what I shall call a proto-Kantian view of what it is to be like a self-conscious

agent and to be aware of other such self-conscious agents who possess the same type of self-understanding and show how it applies to Hegel's well-known passages concerning mastership and slavery in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the third section, I will then show how this leads to a non-metaphysical conception of self-realizing Spirit and explain both what this non-metaphysical 'Spirit' is and the relation between it and the possible forms of self-understandings available to human agents. In the fourth section, I will then try to show how this conception of self-realizing Spirit and its associated self-understandings is central to Hegelian ethical theory.

## I

Many philosophies begin with the basic picture of a person being aware through a series of representations of an independent world of objects. However natural this picture may be, Hegel wants to reject it (or at least reject it as an adequate metaphysical picture of agents knowing items in the world, including themselves). His rejection is based on the basic theory of categories developed in the *Science of Logic*, in which Hegel distinguishes three basic types of categorial descriptions of the world, to which he gives the general labels of "Being," "Essence," and "Concept." In the *Logic*, he argues that the first two ways of characterizing the world (Being and Essence) are inferior to the third way (Concept).

The dialectical argument for moving from one type to another proceeds in (roughly) the following fashion. In the logic of Being (the first type of characterization), Hegel attempts to construct what is involved in a *nominalist* description of the world, that is, a characterization of the world exclusively in terms of individuals possessing only qualitative and quantitative features. However, he thinks he can show that nominalism naturally leads to something like Platonism, that is, the positing of abstract supersensible entities that lie 'behind' or 'beyond' the world of appearance in order to explain the determinateness of the individuals being described, as when one explains the determinateness of several red individuals by reference to the universal, "redness." The universal is said in Hegelian parlance to be the 'essence' of the red things.<sup>6</sup> If one begins, that is, with a nominalist understanding of the world, it is unavoidable that one eventually explain the determinacy of the appearing world in terms of some essence 'hidden' behind appearance, that is, to explain the determinateness of the appearing world by means of an underlying metaphysical substructure that supposedly explains the determinateness of appearance.

However, positing these supersensible grounds of appearance abandons the logic of Being (that is, nominalism) in favor of the second type of characterization, the logic of Essence. This second type of characterization

also breaks down as a coherent alternative. Whenever we posit abstract metaphysical substructures to explain the qualitative and quantitative determinateness of the appearing world, one of two things happens. Either the underlying substructure becomes empty, something about which we can say nothing (Locke called it an 'I know not what,' Kant called it a thing-in-itself); or the appearing world itself loses its solidity and becomes indeterminate, something that is only fashioned or shaped by the determining substructure (as happens in the various forms of subjective idealism or in its modern variants of linguistic idealisms that explain the determinateness of the world by reference to conceptual schemes). Either the unknowable things in themselves determine the world of appearance; or "transcendental consciousness" or our "conceptual framework" determines the categorial structure of appearance.

The logic of Essence is really just the endless oscillation between *metaphysical realism* and *subjective idealism*. The only way out of the endless wobbling to and fro from metaphysical realism to subjective idealism is to go to on a third type of characterization (the level of 'Concept') in which we do not look *behind* the appearances for any determining essence or substructure. Rather, we look only to the common appearing world that we share, and we understand it in terms of the things and the thinking, acting persons in that world. That is, we understand the world not as articulated by a conceptual *scheme* but as manifesting itself to us in a conceptual (or linguistic) form.<sup>7</sup> The concepts we use to articulate this world are not themselves abstract metaphysical entities that stand 'behind' appearance; they are rather positions in a system of inferences. The determinateness of a concept consists entirely in its inferential connections with other concepts, not in its being any type of metaphysical entity. Various schemes of inference are then used to describe the world, behind or beyond which there are no metaphysical entities. There are only people in a world, describing that world in terms of holistically understood conceptual structures. There are no metaphysical anchors to the world that link our beliefs to it; there is only the non-metaphysical system of inferences that people in that world use to describe it and express it.<sup>8</sup> Although our system of thoughts certainly has a non-metaphysical causal connection to the world, there is no metaphysically ultimate basis or metaphysically justifying ground outside the system of thoughts; there is only the internal connectedness of those thoughts themselves. In that sense the system of thoughts is self-mediating, requiring nothing metaphysical outside of itself to mediate it (or 'ground' it, to use the familiar metaphor). It is, accordingly, in Hegel's terms, self-mediating and therefore absolute.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* utilizes these same three categories but in a much different form. That work attempts to display and resolve the difficulties inherent in any metaphysical self-understanding of ourselves

and our relation to the world. It does this by showing that the past attempts in our history at understanding the basic structures of human knowledge and action in terms of metaphysical categories—however rationally motivated they were at that time—both conceptually and historically give way to an understanding of those structures as rooted only in the nature of human community and practices, not in any determining metaphysical ground.

This explains the title of the book. It is a critique of treating the *non-metaphysically* grounded practices of the human community (“spirit,” as Hegel will call it) in terms of the metaphysical categories of consciousness. It is a study of the possible ways in which the human community has historically been structured around metaphysical self-understandings, and it eventuates in a non-metaphysical self-understanding that Hegel calls “Absolute Knowledge.” This is why it is a phenomenology of spirit: “phenomenology” for Hegel is a study of those modes of self-understanding that rely on a distinction of consciousness and its objects (that is, those modes of self-understanding that eventuate in the endless oscillation of metaphysical realism and subjective idealism). Since the Kantian philosophy is limited to consciousness (including ‘self-consciousness’), in Hegel’s terms it too is a ‘phenomenology.’ (As Hegel puts it: “The Kantian philosophy is most accurately assessed in that it is considered as having grasped spirit as consciousness, and as containing throughout not the philosophy of spirit, but determinations of its phenomenology.”) The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is thus implicitly a critique of the limits of Kantian philosophy.<sup>10</sup>

The three opening chapters of the *Phenomenology* repeat the first two of the three types of characterizations found in the *Logic* (namely, the dialectics of nominalism and the dialectics of metaphysical realism and subjective idealism).<sup>11</sup> Hegel begins with the issue that, as he sees it, naturally follows from the standpoint that sees people as conscious of a world of independent objects via some representations of them. The issue is whether any knowledge is “absolute,” requiring nothing other than itself. Since all knowledge must be either inferential or non-inferential (mediate or immediate, in Hegel’s preferred terminology), the question is whether there is some form of non-inferential knowledge that could legitimately lay claim to being ‘absolute’ in this sense. The only type of awareness that might qualify as such knowledge would be a putatively non-inferential awareness of pure individuals. Taken down to the most basic level, those items of non-inferential awareness would be singled out by indexical terms such as “this,” “here,” and “now.” But this gives us no awareness of *objects* of experience (for there is no way within this mode of description to single out one individual object from another), and, moreover, our awareness of the individual sensuous items themselves (picked out by “this,” “here,” and “now”) is *mediated* by qualitative or quantitative universals (‘this red’ is recognizable as red only by being mediated by the

universal, 'redness').<sup>12</sup> Our awareness of things as individuals distinguished only by qualitative and quantitative features turns out not to be self-sufficient but instead unstable; it would seem to presuppose another type of awareness involving a cognitive consciousness of the identification of individual objects instantiating universal properties.

Although beginning one's investigations with the analysis of the awareness of individuals quite naturally moves one to a Platonist position, it quickly becomes clear that the objects of such awareness (on such a view) can be conceived only as completely indeterminate supporting substructures linked with the universals that are the supersensible essence of the individually perceived properties. In order to give an adequate characterization of itself, this type of understanding must posit a kind of background consciousness of generalizable laws and posits to explain both the objects and those laws themselves (such as the idea of 'force' or of the 'powers' of things to explain the typical and non-arbitrary behavior of objects in the world). This awareness of laws and systems of the world is the only true kind of direct consciousness of the world, but it is hardly non-inferential knowledge. It is rather a knowledge of the shared world that human beings inhabit. If it has any underlying metaphysical substructure, it would be consciousness itself. The result is thus the preliminary vindication of the basic tenets of subjective idealism.<sup>13</sup> In this way, the opening arguments of the *Phenomenology* repeat in different form the first two of the three grand divisions of the *Science of Logic*, namely, Being and Essence. They have the effect of establishing the relative historical and conceptual superiority of something like subjective idealism.

The upshot of the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is thus to motivate the case for at least an abstract form of subjective idealism. It also ends with a picture of an agent possessing a particular form of self-understanding; she understands herself as a being that is conscious of self in a fully independent self-determining manner and whose consciousness and synthetic structure explain the determinateness of the appearing world. Part of Hegel's ingenuity was to follow this up with another question: how does this scheme work when the object of awareness is another person?

## II

We may now set up Hegel's imaginative fiction. (I shall follow the *Encyclopedia* version of his argument, augmented by Karl Gustav von Griesheim's lecture notes.<sup>14</sup>) Let us imagine such an agent (who looks a bit like a Kantian self-conscious agent), alone, aware of a world of objects in space and time. (For simplification, let us call this agent a 'he.')

This agent has a kind of inarticulate understanding of himself as an independent,

absolute agent. As an individual in space and time, he is also an organism with basic animal needs to fulfill, but he recognizes nothing as binding on himself that it is not the result of his own self-determination. He certainly recognizes that other things besides him exist, but they function for him only as means to his own self-determination. This agent may be said to have a *self-understanding* as an autonomous subject, that is, as being the determining ground of the basic metaphysical determinateness of the world. (Other things may exist, but their categorial structure is dependent on the synthesizing activity of consciousness.) This form of self-understanding may be expressed as the desire to be a type of person, that is, to realize a particular conception of self.

The desire to be a Kantian agent would mean that we would give priority to a desire for self-determination. In Hegelian parlance, this means that the agent would think of himself as absolute, requiring nothing other than his own self-consciousness for his self-determination.<sup>15</sup> Because of this, the agent would have one highest-order desire to be a self-determining agent, an independent person, to be 'absolute' in this sense. Let us imagine a kind of proto-Kantian agent understanding himself as such an absolute agent. (I will call him a "proto-Kantian agent" because he is not yet a full-blooded Kantian agent willing to ascribe rights to others that he ascribes to himself. As we shall see, Hegel thinks that a true Kantian agent can do that only by smuggling in some ideas of what John Rawls calls the "reasonable" into the "rational."<sup>16</sup>) For good measure, let us assume that his highest-order desire is also motivationally efficacious, that is, that both his strongest and his weightiest desire is to be a proto-Kantian person. How would this proto-Kantian agent understand himself? As a fully self-determining agent, he claims independence for himself. Other things have determinateness *for him*; he, on the other hand, is *self-determining*. Moreover, if he is the *only* end in himself, then other things have value only as means to his own ends.

Now we imagine this proto-Kantian agent running into another similarly endowed proto-Kantian agent. (They have both lived on different parts of a desert island, each reading only the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.) In this fiction each encounters the other as being this kind of proto-Kantian agent having the same general features. Why is this? Each begins with a certain *self-understanding* as this kind of independent proto-Kantian agent. Before each encounters the other, there is nothing to challenge this self-understanding. The lone agent may come to question his strength, his cunning, his wits, or whatever in his encounter with the natural world, but he will not be challenged in this kind of self-understanding. The animals and the plants of the world can offer him resistance, but they cannot articulate a different kind of self-understanding to him. As we might put it, the lone agent has a kind of *inarticulate* self-understanding that the natural world will not rationally lead him to

challenge (Hegel describes this as the sphere merely of 'life'). It is only in encountering another person that this kind of self-understanding comes to require articulation—or as Hegel will put it, it is only in the encounter with the other person that we may be *properly* said to be self-conscious at all. Given the terms of this encounter, what is rational for each of them to do?

Kantians seem to think that each would reason in something like the following manner. What do I desire? Well, I desire my self-determination, and I do not want to be frustrated by another person. This is not an idiosyncratic desire on my part, but a highest-order desire, a condition of being a self-determining rational agent living a human life. Because this is a highest-order desire, I must be opposed to any and all actions that would impede or obliterate it. I therefore must lay it down as a rule that others respect my freedom, which is to say that I claim a non-negotiable *right* to my unimpeded freedom. I claim this right solely because I am a rational agent with a desire for self-determination. But since each of us makes exactly the same argument, and there is no morally relevant difference between us, I must grant you the same right. We therefore shall adopt the Kantian first rule of justice. ("Act externally in such a way that the free use of your will is compatible with the freedom of everyone according to universal law."<sup>17</sup>) So we can live together peacefully after all. Both agree, shake hands, and continue to legislate autonomously yet peaceably.

Hegel's challenge to Kant was, in effect, to ask why the proto-Kantian agent shouldn't stop the argument right after his assertion of a non-negotiable right to freedom and add the following. "I am absolute, pure self-relation. You claim to be absolute, but there cannot be two absolutes in the world. My claims to knowledge cannot be mediated by your claims; nor can I say that you have value as an end in yourself. I demand that you recognize me as self-determining, independent, and absolute. I see no reason not to claim such a status for myself." The other agent then also makes the same argument. They end up quarrelling.

Which is the better argument? The Kantian argument supposes that the two agents can easily see that they share reason in common and that there is no *relevant* difference between them *as* rational agents. But why isn't there? Our imaginary agent argues as follows. There is a difference between you and me. I am to be the one self-determining person in the world, and you are not. Your thoughts, your consciousness, your values are to be determined by me. Admit it, acknowledge it. Recognize me as the one autonomous agent in the world, for whom there is no price but only dignity.

Let us imagine the other agent retorting with something like the following. "Look, I have all the same basic characteristics that you cite for yourself. I am self-determining, I find in consciousness the structures I have put there, my 'I' must be able to accompany all my representations, I have dignity but no price, and so on. Besides, to be rational is to universalize, so let's start legislating for the Kingdom of Ends and quit this bickering."

But if *I* have a *highest-order* desire to be self-determining, and an essential component of this highest-order desire is to be an independent person, then since self-determination occurs in the condition of being an organic creature with contingent wants and desires, the other person whom I recognize as a similarly endowed person is inherently a limitation on my freedom. Since I understand myself as independent, absolute, completely self-determining, I cannot understand the other as having any legitimate claim that would limit my understanding of myself as absolute. Like the rest of the world, he too must be brought into tow as a means to my own self-determination. The rational result of these two self-conscious proto-Kantian agents encountering each other is therefore not the mutual decision to legislate for the Kingdom of Ends. Neither would be rationally compelled to universalize here. Each may reason that whoever has a highest-order desire to be self-determining has a right to do that which is necessary against all other things to maintain this self-determination. The question for universalization is whether there is a morally relevant difference among the agents. It might seem that in this instance there is no such difference between the two considered purely as rational agents. But there is indeed one difference: each understands himself as having a supremacy that is inconsistent with the asserted supremacy of the other. To say that this asserted supremacy is *not* a morally relevant distinction is to *assume* a conception of morality from the outset rather than to derive it. (It is to smuggle conceptions of the *reasonable* into a conception of the *rational*.) Since each has a highest-order desire to be self-determining and independent, each makes *that* argument, and the result is a struggle to the death between the two. The two proto-Kantians end up being locked in a Hobbesian war of all against all (or each against each, in this case).

We reach this conclusion, however, not by postulating, as Hobbes did, that a basic desire for power and control will usually dominate our other desires but instead by positing that we have a highest-order interest to be a certain type of person (in this case, a proto-Kantian autonomous agent). We thus reach Hobbesian results without adopting a Hobbesian starting point. Kant reached opposite conclusions by smuggling into his arguments conceptions taken over from the already organized world of social life, the “reasonable.” If the two agents already have a desire, for example, to cooperate on a basis of mutual respect, and they have acquired a mediated sense of independence through various acculturation processes in a market society, then the argument may indeed go in something like a Kantian direction. (Hegel himself hinted at such a conclusion in his lectures on the dialectic of master and slave.<sup>18</sup>) Without these socially inculcated motivations of the “reasonable,” however, no such conclusions follow.<sup>19</sup>

We can put this in a slightly different fashion. The way in which people understand themselves explains the claim that certain modes of valuing, thinking, and acting have on them. For *us* (the modern readers for

whom Hegel is writing), Kantian claims perhaps *seem* to be the attractive or even the *only* available options. However, to the type of people involved here—that is, to people who are the way they are because of the way in which they understand themselves—these Kantian claims can have no hold, no purchase on their actions and understandings. For *them*, it is not an option.

Why do the two agents struggle to the death instead of reaching a Hobbesian resolution? Since the results of such a struggle are likely to be to their own rational disadvantage, why not establish a social compact to regulate the struggle? The question must have occurred to Hegel, since he discussed it in his lectures in the relevant passages of the *Encyclopedia* version of the *Phenomenology*. There he notes that the struggle, given the highest-order desire on the part of each to be an independent person, is necessarily to the death. Not life, but self-determination in the form of independence is the highest good.<sup>20</sup> For these people, self-preservation has not yet become the highest good. For these people, who think of themselves in something like pre-modern ideas of aristocracy, other things (like absolute self-determination) are more valuable than life itself. Hobbesian theories presuppose a kind of modern individual for whom these classical ideals hold less purchase than older pre-modern aristocratic ideals.

With that presupposition, either the struggle ends with the death of one (or both), or one person must quit the struggle. Force and coercion essentially come into play, since rational argument (even a forceful, coercive, knockdown argument with a lot of punch!) will necessarily fail (each has the same equally valid argument). Each only *proves* something to the other person; he fails to *justify* it, since each proceeds from some premises that the other rejects. The struggle can only end when one person *coerces* the other to alter his conception of his highest-order desire from being a self-determining person into a highest-order desire for life. One party is brought to change his or her mind *not* by rational argument but by force. The coerced person opts for a life of slavery rather than the death that would follow upon his putting the value of freedom above life itself. The person who opts for life becomes the slave, and the other becomes the master.

But why wouldn't *both* opt for life and reach a social compact on that rather Hobbesian basis, rather than each running the risk of death? Hegel's answer to this question seems to be that such a compact would always be unstable, since at any point the highest-order desire for self-determination could reassert itself in the struggle for recognition. The compact would always be short term, since it would be based on a strategic compromise and involve no lasting bond between the two. It merely puts off the struggle to the death; it does not obviate it.<sup>21</sup>

The Kingdom of Ends thus quickly becomes a more conventional Kingdom, with a lord and master dictating to his underling.<sup>22</sup> The slave loses his self-determination, and the master's will becomes the will of both

himself and his slave. Not the community of free and equal agents but an unequal relation between dominated and dominator is set up.<sup>23</sup> After that, the next rational step is obvious. Since the two remain human persons, they continue to share in common certain basic needs, and thus a system of accommodation for the production of means to satisfy those needs is set up. However, the inequality between master and slave remains.

This setup of inequality based initially on force, however, would rationally give way to another setup that better resolves the contradictions of dependence and independence. The two wills, that of the master and the slave, are united into one will, represented by the master.<sup>24</sup> We can now think of the duo, Master and Slave, as a kind of corporate body in which the will of the body is identical with the will of its head (the master). By subordinating his will to that of the master's, the slave makes his will implicitly into a social will. His own willing becomes subordinate to that of the corporate body to which he belongs. The wisdom that the slave acquires (which as Hegel puns, begins with "the fear of the Lord"<sup>25</sup>) is that of abandoning his own egoism and adopting a more social standpoint, subordinating his will to something other than himself. The slave acquires an interest in pleasing another person, the master.

This gives the argument a new turn. If for nothing else than for purposes of stability, the slave must be made to feel favorably inclined toward the master, since he always retains the possibility of renouncing his previous decision to rank life higher than self-determination, which would naturally lead him into rebellion. The master must therefore learn to care for the slave and not to give orders that are sure to be disobeyed and that will provoke insurrection. Thus, it is rational for the master gradually to treat the slave with greater respect, bringing him into the family as a trusted and honored part of it. In this way, the relationship of master and *slave* is rationally transformed to that of master and *servant* (mirroring, so Hegel no doubt thought, the passage from ancient slavery to feudal dependence).<sup>26</sup> By being given this recognition, the servant is now well on the way to asserting his full independence again (mirroring, so Hegel no doubt also thought, the passage from feudal dependence to modern equality).

As a servant, in turn, he becomes an *agent* of the master, representing the master's will, translating it into various forms.<sup>27</sup> (If it is the master's will that he not receive guests until he finishes reading the *Phenomenology*, then the servant translates that will into action, turning away visitors in the name of the master.) The crucial change here is that even though there still exists a relation of dependence, the corporate body becomes a subject in its own right. It acquires, as it were, its own will (which at this stage is identical with that of the will of the head of the corporate body), in that it now has agents acting in its name. The master in learning to give only reasonable commands to his servant implicitly gives up his authority as the sole self-determining being.<sup>28</sup> In doing so, the master shows that he

begins to acknowledge the full status of the servant as a self-determining being. The servant “becomes an end (*wird er auch Zweck*), he counts, he has his honor, is a member of the family.”<sup>29</sup>

Innocent as this may sound, it completely undermines the relation between master and servant, and it underlines the internal failure of the master/servant relationship. Each has failed to make himself ‘absolute.’ Moreover, insofar as the servant has achieved respect in terms of the status of himself being a self-determining being, and insofar as both the master and the servant are now in a unity structured by principles that transcend the kind of strategic struggles that initially created this kind of social relationship, the possibility of a new form of self-understanding and thereby social relationship has been created. This possibility is in fact created by the necessary failure of both persons, the master and the servant, to fulfill their original desires to posit themselves as completely self-determining. The unity between the two in forming a corporate body that can survive the mortality of both of its members gives rise to a new possibility: that of *mutual recognition* instead of the truncated form of recognition found thus far. (Hegel almost certainly intended this also to serve as a kind of philosophical fable about the non-rational dawn of political life and how its brute beginning in coercion would be rationally improved upon, eventuating in the modern notions of the equality of freedom.)

The two members can avoid the at least theoretically endless repetition of this struggle by realizing that if anything is fully self-determining, it is the unity of the two, the corporate body itself, that is fully self-determining. It, not its members, has the better claim to being ‘absolute’ in the sense of not being mediated by another. The self-consciousness of each, interpreted now as including the kind of self-understanding that each has of himself, turns out to be *mediated* by this unity in which they stand. Moreover, this unity has no metaphysical existence apart from being the unity of its members; it can outlive its particular members, but it cannot survive without having members. It is not a hidden metaphysical substructure determining the appearing world of self-conscious persons. This new unity constitutes the category of what Hegel calls “universal self-consciousness.”

### III

As with all dialectical arguments, this develops a move to a new conception, that of “universal self-consciousness,” out of the internal problems involved in earlier conceptions (in this case those involved in the category of self-determining autonomous agents). Applied without any social mediation, the categories of self-conscious autonomous determination lead to the unending conflict of master and servant. This conflict can be overcome

only by *positing* new categories. In the forward movement of a dialectical argument, this act of positing may at first look like only a conjecture; looking back over already completed dialectical arguments, however, the posit appears as a necessary solution to the dilemmas that preceded it. That is, the posit can be seen retrospectively to have been construed according to a kind of dialectical logic (“logic” in the sense that the move to the posit was not arbitrary but was required to avoid a contradiction.)

The *inarticulate* self-understanding that both proto-Kantian agents bring to their encounter rationally leads to a struggle whose resolution is based not on reason but on coercion. This leads to a different form of self-understanding in which a unity between the two is established in which one understands himself as the master (as remaining independent and absolute) and the other understands himself as the slave. This form of shared self-understanding, though, is unstable, since the master becomes dependent on the slave, and the slave works himself up to a recognition of his own type of independence. The self-understandings of the master/slave relationship thus give way to those involving a relationship of lord and servant (modeled no doubt on Hegel’s understanding of the social relations of medieval feudal Europe). Eventually they give way to a full articulation of the equality of freedom, of a set of self-understandings that articulate an understanding of ourselves as both interdependent and independent.

“Universal self-consciousness” is thus a key category for Hegel’s theory. He also characterizes this abstractly as “the affirmative knowing of one’s self in the other self.”<sup>30</sup> Universal self-consciousness is thus the idea of a *shared* and *reflective* understanding of what we as agents essentially are; it is opposed to the earlier *inarticulate* self-understanding that characterized ‘life’ and the incoherent self-understandings that characterize the forms of domination of masters and slaves, and lords and servants. The important step for Hegel is to see that universal self-consciousness does not denote any metaphysical entity standing behind appearance that determines it (as would the Kantian notion of self-consciousness synthesizing its experience) but rather the kind of reflective self-understanding articulated in the essential categories of particular linguistic and cultural communities. Hegel calls those principles of self-understanding that structure human communities *spirit* (sometimes translated as “mind,” since it represents what is basic to rational human life), and it is the move to spirit which is the point at which the *Phenomenology* finally moves to the third level of the *Logic* (the doctrine of ‘Concept’).<sup>31</sup> It returns us to his original claim, that Kantian ethics needs to be reworked in terms of a conception of self-realizing spirit in order to have any content at all.

What is spirit (*Geist*), perhaps the most notorious of Hegel’s categories? Although in the received view of Hegelianism, it is most often taken as denoting some metaphysical entity, perhaps God himself, of which we are all parts and which is struggling to come to an awareness of

itself in history, it is best taken in another sense. "Spirit" denotes not a metaphysical entity but a fundamental *relation* between persons that mediates their self-consciousness as self-understanding.<sup>32</sup> We might put it like this. Self-consciousness is not the awareness of a set of internal objects but a kind of assuming of a position in inferential space.<sup>33</sup> Forms of self-consciousness are then forms of self-understanding; they express how we understand what is essential to us as thinking, acting agents (as subjects, in Hegel's terms). We have a relation of spirit whenever there is mutual recognition among self-conscious subjects that is mediated by a shared self-understanding of what is essential to them as acting, thinking agents. Spirit is, as we might put it, the basic categorial structure of communal subjectivity, ultimately, of the human community itself.

This is, as Hegel stresses, only an abstract characterization of spirit. More detailed treatment of it depends on the kinds of internal dilemmas that various forms of spirit develop. Besides being developed in different ways, it takes different forms depending on the kind of self-understanding present. For example, there are the basic self-understandings we have as seeing ourselves involved in cooperative social life—the kind of self-understanding involved in our moral, social, and political practices and institutions. Hegel calls this "Objective Spirit," and it involves the categories that structure the kind of self-understandings we have in using the principles of "the Reasonable" (the terms of social cooperation of determinate cultural communities) in practical reasonings.<sup>34</sup>

To partially review the steps taken so far: beginning with a conception of consciousness as awareness first of immediate givens, then of metaphysical substructures, Hegel moves to the idea of a consciousness that is aware of itself as a kind of metaphysical substructure, the ground of the determinateness of reality (the thesis of subjective idealism). In practical terms, this becomes the idea of a self-conscious individual rational agent taking himself as the absolute ground of appearance, owing respect to no law not autonomously given to himself by himself. Hegel argues that a kind of ideal encounter between two such agents endowed with that form of self-consciousness would not on its own lead to Kantian conclusions without the importation of some substantive ethical conceptions (the "reasonable") taken over from developed social life, importations that for those individuals *as they understand themselves* would have no hold.

Hegel's use of the conception of spirit thus fits the general argument of the *Logic* that the only way out of the instability of looking for metaphysical substructures is to go on to the third type of characterization in which we do not look *behind* the appearances for any determining metaphysical substructure (either of 'things in themselves' or of 'transcendental consciousness'). Rather, we should look only to the common appearing *world* that we as persons share and understand that world in terms of the various conceptually expressible systems in which the world is described

and thought about by the human community. 'Behind' that world is no hidden metaphysical substructure determining things. There is only the system of spirit, the inferential social space constituting the essential self-understandings of the people of a particular linguistic and cultural community, and the world they inhabit.

#### IV

Hegel clearly intended this account of mutual recognition and spirit as the basis of his ethical thought. He notes, "This form of consciousness constitutes not only the *substance* of all the essential spirituality of the family, the native country, the state, but also of all virtues—of love, friendship, valor, honor, fame."<sup>35</sup> This fits in with his assertion that a conception of "self-realizing spirit" is needed for a coherent conception of ethics. Whereas this has been taken (and may sound on first hearing) as if Hegel is calling for a replacement of Kantian ethics with a metaphysically and religiously based ethics (or with a metaphysics of God developing himself in history), Hegel is proposing nothing of the sort. He is arguing against all metaphysically based theories (including the Kantian theory) and proposing a non-metaphysical replacement for them. His thesis is that basic to our ethical conceptions are our self-conceptions, and these are structured in terms of the forms of spirit, of the basic self-understandings, available to us. Central to the Hegelian program is the idea of self-understanding, of our comprehension of ourselves as fitting or failing to fit a conception of a type of person. Our basic desire is for a *coherent* self-understanding; another way of putting this is to say that we have a highest-order interest in being a type of person, in conforming ourselves to a determinate conception of the person, and in having that conception be intelligible to us. We construct ourselves as agents of a particular type in adopting certain pictures of ourselves. Some constructions may be less coherent than others in that they fail to exhibit a requisite degree of fit with the agent's other desires or with certain impulses and needs of human agents. Since our self-understandings depend on forms of linguistic and cultural communities in which we find ourselves, it is only natural that basic to any ethical conception is the idea of the essential self-understandings of communities, that is, of spirit, and the ways in which those communities try to provide legitimation and justification for themselves.

One of Hegel's examples can illustrate his thesis about the link between forms of self-understanding and ethical conceptions. In his *Aesthetics*, he discusses how the medieval chivalric conceptions of honor differed from the ancient conceptions of honor in terms of how each conception depended on a different conception of the person that was

affirmed in their actions and expressed in their art. In Greek art, honor is represented as concerning injuries to external goods belonging to a person, such as fame, property, or privilege. Honor concerns the external goods due a person, not the personality of the individual as such.<sup>36</sup> The later chivalric conception of honor, on the other hand, sees it as attached to personality, not to these external goods. For that reason, injuries to honor may be more varied in the chivalric conception than in the previous Greek conception. For the chivalric conception, in principle just about everything that a person does or that may be done to him can involve his honor. There are thus two very different conceptions of the person and of social life at work there. In the classical Greek conception, there is no clear idea of the 'individual,' of the "subject's own character and private individuality" as having rights of its own.<sup>37</sup> For the chivalric conception, on the other hand, "honor's struggle is only for the recognition and the abstract inviolability of the individual person," not for "bravery defending the common weal and the call of justice in the same or of rectitude in the sphere of private life."<sup>38</sup> The chivalric conception is the beginning of a conception of moral personality as independent of roles that the person is to play, unlike the classical conception, which saw moral personality essentially in terms of the various roles played by individuals. What will have a hold on a person possessing the classical sense of honor and what will have a hold on a person possessing a chivalric sense of honor will thus be different. What each takes as morally salient will vary.

For example, consider Hegel's discussion of the internal difficulties involved in the chivalric conception of honor. Chivalric honor is, for example, completely vulnerable and is unrestricted in its scope. Since honor concerns the individual and the recognition of him as such, anything can become a matter of honor. The value of all the relationships in which I enter have their value because the individual chooses to give them that value to make it a matter of his honor.<sup>39</sup> Because chivalric honor has unrestricted scope, it is arbitrarily vulnerable, since anything can possibly become an offense to one's honor. Since offenses to honor touch the very soul of the person, the slightest offense can provoke a far-ranging retaliation. This conception of honor thus quickly deteriorates logically into the dilemmas of the earlier master/slave dialectic, since it puts a highest priority on personal independence. For this reason, the form of life that reflects on itself in these terms will find itself constantly in dilemmas for which there is no solution to be found within the terms that this form of life uses to understand itself.

It is thus important to understand how people could come to be the types of people for whom classical or chivalric conceptions of honor were attractive, that is, had some intuitive hold on their thoughts and actions. Because of these kinds of conceptual dilemmas involved in the ways in which human communities have attempted to provide a legitimation for the way in which they essentially understood themselves, it is possible,

Hegel argued, to write a kind of *philosophical history* of these forms of life—a philosophical history, in short, of spirit. The developments of ideals of the person, collections of virtues, ideals of social organization, and so on are all involved in a determinate form of life and can only be understood from within that form of life. The natural teleology of such development is the goal of achieving a form of self-understanding that is consistent and coherent. It has a natural teleology in that the idea of reason itself is a normative concept, involving ideals of coherence and consistency. If one assumes that people seek a coherent self-understanding, then there will be a kind of natural purposiveness to their various self-conceptions as leading to better or worse (more coherent or less coherent) self-understandings.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, this kind of natural teleology tends toward a goal of self-understanding that is also *complete*; a form of self-understanding is complete if it is consistent and coherent enough so that it need not develop internal dilemmas that would require a new form of spirit in order to produce a more consistent and coherent self-understanding.<sup>41</sup> If a metaphysical account of human self-understanding is excluded, then we need a non-metaphysical account of how we came to be the people for whom such a view was attractive, and this account will be historical. However, in order that a form of self-understanding be intelligible to us, this account cannot be *simply* contingent on our having such and such a self-understanding, for that would make things unintelligible to us. We just would *have* such a view, and we could not legitimate it except in some unsatisfactorily circular way by assuming the premises we use to justify it.

It is thus central to a complete account of the forms of self-understanding that these forms be seen both historically and conceptually. The *history* of spirit consists in a narrative of the human community's basic forms of self-understanding. A *philosophical history* of spirit is a narrative account of these self-understandings in terms of their relative rationality and coherence vis à vis each other and in terms of the natural teleology they have toward a full and comprehensive form. It is an account of various forms of the human community's form of self-understanding and the ways in which its attempts at explicating it and legitimating it have broken down, to be replaced by other views that grew out of the deficiencies of earlier views. The kind of natural teleology of the human community to attempt to arrive at coherent legitimations of the self-understandings of those communities is what is meant by "self-realizing spirit."<sup>42</sup> The system of "self-realizing" spirit that is necessary to integrate Kantian ethics into a more coherent scheme is thus the idea of a structured set of self-understandings in which there is a natural teleology toward more coherent forms of self-understanding embodied in types of societal, political, and communal arrangements. It is self-realizing because there is nothing except the socially grounded practices of rational thought and action that underlie such a process.

Interestingly, Hegel claims that *morality* itself is only a specific form of life, a development out of earlier conceptions involved in our understandings of the type of agents we are. Hegel claims that although morality was first articulated by Socrates, it was only recently made into a form of life, a genuine form of spirit, that had any real claim on human actors.<sup>43</sup> This may sound perhaps silly at first, as if Hegel were saying that ancient Greeks were amoral or had no sense of right or wrong; however, that is not his intention. It has been pointed out that there is in fact no word for “morality” in classical Greek or Latin; the term comes from Cicero’s translation of “*êthikos*,” the Greek word for ethics.<sup>44</sup> Morality grows out of ethics (*Sittlichkeit*) and gradually becomes separate from it. The idea of “morality” partially embodies what Hegel later called “the principle of subjectivity” and what we would today most likely call ‘individualism.’ *Moral* action, in distinction from *ethical* action, is that which expresses the intentions of the agent, the maxims on which he or she acts. Because morality supposedly ultimately rests not on specific social roles but on the construction of an understanding of ourselves as being generalized rational agents, it is inherently universalistic (with notions like ‘human rights’ as its correlate). If we take it and it alone as defining our conception of ourselves, then in order to conceive of ourselves as such agents, we must postulate the idea of an act of willing that transcends any particularity of character, situation, or desire. Such a conception of “morality” ends up being correlated with a *metaphysical* conception of the person as having something called free will, a capacity that even Kant noted could only be practically assumed, not theoretically proven. The free will is that metaphysical substructure that explains the moral determinateness of empirically appearing actions.

It is thus no surprise that Hegel took Kant to be the ultimate spokesman for what he called the “moral standpoint,” since Kant more clearly than others saw that “morality” required a metaphysical underpinning. Moral action could only be action *caused* by this free will, independent of all nature. The question for Hegel was whether this self-understanding of ourselves as individuals possessing universalistically understood duties and rights required that metaphysical underpinning, since the conception of a metaphysical underpinning of “morality” in acts of volition that transcend all particularities of character and circumstance leads to the various antinomies of free will and determinism and is, ultimately, itself an incoherent idea. However, the incoherence of a metaphysical conception of free volition should not lead us to reject the claims of universalism in “morality”; Hegel wished to reject their metaphysical basis and to reinterpret those claims within a non-metaphysical theory of social ethics.<sup>45</sup> “Morality,” therefore, is in need of replacement by a non-metaphysical conception of persons as having a kind of self-understanding mediated by the particular linguistic and cultural communities of which they are part.<sup>46</sup>

In particular, “morality” should be replaced by a conception of what is basic in our understanding of ourselves as participating in cooperative social life and by a conception of the substantive principles of practical reasoning as those that have to do with an agent’s essential self-understandings as involved in cooperative, social life.<sup>47</sup> Hegel’s own views were that in modern social life this involves a very general understanding of ourselves as bearers of property rights and contractual obligations, and the kind of reflective universalistic understanding of ourselves in which the ideas of autonomy, conscience, and individualism play a central role. In particular, though, it also involves three types of basic self-understanding appropriate to modern forms of social cooperative life: as a member of a freely formed family, as a rational individual operating in a web of societal relations, and as a citizen. These correspond to the social unities of the modern family, the market and social arrangements of what Hegel calls “civil society,” and the ideals of citizenship embodied in the constitutionalist state. (It is also part of Hegel’s understanding of the historical development of these self-understandings that only in modernity have we come to the point where we have developed the conceptual tools necessary to achieve this non-metaphysical understanding; but that is another story.)

In the understanding of ourselves as citizens, for example, we achieve the kind of universalistic self-understanding at which “morality” aims without the metaphysical underpinnings of “morality.” Moreover, in understanding ourselves not only as free, reflective citizens but also as free, responsible individuals involved in various market associations, we achieve the goals of “morality” without commitment to its metaphysical underpinnings. For a fully coherent self-understanding we need not ascribe any metaphysical basis to our lives; we need only understand ourselves as parts of the developing human community.

The goal of Hegelian ethical theory is thus to seek a workable conception of the principles of personal life and cooperative social life without having to invoke any metaphysical conception of the person or society. This is not because it seeks to articulate (as, for example, Rawls does) an “overlapping consensus” in the interests of securing agreement. Rawls is merely agnostic towards metaphysics, whereas Hegel actually rejects it. Rawls can only offer us a theory of what *we* (modern individuals) would rationally choose from an appropriate menu of options, but he cannot explain how it is that such and such things are on the menu and why *we* are the people for whom, for example, utilitarianism seems like an option. Nor can he tell us if the kind of self-understanding we have is to be preferred to some other alternatives. To avoid such a fall into just having to accept who we are (for “political, not metaphysical” reasons), we need a deeper account of the kind of people we are and why understanding ourselves as being those kinds of persons in that type of community is legitimate. If a system of ethics is genuinely to legitimate itself and

not just tell us how we can cooperate (given who we think we are), it needs to incorporate a philosophical history of spirit that both explains to us who we are in the kind of modern, industrialized pluralistic society in which we find ourselves and how we have *come to be* the kind of people for whom these ideals seem like the only alternatives. Hegel's proposal that only a system of self-realizing spirit, taken in this non-metaphysical sense, could provide any kind of adequate legitimation of that understanding is perhaps not as far off the mark as the world of Anglo-American philosophy has for so long assumed it to be.

#### NOTES

I would like to thank Robert Pippin for many helpful suggestions about various ideas and formulations in this paper. Madison Powers and Michael Inwood also made many helpful suggestions about particular passages. I would also like to thank the Georgetown Graduate School for a Summer Research Grant that enabled the writing of it.

1. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances Simson (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner & Co., 1892), Vol. III, 461. (Hereafter cited as *History of Philosophy*); G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969), Vol. 20, 369. (Hereafter cited as *Werke* and volume number).
2. This point has been made recently by John Rawls in his "Themes in Kant's Moral Philosophy," in Eckart Förster, ed. *Kant's Transcendental Deductions: The Three Critiques and the Opus postumum* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 81–113.
3. In recent writings about Kantian ethics, there has been a crucial shift of metaphor from that of *legislation* to that of *judging*. The shift of metaphor comes in the discussion of Kant's conception of autonomy. In *Acting on Principle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) Onora Nell argues that the categorical imperative should be seen as a kind of procedure for testing hypothetical imperatives. Hypothetical imperatives express our own plans and projects. We then see if they can be suitably universalized. If they cannot, we are to discard them. Nell thus shifts the metaphor of *self-legislation*—reason as actually *making* the laws—to that of *self-judging*. The Kantian autonomous moral agent becomes not so much a legislator of her actions as she is a Supreme Court justice ruling on the permissibility of actions arising out of the legislative faculty that forms hypothetical imperatives. The shift is also apparent in Rawls' piece, "Themes in Kant's Moral Philosophy." This metaphor of judging is quite explicit in Alan Donagan's defense of Kantian ethics. Donagan takes the formula of the end in itself as expressing something like the following. From the fact that there are no producible ends that a person cannot rationally choose to relinquish, it follows that he stands to all such ends in the position of a judge. Reason thus cannot acknowledge anything other than itself as a judge. This constitutes, for Donagan, autonomy, and curiously enough he concludes that because of this, each human agent is therefore a lawgiver to himself. (Certainly the argument that being a judge makes one a legislator would have some serious consequences for jurisprudence, as the legal realists—who actually made such an argument—realized.) See Alan Donagan, *The Theory of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). See section 7.4, "The Theory of the End in Itself," 229–39. Donagan manages this shift of metaphor in part by relying on another shifty metaphor, that of the 'ground' of something ("It is as ends in themselves that rational beings find in their own natures a ground for the law they lay down to themselves." 233). Hegel to some extent even foresaw both the legislative and the judicial readings of Kantian ethics in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, arguing that

both formulations were subject to the charge of emptiness. He had two chapters in that work that were generally recognized as critiques of Kantian ethics, "Reason as Lawgiver" and "Reason as Testing Laws."

4. "It is a great determination of the highest importance in the Kantian philosophy that self-consciousness has led back into itself what counts as its essence, as law, as what is in itself (*Ansich*). . . . It is a great advance when the principle is established that freedom is the last hinge on which man turns, this final point that allows nothing to be imposed on it; thus man allows nothing, no authority to count for him, insofar as it goes against his freedom." *History of Philosophy*, III, 459 (I have altered the translation quite a bit); *Werke*, 20, 367.
5. This approach may be contrasted with that taken by Allen Wood in his *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Wood argues that Hegel's speculative system is 'dead,' but that Hegel's ethical thought nonetheless retains much that is of interest and can be reconstructed without reference to the 'speculative system' in which Hegel phrased it. Wood's work is a far-ranging and very successful attempt at such a reconstruction. However, I think that Wood's understanding of Hegel's speculative alternative is flawed, since he sees it as a deeply metaphysical view that has been overtaken and made obsolete by philosophy since Hegel's time. The alternative view is sketched in this paper and in my "The Successor to Metaphysics: Absolute Idea and Absolute Spirit," forthcoming in *The Monist*.
6. The category of Essence in the *Science of Logic* thus denotes not only a specific category (such as Aristotle's category of essence) but also a *type* of category, namely, any supposedly supersensible entity that is supposed to explain the determinateness of the individuals of the appearing world.
7. Hegel expresses this by saying that "Substance should become subject." In Hegel's logic of what he calls "Essence," we have his working out of the dialectic of metaphysical substructure and superstructure, which culminates in a doctrine of causally interacting substances in one world-system (which he calls "Substance"). But whereas substance might be *self-explanatory* (*causa sui*), it cannot be *self-subsuming*. Being self-subsuming is a semantical notion. Only thought is both self-explanatory and self-subsuming (and thus capable of mediating itself, that is, being absolute). Thus, we must move from the category of a world of reciprocal causation (substance) to that of categories of inferential thought (subject).
8. I have argued for this non-metaphysical understanding of Hegel's notion of the Absolute in "The Successor to Metaphysics: Absolute Idea and Absolute Spirit."
9. See Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, §415. The translation is from G. W. F. Hegel, *The Berlin Phenomenology*, trans. and ed. M. J. Petry (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1981).
10. This interpretation can be seen in contrast to Robert Pippin's subtle reconstruction of the *Phenomenology* in his *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Pippin interprets Hegel as carrying out the Kantian program of trying to construct the various categories and principles of knowledge and practice out of the conditions for the self-conscious awareness of objects. (I have called this elsewhere his "apperception thesis"; see Terry Pinkard, "How Kantian Was Hegel?" *Review of Metaphysics* 43 (1990), 831–38; see also Pippin's piece in the same issue, "Hegel and Category Theory," 839–48.) An interpretation in terms of the apperception principle, however, would keep Hegel's theory at the level of essence instead of at the level of concept, since it would interpret all of Hegel's philosophy in terms of the categories of conscious awareness of objects. Interestingly, Pippin's practice is different than his account of it. His actual interpretation of the Hegelian texts moves more on the level of Concept (in the sense I have given it), since he argues quite well and forcefully that the resolution of Hegel's problems requires him to move to a conception of human practices, not to a conception of metaphysical determining grounds. This contradiction between the stated goal of interpreting Hegel in terms of the apperception thesis and Pippin's actual interpretation in terms of non-metaphysical human practices is one of the genuine tensions in Pippin's deep and far-ranging study of Hegelian theory.

11. Actually the *Logic* that Hegel is presupposing here is not his later *Science of Logic* (written after the *Phenomenology of Spirit*) but what is now known as the 'Jena System,' a first draft of the Hegelian logic written before the *Phenomenology* while Hegel was still at Jena. Johannes Heinrichs has done a very careful commentary on the Jena *Phenomenology* in terms of how it reflects the earlier 'Jena Logic' in his *Die Logik der <Phänomenologie des Geistes>* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1974). The arguments made, nonetheless, in both 'logics' are, however, similar enough to make the extrapolation to the later one.
12. This way of taking the opening arguments of the *Phenomenology* thus departs from the very influential reading that Charles Taylor gives of it as a kind of Wittgenstein-Strawson type of transcendental argument about the use of terms and descriptions (Charles Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the *Phenomenology*" in Alasdair MacIntyre, ed. *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* [Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1972], 151–88). In *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*, Robert Pippin follows this line of interpreting the arguments as a kind of demonstration that the use of indexicals naturally involves us in forms of descriptions, which itself ultimately involves us in characterizing objects as distinct and external to our consciousness. This reading, which I myself accepted for quite a while, has the virtue of locating Hegel in a well-defined kind of philosophical space (we can see him arguing against Russell, against Kripke, etc.). It has the vice, I think, of not actually being Hegel's argument. However, Pippin's arguments have the virtue of being rooted in Hegel's 1807 Jena text, about which unfortunately Hegel himself expressed regrets. Hegel came to see that it was his own usage of such indexicals that confused the matter for readers. In the *Phenomenology* of the later *Encyclopedia* (§418), Hegel criticizes his use of 'this,' 'here,' and 'now' in his earlier Jena *Phenomenology* as involving presuppositions of space and time, and he notes, "The spatial and temporal individualities, here and now, as I determined the object of consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* . . . actually belong to intuition" (my translation). ('Intuition' is a much more developed stage of the theory of consciousness; Hegel is basically accusing himself of making a category mistake here, a charge that, I think, he is correct is making.)
13. In his *Encyclopedia* (§418, *Anmerkung*), Hegel comments on this third section. He says, "there the object is lowered or raised to being the *appearance* (*Erscheinung*) of an internality existing for itself (*für sich seienden Inneren*)" (my translation). Hegel himself, that is, seems to think that the level of 'Understanding' is still operating at the level of what in the *Logic* is called 'Essence.'
14. A participant at Hegel's lectures, Karl Gustav von Griesheim took down Hegel's lectures in shorthand and then later rewrote them in longhand. Thus, in von Griesheim's notes, we have a fairly reliable transcription of what Hegel actually said in explaining these passages to his listeners. Since the notes were taken late in Hegel's life, they also tend to represent his most mature views on the subject. I cite them henceforth only as "von Griesheim's notes." In his edition of Hegel's *Berlin Phenomenology*, M. J. Petry has performed the invaluable service of including von Griesheim's notes next to Hegel's own text.
15. Hegel made a note in the margins of his own copy of the *Philosophy of Right* that autonomy is only "formal self-determination," which he seems to identify there with "abstract subjectivity," which in turn he explicitly identifies with Kantian practical reason. See *Werke*, vol. 7, §123, *Randbemerkungen*, 231. This gives some additional textual support to seeing this part of his argument as dealing with something approximating Kantian autonomy.
16. Rawls makes the distinction between the reasonable and the rational in a number of places. He does so, for example, in his "Themes in Kant's Moral Philosophy." In his "The Basic Liberties and Their Priority,"—in Sterling M. McMurrin, ed. *The Tanner Lectures* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 1982), 3–87—Rawls distinguishes the two in the following way: the Reasonable involves a shared notion of fair terms of cooperation, whereas the Rational involves each participant's rational advantage, what they are trying to advance. The former is shared, but the latter may not be.

In "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory: the Dewey Lectures," 1980, *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. LXXVII, no. 9, 515–72, Rawls argues that the Reasonable presupposes the Rational because it presupposes that each person is moved by a specific conception of the good and that the Reasonable also subordinates the Rational because the Reasonable puts limits to the final ends that can be pursued (see 532). Reasonable principles correspond to the principles of justice, whereas rational principles correspond to the more formal principles of rational choice.

17. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice*, trans. John Ladd (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), 35.
18. This might seem to be just pure anachronism to attribute such an argument to Hegel. However, there are a variety of passages that help to support such a reading. A striking one (in which it should be noted, though, that he does not mention Kant by name) comes from his Berlin lectures on his *Encyclopedia*: "At this present standpoint we have to completely forget the relationships (*Verhältnisse*) we are used to thinking about. If we speak of right, ethicality, love, we know that in that we recognize the others, I recognize their complete personal independence. We know too that I do not suffer on this account, but have validity as a free being, that in that the others have rights I have them too, or that my right is also essentially that of the other i.e. that I am a free person, and that this is essentially the same as the others' also being persons with rights. Benevolence or love does not involve the submergence of my personality. Here, however, there is as yet no such relationship, for one aspect of the determination is that of my still being, as a free self-consciousness, an immediate and single one. In so far as the immediate singularity of my self-consciousness and my freedom are not yet separated, I am unable to surrender anything of my particularity without surrendering my free independence" §431, 77, von Griesheim's notes.
19. It might be objected that this is unfair to Kant, in that the conditions of rational choice are just as important as the principles of rational choice. John Rawls clearly sees this as a problem. For example, in his 'Kantian' theory of justice, Rawls constructs a choice situation for autonomous individuals in which the dialectic of master and slave does not appear. Rawls avoids the outcome Hegel describes only by differing with Kant on the terms under which Kantian agents mutually deliberate. First, for Rawls, the Kantian agents deliberate against the background of a well-ordered society, in which each as free and equal has a commitment to cooperate with the others in a setting based on mutual respect. Kant supposes only that the agents are rational human beings. Second, in Rawls' theory the persons in question are not metaphysical Kantian persons but citizens of a well-ordered democratic society. Third, Rawls has the Kantian agents deliberating as free and equal agents; but the equality of the agents is what is at issue, and, if Hegel's argument is correct, it must come about as a result of a kind of struggle. These three background considerations are not themselves the result of the kind of rational choice that characterizes the choice of principles in Rawls' Original Position. On the other hand, neither are they meant to be. Rawls has a different aim in his theory than Kant does, namely, to provide a pragmatic (he calls it 'political') theory of justice that will provide a basis of agreement for these citizens in a pluralistic society to regulate their discussion. Thus, he assumes the kind of democratic liberal society with its historically developed set of institutions for the purposes of his argument. Thus, Rawls has his agents choose from a menu of the actually available options (egoism, utilitarianism, perfectionism, Kantianism), but he has no explanation (nor desire to give an explanation) of why these options would have the hold on twentieth-century people that he thinks they do. He has no account, that is, of why we came to be the people for whom these are the options, nor does he have an account of whether it is better to be these people rather than others.
20. See *Berlin Phenomenology*, §431, 7 (von Griesheim's notes).
21. "It would be abstractly consistent of each to assert his life and not to endanger it, but the opposite of every determination is also present, and the end here is the resolution (*Auflösung*) of the contradiction. It is, however, an imperfect resolution, involving the basic determination of the recognition's not being able to occur without the subjection

- of the other, the integration (*Aufheben*) of the other's free independence." *Berlin Phenomenology*, §432, von Griesheim's notes (translating "*Aufheben*" as "integration" instead of Petry's "sublation").
22. It is obvious that this ignores the alternative formulation of the categorical imperative that requires us to treat others as ends, never merely as means. Hegel would have no argument with that as a principle, except to note that it does not follow from the idea of universalization as such. It is a more developed principle of a type of social unity.
  23. "Since life is as essential as freedom, the initial outcome of the struggle, as a one-sided negation, is inequality." *Berlin Phenomenology*, §433.
  24. "It is one will, and it is already universal, a will which has broadened out, not merely the will of a single self. . . . Although the servant has to work in accordance with the desire of the master regardless of what this desire is, there is at the same time a universality present, for will, subjective will, desire, is extended, the master being the will within his own consciousness as well as within that of the servant. In that there is now only one will, that of the master, it is at the same time independent, directed in accordance with his desires, and to this extent the servant is an instrument, having no purpose of his own." *Berlin Phenomenology*, §435, von Griesheim's notes, 87.
  25. *Berlin Phenomenology*, §435.
  26. In his lectures on the subject, Hegel added this twist concerning slaves and servants to the argument, although the distinction is not completely made clear. Hegel speaks variously of a *Knecht* (a knight or servant), a *Diener* (literally, a server), an *Unterworfene*, a subordinate, and a *Sklave* (a slave). See *Berlin Phenomenology*, §435, von Griesheim notes, 86 (the German text). The original relation in the printed *Encyclopedia* is finessed by Hegel into mastery and *servitude* (*Knechtschaft*), a term evidently intended to cover both aspects of slave and servant. This difference between slave and servant is not, however, the moving impulse in the corresponding sections of the earlier *Jena Phenomenology of Spirit* (which perhaps partially explains the varying translations of the section as either "Master and Slave" or "Lordship and Bondage"). The *Encyclopedia* version replaces the transition to universal self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, which treated the transition as a progression from stoicism to skepticism to the unhappy consciousness. I would speculate that the fully worked out "Philosophy of History" characteristic of Hegel's later Berlin period accounts for this difference, since the passage from ancient to feudal to modern times is much more clearly and systematically worked out in the later philosophy of history. The same historical progression can, of course, be read into the *Phenomenology*'s sections on stoicism (the manner in which ancient slaves declared themselves nonetheless 'free and independent' in thought) and the unhappy consciousness (generally interpreted in terms of knights—a *Knecht*—in medieval religion). But it is not nearly as clearly made as Hegel attempted in his lectures. Sadly, Hegel never published the later version, dying suddenly as he did. However, similar reflections on slavery and servitude were incorporated into §57 of the *Philosophy of Right*.
  27. In the *Jena Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel makes an argument having to do with the nature of work that he seems to drop in his later rendition of the same sequence in the *Encyclopedia*. (He does not even bring up the argument about work, so far as I can tell, in his lectures on the matter.) In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel argues that in processing things into usable objects for the master, the servant acquires a sense of his own being-for-self, that is, a sense of his own powers of self-determination (after all, he makes the object, it exists through him). This argument is not found in the later *Encyclopedia*. I would speculate that it drops out because Hegel came to see that it was incorrect. To be sure, the servant processes the object, but he does so at the bidding of the master. He processes the object in accordance with the master's will. Thus, this furnishes no real transition to 'universal self-consciousness.' In *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*, Robert Pippin argues that the transition to universal self-consciousness comes about via an argument concerning life and work. The slave becomes attached to life itself, but attachment to life is not attachment to any determinate goal that could guide the slave's labor. Therefore his labors are not determined by any natural interest. The goals arise in the "self-defined experience of the

collective activity of labor" (162). In that way, the slave realizes that he alone is the source for the structure and worth of his products. There are several questions to raise about this. First, the slave does have at least one natural interest in directing his labor, namely, that he do what the master tells him to do so that he may continue to live. The desire for life got him into his predicament in the first place, so it can function as a formal criterion for his labor ("I shall do what the master says, whatever that might be"). I also do not see how the "collective activity of labor" enters into the picture here. The slave belongs to no collective, he is simply a self-conscious person who has ceded his will to another. I also do not see the rational necessity to move to the idea of the "collective activity of labor." Finally, I do not see how this necessitates the slave's coming to see himself as the source of the structure and worth of his products. If the master tells the slave to make him one of those colored doodads, why can't the slave just say, "I don't know why the Master would want this; I see no worth in it; I don't even know really what it is; I see no real structure in it." Why is it *irrational* for the slave to say that? Pippin bases his argument exclusively on the earlier Jena *Phenomenology*. What I see as the weakness of the arguments here was perhaps also seen by Hegel, which motivated him to alter so fundamentally the nature of the transition in his mature lectures.

28. "Whoever wants to command must do so reasonably, for only he who commands reasonably will be obeyed. . . . Command involves understanding how to avoid what is preposterous and absurd, and knowing what is universal involves the renunciation of the singularity of self-consciousness." *Berlin Phenomenology*, §435, von Griesheim's notes.
29. *Berlin Phenomenology*, §435, von Griesheim's notes, 89. I translate "*er wird Zweck*" as "he becomes an end" in place of Petry's, "he also has a purpose."
30. *Berlin Phenomenology*, §436.
31. Although the conceptual treatment in the *Phenomenology* moves to the level of 'spirit,' it still treats it as if it were a metaphysical entity determining the world of appearance, since the *Phenomenology* is a philosophical history of the interpretation of spirit as a metaphysical entity. The book ends with the final overcoming of this metaphysical interpretation.
32. In the Jena *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel describes spirit in the following way: "A self-consciousness exists *for a self-consciousness*. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it. . . . A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as 'object'. With this, we already have before us the Concept of *Spirit*. What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what spirit is—this absolute substance which is the unity of different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: the 'I' that is 'We,' and the 'We' that is 'I.'" *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 110; *Werke*, 3, 144.
33. See Willem A. deVries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); this point is also subtly argued (interestingly enough) as a Kantian position by Jay Rosenberg, *The Thinking Self* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).
34. In addition to this form of self-understanding, there is also that involved in what Hegel calls Absolute Spirit. This consists of a non-practical reflection on the truth about our essential identities as thinking, acting agents, i.e., as subjects (how we must conceive of ourselves in determinate historical periods). This kind of reflection is institutional and communal, carried out through the historical practices of art, religion, and philosophy. In art, for example, we reflect on these truths about our essential identities in the form of beauty (which Hegel identified with the rational coherence of sensuous appearance). In religion, we abstract from the more specific social conditions that art uses as conduits of its reflection and reflect on the truths involved in our essential identities in terms of the basic facts of birth and death and the purpose of life. It is absolute in that it is self-mediating; there is nothing metaphysical 'behind' its reflections except the ongoing communal human activity itself of reflecting on the community's identity, on who 'we' (in this community) essentially are. This is not to deny the obvious, that cultural, geographical, and other factors all influence the reflections of Absolute Spirit. As

Michael Inwood pointed out to me in an earlier draft, nobody would expect Eskimos to produce Italian renaissance paintings. In such reflection, though, we reflect on who we are, on the core beliefs of our culture concerning what our basic interests are. For such absolute reflection (spirit reflecting on itself) anything is fair game, although the form that such reflection takes will be influenced by extraneous factors. Whatever art the Eskimos produce will consist of reflections on the central core beliefs of their culture; it will be reflection on who they are, and presumably Italian renaissance painting will not be appropriate to that task (for that would presume that the Eskimos really were Italian renaissance men and women).

35. *Berlin Phenomenology*, §436.
36. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). Vol. I, 557.
37. *Aesthetics*, I, 510.
38. *Aesthetics*, I, 353.
39. "Therefore I can make a point of honor of what is itself purely substantive, fidelity to princes, to country, to calling, fulfillment of paternal duties, fidelity in marriage, honesty in buying and selling, conscientiousness in scientific research, and so on. But from the point of view of honor all these relationships, valid and true in themselves, are not already sanctioned and recognized on their own account, but only because I put my personality into them and thereby make them a matter of honor. Therefore in every case the man of honor always thinks first of himself; and the question is not whether something is absolutely right or not, but whether it suits him, whether it befits his honor to concern himself with it or to stay aloof from it" *Aesthetics*, I, 559.
40. This concept of a kind of natural teleology of reason is a weaker form of Hegel's own robust conception of teleology. In his philosophy of history, for example, Hegel argues that the development of world history had a kind of logical necessity to it. Given that spirit had begun with a kind of Egyptian conception of itself (that is, given that individuals in ancient Egypt had that particular type of self-understanding), it was logically necessary that it develop a Greco-Roman and a modern European version of itself. He argued this on the basis of a category of teleology defended in his *Science of Logic*. I argue in *Hegel's Dialectic* that his arguments for teleology fail in the latter book and hence his arguments for the *necessity* of world history's progression from the self-understandings of Thebes to those of early nineteenth-century Berlin were unfounded. But whereas this may undermine Hegel's claim to historical necessity as logical necessity, it does not undermine his claims that these later forms of spirit were the only rational ways to resolve the dilemmas of the earlier forms; it merely means that there is an element of complete contingency in history, since without such and such contingent developments, there would not be *those* problems to rationally resolve. Instead, there would be others. A 'natural teleology' has an inherent purpose to it (in the sense in which, for example, the purpose of reasoning is to reach true and sound conclusions) but no goal at which the process is consciously or unconsciously aiming. Natural teleologies may express themselves in certain tendencies toward this goal. However, the empirical extrapolation of a causal tendency is not the same as a natural goal of the process. (I owe some of the formulation of this weaker conception of natural teleology to a conversation with Allen Wood.)
41. It is a separate issue as to whether we have reached that point or even *could* reach that point. Hegel thought not only that it was possible; he thought that we had indeed done so.
42. This should throw some light on Hegel's widely misunderstood idea of a 'world-spirit' that supposedly actualizes itself in history. A world-spirit in Hegelian terms would only exist when there is a structure of mutual recognition between various people and communities in the world. It does not and cannot exist prior to such recognitions and is thus no metaphysical entity directing history to its own ends. Why does Hegel speak of a 'world-spirit' at all? It is his view that world history as a narration of the development of forms of human self-understanding has an implicit theme in it: the realization of the equality of freedom. One has a world-spirit whenever one has differing cultures making that theme part of their self-understanding. Some cultures (Greece, Rome,

Christian Europe) have served as the avant-garde of that theme, but the idea of the equality of freedom is destined to be taken up eventually by all cultures. Since there can be no serious ideological competitor to the theme of the equality of freedom, there is a 'world-spirit' of sorts in our time. But this 'world-spirit' is something to be constructed, not something that exists independently and directs forces of history for its own goals.

43. Hegel says of Socrates that he "is celebrated as a teacher of morality, but we should rather call him the *inventor* of morality. The Greeks had an ethics (*Sittlichkeit*), but Socrates wished to teach them which moral virtues and duties they had. The moral person is not merely the person who wills and does the right, not the innocent person, but he who has the consciousness of his action." *Philosophy of History*, 269; *Werke*, 12, 329.
44. Alasdair MacIntyre claims this in *After Virtue* 2d ed. (South Bend, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1984), 38. MacIntyre argues that the use of "moral" in the modern sense in which Hegel uses it does not appear until roughly the seventeenth century—until, that is, a form of life had begun to be constructed in which 'morality' in Hegel's sense was a part of the self-understanding of the people.
45. One can contrast that with the attempts by F. H. Bradley to construct a clearly metaphysical account of similar things. Bradley argues that the morality of "my station and its duties" must be complemented by a metaphysical notion of an organic unity to which we all belong in order to avoid the pitfalls of "morality." Bradley's view is thus the opposite of the Hegelian conception. This understanding of Bradley's view is found in Peter P. Nicholson's *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). See "Study I: Bradley's Theory of Morality," 6–53.
46. This allows Hegel to reject Kant's notion of the moral worth of action as residing solely in the maxim from which the action issued. Although he often attacked Kant's conception of moral maxims as formal and empty, his criticisms of it actually centered on the one-sided nature of the Kantian conception of the moral agent. In order even to understand adequately the notion of acting from a maxim, one must integrate the basic ideas of "morality" (for example, its universalism and its stress on the reflective capacities of the agent) into a more complex conception of individuals in communities taking their basic self-understandings from the linguistic and cultural practices in which they find themselves in order to achieve a coherent picture of who they are. Focusing on the motive (that 'out of which' we act), or on the end of the action (that 'for the sake of which' we act), or on the consequences of the action (what happens as a result of what we do, how much objective good we produce) is always going to be one-sided, since it ignores the complex unity of an action as involved with the identity of the agent, an identity that may escape the agent's own understanding (particularly if that mode of understanding is itself incoherent). The *action* that an individual takes will be the complex unity of motive, end, and consequences, and the action contributes to the self-definition of the agent. Hegel's idea of the way in which an action is imbedded in a social context is illustrated by the idea that we often learn what we are doing only in the process of doing it, and that sometimes we end up doing things that transcend our motives and our ends (for example, we insult someone without intending to do so; or we pave the way for a progressive change in our society or the circumstances of our work; or we bring about a reconciliation among people that was not in our aim but which we accept as having done). The *action* is the whole, taking into account our selves, our actings, and the consequences of what we do, and it is the action that is the primary unit of moral assessment, not isolated elements of it. The action itself, however, can best be understood only within the kind of non-metaphysical context provided by the idea of a self-realizing spirit, that is, a human community with a kind of natural teleology to develop its set of self-understandings in a more and more coherent fashion.
47. This is also based on the notion of the practical syllogism as developed in the *Logic*. There, Hegel argues against the idea that practical syllogisms have the structure of wants and beliefs about how to satisfy them. The first premise of a practical syllogism in Hegel's understanding must concern itself with the belief that something is good—

not that an individual wills anything—and the second premise states something constitutive to achieving that good. The practical syllogism thus runs: (1) **X** is good; (2) **Y** (an action) is constitutive of **X**; (3) a person notes that she must **Y** in order to **X**; (4) the person notes that she is the type of person for whom **X** is appropriate; (5) therefore, she is to do **Y**. I discuss this in greater detail in *Hegel's Dialectic*, chapters 5 and 7.