

# Freedom through Otherness: Hegel's Lesson on Human Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity\*

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

As is well known, Kant distinguishes between the realm of mere rational thoughts, which can plausibly extend beyond experience, and the realm of true, necessary and universal, i.e. “scientific” knowledge, philosophically justified within the boundaries of empirical phenomena. As regards human beings, Kant holds, according to our proper and distinctive rational nature, we must *think* of ourselves as capable of acting in response to our awareness of being inwardly and essentially able to act on rational aims and by free self-determination *contra* our phenomenal appearance of being determined by mechanical responses to stimuli and innate animal instincts. Nevertheless, we cannot necessarily and universally *know* ourselves as we truly are in ourselves, as moral agents with

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free will. By contrast, in the introductory §377 to his *Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel introduces the “scientific” knowledge of spirit through the “absolute” injunction “know thyself”, remarking that this commandment has not only the significance of an individual’s self-knowledge according to exclusive peculiarities and inclinations, but means knowing what is true of mankind in and for itself, that is, its essence as spirit<sup>1</sup>.

In the Addition (*Zusatz*, hereafter Z) to §381, Hegel regards the ‘I’, the universal ego that any real individual being is and is aware of being, as the primary and simplest determination of human spirit<sup>2</sup>. The ‘I’ here at stake is the pure sense of our self or identity, that is, an abstract notion as simple self-referring universality (I am I), common to all human agents. Interpreters have remarked how Hegel ties together this abstract universality of the ‘I’ and abstract freedom: a human being is “essentially something universal”, or possesses an “inner universality”<sup>3</sup>; “I is [...] the existence of wholly abstract universality, that which is abstractly free”<sup>4</sup>. At the level of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel recapitulates the becoming of the self in the ethical, cultural and moral worlds of Spirit. In the first (legal) instance of personhood, the self is devoid of substance and its existence counts as an abstract actuality: “the universal is in it with no distinction (*ohne Unterscheidung*), and is neither the content of the self, nor is the self filled through itself”<sup>5</sup>.

How can we, existing singularities, primarily conceive the truth of a common spiritual essence of our humanity in terms of an abstract notion of the self as simple self-referring universality? A pure ‘I’ satisfies a universality criterion but it does not capture the singularization of any distinctive individuality and the real existential manifold of any consciousness, that is, its concrete content or

<sup>1</sup> “Knowledge of spirit is knowledge of the most concrete and consequently of the sublimest and most difficult kind. Know thyself, this absolute commandment, is not concerned with a mere self-knowledge, with the particular abilities, character, inclinations and foibles of the individual, but in its intrinsic import, as in the historical contexts in which it has been formulated, *it is concerned with cognition of human truth, with that which is true in and for itself, – with essence itself as spirit*” (*Enz.* III, §377: 9, my emphasis. All the English translations of Hegel’s texts are mine unless otherwise stated). Note that §377 does not exclude finite individual beings from philosophical consideration, because it leaves out only personal idiosyncrasies: indeed, here Hegel regards as contingent, insignificant and untrue all these features of individual human existence which fall under the heading of peculiar capacities, tempers, needs, weaknesses.

<sup>2</sup> In *Enz.* III, §381 Hegel also says that spirit turns out as the idea in its being-for-itself.

<sup>3</sup> See the Remark (*Anmerkung*, hereafter A) to §132 in *GW* 14,1: 116.29-30 and *ivi*, §153: 142.17-18; see also §5, 32.16-17, where universality as pure thought as such is defined as the limitless infinity of the absolute abstraction.

<sup>4</sup> See *Enz.* I §20A: 75: “Ich ist insofern die Existenz der ganz *abstrakten* Allgemeinheit, das abstrakt *Freie*”.

<sup>5</sup> *W*3, 465; Miller trans. ¶633: 384 modified.

material given by intuition and representation. Moreover, an abstract self or “person”, whose existence consists in its being acknowledged by others, conveys a universality that appears formal and empty (this atomistic conception of the self is the condition of alienation) and also a content as something externally given which fills it; if *this* notion of the ‘I’ and *this* conception of the human self as purely universal entity must be taken as the primary and simplest determination of spirit, how does it become a concrete object and content that fulfills our individual consciousness? Recently, interpreters have provide answers to this question by showing how Hegel argues that overcoming alienation requires articulating a conception of the self that can be affirmed equally of everyone, but, most importantly, which also includes the individual’s particularity (and so satisfies a criterion of what Hegel calls “fulfillment”). However, this analysis is based on Hegel’s view that an individual is a person in virtue of being an ‘I’, taking for granted that this generic feature individuals always already share is the capacity for self-conscious thought, and individuates Hegel’s problem of “fulfillment” in terms of relating the self’s generic and particular characteristics<sup>6</sup>. One key interpretive point in this essay is that Hegel shows that the simple unity of any actual ‘I’ must be thoroughly integrated with that person’s multifarious properties, including differentia (necessary particularities), memberships, relation to others, both of its own and of other groups, beginning to prove his thesis by demonstrating that even the most immediate, simplest cases of socially shared knowledge of spatio-temporal particulars also reveal that the truth of the sensible singular (either subject or object) is its intrinsic abstract, though also individualized, universality. In the next sections (§§1, 2) I shall cast light on the distinction between immediately accidental (essentially untrue) and necessary individual particularities (specific external determinations of an inward essence) focussing on Hegel’s notion of subjective “constitution”.

### 1. EXCLUSIVE SINGULARITY AND COMMON SUBJECTIVITY OF THE ‘I’

In the Addition to §385 of his 1830 *Encyclopaedia*, speaking of spirit, Hegel clarifies that to come to *know what it is* makes its realization. Hegel says that spirit is already spirit since its abstract beginning, but *er weiss noch nicht, dass er dies ist*; therefore, spirit essentially “is” only what it knows of itself (*wesentlich nur [...] was er von sich selber weiss*). Hence, human spirit’s own nature is to comprehend its concept in philosophical knowing<sup>7</sup>. Hegel distinguishes between

<sup>6</sup> See Brownlee 2015.

<sup>7</sup> As a concise recent entry puts it, the first section of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, subjective or finite

*Wissen* (knowing), as a general name, and *Erkennen* (cognition). When I know something, I am self-conscious (i.e. I am aware of myself) in so far as I am aware of an external object: I can know of myself only in knowing an external object, in objectifying *my* thought of *that* object. More technically, cognition as *Erkenntnis* is the intelligent activity of spirit positing the real, concrete sensory content within ourselves, in the inwardness and universality of one's thinking 'I': in appropriating that externally given content, I simplify it and make it something ideal, that is, something thought. In this way, in §381Z Hegel defines the basic element of spirit's conscious activity as "pure self-knowledge (*Selbsterkennen*) in absolute being-other (*Anderssein*)", or as the movement of leading back or negating that which is (merely) external into a simple self-relation. On the one hand, the I, the universal ego that any individual being is and is aware to be, is thus regarded as the primary and simplest determination of spirit<sup>8</sup>, on the other hand, spirit, as Hegel defines it in the *Phenomenology*, is "the knowledge [*wissen*] of oneself in one's externalization"<sup>9</sup>.

How then can our knowledge reconcile the notion of an universal 'I' with the real existential manifold of any singular 'I', which makes each of us different from other humans to whom we relate? In this regard, it is worth noting that Hegel distinguishes between *Besonderheit* as *Partikularität* and *Besonderheit* as individual determination: our contingent particular features or aims or idiosyncrasies (*Enz.* III, §406Z:148), are not to be confused with our specific determination as human being among other human beings which individualizes our universal content *qua* human beings (*Enz.* III, §406Z:143-

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spirit: "analyses the fundamental nature of the biological/human individual along with the cognitive and the practical prerequisites of human social interaction" (deVries 2013, 133). The Section on 'subjective or finite spirit' precedes the Section on 'objective spirit', which deals with the various forms of relation among human agents within an institutionalized community, according to Hegel's famous definition of spirit in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as: "I that is *We* and *We* that is *I*" (*W*3, 145; Miller trans. ¶177: 110; see also *GW* 14,1, §264: 210-211).

<sup>8</sup> "All the activities of spirit are nothing but the various modes in which that which is external is led back into the internality, to what spirit is itself, and it is only by means of this leading back, this idealizing or assimilation of that which is external, that spirit becomes and is spirit. On closer examination of spirit, we find that the ego is its primary and simplest determination. Ego is a completely simple, universal being. When we speak of it we are certainly referring to an individual being, but since every individual being is ego, we are merely referring to something extremely universal. It is on account of its universality that the ego is able to abstract from everything, even its life" (*Enz.* III, §381Z: 37-39).

<sup>9</sup> "Denn der Geist ist das Wissen seiner selbst in seiner Entäußerung" (*W*3, 552). According to Hegel, there is something hidden from consciousness in its object if the object is for consciousness something other or alien; only when the absolute being *qua* spirit is the object of consciousness then consciousness knows the object as its own self, for then the object has the form of self in its relation to consciousness, or "consciousness is revealed to itself in the object" (*Gegenstand*): "es ist sich in ihm offenbar" (*W*3, 552; Miller trans. ¶759: 459).

144). Consider Hegel's point in a Remark to his *Anthropology* about the soul which is wholly universal and yet is *this* individual, specifically determined soul with its own various determinations which considered for themselves are merely general. Here the goal of Hegel's reappraisal of the *prima facie* natural characteristics differentiating human being among themselves – difference of temperament, character, inclination, gender, race, or habits – is to conceive of them in terms of different degrees and ways to signify spirit, as qualities showing the existence of spirituality within the individual subject as affecting external existence, being part of the individual's active, actual being (*Enz.* III, §406A: 133-138). Accordingly, Hegel claims that our actuality consists of all the universal determinations of the soul lived and individualized within us. Hence, each transitory, arbitrary, elective or accidental circumstance, becomes embraced within the totality of our feeling of ourselves, as the member of a chain of determinations (*als Glied einer Kette von Bestimmungen*; *Enz.* III, §406Z: 144)<sup>10</sup>. This is to say, to consider the contingent aspects of my being as *untrue* aspects of myself, merely means being aware that they play no central or essential role in my self-knowledge *when taken in their immediacy*.

The difference between something's own character and something else to which it is always related is at the core of the dialectic of qualitative determinateness; this difference allows for contingency affecting something's specific, determinate being. In the 1830 *Science of Logic*, in the chapter on Quality, Hegel distinguishes between a determination that remains external to the inwardness of something and, although characterizing its appearance, is only "for others", and a determination that necessary belongs to something, and though characterizing its appearance by depending upon externality, carries the different qualitative significance of expressing the determinate filling of that something's inwardness, its "constitution":

The filling of the being-in-itself (*Ansichseins*) with determinateness (*Bestimmtheit*) is also distinct from the determinateness which is only being-for-other and remains outside the determination [...] That which the something has *in it* thus separates itself (*teilt sich*) and is from this side the external existence (*Dasein*) of the something which is also its (sein) existence, *but not as belonging to its being-in-itself*. Determinateness is thus constitution (*Beschaffenheit*). Constituted in this or that way, the something is caught up in external influences and external relationships. This external connection on which the constitution depends, and the being determined through an other, appear as something accidental. But it is the quality of the something to be given over to this externality and to have a *constitution* (*Beschaffenheit*). (*W5*, 133; *SL* 2010, 96)

<sup>10</sup> Note that '*Kette von Bestimmungen*' here means: linked series of *specifications*; this is not an issue of free will vs. determinism – a too common Anglophone misreading of *Bestimmung* and its cognates in philosophical German. I wish to thank an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

In §410 of the *Anthropology*, Hegel underscores how habit (*Gewohnheit*) is a difficult point in the organization of spirit, as the mechanism of self-feeling, and since according to habit a human being is in the mode of natural existence, is not free. However, despite its mechanical aspect, according to which it is often regarded as lifeless, contingent and particular, at the same time habit:

is what is most essential to the existence of all spirituality within the individual subject. It enables the subject to be as *concrete* immediacy, as an ideality of soul (*als seelische Idealität*), so that the religious or moral etc. content belongs to him as *this self, this soul*, and is in him neither merely *in itself (an sich)*, as an endowment (*Anlage*), nor as a transient sensation or representation, nor as an abstract inwardness cut off from action and actuality, but is in his being (*sondern in seinem Sein sei*). (*Enz.* III, §410: 187; cfr. Petry trans., II, 397)<sup>11</sup>

In the Addition to §112 of the *Encyclopedia Logic* Hegel introduces the *Logic of Essence* by remarking:

we often say specifically that the main thing about people is their essence, and not what they do or how they behave. What is quite right in this claim is that what someone does must be considered not just in its immediacy, but only as mediated through his inwardness and as a manifestation of his inwardness. (*Enz.* I, §112Z: 234)

Note that distinctive of Hegel's spirit is that it truly actualizes itself by constituting the essence or substantial basis of any existing singularity (*this self, this soul*) as universal human individuality. In §145 of the *Logic of Essence* on "Actuality" (*Wirklichkeit*), Hegel makes contingency and possibility respectively the outward and inward moments of the exterior manner in which whatever has an essential, actual being initially appears to consciousness (*Enz.* I, §145: 284; *EL*, 217), for "Actuality is not just an immediate being (*ein unmittelbar Seiendes*); but, as the essential being (*das wesentliche Sein*), it is the sublation of its own immediacy, and thereby mediates itself with itself" (*Enz.* I, §146Z: 288; *EL*, 220). Therefore, contingent features are not nullified by reducing the otherness of both natural and spiritual processes to any reflex of logical necessity. Rather, Hegel claims that the contingent aspects of one's own being must be considered

<sup>11</sup> As Guido Seddone highlights: "habit occupies a very important position for it is placed after the sentient faculty of the body and introduces the actual soul, i.e. the condition in which the soul conceives of its body as its own *other* and distinguishes itself from the outside environment, becoming an individual subject" (Seddone 2018, 75). It is worth noting that Lumsden addresses the critical role of the Hegelian habit in embodying normativity as a material instantiation of self-producing spirit vs. Kant's disembodied space of reasons: "I think it is clear that the importance of habit for Hegel and the way he conceives it as 'spiritual nature' is positioned against the rigid division between biological life and spirit that seems to be assumed in Kant's thought" (Lumsden 2016, 89).

as expressions of one's own specific individuality (*Besonderheit*). Accordingly, what individuals are essentially is only what they know of themselves, starting with their awareness that their contingent peculiarities, in their immediacy, are precious only for the individual person's self-complacency.

In this way, the value for individuals, discounting knowledge of these peculiarities, becomes to consider the duties which constitute the true content of the will, that is, to know the universal intellectual and moral nature of mankind, for which education and discipline are essential<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, as Hegel remarks introducing the Logic of Essence, "it should not be overlooked that essence, and inwardness as well, only prove themselves to be what they are by coming forth into appearance" (*in die Erscheinung heraustreten: Enz. I, §112Z: 234*).

Within this context, Hegel distinguishes humans from non-human animals. The death of an animal signifies the indifferent universality of the genus which is present in the concept of the singular animal, but which remains confined and closed within its inwardness, without passing into existence: death appears (*erscheint*) in the form of immediate singularity (*unmittelbaren Einzelheit*) as its empty, annihilating negation. As something singular, the animal has its concept in its *kind*; the kind frees itself from singularity through death (*Enz. I, §24A<sup>2</sup>: 86; EL, 60*). By contrast, in humanity, death brings forth the "universal individuality which is in-and-for-itself" (*die an-und-für-sich allgemeine Einzelheit*), proving to be the conserving sublation (*erhaltende Aufhebung*) of individuality (*Enz. III, §381A: 21; Petry trans., I, 35*).

In the 1822–23 Lectures on *Philosophie der allgemeinen Weltgeschichte* Hegel adds to this topic some anthropological remarks. He says that humans can inhibit instincts and representations, and that thoughts interrupt from within the cycle of driving instinct plus satisfaction which supports the continuity of the self. In contrast, non-human animals can be interrupted only from without, by pain, hunger or fear. According to Hegel, non-human animals actually 'sense' or 'intuit' the concept of things and attain substantial subjectivity, experiencing a thorough sense of unity in their members, autonomously behaving within their environment, driven by internal excitement and satisfaction to maintain and develop their life. Sensibility and irritability distinguish animal from plants: animal subjectivity's inwardness involves its being determined from within itself, from within outwards, rather than simply and mechanically from without. To be aware of its own environment does not subject the animal to determination by its habitat, for the animal responds to whatever it senses according to its own

<sup>12</sup> This is why the embodiment of God in the Son and the presence of the Holy Spirit in a community of believers function as common Christian representations of Hegel's philosophical concept of the knowledge of spirit "in its absolute infinity", grasped as a faithful image of the eternal Idea (*ein Abbild der ewigen Idee: Enz. III, §377: 9*).

capacities, needs, aims. Moreover, the animal has freedom of self-movement, spontaneously determining its own place.

Recent interpretations have re-evaluated this introduction of notions as ‘freedom’ and ‘subjectivity’ within the animal kingdom, speaking of a “naturalization of the subject”<sup>13</sup>, thus countering contemporary readings “assuming that Hegel's Spirit would leave nature behind and that freedom and subjectivity would be merely normative phenomena that would appear only after nature within attributive social practices” (Testa 2016, 24)<sup>14</sup>. In my view however even if it is certainly true that Hegel regards the animal as the *truly subjective unity* of an infinite form embedded in a plurality of organs, held together in the outwardness of a body connected with an external world, it is equally true that for Hegel this kind of animal subjectivity is not yet for-itself as pure *universal* subjectivity: it is able to feel, sense, intuit itself but not to think of itself<sup>15</sup>. As Renault nicely puts it:

The transition from nature into spirit is characterized by continuity as well as by discontinuity. Nature is already a series of levels of increasing complexity and a process of internalization or integration, of the interrelated moments [...] The animal has already a ‘soul’, and it is at exactly this level of animal subjectivity that the Philosophy of Spirit has to start. Hence, the Anthropology is a theory of the continuity of spirit with nature. Indeed, it is also a theory of what specifies the human soul: it is characterized by a higher degree of unification of drives and feelings through habits in a second nature [...] At a certain degree, these quantitative changes in degrees of integration reverse in a qualitative change named freedom. Conversely, the qualitative change that defines spirit shouldn't be conceived of independently of this series of quantitative changes. (Renault 2016, 204)<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere I have remarked how the animal exhibits merely the transition from one sensation, which occupies the *whole of its soul*, to another which dominates it equally, showing to have the sense of itself but not self-consciousness, that is, the animal is endowed with a psyche without possessing *categorical* mental process of which to be aware (Ferrini 2012, 147). The key point examined here is that Hegel claims that animals cannot say ‘I’, and that only the human, in calling himself ‘I’, means oneself, as this single person, the unity of one's own self-consciousness,

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. Testa 2012, 19-35; Pinkard 2012; Illetterati 2016, 183-201.

<sup>14</sup> The reference is mainly to Pippin's polemic against McDowell and Devries, see Pippin 2002, 58-75.

<sup>15</sup> “Diese Subjektivität ist aber noch nicht für sich selbst, als reine, allgemeine Subjektivität; sie denkt sich nicht, sie fühlt sich, schaut sich nur an” (*Enz.* II, §350Z: 431).

<sup>16</sup> On the increasing degrees of subjectivity (self-determination) and decreasing degrees of separation and isolation of the forms of the natural things in the three divisions of Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* (‘Mechanics’, ‘Physics’, ‘Organics’) see Ferrini 2009b, 45-58; on animal subjectivity and its environmental relations see *ivi*, 74-78 and Ferrini 2010, 129-135.



and *also* something completely universal, undetermined, in which everything particular is negated: the human being is the *only* “singularity that is in itself and for itself the universal”. This is the sense of human subjectivity: “It is man who first raises himself above the singleness of sensation (*die Einzelheit der Empfindung*) to the universality of thought, to self-knowledge (*zum Wissen von sich selbst*), to the grasping of his subjectivity, of his ‘I’” (*Enz.* III, §381A: 25; Petry trans. I, 49, rev.). In fact to be self-aware is to be implicitly aware of oneself as universal and *at the same time* as singular in both the internal and the external senses. On the one hand, self-conscious rationality is not “glued onto” our natural lives; on the other hand, the distinctive self-relation that identify the humans differentiating them from other animals does not raise ourselves out of the natural kingdom<sup>17</sup>.

## 2. THE LOGICAL DETERMINATIONS OF THE HUMAN ‘I’ BETWEEN OTHERNESS AND SELF-IDENTITY

As remarked above, in §381Z Hegel speaks of man’s knowledge of oneself, grasping one’s subjectivity, one’s ‘I’, in terms of “self-elevation” above the singleness of sensation to the universality of thought: as is well known, this has been charged to subordinate difference and alterity to self-identity<sup>18</sup>. It goes without saying that if we regard Hegel’s “know thyself” injunction as meaning that a self-conscious ‘I’ must become another for itself, only in order to be able to identify with itself, then our self-knowledge would rest upon a sort of hypertrophy of the subject’s sense of identity, which will be unable to offer any kind of knowledge where different members of a social community actually grasp the complexity of their intersubjective interactions. If this were Hegel’s lesson about the primary form of subjectivity, what can follow from such an abstract beginning? Wouldn’t any further dialectical development inevitably make the content no more than a subjective product closed within the inwardness of a self-consciousness, as Hegel himself rejoins to Kant’ and Fichte’s idealisms? How does Hegel’s philosophy justify its claim about existing exclusive singularities as universal individualities?

<sup>17</sup> See on the point Pinkard 2017, 6-12.

<sup>18</sup> According to Stephen Houlgate, this reading of Hegel is very common, especially among commentators inspired by Nietzsche, Heidegger or Derrida; their picture is essentially the same: “everything in Hegel’s world endeavors to absorb what is other *into* its own self-identity” (Houlgate 2006, 350).

A popular line of interpretation<sup>19</sup> has argued that the intersubjective dimension, though highlighted in Hegel's earlier writings of the Jena period and the 1807 *Phenomenology*, "is repressed by subjectivity, leaving no presence in the presentation of the absolute idea" (Habermas 1999, 149). As Espen Hammer summarizes, for Habermas there is the 'bad' Hegel of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and beyond, which replaced the situated and finite subject of the earlier writings "with a theory of absolute subjectivity, involving a single macrosubject allegedly capable of overcoming the opposition between subjective certainty and objective sociality by reference to some form of totalizing, otherness-absorbing self-conscious 'whole'" (Hammer 2007, 116). The reading *à la* Habermas claims that actual intersubjectivity becomes lost in Hegel's later system as the exposition of the unfolding of the Idea's logical sustained structure, which Honneth views as a "monologically self-developing spirit" (Honneth 1995, 61)<sup>20</sup>. Also Derrida charged Hegel with logocentrism arguing that his speculative logic established the true infinity of being exempted from the negativity of the finite<sup>21</sup>.

This is why it matters to reconsider Hegel's logical basis for the subjective finitude of spirit and the restless logical nature of any *finite* 'I'. Indeed, the text of §386 introduces the stages of spirit's development by relating Hegel's examination of subjective and objective spirit to spirit's appearance and finitude,

<sup>19</sup> As Robert Pippin puts it, a widely accepted view has it that Hegel came later to believe "that human social and political existence was best understood and legitimate as a manifestation of a grand metaphysical process, an Absolute Subject's manifestation of itself, or a Divine Mind's coming to self-consciousness" (Pippin 2002, 155). In a footnote, Pippin states that versions of this claim can be found in Habermas, Theunissen, Hösl and Honneth, *inter alia* (*ivi*, 168, note 3).

<sup>20</sup> To solve these tensions between private lives and public orientation, individual and social reasons (Pinkard 2012, Chapters 4 and 5), interpreters have argued in favour of a systematic continuity of freedom and recognition in Hegel's early and mature writings, focussing on the development of self-consciousness and the necessity of the process of "recognition" (Houlgate 2010), as a social-ontological phenomenon which points to a holistic normative account of human personhood by distinguishing persons and their lifeworld from mere animals and their natural environment (Ikäheimo, 2009). In particular, some draw attention to the struggle for recognition and the thematization of intersubjectivity (Bykova 2013), and to the recognition of our mutual interdependence as normative for manifesting our individual free agency (Williams 2013).

<sup>21</sup> See Derrida 1980, 119: "the only effective position to take in order not to be enveloped by Hegel would seem to be, for an instant, the following: to consider false-infinity (that is, in a profound way, original finitude) irreducible". See also Derrida 1997, 24: "Hegel [...] undoubtedly summed up the entire philosophy of the *logos*. He determined ontology as absolute logic; he assembled all the delimitations of philosophy as presence; he assigned to presence the eschatology of *parousia*, of the self-proximity of infinite subjectivity". Zambrana 2012 has challenged Derrida's reading arguing that "true infinity is crucial to Hegel's understanding of ideality as a question of normative authority, which does not fall prey to logocentrism". As Zambrana remarks, the notions of finitude and infinity should be understood as constitutively impure: "True infinity is thus the comprehension that neither finitude nor infinity can be held as absolute, pure notions, since neither is self-subsistent" (Zambrana 2012, 5).

referring to an intrinsic contradiction within the logical determination of finitude<sup>22</sup>. In the Logic of Quality of the 1830 *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel presents this “intrinsic contradiction” by mentioning that Plato’s *Sophist* highlighted how any finite individual is equally well ‘something’ (the side of its ‘sameness’) and also *its other* (the side of its distinguished determinateness): each finite individual is exclusive only insofar as it involves its other (*Enz.* I, §94: 199; *EL*, 149). Put otherwise, Plato exhibited the interweaving network of forms which defines the sameness of any determinate thing<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, Hegel presents the ‘I’ as the most familiar example of being-for-itself, that is, of being manifest to oneself<sup>24</sup>. Hegel says that “we know ourselves as determinate beings who *are there (daseiend)*, both distinct from other determinate beings and yet related to them”<sup>25</sup>. Hegel does not present the notion of ‘I’ as a monolithic punctual substance characterized by exclusive predicates, on the basis of our being autonomously cognizant of ourselves as subjective identities, both in continuity and discontinuity with our conspecifics. Rather, Hegel stresses how our self-knowledge that the universality of thought is embedded in any singular human being makes our subjectivity enter expressly into a free existence:

The most familiar example of being-for-itself is the ‘I’. We know ourselves to be beings who are there, first of all distinct from other such beings, and related to them. But secondly, we also know that this expanse of being-there is, so to speak, focused into the simple form of being-for-itself. When we say ‘I’, that is the expression of the infinite self-relation that is at the same time negative. It may be said that man distinguishes himself from the animals, and so from nature generally, because he knows himself as ‘I’; what this says, at the same time, is that natural things never attain to free being-for-oneself, but, being restricted to being here, are always just being-for-another<sup>26</sup>.

Man distinguishes himself from the animals, and so from nature generally, because he knows himself as ‘I’, but when we say ‘I’, this expresses the infinite self-relation which is also negative and exclusive. Note that the formal structure of the ‘I’ is not the distinctive identity which merely individuates any ‘unique thing’ from all others, unto itself, regardless of any relations to others. Indeed,

<sup>22</sup> “Spirit is the infinite Idea, and the disproportion between the Notion and reality, the meaning of finitude, has here the added determination of its constituting the appearance within spirit. [...] The determination of finitude has been elucidated and examined long since at its place in the logic” (*Enz.* III, §386: 71-73).

<sup>23</sup> See *ibid.*: “[...] the expression of the contradiction, which the finite contains, [i. e.] that it is just as much something as its other”.

<sup>24</sup> See the Section on “Quality. C-Being-for-itself”: Hegel, *Enz.* I, §96Z: 203-204; *EL*, 153.

<sup>25</sup> *Ivi*, § 96Z, 203.

<sup>26</sup> *Ivi*, 204.

Hegel refers to the 'I' as the most familiar example of that immediate relation to itself, merely *by excluding the other from itself*; as such, for "this determinacy is no longer the finite determinacy of something in distinction to another, but the infinite determinacy that contains distinction within it as sublated"<sup>27</sup>. This progress in thought has further consequences. This is why in the 1830 *Science of Logic*, Hegel presents the 'I' not only as an example of qualitative being manifest to oneself but also as an example of the category of Quantity:

for the 'I' is an absolute becoming-other, an infinite distancing or all-round repulsion that makes for the negative freedom of the being-for-itself which, however, remains absolutely simple continuity – the continuity of universality, of self-abiding-being interrupted by infinitely manifold limits, by the content of sensations, of intuition, and so forth. (*GW* 21, 179; *SL* 2010, 156–157)

The concrete content of consciousness, the manifold of sensations, intuitions, representations, are the 'discrete moments' of the simple continuity of the 'I'. In §2 of the 1830 *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel underscores the difference between philosophical thinking and "the thinking that is active in everything human and brings about the very humanity of what is human", by stressing that equally well: "*in-itself* there is only *One* thinking" (*Enz.* I, §2: 42; *EL*, 25). Accordingly, despite the difference between forms of thought which appear as feelings, beliefs, intuitions, representations and *thinking itself as form*, Hegel consistently maintains that thought (the 'I') determines and permeates all human content of consciousness. In the Remark to §20, Hegel states that the 'I' (*das Ich*) is "the thought" (*das Denken*) as the subject, and since "I am at the same time in all my sensations, representations (*Vorstellungen*), states, etc., thought is present everywhere and pervades all these determinations as [their] category" (*Enz.* I, §20A: 75; cf. *EL*, 51). The same point is made in the *Preface* to the second edition of the *Science of Logic*, where Hegel makes clear that the forms of thought are, in the first instance, displayed and stored in human language (*W* 5, 20). From the section on intelligence in the *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1805/1806, to §2 of the 1830 *Encyclopaedia*, up to the *Preface* to the second edition of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel always maintains that, through *das Ich* the forms of thought in general permeate, instinctively and unconsciously, all – even the most sensuous – *human* activities in their original qualitative difference from animality. The essence, the distinctive *nature* of man itself is a *logical nature*, and expresses itself, awakening spirit, as the *power* to give names to things, as language, the first *creative power* exerted by human intelligence, which therefore *essentially* belongs to the realm of Spirit. This

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

transforming universal power is said to be a sort of “infection”; systematically, Hegel uses this term at various stages: with regard to magnetism (*Enz.* II, §314), vegetable nature (§§345–346), animal process of assimilation (§354, §§364–365), animal disease (§371) and in the §402 *Philosophy of Spirit* with the significance of ‘magic dominion’ over the world. At the level of the *Phenomenology*, the result is the “intelligibility” (*Verständlichkeit*) of the content matter, which fills the gap between ordinary and philosophical consciousness and affords a ladder from the former to the latter.

This focus on the naturally logical activity of our ‘I’ to appropriate the external object making it as its own (*Eigentum*) belongs to the core of the Hegelian thought throughout its development, beginning from his famous *Aphorism* on Jakob Böhme (1803-1806), which has parallels in many systematic places<sup>28</sup>. Commenting in the Jena period on Böhme’s vision of God’s wrath when He becomes aware that his essence is lost, dispersed in the other of Himself which He has created, Hegel relates that intuition of a divine consuming fire that burns nature, transfiguring its immediate life in an eternal spiritual one, to the higher scientific work of consciousness. Human self-awareness, through conceptual knowing, shows how the natural essence of both the subject and the object is consumed so that the individual emerges conscious of his own self and intuition of nature’s *spiritual* essence. Self-knowing subjects crush the alleged external substantiality of the reality of the world standing before his or her knowing, by making it *ideal*.

To clarify the epistemological and metaphysical conditions for developing a “thinking ‘I’” through the relation between essence and appearance, in the next section (3) I outline the cognitive path of human natural consciousness until its transition into the practical relations with objects in real life, presenting the various dialectical stages of the relation between simple unity and diversity both *a parte objecti* and *a parte subjecti*. As remarked earlier, my critical point is that any universal ‘I’ must be thoroughly integrated with the real individual’s distinctive and specific characteristics. Hegel begins to prove this thesis at the most immediate level of our phenomenal knowledge, by demonstrating how the dialectic of sense-certainty develops the characters of the sensibility and singularity of the object *and* the subject, their real individuality, precisely by bringing about the opposite feature of their intrinsic abstract universality. This is what comes through the words of language as the very first human spiritual

<sup>28</sup> See for instance the 1805-1806 *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the Addition to §248 of the *Encyclopaedia*, and the Addition 1 to §42 of the *Encyclopaedia*: “Thus the Ego is, so to speak, the crucible and the fire through which the *indifferent* multiplicity is consumed and reduced to unity” (*Enz.* I, §42Z<sup>1</sup>: 118; *EL*, 85, my emphasis).

act that consumes the immediate natural determinacy of the sensible world<sup>29</sup>. This tension between the intellectually fixed opposites of simple unity and multifarious diversity, inwardness and outwardness, concrete individuality and abstract universality, animates the movement of 'Perception' to 'Force and Understanding' and marks the transition to self-consciousness, that is, to the form of a practical, living and thinking 'I'. We will see how the whole movement of Perception is taken to be the one of an (internal) unitarian and universal *essence* that in perceiving is linked with an external multifarious diversity that is both inessential (i.e. the properties are mutually indifferent, not mutually exclusive) and necessary (to the determinateness of the thing). Furthermore, I will show how the outcome of the dialectic of the Understanding moves our knowledge towards a new configuration of both subject and object: towards *self-awareness*, as the autoscopia proper of self-consciousness, and towards contents, as 'Life'. Organic life can count as a kind of infinite object that the abstract, reflective thought-form of our Understanding cannot grasp<sup>30</sup>, for it is characterized by the internal unity and the mutual exchange of internal and external, that is a principle of immanent differentiation preserving the manifoldness in the unity.

As Terry Pinkard correctly remarks, with the collapse of the idea that the so-called essence of things was an old metaphysical intrinsic, non-relational essence, and the result of being aware of our own conceptualizing activity, which contrasts itself with the world of independently existing objects:

an alternative picture of the subject has emerged – namely, that of a practical, living subject who deals with objects in terms of his cognitive capacities and for whom his concepts are more like *tools* with which he can deal with his environment. Hegel calls this 'life'. (Pinkard 1994, 48)

<sup>29</sup> See *GW* 8, 190: "der Mensch spricht zu dem Dinge als dem seinigen und diß ist das Seyn des Gegenstandes".

<sup>30</sup> In the *Zusatz* to §28 of the 1830 *Encyclopaedia* Hegel warns us to distinguish between the finite thinking of the understanding, which takes up the abstract determinations of thought as they are immediately given and in isolation, and the true, infinite thinking of reason. Formally speaking, the finite subsists in its relation to its other (i.e. an object that confronting me as something other presents itself as my limit and negation), but when thought takes thinking as its object, then the object confronting me no longer counts as a negative limit: infinite thinking determines as does finite thinking, but rather than fixing restricted thought-determinations, it regards them not as ultimate, but negates their abstraction and one-sidedness, unveiling their nature of being moments passing into one another.

### 3. FROM THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE PURE 'I' AS IMMEDIATE SPIRIT TO LIFE

As Russon remarks, the *phenomenological* study of our conscious experience means “that it is a study that describes experience ‘from the inside’”, and not according to some presupposed model of reality (Russon 2015, 51). In the Preface to the 1807 *Phenomenology* Hegel describes the relationship between the philosophical form of knowing and the ordinary cognitive strategies of unscientific consciousness against the background of his quest for the universal intelligibility of science, which implies its accessibility from the standpoint of our ordinary way of knowing. In sharp contrast to viewing science as an esoteric possession of few individuals by some special kind of intuition, faith or feeling of the True, and in sharp contrast to indefinite, vacuous formulas which are declared or asserted, rather than justified, Hegel articulates a double strategy: (1) to show what natural and philosophical consciousness have in common (the ‘I’ and the intelligibility of the world thanks to the theoretical approach of the abstract universality of our understanding), and (2) to point to the *complete determination* of the content we experience in knowing. In the former regard, Hegel emphasizes what affords everyone equal access to science:

The intelligible (*verständige*) form of science is the path offered to everyone and equally available for all. To achieve rational knowledge through our own understanding (*Verstand*) is the rightful demand of a consciousness which is approaching science. *This is so both because the understanding (Verstand) is thought, the pure ‘I’ as such (überhaupt) and because what is intelligible (das Verständige) is what is already familiar and common both to science and to the unscientific consciousness alike, and it is that through which unscientific consciousness is immediately enabled to have access to science.* (W3, 20; Miller trans. rev., ¶13: 8; my emphasis)

In the Addition to §246 of the Philosophy of Nature in the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel makes clear that in simply thinking things, in simply giving to them a name, our intelligence ‘transforms’ them into something universal, intelligible though in a theoretically abstract way: we give them our own (human) form and turn them into something belonging to us, with which we *all* are acquainted and able to share, though at the cost of what nature really is. In bringing everything into the net of the universal determinations of thought we have *first* made the content intelligible, something we share and can communicate, and what is intelligible – i.e., all things whose unique sensuous singularity can be *said* or enunciated – is the content of our natural unscientific consciousness, which itself is immediate spirit, the pure ‘I’ as such<sup>31</sup>. Yet this is not at all regarded as an exclusively

<sup>31</sup> “We also find that the theoretical approach is inwardly self-contradictory, for it appears to bring about the precise opposite of what it intends. We want to know the nature that really is, not something



subjective feature. In his 1830 Lectures on the *Science of Logic*, Hegel uses the example of a very simple sensory judgment (“the rose is red”), remarking that: (i) what appears to be totally sensory contains the copula, which is non-sensory; (ii) the division between subject and predicate contrasts to the undifferentiated sensory apprehension of a red-rose; (iii) what is more, when I say “red” for the singular red that I have before me, the predicate expresses a general objective characteristic that at once belongs both to blood, wine etc. *and* to me<sup>32</sup>.

In his *Lectures on Philosophy of Spirit* from Berlin 1827-28, Hegel claims:

The universal is nothing other than what is contained in the object. The universal is only in the subject and it has been asked, whether genera are in nature or are only in the subject [...] the universal is the truthful in objects. ‘To provide marks, differentia, in a definition’, one says, ‘is necessary though only for the subject’. However, the mark by which one kind of species is distinct from another kind must be an essential mark, which is the root of its other characteristics (VPG, 230.308-318).

As Kenneth Westphal has pointed out, this kind of idealism, according to which the determinate objective quality of the things themselves that I immediately perceive is an intuited singularity that has the form of universality which *also* belongs to my thought, “is a form of ontological holism that is, and is intended to be, consistent with realism” (Westphal 2018, 420). Indeed, since language is the work of thought, nothing can be actually expressed in language (*versus* what is merely meant) that is not universal:

However much they actually wanted to *say* (*sagen*) what they mean (*meinen*) about this piece of paper, and however much they wanted to *say* it, still it would be impossible because the sensuous ‘this’, which is what is meant, is *inaccessible* (*unerreichbar*) to

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which is not, but instead of leaving it alone and accepting it as it is in truth, instead of taking it as given, we make something completely different out of it. By thinking things, we transform them into something universal; things are singularities however, and the lion in general does not exist. We make them into something subjective, produced by us, belonging to us, and of course peculiar to us as men; for the things of nature do not think, and are neither representations nor thought” (*Enz.* II, §246Z: 198).

<sup>32</sup> VL, 4.54-56: “was ich vor mir habe, ist nur das einzelne Rot, dieses Bestimmte, das aber auch [die] Form der Allgemeinheit hat, diese gehört auch mir an”. In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel analyses judgments of inherence as singularized universals which specify the logical form taken by content-conferring perceptual judgements. Paul Redding remarks: “to predicate ‘red’ of some particular rose is to attribute to it the particular redness that it has and not the general property redness that it has in common with, say, postboxes and fire engines” (Redding 2014, 10). However, he also notes: “Hegel’s argument runs broadly along the lines that the negation of a judgement such as ‘the rose is red’ still carries a certain positive content, namely, that the rose has some other colour. When it is said that, for instance, the rose is not red, only the determinateness of the predicate is thereby denied and thus separated from the universality which *equally attaches to it*; the universal sphere, color, is retained; if the rose is not red, it is nonetheless assumed that it has a color, though another color. From the side of this universal sphere, the judgement is still positive” (*ivi*, 11: note 8; my italics).



the language which belongs to consciousness, that is, to what is in itself (*an sich*) universal. (*W* 3, 91s.; Miller trans. rev. ¶110: 66)

The key point here is that if nothing more is said of an existing thing than that it is an external object (*äußerer Gegenstand*), the thing is expressed as the most universal of all and what is expressed is only the *indifference of its externality*, i.e., “its sameness (*Gleichheit*) with everything instead of its distinctiveness” (*Unterschiedenheit*; *W* 3, 91s.; Miller trans. rev. ¶110: 66). At first the object that consciousness meant to know in sense-certainty appeared as something totally unaffected by its relation to consciousness, given to it as a singular, immediate and independent being, with no other determination of being intuited as an existing being-there within space and time. However, the dialectic of object as a *this* which is *here* and *now* had turned the initial certainty of actually grasping substantive individuals into an opposite truth. *A parte subjecti*, consciousness experiences that it apprehends the *this* only by dissolving it into a relational net of differentiated referents; *a parte objecti* is the “now”, that is present at noon in so far as it is not the past night-time. For us, that experience had in fact exhibited the object as something *internally mediated in its singularity*: a simply self-identical (universal and undivided)<sup>33</sup> complex of many punctual determinations of the two abstract forms of externality: spacial juxtaposition (the *neben*) and temporal succession (the *nach*). This is what verbal language necessarily reveals when consciousness wants to “say” (or state) the individual existence it means to express<sup>34</sup>. Because of these two extremes of real individuality and abstract universality in the new stage of *Perception*, common sense despairs of reaching truth whenever that it tries to bring together the unitary being of a thing and its many different sensory aspects. In the same vein with the general perspective outlined in the *Preface*, the understanding (*Verstand*) is the finite mode by which the subject apprehends given objects in their determinate distinctions, but it bestows the form of abstract universality on these contents, which it fixes in mutual contra-distinction. Since *Perception* results for us from *Sense Certainty*, on the one hand, the thing is taken as essentially one, as a simple natural unity or a substantive individual which as this kind of non-relational identity *excludes* what is other than itself. On the other hand, however, the thing of *Perception* also necessarily *contains diversity*, it appears as constituted by a manifold of

<sup>33</sup> *W* 3, 85; Miller trans. rev. ¶96: 60: “Such a simple (*Ein solche Einfaches*), which is through negation, which is neither this nor that, a *not-this* (*ein Nichtdieses*), and is equally indifferent to being this or that, is what we call a *universal*”.

<sup>34</sup> Westphal 2002-2003 has pointed out how fundamental is the interrelation between *sagen* and *bezeichnen* (connotation and denotation, intension and extension, utterance and gesture) for Hegel’s analysis and transition from sense-certainty to perception.

determinate properties. Logically speaking, Hegel states that in truth repulsion is essentially attraction and the excluding One sublates itself<sup>35</sup>.

What emerges is that in consciousness' experience the perceived thing as the simple, unseparate complex of many properties, collapses through the determinateness that allegedly constitutes its essence: indeed, *Perception* inwardly *sublates itself*, because when it separates the simple inner self-determination of the thing from its multifarious way of being, it also separates the being of the thing from its immediate presence to a perceiver, and it derives (or posits, *setzt*) the thing as the whole ground of its determinate, apparent and specific parts or properties. This self-sublation of the finite is exactly what Hegel calls the dialectical moment of everything logically real in §79 and §81 of the 1830 *Encyclopaedia*.

In short, by its definition, *Perception* cannot go beyond an empirical, variable and contingent mixture of universality and singularity; this marks its boundaries. The unsolved sensuous opposition between the abstract extremes of essentiality and determinateness leads to the transition of this shape of consciousness to the superior and deeper unity of the *Understanding*, and to *force* as its object. The transition is carried out when consciousness moves to an unconditioned, supersensible, self-identical universality as the inner, *productive* ground of the manifold properties of the object. The thought-form of such a productive ground is a self-identical universality, which is not an immediate lifeless substance that lacks actual existence, but a *purposive activity* which has the power to make itself into what the thing is in itself, developing its parts and properties, bringing the inner nature of perceived things to actuality. Hegel's analysis of the deceptive experience of the "perceiving understanding" in the dialectic of *Perception* proves directly within the experience of consciousness that natural things must be objectively determined according to what is internal and necessary, not extrinsic or alien to them: their ground is force that expresses itself<sup>36</sup>.

Note that with the transition to the chapter *Force and Understanding*, consciousness does not confront any longer an external object that is also foreign (*fremd*) to thought, *essentially other than the subject*. Through the determinations first of "force" and then of "laws" as universals which remain in identity with themselves within the flux of phenomena by ruling their variation, the inwardness of the natural thing becomes the thought of them, their concept. The discovery of the form of the laws of nature, which invariantly and generally govern what appears and happens in our mind-independent world, allows consciousness to bring back to simplicity, to the form of the

<sup>35</sup> On the dialectic of repulsion and attraction see Schick 2000, 235-251.

<sup>36</sup> Here I refer to Ferrini 2005, 187-197.

universal, all the singularities which stand before the knowing subject. The transition from the *Understanding* – not as a faculty of cognition but as shape of the ordinary knowledge of consciousness<sup>37</sup> – to *Self-Consciousness* (according to its three shapes of appetite, struggle for recognition and work) is carried on through the immanent limits of the intellectual nature of the law which must fix within itself a necessary connection, between two irreducible opposite sides: one internal: theoretical, universal, necessary, qualitative, stable and ideal or supersensible (the formula), the other external: empirical, quantitative, transient, contingent and real or apparent (the side of the observed data). The shape of consciousness which knows the externality of nature through the laws of the understanding cannot go beyond the mutual externality of the two constitutive sides of the law, which as such remain quietly, i.e. *lifeless*, fixed within their difference. Note that the merely understanding consciousness cannot apprehend fluidly the difference between the theoretical and empirical side of a natural law, as related moments of the form that moves itself, the dynamic between foundation and existence.

The reflective understanding proves to be only able to express the static and quiet aspect of phenomena, proves to be inadequate to think what occurs in its experience of the law: the (relational) principle of internal difference, of the opposition itself, counts as something contradictory for the understanding. At the same time, the limits of our certainty of the object as something essentially other than our awareness of it have been brought before us. Indeed, what has also been traced out in *Force and Understanding* is the categorial structure of the object of knowledge, the structure of our ordinary intellectual procedures which determine the lawfulness of nature, its scientific objectivity.

To sum up, from a philosophical standpoint, the truth of sense-certainty was in fact the indifferent universality of the “here” and the “now”, but this also marked the beginning of a path of liberation from any immediate dependence upon the object, from the intuitive apprehension of the “here is the tree” and the “now is noon” as grounding truth. For perceiving consciousness, a natural thing is inwardly differentiated between its particularity and its universality (in external relation to each other) and equally well it is determined by their empirical, contradictory mixture. For understanding consciousness, the natural thing is determined as *in itself external*: the independent existing singular being that confronts sensuous consciousness is reduced (or raised) to the universality of the appearance of an inner being-for-self; this requires developing *reflective* representations in which the subject becomes aware not just of the object as in itself external, but of its own objective way to represent the object. *A parte*

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<sup>37</sup> See Moneti 1986, 39.

*subjecti*, the outcome is that consciousness no longer takes as object what is in relation to it, but its own essential way of determining what is external to it; *a parte objecti*, we have the transition to a being that *is* the “appearance of an inner being-for-self”; that is, to a *living* being. Indeed, the being that is characterized by the internal unity and the mutual exchange of internal and external, that is a principle of immanent differentiation preserving the manifoldness in the unity, is the *organic* being (*Enz.* II §344Z: 347), the “infinite” form of which cannot be comprehended by the finite form of the understanding.

In the Addition to §418 of the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel underscores that when we confront any organic being, the *object switches over into the subjective*, so that consciousness discovers itself as the *essentiality* of the object it confronts. From the resolution of the contradiction of the section on the *Understanding* onward, the externality of nature begins to develop as spirit’s *proper own* externality: from the external object, now spirit comes to reflect itself into itself, as the (internal) *essentiality* of the natural beings, and becomes manifest to itself, being aware of its own conceptualizing activity, that is, is for itself or objectified to itself (*wird sich selber gegenständlich*)<sup>38</sup>. Thus, the subject becomes ready to encounter, at first *in the shape of an external object*, another conscious human subject as its own reflective doublement. As Judith Butler notes, contextualizing the outset of Chapter 4 in the *Phenomenology*’s next section on Self-Consciousness:

Why is it that the Other appears, and why is it that the Other appears as another shape? [...] In an earlier section of the *Phenomenology*, space, time, and distance are conceptualized in relation to ‘force’ (*Kraft*) and ‘understanding’ (*Verstand*). Understanding is differentiated from Perception (*Warnhemung*). In perception, the determinateness of a thing is known, along with its distinct and determinate qualities. We might understand this way of linking perception to determinateness as prefiguring the ‘bounded’ and distinct sense of the ‘I’ as it first comes face to face with its redoublement (*die Verdopplung*) in or as the Other. (Malabou & Butler 2011, 625-626).

In the next two sections (§§ 4, 5) I show how in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel argues that humans may be said to be thinking I’s with the significance of relating as particular individual agents to their human essence in a process by which the immediate or abstract self-consciousness does *not* become another for itself *merely in order to be able to identify with itself* according to an alleged hypertrophy of the subject’s sense of identity. By focusing on the master-serf relationship and on the import of what appears to be objectified in the serf’s work for the externalization of the master’s own inwardness, I highlight Hegel’s

<sup>38</sup> See Hegel, *Enz.* III §418Z: 207.

idea of freedom as intersubjective cognitive and practical actualization. We will see how in Hegel's absolute idealism, *relational* characteristics enter the definition of what is substantial in human individuals *qua* embodied 'Egos', actually integrating both abstract and internally differentiated universality within mutually related individuals.

#### 4. FROM THE ABSTRACT TO THE THINKING 'I'

Franco Chiereghin has noted how only *after* the master-serf dialectic do we no longer have the abstract 'I' of a human self-consciousness entangled with natural animal life, and only *after* the passage from the primitive shape of "appetite" (*Begierde*, often translated as "desire") to "recognition" humans may be said to be thinking 'I's', with the significance of relating as particular individual agents to their objective (human) essence, in such a way that each 'I' may share *thought* with all other 'I's' (Chiereghin 2009, 55-58). How can we make sense of this passage in light of our previous considerations about contingency and externality in the qualitative characteristics of the human self?

The phenomenological transition from the world of the *Understanding* to the world of *Life* is at first a transition to the *immediacy* of Life, to a physical world that is nothing but an environment inhabited by living organisms. Note how in those pages of the *Phenomenology* natural externality actually ceases to be merely indifferent externality but is now *equally well* an externality established by life in order to live<sup>39</sup>. Indeed, *Life* is common to all the realms of organic nature. In *Life* however there is neither freedom nor actual universality. As remarked earlier, in contrast with the results of the (human) dialectic of the *Understanding*, the substantiality of the animal's independent subjectivity, its individual existence, has not yet achieved being-for-itself. Its degree of unification of a multiplicity of distinct singularities can only be the sense of a common identity with the other conspecifics through the indefinite process of reproduction (the *Gattungsprozess*)<sup>40</sup>. Within animal life, universality is neither fully achieved nor sustained, for animal life cannot achieve any *enduring* (spiritual) concrete universal existence. Therefore, when human beings are considered phenomenally as driven only by instincts, thus living immersed within an unthinking condition as if they were *only* natural beings, they are isolated from their spiritual inwardness, external to, or estranged from, their

<sup>39</sup> Compare Kisner 2008-9, 42-43 with *VPG*, 24-26.

<sup>40</sup> See *VPG*, 25.643-26.653; *Enz.* III §381Z: 20-21.

essential humanity (VPW, 27.643–653). Is this an entirely self-determining and internally self-justifying, “boot-strapping” claim<sup>41</sup>?

At first (at the stage of *Life* analysed at the outset of the *Self-Consciousness* chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, after *Consciousness*) the ‘I’, which constitutes the logical nature of any human animal, tries to solve the immediate appearance of its constitutive opposition between the side of continuity or commonality and the side of discreteness or particularity by destroying and absorbing *anything other* which limits and interrupts the continuity of its self-unity. Likewise, in natural life, animals driven by appetite treat any external object they encounter as mere means to reintegrating their own sensible self-unity (VPG, 35.843–856). This strategy seems to work also for human animals in so far as ‘otherness’ is constituted by external things devoid of self and *devoid of any objective essence for the human self*, which finds no resistance to appropriating and consuming whatever differs from it<sup>42</sup>. According to this external side, in desire and longing, things become immediately identical with the immediate human subjectivity, which exerts power over them as they exert power against it, in an endless cycle of mutual entanglement and momentary lack of differentiation. Subjectivity constantly relapses into itself out of its objectification<sup>43</sup>, thus requiring continuous stimulation to restart its actualization. The key point here is the entanglement of the human self-unity with singularity and its full immersion in transitoriness, contrary to its inward, essential enduring universality, which in the state of nature altogether lacks any durable dimension: in short, given the intrinsic relatedness of sameness and otherness in the restless logical nature of the ‘I’, when the independence of the other, *qua* natural thing, is destroyed, the universal form of subjectivity also collapses. *Also humans may be unable to call themselves ‘I’.*

The key point is: insofar as *for me* the other is an immediate other determinate being, something in nature existing simply as natural<sup>44</sup>, Hegel claims that *I am*

<sup>41</sup> See Pippin 2008, 202: “Hegel’s theory of recognition has turned out to be a theory of practical rationality of a radically ‘boot-strapping’ (internally self-determining and internally self-justifying sort)”.

<sup>42</sup> Russon 2015, 51-52 writes: “We typically imagine desire to be the desires *of* a person, an already formed and socially integrated ego. Hegel, though (like Freud, Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari in the twentieth century), investigates the primitive experience of desire that *precedes* ego formation. This desire (*Begierde*) [...] is a consciousness that exists only in and as the practice of carrying itself out, the ‘self’ that finds itself only as the experience of satisfaction in the ‘consummation’ of its encounter with its other. This primitive desire is not a *thought*, but a *behaviour*. In its most basic enactment, (self-)consciousness, then, is a matter of practice and, hence, inherently bodily. Most immediately, (self-)consciousness just is the body *lived as* the enactment of desire”.

<sup>43</sup> See *Enz.* III, §429Z.

<sup>44</sup> See *ivi*, §431.

unable to know myself as myself within this other, and therefore to be aware and certain of my own self, of my own enduring universal identity. This means that for Hegel when a human being is captured in the cycle of destroying the independence of the other, *qua* mere thing to consume, as a means to satisfy needs, it also cannot reach any knowledge of oneself as a lasting universal form, and not becoming aware of its kind of subjectivity, it cannot express it by saying 'I'. The necessity to overcome the state of natural life rests in the structure itself of the 'human' appetite/desire, that on the one side, by showing the immanent corporeality of the self, "reveals the impossibility of consciousness existing independently of a body", and on the other side, awakes the self-awareness of oneself as not being defined uniquely "by the very bodily reality" in and as which desire is enacted (Russon 2015, 52).

Note that according to Hegel's *Logic of Essence*, if the 'thinking I' cannot appear in the state of nature: this commits, urges and drives the inward, essential and still implicit universal nature of any human *finite* subjectivity to prove itself to be what it is by (practically) coming forth *in die Erscheinung*. By contrast, as Marina Bykova remarks, Fichte's self-positing 'I' is immediately present to itself in its original purity and thus *appears* fixed and indifferent. In this way, Fichte's subject:

is not practical because the external world, posited by the I as its own limitation, exists only in concept and not yet in reality. Thus, it lacks a necessary substantial aspect and ultimately affords no real development. Hegel rejects the notion of the I as fixed, unchangeable, and originally given [...] Hegel views the I as a *result*, rather than a beginning. Indeed this result is a product of the I's own development in its organic unity and dynamic entirety, the *whole* process. of 'the coming-to-be of itself' (*PhG*, PS 18/ *GW* 9: 18). [...] The I is not merely posited; it must create itself through self-mediation of its otherness in and through practical interactions with others within the real natural and social world. (Bykova 2019, 167)

In the state of *Life*, any self-consciousness directly manifests and proves its universal essence by accepting to risk one's own life. This happens when the immediacy and transitoriness of the others each (self-)consciousness distinguishes from and refers to, means to encounter 'their Others', that is, individuals of the *same species*, which cannot be destroyed and consumed as natural things *without opposing a distinctive resistance, a kind of resistance that expresses human essence*. Hegel writes that a self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as 'object'<sup>45</sup>, but two humans initially confront each other as natural immediate beings irrespective of each other. However, within the state of *Life*, the resistance of another 'I' to be

<sup>45</sup> *W* 3, 145: "Indem ein Selbstbewusstsein der Gegenstand ist, ist er ebensowohl Ich wie Gegenstand".



treated solely as an object *must be different* from any kind of non-human animal's resistance. As recalled above, according to the 1827-28 *Lectures on Philosophy of Spirit*, "the mark by which one kind of species is distinct from another kind must be an essential mark, which is the root of its other characteristics" (VPG, 230.308-318)<sup>46</sup>.

A "Battle unto Death" between humans must imply a *mutual assessment* of the opponent's physical force and vulnerability, not the use of teeth or claws, but tools as weapons and cognitive skills. Otherwise stated, entering such a struggle implies evaluating *mutual* weaknesses and strengths and *both* the opponents must respond to evidence and inference<sup>47</sup>. When human beings are considered as driven only by appetite or desire, their agency is inseparable from the existence of their's own bodily needs, and in the state of *Life* any human attempt to make another human being 'for oneself' cannot be "a mere cognizing of otherness; it must at the same time be a supersession of the other, an attempt to make the other exist 'for self-consciousness' in a concrete, objective manner" (Neuhouse 1989, 250). After the struggle for "recognition"<sup>48</sup>, some individuals will prove their "courage", capacity of assessment, ability to "master" (i.e. ruling and controlling) things<sup>49</sup>; they will prove to be able to abstract from any commitment, to be independent from domestic relations and circumstances, thus experiencing their universal essence by openly facing the possibility of death, eventually winning the battle; instead, by refusing to risk their own life because of their over-attachment to it, and then surrendering to "the Other", many individuals will experience the

<sup>46</sup> See on the point Ferrini 2009a, 95-100.

<sup>47</sup> As Neuhouse remarks, the initial, naive and incomplete, certainty the humans have of themselves in the natural state becomes aware of otherness only at an experiential level: "It is only [...] when I try to make the animal really 'for me' by attempting to consume it, that I first encounter the otherness of the animal. It is from its threatening snarl, its attempts to flee – its resistance in general – that I learn that it is something other than myself" (Neuhouse 1989, 250). In explaining the transition from desire to recognition Brandom (2007) underscores that the other we struggle with is capable of recognizing us, but in my view this assumption would beg the question. Further (preliminary) conditions are necessary for the process of recognition, as the capacity of mutual assessment, artificial weapons, distinctive cognitive skills which must become manifest in a life-death struggle between *human* animals, where each part essentially proves the nature of its being against the other.

<sup>48</sup> W3, 144: "Es ist ein *Selbstbewusstsein für ein Selbstbewusstsein*. Erst hiedurch ist es in der Tat". According to Hegel, then, no one can become self-conscious without passing through being consciously aware of another human being showing the same characteristics of awareness, and "for us" this has the significance to reach the concept of spirit. On the historical result of Hegel's master-serf relationship as dissolving the Aristotelian natural relation of dependence among human beings, see Bodei 2019, 185-186.

<sup>49</sup> See on this point Malabou's reconstruction of Derrida's interpretation of "Master and Serf": "Derrida uses Bataille as a surrogate to make Hegel speak *against* himself. The Hegelian notion of 'mastery' is doubled by Bataille's notion of 'sovereignty'. According to Derrida's Bataille, sovereignty would be the genuinely detached attitude, whereas mastery would be another name for a servile overattachment to life" (Malabou & Butler 2011, 613).



conserving sublation of a servile consciousness that also works for the durability of things as goods<sup>50</sup>.

The justification for this juncture of the text that commits the future master's potential and implicit sense of subjectivity to fight, risking life against reification, facing the weaknesses and strengths of a conspecific through their proper assessment, is both logical and anthropological. The logical link between the quality of individual character, its constitution and behavior as manifesting inwardness, explains why contingencies and particularities such as needs and inclinations, affecting *external* existence and being part of any individual's being, can represent what *attracts* individualities when they are thought of as exclusive Ones and as many Ones, from the external viewpoint of atomism in the Logic of Being (*Enz.* I, §98: 205–209). Moreover, in the section "Phenomenology" of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, the commonality (*Gemeinsamkeit*) of the needs and the care (*Sorge*) to satisfy them which holds between master and serf, and also the acquisition, conservation and formation of objects of appetite through the serf's work, develop a provision (*Vorsorge*) regarding the future and secures it (*Enz.* III, §434: 224). Because what someone does must be considered only as mediated through *its* inwardness, rather than taken in its immediacy, reflected behaviors – such as care, cultivation, formation, or provision – can eventually mediate between the two rigid, impenetrable, singular extremes of the independent and dependent consciousness. It is worth noting that between superior and subordinate genuine recognition is impossible, and that "the first fully developed form of mutual recognition in the *Phenomenology* occurs at the very end of *Spirit* [...] in 'Evil and Forgiveness' [...] At this juncture, two moral judges finally recognize that they are equally fallible and equally competent to judge individual behaviour" (Westphal 2018, 243)<sup>51</sup>. Indeed, Hegel remarks that between master and serf recognition remains one-sided and unequal because "it lacks the moment, that what the master does to the other, it also does to itself, and what the serf does to oneself it also does to the other" (*W3*, 152)<sup>52</sup>. Since according to Hegel humans

<sup>50</sup> Bodei 2008, 244 points out how in "Master and Serf", the words *Knecht*, *servus*, comes from *servare* (to preserve, *bewahren*) and not from *servire* (to serve, *dienen*) and that *Timor Domini initium sapientiae* (Ps. III, 10) is only the beginning of the freedom of self-consciousness.

<sup>51</sup> For Hegel's analysis of "Evil and Forgiveness" as crucial to his account of mutual recognition and his *proof* that "the 'I judge' is possible for each of us only insofar as it is also possible, and one recognises it is possible, for other members [...] of one's community", see Westphal 2018, 257-261.

<sup>52</sup> See on the point Westphal 2018, 241-242. Against the background that the self-conscious 'I think' that matters most to philosophy is the 'I judge' that is central to rational thought and action, Westphal underscores that "Though initially focussed on mutual recognition, Hegel's analysis in 'Lord and Bondsman' sets this issue aside" and that the "structure of Hegel's text ought to alert us to his intention *not* to prove here that bare individual self-consciousness is possible only on the basis of

possess the characteristics of self-awareness, freedom and universality only as a potential (*GW* 14.1, §57Z: 64-65), in the next section (§5) my key point is to show how in “Master and Serf” Hegel introduces an argument of his own for linking the ‘I think’ and the thesis of mutual recognition<sup>53</sup>. I aim to clarify how work allows the serf to intuit a self-standing being as its own self and to acquire the sense of the universal enduring essence of its own self through its own means. Moreover, I shall show how what appears to be objectified in the serf’s work *may* directly pertain to the externalization of the master’s own inwardness, providing grounds for an intersubjective cognitive and practical actualization of freedom.

##### 5. RELATING INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS TO THEIR OBJECTIVE HUMAN ESSENCE: THE EMERGENCE OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND CORPOREALITY

Emmanuel Renault has recently drawn attention to the relation between self-consciousness and nature, and on the true conception and actualization of freedom as depending “not only on intersubjective relations to others, but also on practical relation to natural materiality”. In this way, he has enhanced work not just as a formative activity but also as a shape of self-consciousness. Renault remarks:

As a matter of fact, the bondsman is deprived of freedom and of the recognition, but he acquires through work a conception of himself as having a set of capacities and as being the one who is able to use his own capacities to satisfy other’s desires and get recognition. In Hegel’s terms: the servile consciousness ‘comes to acquire through his own means *a mind of his own*, and he does this precisely in the work in which there had seemed to be merely some outside’s mind’. (Renault 2016, 211)

On this quotation from Hegel’s *Phenomenology* Renault bases his taking distance from two theses that “are usually considered as decisive for a Hegelian conception of the social self”: the social ontological thesis, according to which sociality should be identified with recognition (Renault 2016, 212)<sup>54</sup>; and the social psychological thesis, according to which the sociality of the self depends primarily on recognition. As to the latter, Renault highlights:

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our consciousness (or ‘recognition’) of other self-conscious people”.

<sup>53</sup> See Westphal 2018, 241.

<sup>54</sup> References are to Deranty 2005 and 2009 and to Ikäheimo & Laitinen 2011.

that the type of self-conceptions that monitors the behavior of a self-consciousness is not only constituted in recognitive relationship with others but also in practical interactions with the environment, partly through the process of life, that is not social, and partly through work that is a social activity [...] specified by the social logic of producing for others, a social logic that is not reducible to the logic of recognition. (Renault 2016, 214)

It is certainly true that the concern for the satisfaction of needs are not only needs of recognition and that for Hegel the social self is also a working self, however, this analysis seems to require a further step, showing how working practice in a master-serf asymmetric system of production can induce a progress towards freedom into the master's self-consciousness, a progress that *is able to unify the being-in-itself of things and the being-for-itself of consciousness as well as independent and dependent forms of consciousness.*

As remarked earlier, the master and serf dialectic serves to develop a shared enduring form of subjective universality. Such durability is at first attained by what functions as a means for the satisfaction of the master's needs. Note however that this constitutes the sole, indirect, way for the master's own externalization. This prompts the master's self-consciousness to sublimate its exclusive egoism which simply destroys and consumes things, and eventually *to refer to oneself what appears objectified in its serf* to whom its own identity relates: i.e. the discipline of an arbitrary, peculiar and contingent natural will. Hegel tells us that the result of the master and serf dialectic is the master's submitting "its own self-seeking will [*seinen eigenen selbstischen Willen*]" to the universal law of the *an-und-für-sich-seienden Willens* (Enz. III, §435Z: 225). which constitutes the common rational space of a legal statal institution;<sup>55</sup> this passage, the becoming of the human selves as subject of normative statuses, needs clarification, for at the phenomenological level of the *Philosophy of Spirit* in the 1830 *Encyclopaedia* Hegel does not make explicit how it is possible that the master may ever refer to oneself the serf's self-discipline of the will through the obedience to a lord and practical relations to natural materiality. As noted above, in the 1807 *Phenomenology* Hegel remarked that between master and serf recognition remains one-sided and unequal.

In the chapter on "Stubborn Attachments", an essay on "Master and Serf" in her 1997 book on *The Psychic Life of Power*, Judith Butler expressed the "vexed relation" between them in the formula "you be my body for me". It has been recently suggested that this reading in terms of 'bodily substitution' implies

<sup>55</sup> "The master confronting the serf was not yet genuinely free, for he did not yet thoroughly see [schaute an] himself in the other. It is only by the serf becoming free that the master consequently also becomes completely free" (Enz. III §436Z: 226-227; see also §435Z).

“that it is of the structure of the body to be outside itself and that this imperative or demand – you be my body for me – can only ever be partially fulfilled” (Malabou & Butler 2011, 611). My key point here is to address this formula not from the standpoint of the impossibility of any final expropriation and appropriation of another’s body, but from the side of the master’s possibility of referring to oneself what cannot be objectified of its own self because it appears in the serf’s ‘other’ consciousness. In the next section I shall develop the significance of “you be my body for me” not as a ‘bodily substitution’, but as a ‘bodily extension’, against the background of the master’s mind-body union. In my view *this master’s self-feeling is the means for* projecting its subjectivity into externality and ultimately submitting its own peculiar and arbitrary will to universal laws<sup>56</sup>.

It appears to me that the being-for-self of the master (as a consciousness immediately relating to itself) exercises power over the other servile self in analogy to how its mind exercises power over its own corporeality: the master makes the immediacy of another consciousness, the serf’s corporeality, the *executor* of its will, as if the serf were just an *extension and means* of its own body, by appropriating and enjoying the fruits of the serf’s work.

The being-in-itself of the serf is submissive and dependent; however, *obedience* “develops in him (ultimately) the capacity to be *master* over himself” (my italics). Note that self-discipline involves the sublation of the serf will’s immediacy, and *also* of the serf body’s simple and immediate naturality (the performance of organic functions). In the *Anthropology*, Hegel notes that the human body is not naturally capable of projecting the subjective element (actualization of purposes) into external objectivity: the body *must be trained* to serve spirit.

In understanding Hegel’s conception of mind in his *Anthropology*, recent scholarship has focused on the organic character of the cognitive functions, pointing to Hegel’s commitment to a “soft version of naturalism”, according to which “cognitive capacities are strictly connected with natural requisites and maintain a permanent relation with the natural dimension of the organic” (Seddone 2018, 75)<sup>57</sup>. Hegel’s mind-body human relation, however, requires

<sup>56</sup> Commenting on the First Book of Aristotle’s *Politics*, Bodei writes: “Resistenti e adatti alle fatiche e al lavoro fisico, gli schiavi stanno [...] al padrone come il corpo all’anima [...] Lo schiavo è, a tutti gli effetti, una parte viva, ma spazialmente distaccata, del padrone, dalla cui mente è guidato. In quanto suo prolungamento nella sfera delle cose, è assimilabile alla mano” (Bodei 2019, 87-88). See on this point *supra*, Chap. I, § 1. Simon Lumsden argues that human subjects identify through self-feeling, not reason, most practices and norms as their own: “Norms are for Hegel produced through collective processes of establishing values, customs and reasons to act, but he also emphasizes that these norms are for the most part embodied in subjects as habits through complex processes of socialization” (Lumsden 2013, 59-60).

<sup>57</sup> For instance, Barbara Merker has shown how, for Hegel, “the theoretical, practical and evaluative

also accounting for the cognitive character of the performance of organic functions not merely as if the body were the practical instrument for inhabiting and experiencing the external environment. Indeed, Hegel says that contrary to animals, *hat der Mensch sich durch seine eigene Thätigkeit zum Herren seines Leibes erst zu machen* (*Enz.* III, §410Z: 190; Petry trans. II, 407). This means that the subject trains its own body *not just* “to adequately act in the perceived world”, spreading “its normative effort by creating a system of rules and habits” (Seddone 2018, 78). Arbitrary and transitory will is mediated through planning and preserving for the future, avoiding destruction and consumption of resources to reach ends (satisfaction of needs and inclinations), but the *Anthropology* tells us that the discipline of the will and the opportunity to actualize freedom through a (long) process of spiritual appropriation of nature induced by work and obedience, must be preceded by a control over *one’s own physical corporeality*. This becomes mediated through the spiritual development of skills to reach ends by means (technical instruments, tools, training to acquire physical abilities), shaping and improving the body’s skills and performances.

To my view, in so far as the master exercises power over the serf as the master’s will exercises power over its own corporeality, the key to unify the two consciousness appears to be grounded *on the self-feeling of their original mind-body unity*. Note that before their unification, the master’s independent subjectivity is limited and interrupted by what is external in a twofold way, both inward and outward: by the immediacy of the servile dependent subjectivity’s entanglement with the being-in-itself of natural things (to which the master’s identity relates), as well as by the immediacy of the physical aspects of the master’s own corporeality, which can inwardly resist its own spiritual power. Indeed, in §412 of the *Anthropology*, the soul, which is present everywhere, exerts a formative action (*Hineinbildung*) within corporeality (*Leiblichkeit*) but is unable to sublimate completely the difference between soul and body. There is an irreducible purely organic aspect of the body which resists the moulding power of the soul and constitutes the limit to the soul’s *Hineinbildung*. In the *Anthropology* this movement marks the birth of the pure ‘I’ from which we started this chapter. The actual soul, which is for itself, expels the organic aspect of its corporeality from its immediate being and so contrasts itself to its own corporeality, thus attaining the sense of the abstract, immaterial ‘I’. As Malabou remarks:

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functions of the mind are grounded in something like a natural normativity, based on the interaction of the body’s inner world with the outer world” (Merker 2012). On Hegel’s “moderate naturalism” see also Seddone 2019, 11-12.

The origin of individual identity is a paradoxical disjunction of the self that leads the soul to madness. Originally, the self is not identical to itself; the mind and the body are definitely split. This doubling of the self is intolerable and maddening. The 'feeling of self' in its immediate form is 'a mental derangement'. The 'body is a foreign being' that contradicts the unity of the self. (Malabou & Butler 2011, 624)<sup>58</sup>

We noted above that according to its logical structure, the 'I' is not a finite determinacy of something in distinction to an extraneous and alien another. The 'I's immediate self-relation results from excluding *its* own other from itself. The independent subjectivity of the master is thus *logically related* to the excluded dependent servile consciousness, which, in its structurally precarious finitude, through the practice and training necessary to apprehend how to work, has sublated the immediacy of both its will *and* body<sup>59</sup>. The master's determinacy as independent consciousness, its self-relation in referring to itself as 'I', relates the master's consciousness to an other which no longer confronts it with any absolutely alien self-external *or internal Anderssein*. As remarked earlier, in the *Psychology* section Hegel writes that the formal knowledge (*formelle Wissen*) of certainty raises itself into (infinite, un-limited) agreement of the subject, not with its existence limited by an alien object, but with its objectified essence, whereby the subject is by itself within *its own* otherness. *Also through the self-feeling of its anthropological mind-body union, the master's independent subjectivity comes to agree in principle with its thoroughly objectified spiritual essence*, thus becoming able to know itself as itself (as master) within this other (as effective serf). Otherwise, the result of the dialectic of lowly serfs bonded to their masters could never unify the being-in-itself of things and the being-for-itself of consciousness.

The unification of independent and dependent forms of consciousness takes the shape of free self-consciousness and is nothing but concrete, *embodied*, thinking 'I', reaching the true unity of subjectivity and objectivity. According to Hegel, the result of this dialectic exhibits the inner unity of the two divided consciousness and (ultimately) grounds the unqualified (un-limited) equality of human beings, so that no one of us has a right to dispose arbitrarily over another's will *and body*: mutual recognition, each 'I' regarding the other 'I' as a fellow creature *and* human being, implies that one knows oneself to be free because one acknowledges that one's own proper other is equally free: free *from* finite being-for-itself *and* from essential entanglement with thinghood: i.e.,

<sup>58</sup> The textual reference is to Hegel, *Enz.* III, §407.

<sup>59</sup> As Zambrana notes (see *supra* note 21), in Hegel's *Logic*, the normative authority of reason, which in being self-authorizing is infinite, establishes that determinacy as a matter of *Geist*, i.e. the result of concrete practices that sustain or debunk specific form of determinations. In Zambrana's view, this means that the authority of any idea is "structurally precarious – *finite*" (Zambrana 2012).

we are each free from any merely instrumental account of reason and able to undertake responsibilities<sup>60</sup>.

To sum up: the dialectic of natural consciousness (in the chapter *Consciousness of the Phenomenology*: in the shapes of meaning, perception, and understanding) destroys the certainty that the being-other of the thing constitutes a foreign, extrinsic, independent essence, indifferent to the knowing subject. From the being-other of the object as something essentially alien to consciousness we pass to the object as self-consciousness's *own other* in "Master and Serf", where through service and work, external reality is practically transformed by obedience and by renouncing individual choice. This is why it has been pointed out that "the task of Hegel's epistemology is to reconcile a realist epistemology, including a correspondence conception of the nature of truth, with a very complex social and historical philosophy of mind and theory of knowledge" (Westphal 2016, 195).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this way Hegel can claim to have deduced from the logical structure of an embodied and affective thinking 'I' as concrete subjective consciousness exhibited within appearance, what Kant in the "Conjectural Beginning of Human History" referred to *Genesis* 3:22: "And thus the human being had entered into an equality with all rational beings, of whatever rank they might be". Kant developed this idea by focusing on a prerogative that a disembodied I had by its rational nature over all animals, regarding them as means to its free will for attaining arbitrary ends. According to Kant, the first time a human said to a sheep that its wool was for satisfying humankind's own needs (*Genesis* 3:21), the human also – if obscurely – implied the thought of the opposite: that a human must not say any such thing to any other human being, thus entering into an "equality with all rational being" (*Mut. Anf.*, 90-91). By contrast, according to Hegel, to put at mortal risk the self-sense of one's own natural essential singularity in the mutual attempt to destroy one another's life, is necessary to solve the extreme contradiction of the common identity of the abstract "I am I" in a natural state of *human* animality and appetite, in

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<sup>60</sup> This point has been extensively examined by Westphal 2018. See Chap. 12 "Mutual Recognition and Rational Justification in Hegel's 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*" and Chap. 13 "Mutual Recognition and Rational Justification in Substantive Domains" (*ivi*, 231-293). Note that a standard belief throughout medieval Europe was the King as both lawgiver and protector of his people. See for instance the following passage of the coronation oath of the Saxon King Edgar in 973: "I will forbid extortion and all kinds of wrong-doing to *all orders* of men [...] I will enjoin *equity* [...] in *all* judgments" (Ashley 2008, 19; *my italics*).

which no one “idealistically” respects external things and no one immediately approaches other living beings regarding them as fellow creatures.

Kant’s hypothesis regarding human identity indicates that the awareness of the common rationality of human beings is brought to light by philosophical reflection which recognizes the originary presence of that thought as the negative side of humans’ primitive relation of dominion over animals: history will witness this fact and philosophy here would play only an analytical role. By contrast, with Hegel philosophy plays a genetic role in the shaping of the sense of what it is to be human, and the humanity of the human beings is an historical element: the real moments of the conquest of its consciousness of the equality of all rational beings, or its freedom, is what we found conceptualized in Hegel’s philosophy of history and philosophy of right<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> In the Introduction to his last book, *Domino e sottomissione*, Remo Bodei acknowledged that his first idea to write an history of the concept of subserviance among the humans originated from the reading of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* Chapter on “Master and Serf”, which, in his view, recapitulated all the theoretical path from Aristotle to the Bible, from the Stoics to Hobbes, from Rousseau to Fichte, relating all the historical different forms of human dominion and submission in light of the raising of an autonomous self-consciousness, the presupposition for liberty (Bodei 2019, 29). Lumsden (see *supra* note 11) shows how Hegel does not distinguish spirit from nature by dichotomising a wholly causal nature from a self-sufficient space of reasons in the way that Kant appears to do. Lumsden highlights that: “Embedding the ethical in the ‘naturally determined character of the individual’ and ‘presenting spirit as world’ is important to correct the abstractness and formalism of Kant’s approach, which appeared to place an unrealistic authority in a reflective reason disconnected from cultural and natural life [...] Spirit is the term Hegel employs to grasp human beings as self-producing and with which he distinguishes self-determining humans from causal nature. His invocation of self-producing spirit does not mean, however, that spirit has left nature behind and is now residing in a disembodied space of reasons” (Lumsden 2016, 75-76).



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