

# Hegelian Economics, Metaphysics and the Social Form of Beauty

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## Introduction: Beauty, Cognition and Society

Truth and knowledge are not the same. Knowledge conforms to Hegel's Concept, that is, appearances brought under the notion of logical order. These are necessary relations. For that reason, they are unfree. Knowledge for Hegel is akin to the elementary empirical point of view. From the perspective of the Concept, form and matter seem to have only a strictly formal and external relation. It is naive and uncritical because it is mere imposition. In social life, this is similar to the state acting as a foreign object, imposing its will on abstract individuals yearning for anarchic freedom.

On the other hand, the discovery of all necessary relations among phenomena and their social implications is truth (Williams, 1985: 600). Truth, or the Idea, is the outcome of the continual process of integrating the apparent dualism between form and content into a rational world that is recognized as rational. This reconciliation of the abstract dualism of knowledge is found in the development of social life and true freedom. Form must conform to content, and content to form. Dualism is not truth in that there is no isolated observer imposing logical form on an anarchic nature. This is not so much false as incomplete.

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* builds the rational world of truth from the ground of the conscious subject confronting a meaningless array of phenomena (Walsh, 1946: 50 and Westphal, 1985: 606). These phenomena are meaningless only because of our intellectual and temporal limitations. Consciousness must discover itself and its categories in the "external" world, and this "external" world realizes its logical structure in the (collective) human mind. Cartesian Rationalism and Lockean empiricism are both highly limited, and Kant, while an improvement, does not go far enough. After all, his categories seem to come from nowhere. Hegel's point is that categories manifest freedom to the extent they are grasped as historical and social.

This paper will deal with Hegel's work relative to the development of the Idea, or Spirit. The purpose of Hegel's epistemology is freedom, and his more formal doctrine is subordinate to this end. Cognition is not separate from human social requirements both as a biological and spiritual entity and hence, must be grasped as societal. Truth only comes into existence when the laws of the natural order (that is, knowledge at its highest limit) become part of our consciousness and hence, are reflected upon as rational. Freedom is the same as spirit, and goes beyond the formal requirements of reason. Freedom is Truth, not knowledge .

How does the necessary logical relations among objects become free? How can something give rise to that which it (seemingly) does not have in itself? The difference between knowledge and truth is freedom. To know that x is the effect of y is knowledge, it derives ultimately from reason (which itself, is manifest in the formal and external properties of logic). To reflectively bring that relation into our social world and grasp it as real, correct and good, is to transform logical formality into the free (social) will. In Pippin's conception, "actions are expressive, not merely the unique results of an agent's executive powers" (Pippin, 2008: 152ff). This conception of Hegel is the argument to be made here, since it holds that expression, or the

description of the natural order, is also the foundation of morals and, as a result, freedom.

### **Romantic Economics and Nationalism**

Romanticism presents a coherent and compelling answer to the individualism and anarchy of the free market idea of Adam Smith and the classical school of economics he founded. This section of this paper will summarize the basic ideas of this school, specifically in reference to the new society they thought they would build on the amoral ruins of the free market system. Hegel, as will be seen later, is a major figure in the criticism of laissez-faire economics, but also uses it as an important stepping stone to the development of a rational freedom that is so characteristic of Hegel.

The basic structure of Romantic thought is first of all based on a rejection of rationalism. Rationalism is an approach to politics that stresses technique over ends, treating individuals and peoples as basically identical, and can be placed within scientific models that will both safeguard natural rights, or barring that, maximize production and hence, utility. Within the classic school of economics, there are no “peoples,” or social specificities (except for those things that assist in the development of comparative advantage), there are only producers and consumers. The Romantic school is also a nationalist school, in that it treats nations as individuals, seeing them as relatively unique occurrences of an organic nature. What this means is that economics can never be considered apart from the social organism as an entity. Economics, as writers such as Adam Muller stressed, must become a part of society, integral with its own sense of self and specific development, and, in so doing, become part of the moral life of society (Briefs, 1941, 282).

The Historical school of economics grew out of this development, and stressed the following points of its economic critique:

1. There is no blueprint for economic growth (Scrapanti, 2005, 110). As each society is different, each society historically and politically specific and unique, there is no single approach to development. Some states will be tightly bound up with economic production (such as small states), others will have the luxury of an unregulated market. Some peoples are naturally individual (such as Americans), where others are more communal (such as the Russians). Russians, having a harsh climate, difficult soils, and short growing season, were forced to develop communal institutions and a strong state to offer security. The United States, relatively protected from European wars and saturated with fertile soil, developed a more individualist ethic. Both are correct in their context, and both will develop two very different forms of economic growth and even different definitions of development.

2. Each community then must be seen from the inside in order to judge what is appropriate for each. For the likes of Adam Smith, the free market maximized production and utility regardless of the specifics of the people. This school rejects that and realizes that history, climate, types of soil and geographic location all play their part in not only the economic development of the society, but also in what these people actually come to define as development or utility in the first place.

3. Economics is really, therefore, not its own science: it is not a science at all. It is a part of state building and the sense that a society has of itself, its mission and destiny. “State” in the Hegelian and Romantic school is a technical term: it does not refer merely to the bureaucracy or coercive agencies of the government. State and government are two different terms: while the latter is basically formal and coercive, the former is no, it refers to the culture and tradition of a specific people that is only partially captured in the “formal” elements of the government. The

state refers to all those things that impinge on social order. Economics is merely one of these things, and cannot be artificially abstracted from the social order of which it forms a part (Scrapanti, 2005, 110-112).

In the work of Adam Muller (cf. Briefs, 1947), the state is the “form” of the society: the state is a manifestation of order, and not the principle of order in itself. The state (as defined above) grows and develops like any other organic entity, and the things it needs at an infant state of development is not needed any longer at middle age. Law, including the functioning of the market and corporate bodies follows the growth of the people, and cannot be reduced to a set of abstract laws.

Ultimately, the peoples develop, slowly but surely, into corporate orders. Peasants, townsmen, different types of merchants, government officials, religious officials, etc, all of which slowly develop their own sense of self and mission. All of these groups form a separate tradition based on historical precedent, each developing its own sense of rights and duties to the common good. It is these corporate orders that will eventually form the “state” and its system of rule. In this growth, the sense of the common good is developed not by individuals in an abstractly free market (e.g. Smith’s “perfect competition”), but are part of the historical give and take among various corporations. There is nothing abstract here: each is specific to itself both as a corporate order as well as in forming, in mutual interaction, the sense of the common good (Briefs, 1947, 284-285).

The work of Adam Muller, in this context, therefore, can be reduced to the following basic points:

1. Private property as an “abstract” institution is rejected. There are no “abstract” rights and duties, only concrete manifestations of how the corporate orders on society have worked out their ruling arrangements. Property is as much a part of the commonweal and the corporate consciousness of a people as it is a part of an individual’s or family’s life.

2. Property, therefore, is multi-fold. It may take the form of corporate property, that is, property that can be used at will by members of a corporate organization. All property comes with a series of moral obligations to the corporation and the society and region as a whole. Hence, property is never absolutely public or private, but always a mixture of both depending on the historical circumstances of a people.

3. Given 1 and 2, property therefore, is a social institution, not an individual set of rights. Property is only justified to the extent it benefits not merely the individual owner, but the society as a whole and the corporate orders that make it up. For Adam Smith, capital is justified in the context of the market, itself part of the utilitarian complex Smith took from his mentor, David Hume. Capital is justified in that it properly and efficiently responds to the demands of the market. If there is a demand for product x, and certain forms of capital can efficiently and cheaply produce product x, their profit and power are hence justified in their response to demand. This is exceptionally abstract for the Romantic. Demand and supply are not merely quantitative ideas, they are also qualitative ones. Demand for the wrong things, such as colas, fatty foods, super fast cars, etc. can damage the society. Demand for foreign things in a local culture can help destroy that culture, and hence, a part of history can be damaged or even destroyed. Therefore, it is the role of the state (broadly considered) to ensure that the economy helps the growth of the moral life of the people. The state, in this sense, has every responsibility to make certain colas do not rot the stomachs of their people, or that McDonald’s does not clog the arteries of peoples who never knew heart problems, such as the fish eating Fijians or Greeks.

4. Private property, either of the individual, family or corporate order (such as a guild),

represents the power over matter from a group of people relative to their corporate interests. This is the control over matter from the point of view of the part. State property is in the interest of the whole commonwealth, and represents the power over matter from the point of view of the whole. Both have their place, and both have their role in society. Hence, the key issue is balance: while individual and corporate initiative cannot be suppressed, neither can the legitimate interests of the whole. But in approaching the economic life of a specific people, one must truly become an expert in their history and way of life. Only here can the orders be seen to make some sense, to have derived from historical circumstance and hence, can only develop within this context. Criticism is possible, but it can only come from within. Societies can never be considered as merely economic units, or even as simple bearers of stagnant tradition, but always a growing, vibrant organism where each element is dependent on every other one: hence, economics is moral, social and political, and each of these fields must borrow from each other in the making of policy and the sense of prioritizing.

### **Economics, Justice and Labor: Hegel's Political Economy in the Philosophy of Right**

The above mentality is at the root of Hegel's ideas on economic life and its role in the state in the *Philosophy of Right*. While the economic literature on Hegel is rather sparse, it is interesting and worth going over here. The background and mentality of Hegel's approach to economic thought must be outlined before the primary data on Hegel's ideas can be dealt with.

In Teichgraebers (1977) paper "Hegel on Property and Poverty," this author situates Hegel within the Romantic stream and as a reaction against the Enlightenment and classically based school of economic ideas. The basic way to structure Hegel's thought is to make three basic distinctions:

a. abstract freedom: this is the basic idea of the classical school. The individual is absolutely free to develop in any direction that he chooses. But this is abstract, since this movement can be in any direction, there is no sense on what "ought" to be done, and no real purpose or end to action.

b. abstract determination: this is the growth of the distinction between subject and object, and is as far as the classical school can go. While Adam Smith can hold that the maximization of production and the satisfaction of the market is at the center of economic life, this is not a real end, but only a general end. Will such things make people happy? Will the fulfillment of economic demands lead to ordered, settled and stable lives? None of this can be answered in the context of classical economic thought. The ends are too vague: they deal only with prices and efficiency. Hence,

c. Conscious rationality is the final conclusion: the dialectic of a and b above lead to the synthesis of c, the development of a rationally ordered society, the manifestation of the deepest needs of the population, and hence, beyond mere economic calculation. Moment a above is the freedom of the child, the immature who wants to "strike out" on his own, but does not have a clue where to go. All he knows is that he can do "anything." Moment b is the realization that one must take the ends of others into consideration, which is the very essence of the market in Smith. One can be free, but only in the context of society, where demands are made based on what we assume are legitimate needs. The final resolution of ends, needs and wants is in conscious rationality, or the development of a well ordered state, broadly considered.

Putting this differently, the synthesis of c above represents the ability of reason to make

the world a home. Freedom is then defined as the synthesis of the individual will and the will of all, qualitatively synthesized into a state structure that does not rule over them, but manifests their very rationality. How that is done specifically will wait for a bit later.

But at this stage in our discussion, suffice it to say that Hegel cannot stop at the connection between individual freedom (abstract considered) which in economic terms refers to mere possession of objects, without an end or purpose adhering to them. It is the animal drive of men to overpower nature and place their stamp on it, but the possession of property, in itself, is the realization of the beginning of a purpose driven life. Man's reason is externalized for the first time in property. Freedom is seen to stop in the appropriation of matter, and something opposed to the abstract freedom of the ego is seen and enjoyed. The ego has come up against the non-ego, or the outside world, in this case as dead matter. The next stage is the non-ego showing itself to the person as other egos, or other people. The building of ends around the needs of all however, is the beginning of social maturity, and is represented by the market, but this is only the beginning. This stage is marked by the emergence of a new concept, that of "contract," where the rights, duties and needs/ends of the population as a whole are considered: the contracting parties are seen as fully mature persons. The contract is the ego recognizing its "opposition," the non-ego not as mere opposition or the frustration of animal desire, but as an equal, one that, if treated this way, can assist in the general projects for the community as a whole. The nature of these general projects, however, lies with the state (generally considered).

In Shlomo Avineri's (1971) piece, "Labor, Alienation and Social Classes in Hegel's *Realphilosophie*" does not deal with the Philosophy of Right specifically, but deals with the same concepts that will be more fully developed in that book, as well as the third section of this paper. It deals with the basic concepts mentioned above, but in a slightly different way. In all of Hegel's work, the person and society develop through stages, and each stage leads to the next until reason is to be found all in all, all elements of the rational person can be found in the institutions of the state. So in this case, suffice it to say that Adam Smith gives us a snapshot of society where capital is justified by the criterion mentioned above. Hegel views this as important, but only as part of a greater truth.

The importance of property in Hegel can be dealt with first as merely possession, and then as contract. While both of these are abstract moments in a more concrete whole, Avineri has a subtle and detailed analysis of them that is worth looking at.

1. Property as labor. This is at the root as property as labor, and is identical to Locke's famous theory of private property and its justification. In property justified by the labor that the person puts into it, reason is externalized and the relations of person to object is the first time the person as such is seen as the bearer of rights. This object is then the objectification of man's powers and hence a reciprocal set of relations is established. But labor and property only truly become such in the market, where production becomes more and more general and hence, reason is objectifying itself not merely for their person, but also for the social whole (as yet unarticulated). Hence, the more production of generalized (that is, spread out over a larger whole in the developing market) the more the person realizes that he is not an isolated monad, but a social creature in itself. The society is beginning to articulate itself through mutually beneficial labor and the property relations that form alongside it (Avineri, 1971, 99-102).

2. Property as Contract. The market is then the first articulation of a social whole, one that is not biologically based (such as the family is). Society at this stage is articulated through

the institution of contract. The more universal the needs of the people, the farther distant the producer is from his product, something Marx was to pick up on later. As society articulates itself as a market based on contractual relations, the producer is no longer producing just for himself or for his family or tribe, but for the common good. The producer is then aware of two things: first, that his is a social life and being, and second, that he is losing control over his own production. Hence, alienation enters into the vocabulary for the first time, again something that Marx will make great use of. Money then represents this articulated, contractual whole, but also represents man's alienation and complete loss of control over the demands of the social whole itself *vis a vis* the producer's labor (Alvineri, 1971, 106-107).

Hegel becomes the first major thinker to criticize the factory system on this basis. Hegel already sees that fashion and the dominance of the few begin to dominate and control production. Fashion controls demand and hence, the free market does not articulate human reason sufficiently. It still remains abstract. In the process of articulation, the society begins showing forms of differentiation that begin to go beyond mere market/contract relations. He notices three separate corporations develop and their specific roles.

First, the peasantry. This represents the domination of the family and its values of love and trust. Second, the merchants and traders (and this includes all involved in industry) and this "middle class" ethic manifests the idea of law. Thirdly, that of the bureaucratic class, the governing class. This represents the concept of universality. Hence, from the development and articulation of these three social classes, three forms of consciousness are developed. For Hegel, there is no difference between a social class in relation to the economy and a social class in relation to political rule. They are two sides of the same coin (Alvineri, 1971, 112-113). The state will come from the interrelations of these three classes and will then place its own stamp on production, finally articulating the rational consciousness of labor and social life as a single, integral unit. But this will be dealt with in the following section.

This work is the final statement of Hegel on the nature of economics and its integral relation to political right. Karl Marx is to take this as his starting point for his own philosophy by the 1840s. This work is completed by Hegel in 1821 just before his untimely death in a plague in 1831, at the height of the Romantic movement in Germany (making Hegel just slightly younger than Muller, who died in 1829). In the following treatment, the classic (1952) Knox translation is used, and references are to paragraphs numbers, not page numbers, the same method Hegel used in writing the book. Hence, the references are standardized over editions and translations. *Philosophy of Right* will now be referred to as POR.

What this paper has done so far is deal with the question of "abstract Right." The move from property as possession to property in market and contractual relations remains in the realm of abstraction. Hence, the basic criticism of the classical school is that they did not go far enough in seeing the articulation of society as a whole. They merely stopped at the contractual and market relations, as if this was the whole of social life. They left social theory in the realm of the abstract, and it was up to Hegel to bring it into the life of the concrete whole.

Abstract right, as analyzed in the POR has these moments: first, as possession, as mentioned above. Second, as use, or the object as related to the owners in the context of need, and third, alienation, the synthesis of the first two (possession + use). Alienation is important in terms of property, that is, the ability to sell or abandon the property, because the person is thought of as bearing rights that are not immediately part of the world of property relations. The person, through the concept of alienation of property, becomes a right bearer even if he were to

give all his property away (Hegel, 49-59).

The move to the concrete has also been mentioned above, that of contract and the slow articulation of a social whole through production for a large and varied market (Hegel, 78-80ff). Man sees himself as social by definition, in that his production is showing itself as rational only in that it is made for a market. But, as we mentioned above, this is insufficient. Smith did not go far enough. The market, its “system of needs,” is arbitrary, it is a part of no greater articulated whole. People want x because they want x. That is irrational, arbitrary, and worst of all, abstract. Hence, abstract right and concrete right, as two opposing pairs, must give way to a synthesis and the final act of Hegel’s economics: the ethical life.

Like everything else, ethical life in Hegel moves through three stages, the first two opposing and antagonistic, the third, synthetic and stable. The first moment is the most primitive form of ethical life, that of the family (cf. Hegel, 170ff). From the economic point of view, the family is important because all family members have a right to part of the family capital. Young children must be cared for, and money and labor must be spent freely, not on the basis of profit or gain, but on the basis of love and instinctive obligation.

But children have a habit of growing older and wanting to “strike out” on their own. Parents get older and retire, and the kids move on, wanting to “spread their wings” and fly, and they fly to the open and free market so beloved of the classical school of economics. “Civil society” is the technical term used for this market, the manifestation of the concrete, contractual relations discussed above. In the family, the child is yet a full person. He is part of an organic, albeit primitive, whole. He is seen only as a full person (but not yet as citizen) in civil society, where his rights must be respected so far as he respects his own obligations (i.e. the rights of others). The market transforms the sheltered child of the family into the mature man or woman of society. This person is now social, producing for a large and varied market, and is enmeshed in a web of contractual relations that both recognize rights as well as embody them (Hegel, 185-200). It is here where Hegel begins to see the articulating of society into farmers, industrialists/traders and bureaucrats, creating corporations to defend the interests of these three groups and their specific needs, wants and ways of life. The market, in other words, is articulating itself into something completely different: the state.

The world of contract and market relations transforms the “individualist” into a communalist. Individualism is incomplete and false, since the market proves that his own work is not his own, but part of the society’s both in the sense that his education and the technology that he works on is not of his own invention, as well as the fact that his own production is not for himself, but for a social whole: the market. Hence, from the young, individualist wanting to “strike out,” the mature man comes to reflect on himself as Marx would call a “species being.” But the process of this articulation from market relations to corporate bodies is the Corporation itself, again, another technical term that refers to the corporate interest group that will soon begin interacting in a market relation that will itself morph into the state where all three major Corporations are brought together. The Corporation might be called a guild, but either way, its job is to look after its members both socially and economically, train its members to maintain a single standard of quality, and finally, to act as a vehicle of solidarity in economic and super-economic matters.

The Corporation itself is the first expression of that which goes beyond mere economic relations, and instead shows itself as an institution of “social solidarity.” (Hegel, 250-253). The Corporation seeks, given the above, to control all possible contingencies of the market, insuring its members, etc. Hence, the Corporations seek to place their order (naturally growing from the

original, classical market/contract relation) upon a market that is anarchic and based on cycles of boom and bust. These cycles are socially unacceptable given the large number of unemployed, etc., the corporation exists to insure its members from these cycles, and hence, bring order out of the chaos of market relations (Hegel, esp 252).

### **The Nature of Cognition in Hegel's Political Idea**

Before even knowledge is reached, cognition must first take the immediate, intuitive world confronting it and separate itself from it as external to internal. The process of going from the intuition (immediacy) of phenomena to the world of reality is summarized by Hegel this way:

That first reflection from out of immediacy is the subject's distinguishing itself from its substance, that is, it is the concept estranging itself, taking-the-inward-turn, and is the coming-to-be of the pure I. Since this distinction is the pure activity of the I = I, the concept is both the necessity and the sunrise of existence which has that substance for its essence and which durably exists for itself (Hegel, 731).

In other words, the self comes to know itself as such only because there is this distinction between the immediate,<sup>1</sup> "brute given" (what Kant calls the "manifold") and the fact that it is perceived as an image. Once this is done, we become aware of the self as an empty thing (consciousness as a formal field of vision), and the content of the image that is begging to be rationalized, or the form drawn out of its seemingly random and irrational attributes. An object is isolated as a concrete thing that is also a universal: it is both unity and multiplicity, form and content.

Thought strives to develop the object into an integrated whole. The dualisms of form and content, multiplicity and unity, freedom and necessity and so on are unsatisfying to reason because they remain confrontational (Cohen, 1932: 285ff). Reason comes to recognize that these are not opposites, but only appearances suggesting that.<sup>2</sup> Form and content are not merely given in experience (or at least not in a way that we can immediately grasp), but must be constructed through this process of reconciliation. This done through the generation of antithesis from identity, the brute given is deconstructed. The object as both one and many breaks down into a reconciliation that realizes integration, not confrontation among these seemingly opposed notions (Berndtson, 1950: 41ff). Hegel writes,

From out of sensuous being, it became a universal, but since it emerged from out of the sensuous, this universal is essentially conditioned by the sensuous and is thus not truly in parity with itself. Rather, it is a universality affected with an opposition, which for that reason is separated into the extreme terms of individuality and universality, of the "one" of properties and of the "also" of the free-standing matters. . . . But since both exist essentially in one unity, unconditioned absolute universality itself is now on hand, and for the first time consciousness truly enters into the realm of the understanding (Hegel, 112-113).

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<sup>1</sup> I am arguing that Hegel does believe in an intuition in the same sense as Kant's manifold. Intuition, following Walsh (1946), is the same as an immediate, pre-conceptual flux. This is what Hegel means by "nothing."

<sup>2</sup> In other words, these contradictions are needed steps in constructing a rational world. They are not illusions or falsehoods. They are just one-sided.

This is the purpose of the purely epistemological parts of the *Phenomenology*. The “one” is the object perceived as wholeness, the “also” is the object seen as a set of properties. An “object,” or really all nature reflected in ourselves, appears first as matter and form as an unbridgeable antithesis.<sup>3</sup> The object can be understood as a unity, but also, with equal reality, as a multiplicity of attributes.

A human hand, for example, is one thing in that it is a functional object. It is also many things in that it has five fingers, many cells, bone, muscle, etc. The human hand is both one and many. However, the hand, or any object, can be raised to a singular concrete-universal encapsulating both its multiplicity and its unity. The very fact that the hand is seen as one object derives from the fact that it is complex. Its functionality is based upon it. Therefore, the multiplicity IS the unity, and the unity is only understood in that the human hand is many different objects working together. Further, the hand is connected to the body, and the body to other human beings and social life. All is one, all is both multiplicity and unity, but now, these terms are not seen as opposites, but complimentary.

The two abstract extremes Hegel describes and then transcends are pure idealism and naive, empirical realism. Pure idealism is the view that the mind projects its reality on the “outside” world. This can create nothing but subjectivity since it is pure form without content (or with arbitrary content). In a sense, this approaches Kant's transcendental critique since the categories are generated from within, and only impose themselves on the unknowable manifold. When Fichte discarded the thing-in-itself, idealism's full logical absurdity came to light.

The latter, naive realism, is the perspective of positivism, where external objects are assumed to exist without proof, while the observer is isolated in his Cartesian self. Matter exists unexplained and remains a brute given. Positivism views thought as a tool “working” on external things, as form violently imposed on helpless matter. This dogmatism is its weakness. Hegel demands that all be brought under form, not just the external world. This is similar to a law imposed from an alien source upon people in a society.<sup>4</sup>

Hegel writes, “However, insofar as thinking enters consciousness, that is, insofar as pure consciousness enters into self-consciousness, this immediacy comes to have the significance of an objective being that lies beyond consciousness of self” (Hegel, 482). Here, consciousness perceives both “external” content and itself as matter and form. In the process, it realizes that this external content is also itself, since the “external” is manifest only as consciousness, as image. Man, in other words, has no direct access to what is “external” to it. Since logic will not rest with either pure idealism or naive realism, it is forced onward to conquer this opposition. Like the example of the human hand above, consciousness realizes that the content contains its own form, and the categories generated by it also manifest the content.

I am I, in the sense that the I, which is an object for me, is not as it is within self-consciousness, where it was merely as an empty object, nor even as it is within free self-consciousness, where it is just an object that withdraws itself from others which nonetheless still count as valid alongside it. Rather, it is an object with the consciousness of the non-being of anything that is “other.” It is a singular object; it is all reality and presence. However, not only is self-consciousness for itself all reality; it is also in itself

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<sup>3</sup> This seems to imply that freedom and dualism are not compatible. Unless reality (including agency) is seen as unified, it is unfree.

<sup>4</sup> The issue is then taking an “ought” from an “is.” This overused conception is false, since moral norms, if not from what is real, must be subjective. This is true from the perspective of the alien and imperial state as from that of the anarchic individual. This is why they are both false.

all reality, primarily by way of its having become this reality, or, to a greater degree, by having proved itself to be this reality (Hegel, 208).

Form and content are actually one, but, given our imperfections and lack of self-sufficiency, we see them as dual. We see them not only as dual, but each half seems to be as valid and real as the other. The way the mind conquers this dualism is to discover that there is no “inner” and “outer,” since both are the same. The “inner form” contains as much determinate content as the “external object.”

When considering any object, the observer comes to see it as connected to all else as it receives greater and greater articulation through social practice and its synchronous expression as philosophy. “Nature” is discovered as a system of relations going beyond the object in isolation. In this same process, cognition itself sees its own action external to it.<sup>5</sup>

### **Epistemology as Social Life**

The transition from Concept to Idea, or knowledge to truth, is the transition from formal epistemology to social life (Pinkard, 1981: 455). Once the objects form a natural system, they are comprehended as part of a broader whole. This goes for our own humanity as with any other object. Thought is no longer in the Cartesian prison, but is operative in what was formerly considered “external” reality. Humanity can reflect on this system of causality (that is, nature itself) and therefore, it can become free and conscious. It is one thing to grasp the natural order as a set of logical relations, another to make it an integral aspect of life.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, the harmony of nature with moral consciousness belongs to the sphere outside of the latter. Here it is nature which exists in itself, and the issue here has to do with morality as such, that is, with a harmony which is the acting self’s very own harmony (Hegel, 551).

This is the difference between knowledge and truth. The natural harmony reason has shown (as Concept) now must be made moral, and the moral seen in the natural order (as Idea). This then becomes something more than knowledge once it is incorporated into our social world. Since social practice is what creates these philosophical problems in the first place, it is also this same practice that, through philosophy as its organ, solves them (Pinkard, 1996: 82).

As human beings, knowledge turns into truth once moral duty transcends natural determination and is advanced by human beings as a law that is taken as its own. Here, the laws governing natural systems are made into truth: they are part of an autonomous social world rather than remaining dead, formal truths (Pinkard, 1996: 202-203).<sup>7</sup>

Thought manifests time as development: history is an actor to the extent that the universal human mind (that is, human nature) is realized over time. Mind externalized is nature, which must be reflected back into (social) self-consciousness in order for it to become free rather than an alien imposition. Thought is not really about cause and effect, though it requires this

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<sup>5</sup> Man sees himself in the other. This is the social analogue to this statement. The point is that natural and social thought is one, just seen from two differing points of view.

<sup>6</sup> Another way to put this is that formal logic, while arising from the social order, is not inherently social. It must be taken as logically true by the social whole almost habitually, as a part of itself.

<sup>7</sup> One significant problem is that, under this view, it almost seems as if the mere realization of law as law is the same as freedom.

realization to advance further (Baillie, 1932: 407 and Pinkard, 1996: 88). Hegel writes on this transition in the *Phenomenology*:

The living ethical world is spirit in its truth. In the way that spirit initially attains an abstract knowledge of its essence, ethical life collapses into the formal universality of law. Spirit, which henceforth is estranged within itself, depicts one of its worlds in its objective element, namely, the realm of cultural maturation, as a harsh actuality, and it depicts another as confronting that first one in the element of thought, namely, the world of faith, the realm of essence (Hegel, 395).

The Idea is truth in that it is nature becoming conscious of itself as mind. Mind and nature are part of the same whole, and because they do not differ essentially, they are commensurate. Mind, in other words, is no less a part of nature than the laws governing how cattle graze. Therefore, following Schelling, nature is legitimately seen as becoming conscious of itself in that it is ideal, and therefore, it is mind.<sup>8</sup>

The social system is the analogue to the natural order. Both are rational only when it is recognized to be such. Social duties are similar natural laws. Once these duties are perceived as rational and good, truly manifesting human nature, they are then recognized as manifestations of freedom rather than as abstract law imposed from without (Warminski, 1995: 130-135).

However, even though its actuality is incomplete, duty nonetheless counts as the essence for its pure willing and knowledge. In the concept, inasmuch as the concept is opposed to reality, that is, is the concept in thought, consciousness is thus perfected. However, the absolute essence is precisely what has been conceived, that is, what is postulated as an other-worldly realm beyond actuality (Hegel, 555).

Once nature becomes reflective and free, mankind is no longer its plaything. This is freedom and is the indispensable ingredient for actualized truth, that is, the Idea. Freedom is our will acting under law and recognizing this law as itself. It is the concrete-universal at its highest extent (Alexander, 1886: 496-499).

Each move, from the isolated individual to the full member of the corporation and hence, the state (as the synthesis of the corporate orders) develops according to a rational and natural plan. The moves from a to be here are not arbitrary, but are found in the contradictions of the previous incarnation. The market is anarchic, it goes through boom and bust cycles. Hence, the “freedom” that the classical economists hold to is vitiated by the radical instability of the system. Hence, the corporation is born: it follows naturally from the realization of the instability of market relations as well as the solidarity that people come to feel as they find themselves as articulated social beings. The corporation takes over where the family left off: as an institution of friendship and solidarity, of self sacrifice for something other than profit and market share.

Civil society is a radically subjective set of institutions, but its true concrete objectivity derives from the very nature of the market itself: it is social, it is specialized into functions (hence the corporation), and seeks to make individual labor social in content through the articulation of demand. This social aspect of civil society demands objectification in institutions, and the entire world is then articulated as a set of such relations in the later developing state, where, according to Hegel, they sit as part of the legislative upper house, or Senate. Hence, the

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<sup>8</sup> Truth, freedom and reconciliation are here seen as the same.

economic is made social, and the social is drawn out of the economic. What is left is the full articulation of the person, the person not as an animal, not as a profiteer, not as a worker, but as a fully rounded person, a human being, a citizen.

Subjectivity exists when the person is conscious of himself and his freedom, as well as the manifestation of that freedom in the domination of material objects. When this freedom must be regulated by contract (or else production cannot occur) and a market develops where the freedom of each can begin to make sense (in the identical way Adam Smith makes it), the person is now slowly being moved to the realm of objective social relations (e.g. the market) as well as to the true consciousness of order and freedom, that is, the state and its institutionalization of the corporate orders of social life that derive from market relations and their problems. Memories of the family rise again to create a super-familiar institution of the corporation or guild. The corporation, and its final incorporation into the state legislature finally completes the process of making the ego a “person” in the true, that is, rational sense of the word. What begins as the wild ego becomes a civilized person, conscious of his interests as a person, a family man, a member of a guild as well as a citizen of the state not as separate moments now, but as a fully articulated whole apparent to consciousness as a single object.

### **Aesthetics and Justice**

Hegel is the main expositor of the German idealist school of epistemology at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hegel's comprehensive of art is no different than his comprehension of nature. The process of the will “discovering itself” is how the nature world is “humanized” that is, brought under the control of the human will. Nature is humanized as both science and art. There is no epistemological distinction between the two, since the struggle of the human psyche is the same – to take the purely “external” and re-shape it according to the desires of the will.

There are two main concepts to remember when dealing with a writer of such difficulty as Hegel:

First, that there is no sensation that exists by itself – all sensation is “filtered” through a set of categories relative to the historical era of the subject. Second, the categories that we use to interpret reality are conditioned by the historical epoch we are in. The broader point is that the idea of “beauty” in art is relative to this historical era. The era is able to filter our sensations. Our understanding of a world of medieval art, for example, must understand the basic conceptual apparatus that was dominant at the time.

In terms of understanding the beautiful. Hegel lays out three very general phases the human psyche (collectively speaking) goes through. These are the symbolic, the classical (or Greco-Roman) and the modern, or the Spiritual phase that Hegel was writing in.

First, our categories are historical. Humanity goes through many stages of development before the European state makes its appearance. Historical forces change the concepts we use to interpret art (among other things). The concepts we use change because the lifestyle and economics of a society are always changing. Our concepts affect the historical and political forces of society, and those forces help create and shape our mental apparatus.

The aesthetic principles here derive from this historical development in that they are categories developed by and through this process. In his approach to aesthetics, Hegel lays out three forms:

1. The symbolic. This era is the most primitive. In terms of social life, it refers to the state of the ego that discovers itself as free. This is called the “abstract” ego in that it has no intrinsic content. It realizes that it can decide upon whatever it wants. But this kind of immature, purposeless freedom cannot last. The will seeks a resting place that is fully in agreement with its desires. All of this has yet to develop, but, to a great extent, all historical development is based on this drive.
2. The classical. This is the mentality of the Greco-Roman civilization. It can be reduced to the abstract ego finding itself checked by the development of a total state. The Roman empire is the highest level of this development, since the ego must, due to the power in the hands of the empire, submit.

Hegel calls this the “classic” form because “This unity, this perfect harmony between the idea and its external manifestation, constitutes the second form of art — the Classic Form.” the ego has found a balance. Its external manifestation is strictly formal. It comes to a balance of power with what it finds externally. It submits to an external power. It sees this external power as “absolute.” It grasps the beautiful as that which agrees with this kind of power.

This too, however, cannot last. The ego, extending itself out in the world, cannot help but desire some third entity that mediates between the external form and the internal drive of the ego. This is the modern, or Germanic form of spirit. Hegel writes,

Nevertheless, spirit cannot rest with this form, which is not its complete realization. To reach this perfect realization, spirit must pass beyond the classic form, must arrive at a spirituality, which, returning upon itself, descends into the depths of its own inmost nature in the classic form, indeed, notwithstanding its generality, spirit reveals itself with a Special determinate character; it does not escape from the finite (*Development of the Ideal in the Special Forms Of Art*, Introduction).

3. Finally, the Germanic form of spirit is the final resting place of the ego once it begins its historical mission to find its true home. The ego finds an external world that it comes into contact with and comes to a *modus vivendi* with. The classical form, however, is unmediated. It is simply the confrontation of the infinite ego with the infinite other. It will then shine back on itself. This shining back is the spiritual.

Hegel's aesthetics functions no differently than anything else. The ego is striving, it is manifesting itself in three different ways: first, as it finds itself abstract, with no clear purpose. Then, extending into space, finds its external limit, which is the harsh lines of the classical form, reaching its highest phase in the Roman empire. This is resolved by the ego, reflected back on itself, analyzing the structures of social power and, without going back to the abstract ego, wants an external power that, while giving the will the structure it craves, can do this according to the rational demands of the social whole. This is the modern idea, sometimes called the spiritual or romantic notion.

Hegel's analysis of beauty and the change in humanity's concepts used to judge art is very difficult. It is immensely abstract and very general, and yet, there is a rationality behind it. It can be summarized rationally in this way:

1. It all begins with the self, the ego. The ego is free, but it is not happy as free in this sense, because it wants a sense of self and purpose. The symbolic stage is the abstract ego coming to a realization of its power in that it is totally free.
2. The ego then discovers its outer limit through the absolute master – the Roman state. The ego then idealizes this overarching power as the absolute form of beauty because it provides the ego with its external check. The ego is forced to submit as the empire provides the end and purpose of the human will – total obedience.
3. The ego cannot deal with this. It cannot deal with total freedom because it is purposeless, it also cannot deal with the purely external form of power represented in many classical empires.
4. Hence, the modern form of the ego is one that has an external limit, but the limit itself is reflected upon and analyzed by the ego. The ego needs this limit, but it does not want just an authoritarian state and society, it wants a limit that it itself desires. It is a combination of the authority the will craves, but an authority that serves the basic desires of the human self as it develops.

But what does this have to do with art? For Hegel, everything is social. The forms of art or science are radically altered by the process outlined above. Art is just one part of human life that is placed within the historical structure of humanity. If the human ego is in its classical stage, it is controlled by an alien, external authority possessing much power. The society is just the isolated ego on the one hand, and the equally isolated state on the other. This leads the ego to consider beauty to be primarily an outward form. Geometry and realistic sculpture becomes one expression of this state of affairs.

The concepts of beauty are tightly connected with the development of historical forms in general. The move from the classical, idealized, absolute and external form eventually breaks down. This is because the ego, while facing the external Roman state, still realizes itself as free. The mere existence of an external power has no real legitimacy. The will is still free, and has the capacity to reflect on the nature of external power. The will still wants that external power, but now, the modern era develops where the ego can now reflect rationally on its society and reshape it according to its basic desires. Art then becomes more individualized, creating the modern romantic movement, where the external world is not just an isolated power, but is something analyzed and reflected upon by the will. In other words, the powers that control the human will now need to be justified rationally. The ego now reflects upon this outer power and seeks to shape it according to its desires. This is the very concept of modernity and the nation-state it has created.

The modern or Romantic stage is based on the idea that our external impressions are not just external forms. Our own personal psyche can impact how we see things. This is Hegel's truly revolutionary idea: the ego can help shape how we see things that are “out there.” The modern idea is now that the self can help shape what is “out there.” Art then does not just reflect what's “out there” such as in the classical idea, but now can actually shape what's “out there.” The ego's own desires change our sensation of the external world, creating a “home” for itself, where the external world is altered to make it more comfortable and rational to the viewer. Modern art then stresses our own personal and subjective grasp of the external world.

Our grasp of the external world is no different in art than in science. Our grasp of nature goes through the same struggle to realize the aims of the will as does the human grasp of art. Art is the humanization of nature. It seeks to take its growing reflectiveness and make something else

out of nature. This “something else” is art. It is about the humanization of the natural order as something not “out there” but “in here.”

### **The Final End: The Self**

Freedom is the sole end of Hegel's political vision. However, the idea of freedom is never arbitrary will, but rather a state of affairs where social arrangements faithfully manifest human nature. Freedom is then the social environment that is most oneself. To be free is to be able to see oneself in the social environment, and thereby obey your own will when obeying the state.

Human nature is social and developmental. The will requires structure since it does not exist in isolation; structure is not distinct from freedom since true autonomy is to obey oneself: to do so however, requires that one live in a society. Outside social life, man could not exist at all. The state is the manifestation of the will because it regulates the nature of the public association such that human nature can unfold as perfectly as possible. In making sense out of this argument, Hegel's programmatic statement in his *Philosophy of Right* is the following:

The state is the actuality of concrete freedom. But concrete freedom consists in this, that personal individuality and its particular interests not only achieve their complete development and gain explicit recognition for their right (as they do in the sphere of the family and civil society) but, for one thing, they also pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and, for another thing, they know and will the universal; they even recognize it as their own substantive mind; they take it as their end and aim and are active in its pursuit. The result is that the universal does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests and through the cooperation of particular knowing and willing; and individuals likewise do not live as private persons for their own ends alone, but in the very act of willing these they will the universal in the light of the universal, and their activity is consciously aimed at none but the universal end.<sup>9</sup>

One way to understand this is to say that the citizen becomes such only in society. To obey one's own will is to grasp one's collective responsibility. Our needs are met by an entire society working together. Alone, the human being cannot survive. On the one hand, we have specific needs (the particular) of various kinds, and on the other, we live in a society (the universal) that is designed to meet them. Once we realize this, the insufficiency of our isolated ego is clear.

This is more than just recognizing the division of labor. Hegel also realizes that our worth is not something just generated internally. It is also manifest in social recognition. In nations numbering in the millions, the individual, no matter how well adjusted, does not matter. However, as a member of society with a determinate place, she might. The needs of the person also include their recognition as a bearer of rights. This would include the state's protecting, for example, their rights to property or the privileges accruing to one's place in the social order. Since there are no abstract people, the recognition of one's specificity is also a need that only a society can fulfill.

The human being is inconceivable in isolation. First, he is a member of a family, then, upon reaching adulthood, becomes part of civil society. Civil-society is typified by self-interest,

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<sup>9</sup> Hegel, GWF. *The Philosophy of Right*. TM Knox (trans). (Oxford University Press, 1952), 260

while the family is based on love. When the adult children leave the family home and strike out on their own, Hegel writes,

Here ethical life is split into its extremes and lost; the immediate unity of the family has fallen apart into a plurality. Reality here is externality, the decomposing of the concept, the self-subsistence of its moments which have now won their freedom and their determinate existence. Though in civil society universal and particular have fallen apart, yet both are still reciprocally bound together and conditioned. While each of them seems to do just the opposite to the other and supposes that it can exist only by keeping the other at arm's length, none the less each still conditions the other.<sup>10</sup>

The egocentric drive for wealth and status that is manifest in civil society is contradicted by the fact that our very self-interest requires the community. The family is not large enough to be self-sufficient, and egotism cannot stand on its own. Both worlds contain their own contradiction. Individualism and self interest make no sense, since the very concept of self-interest is only communicated socially. Even more, the division of labor that is needed for even the most rudimentary production implies the significance of the community. Therefore, our self-interest is really our desire to maintain a rational, communal order of mutual aid.<sup>11</sup>

Put differently, the self-interest of the capitalist, for example, requires the smooth operation of many public and private institutions. Hence, any self-interested actor is a living contradiction, since, in demanding her own profit, she must necessarily demand that society function in a rational and predictable way. In other words, she demands that the society organize itself virtuously for her personal benefit. Her profit is really the result of coordinated labor and social virtue.<sup>12</sup>

Since neither the family nor self interest can sustain a rational and free society, the next step is the Corporation, or the social body that organizes citizens specializing in a specific craft or position. The corporation is the key to the transition from self-interest to true freedom:

In accordance with this definition of its functions, a Corporation has the right, under the surveillance of the public authority, (a) to look after its own interests within its own sphere, (b) to co-opt members, qualified objectively by the requisite skill and rectitude, to a number fixed by the general structure of society, (c) to protect its members against particular contingencies, (d) to provide the education requisite to fit others to become members. In short, its right is to come on the scene like a second family for its members, while civil society can only be an indeterminate sort of family because it comprises everyone and so is farther removed from individuals and their special exigencies.<sup>13</sup>

The Corporation is essential in the development of a rational social order, or alternatively, a free social order. This body makes the ethical and social nature of labor explicit. It is a social body, not yet entirely self sufficient, that makes clear to all its members that their

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<sup>10</sup> Philosophy of Right, 184, add.

<sup>11</sup> Teichgraeber, Richard. "Hegel on Property and Poverty." *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 38, (1977), 50-51

<sup>12</sup> Stillman, PG. *Hegel's Civil Society: A Locus of Freedom*. *Polity*, 12/4, (1980), (Summer, 1980), 624ff and Alvineri, Shlomo. *Labor, Alienation and Social Classes in Hegel's Realphilosophie*. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, (1971) 100-102

<sup>13</sup> Philosophy of Right, 252

own labor is not merely for their own benefit, but that all labor exists for the common benefit. The Corporation takes self interest and transforms it into, in part, what it truly desires.

What Hegel says above is very significant in his view of freedom. First of all, being a member of a corporation means that one is a true citizen, not a random ego that finds itself in a society. Corporate membership takes the individual, by himself totally powerless, and joins him with people in a similar field. In addition, it codifies the field's standards, justifying hierarchy through mutually accepted rules. Further, it assists its members with social insurance and other benefits that can compensate for the order that self-interests creates, which soon shows itself as irrational, since it produces extremes of inequality.<sup>14</sup> Hegel accepts that inequality is unavoidable, but they can reach an extreme such that the society becomes unbalanced. Civil Society no longer performs its individuating function when wealth is monopolized by the few (or alternatively, monopolized by those who do not deserve it). The corporation, as well as the state, helps to maintain a rational balance.

The liberalism of Hegel's day, whether it be based on Locke, Kant, Fichte or Rousseau, truncate the idea of the human will. The "social contract" idea only gets at part of the truth. What they all argue is that freedom is identical with what the will desires. There is no sense of the social, or if there is, it is strictly universal, with no specific content.<sup>15</sup> In criticizing Rousseau, Hegel states,

Unfortunately, however, as Fichte did later, [Rousseau] takes the will only in a determinate form as the individual will, and he regards the universal will not as the absolutely rational element in the will, but only as a 'general' will which proceeds out of this individual will as out of a conscious will. The result is that he reduces the union of individuals in the state to a contract and therefore to something based on their arbitrary wills. . . . The will of its re-founders was to give it what they alleged was a purely rational basis, but it was only abstractions that were being used; the Idea was lacking; and the experiment ended in the maximum of frightfulness and terror.<sup>16</sup>

The problem with earlier views of freedom was that they were all one-sided. The will was seen as, of itself, complete. Kant's idea of universality was purely abstract. It might give the justification for a moral act, but does not give us any impetus to act in that way. Whether it be the economic will of Locke or the "universality" of the "General Will," in all cases, the will does not will anything in particular.<sup>17</sup> The problem with the social contract, the natural outgrowth of egotism, is that, in order to a) know what a contract is, b) to communicate its terms, and c) to have the legal consciousness required for any contract to exist at all, implies the existence of a complex society that must exist before the theoretical society comes into being. Hence, the social contract is not only incorrect, it is absurd.

Furthermore, positing the ego as the "individual" is equally incorrect. The ego never exists on its own. Man is not born free, but as a helpless infant that requires the family to nurture

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<sup>14</sup> cf. Dickey, L. Hegel: Religion, Economics and the Politics of Spirit 1770-1807. (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> Pinkard, T. Freedom and Social Categories in Hegel's Ethics. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 47/2, (1986), 220ff and Church, J. The Freedom of Desire: Hegel's Response to Rousseau on the Problem of Civil Society. *American Journal of Political Science*, 54/1, (2010), 130ff

<sup>16</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, 258, remark

<sup>17</sup> Sterrett, JM. *The Ethics of Hegel*. *International Journal of Ethics*, 2/2 (1892), 180ff

it. There is no abstract ego there, but a) the duty of the family to care for the child and b) the child to develop in such a way so as to contribute to the universal good. Hegel is not writing about a society that grows from the family to civil society, and then, given the conceptual conflict of capitalism, the egotist realizes the error of her ways and joins the nearest corporation. Hegel is not writing chronologically, but logically. At all times, all three parts of social life have existed. No family can exist without a rational economy as an economy cannot exist without moral citizens who obey contracts and pursue socially useful skills. Such economies, in turn, do not arise by chance, but come into existence only within a state structure that guarantees security, currency, and enforcement of contracts. What matters is the extent to which citizens realize that all of these are both separate and related.

The problem with liberalism is that it assumes a highly civilized human being from the beginning, as if English gentlemen spring up out of the ground fully formed. Hegel's contribution was to show how such a person can ever come to be in the first place. In the broadest sense, Hegel is stating that the person is a complex of needs and duties, and therefore, such needs and duties must be reflected in any social order. Even broader is the idea that the creation of rational people is a complex and delicate process.

The state is the actuality of the ethical Idea. It is ethical mind qua the substantial will manifest and revealed to itself, knowing and thinking itself, accomplishing what it knows and in so far as it knows it. . . The state is absolutely rational inasmuch as it is the actuality of the substantial will which it possesses in the particular self-consciousness once that consciousness has been raised to consciousness of its universality. This substantial unity is an absolute unmoved end in itself, in which freedom comes into its supreme right. On the other hand this final end has supreme right against the individual, whose supreme duty is to be a member of the state.<sup>18</sup>

This difficult passage is a compliment to the first passage cited above. The upshot is that freedom is the same as rationality; since human nature is, at a minimum, rational, this implies that any obedience must be to something that is equally rational. Secondly, the egocentrism common in one-sided liberal doctrines is canceled since the community is implied in them all, but either repressed or reduced to banal abstractions.

Therefore, the person remains the bearer of rights. These rights, taken together, all lead to the concept that the human person, as citizen, may only legitimately be required to obey her own selfhood. The question of its nature is the purpose of the Philosophy of Right. There are three moments: abstract ego, abstract universality, and its synthesis, the person. Any person (as opposed to an ego) is a synthesis of both objective realities and subjective needs. The person is both an ego that legitimately demands certain needs be satisfied, but in doing so, the citizen/person also implies the existence of a well ordered community.

### **Conclusions**

Any extant thing strives to manifest its ideal nature in time. The object, however, is finite and hence dependent. It is not fully real since reason demands an autonomous structure, not something dependent on a brute given. While subjectivity is consciousness holding itself as its own standard, this is not satisfying, since the abstract "I" does not exist, the self is part of a whole. The ideal is the standard. The subjective standard cannot be the source of any truth, since

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<sup>18</sup> Philosophy of Right, 257-258

there is no necessary relation between the object and its ideal structure. Over time and through struggle, the mind realizes that it contains both objective and subjective standards. This distinction is exposed as a false one.

Mind exists “externally” as adhering to phenomena (as they are not arbitrary images) and phenomena are understood to the extent that they relate rationally and intelligibly to each other and to ourselves. This is the Concept. The problem here is that nature appears as mechanical necessity. Only when the unity is self-determining (spiritual, hence free) can it be real (Harris, 1882: 119-122 and Alexander, 1886: 499). This is the Idea. Truth and Idea are necessarily social. The final gnosis is that philosophy is the human collective expressing itself through time.

Spirit is the realization that all thought is social and historical. Our logical categories are not merely the self-generation of a detached and alienated mind, but have developed as society comes to meet its objective needs. What begins as the empirical ends as the rational. What appears as mechanical necessity soon becomes the self. It becomes free (Harris, 1882: 119-122, as well as in Pinkard, 1996).

Hegel's social idea takes the best of Plato and the best of Kant, combining them into a system. This system is typified by the desire to see how the civilized, rational person can ever exist. It is easy to say that the likes of Kant were really about rationalizing the urban bourgeoisie, and chances are that such an assertion is correct. It is more difficult to make an argument about how any class, or any set of attitudes can a) come into existence and b) rationalize itself publicly.

What is left of human life that is strictly individual? Nothing. The individual is a mythic abstraction of modernity. By itself, the helpless infant can survive for a few hours. The liberal slogan that man is “born free” makes no sense, since man is born totally helpless. The fact that one can utter the phrase “born free” and have it be socially understood shows that the individual does not exist; the very concept of individualism was socially created. One cannot argue for individualism except by using socially generated artifacts such as words, meanings and moral norms. Therefore, the individual, of herself, cannot exist, she is a logical and historical contradiction.

“Thinking for oneself” is a mindless slogan because anything one might think is reflective of a certain tradition, expressed in a specific language and is aimed towards an end that, presumably, has social use, can be rationalized and is itself a social creation. Since we have invented none of these things, Hegel is correct to stress the collective world that is required for anyone to exist.

The individual, produced in social life, still has rights and duties. The individual cannot be ignored on the grounds that he has not invented social meanings. It is merely to say that to stress either the ego or the collective is an error; both are equal, both have rights. Hegel's argument shows how the ego and the society a) are not eternally in opposition, b) compliment one another, and c) require one another. Neither the social whole nor the individual can make absolute claims. Freedom is realizing that our person nature is no different than the social world, so long as that world reflects the complexity of the human mind.

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