

## German Idealism 10

### Hegel V: Hegel's Logic

#### Main reading

? G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Ch. VIII, 'Absolute Knowing', selection: §§798-808; §§804-8 are in S. Houlgate ed., *Hegel Reader*, ch. 10. If possible read also the Preface §§1-71; §§11-67 are in Houlgate ed., ch. 5.

? G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic* (1817), trans. and ed. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991) [an older edition, with an inferior translation: *Logic*, trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975)], §§1-25 and §§79-98. Alternatively, read chs. 11, 12 and 15 of S. Houlgate ed., *The Hegel Reader*.

? Secondary literature: J. Burbidge, 'Hegel's conception of logic', in F. Beiser ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*.

#### Further reading – on Ch. VIII and the Preface:

##### On Ch. VIII:

? H. S. Harris, *Hegel*, chs. 9-10.

? Q. Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's 'Phenomenology of Spirit'*, ch. 9.

? G. Mure, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, pp. 109-11.

? R. Norman, *Hegel's 'Phenomenology'*, ch. 6.

? I. Soll, *An Introduction to Hegel's Metaphysics*, ch. 4.

? M. Forster, *Hegel's Idea*, pp. 192-204.

? T. Pinkard, *Hegel's 'Phenomenology'*, pp. 331-45.

? R. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 168-71.

? R. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel*, pp. 635-9.

? C. Taylor, *Hegel*, ch. 19.

##### On the Preface:

? Q. Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's 'Phenomenology of Spirit'*, ch. 10.

? R. Schacht, 'A commentary on the Preface to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*', *Philosophical Studies* 23, 1972, 1-31.

? R. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel*, ch. 5.

? M. Westphal, *History and Truth in Hegel's 'Phenomenology'*, ch. 2.

##### On Hegel's concept of the Absolute:

? R. Aquila, 'Predication and Hegel's metaphysics', in M. Inwood ed., *Hegel*.

? W. Jaeschke, 'Absolute subject and absolute subjectivity in Hegel', in D. Klemm and G. Zöller eds., *Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute, and Others in Classical German Idealism*.

? T. Wartenburg, 'Hegel's idealism: the logic of conceptuality', in F. Beiser ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. Helpful comparison of different interpretations of Hegel's absolute idealism.

#### Further reading – on Hegel's Logic:

? G. W. F. Hegel, extracts from *Science of Logic* (1812-16), in S. Houlgate ed., *The Hegel Reader*, chs. 13-17.

- ? R. Pippin, Hegel's Idealism, ch. 8. (And pt. III.)
- ? T. Pinkard, 'The logic of Hegel's Logic', in M. Inwood ed., Hegel.
- ? M. Inwood, entry 'Science of Logic' in A Hegel Dictionary.
- ? C. Taylor, Hegel, pt. III.
- ? M. Rosen, Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism, chs. 4, 6.
- ? S. Houlgate, 'Substance, causality, and the question of method in Hegel's Science of Logic', in S. Sedgwick ed., The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy.
- D. Kolb, The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After, chs. 3-5.

Further reading – general on Hegel:

- ? J. Habermas, 'From Kant to Hegel and back again – the move towards detranscendentalization', European Journal of Philosophy 7, 1999, 130-57. Critical appraisal of Hegel's significance for contemporary philosophical thought.

Essay questions

- How should Hegel's Logic be understood?
- 'The development of German idealism, from Fichte through Schelling to Hegel, is strictly necessary; and only with Hegel does German idealism finally achieve coherence.' Discuss.

The Absolute: Phenomenology, Ch. VIII and Preface

In order to overcome the limitation encountered by revealed religion, a shape of consciousness with the form of the Absolute is needed, and this is provided by moral consciousness (which produces its own object): 'moral self-consciousness ... is aware that its knowledge is a knowledge of what is absolutely essential, it knows that being is simply and solely pure willing and knowing; it is nothing else but this willing and knowing; anything else has only unessential being, i.e. not intrinsic being, only its empty husk.' Absolute Knowledge, in which knowing = what is known, results from the union of moral consciousness (absolute form) with religious consciousness (absolute content).

From Ch. VIII:

- 'what in religion was content or a form for presenting an other, is here the Self's own act; the Concept requires the content to be the Self's own act'.
- 'Truth is not only in itself completely identical with certainty, but it also has the shape of self-certainty; it is in its existence in the form of self-knowledge. Truth is the content, which is religion is still not identical with its certainty. But this identity is now a fact, in that the content has received the shape of the Self.'
- 'this knowing is a pure being-for-self of self-consciousness; it is 'I', that is this and no other "I", and which is no less immediately a mediated or superseded universal "I".'
- 'Experience [the experience of the Phenomenology] is just this, that the content – which is Spirit – is in itself substance, and therefore an object of consciousness. But this substance which is Spirit is the process in which Spirit becomes what it is in itself; and it is only as this process of reflecting itself into itself that it is in itself truly Spirit. It is in itself the movement which is cognition – the transformation of that in-itself into that which is for-itself, of Substance into Subject ... or into the Concept.'
- 'In this knowing, then, Spirit has concluded the movement in which it has shaped itself ... Spirit has won the pure element of its existence, the Concept.'

From the Preface:

- 'In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on expressing and grasping the True, not only as Substance, but equally as Subject.'
- '[T]he living Substance is being which is in truth Subject, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself ... This Substance is, as Subject, pure, simple negativity, and is for this reason the bifurcation of the simple; it is the doubling which sets up opposition ... [T]his self-restoring sameness, or this reflection in otherness within itself ... is the True. It is the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning.'
- 'The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only in the end is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself.'

The Absolute (Absolute Knowledge/Knowing) is thus a philosophical shape of consciousness/Spirit, which consists in a realisation about itself qua product of all of the previous shapes of consciousness, viz. that it is movement, and that this movement of thought is Truth and the Whole. Though the Absolute must be conceived as both Substance and Subject, the latter is the more fundamental.

Hegel's metaphysics:

1. Hegel responds to Kant's conclusion that human reason is limited with the claim that it is Kant's thought, not human reason, which is limited (Kant's philosophy is merely 'analytical', merely 'formal', a 'philosophy of reflection', a merely 'subjective' philosophy, a 'philosophy of the understanding').
2. Hegel introduces the level of speculative philosophy: reason takes the place of understanding and grasps wholes, unities, where merely analytical thought sees only distinctions.
3. The possibility of speculative philosophy is accounted for by its commitment to subject-object identity.
4. Hegel's dialectical logic (= metaphysics) grasps wholes through grasping internal negative relations (Aufhebung).
5. The basis for dialectic is provided in the form of self-consciousness, with its movement of (i) self-externalisation, (ii) alienation, and (iii) return into itself.
6. The world from the speculative standpoint is teleologically structured, reason's self-differentiation and grasping itself in differentiation, etc.: 'What has just been said can also be expressed by saying that Reason is purposive activity ... purpose is what is immediate and at rest, the unmoved which is also self-moving, and as such is Subject ... The realized purpose, or existent actuality, is movement and unfolded becoming; but it is just this unrest that is the self' (IPH §22).
7. Hegel's philosophy = self-manifestation of the Absolute = absolute idealism.

The relation of Hegel's idealism to that of Fichte and Schelling. Per Hegel, Fichte's philosophy = subjective idealism, Schelling = objective idealism, Hegel = absolute idealism. Some important differences from Fichte and Schelling: (1) Hegel's methodology. (2) Hegel's metaphysics of intersubjectivity (Spirit, self-conscious social existence, as a plane of cognition and rationality which provides the ground of individual subjectivity). (3) Hegel's Logic.

Hegel's Logic (Part one of Hegel's Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences)

1. BEING is 'pure thought and simple immediacy', neither mediated nor determined. This is the 'first definition of the absolute'. [God as 'the sum-total of all realities'.]  
'But this mere Being, as it is mere abstraction, is therefore the absolutely negative':

2. NOTHINGNESS. Similarly pure and immediate. The 'second definition of the absolute'. [God as 'the supreme being', i.e. 'something merely negative'.]

'Nothing, if it be thus immediate and equal to itself, is also conversely the same as Being is.' 'The truth of Being and of Nothing is accordingly the unity of the two: and this unity is':

3. BECOMING. 'Becoming is the first concrete thought, and therefore the first [appearance of the] Concept'; it 'is the first adequate vehicle of truth'. [It 'finds its analogue in the system of Heraclitus'.]

'In Becoming the Being which is one with Nothing, and the Nothing which is one with Being, are only vanishing factors; they are and they are not. Thus by its inherent contradiction Becoming collapses into the unity in which the two elements are absorbed. The result is accordingly':

4. DETERMINATE BEING (Being there and so, Dasein).

'[Being and Nothingness] are nothing but empty abstractions, and one is as empty as the other. The drive to find a fixed significance in Being or in both is the very necessity which leads further and gives them true significance. This procedure is the logical deduction and the movement of thought that manifests itself in what follows. The reflection that finds deeper determinations for Being and Nothingness is logical thought, through which such determinations evolve, though not in an accidental but in a necessary way. — Every following significance, therefore, is only to be seen as a more precise specification and truer definition of the absolute.'

Interpretative issues concerning the Logic. (1) What is the status of the Logic? What is it an account of? (Platonist vs. Kantian interpretations.). (2) How are we to understand the relation of the Logic to the Phenomenology?

Hegel's critics. Two common objections to Hegel. (1) Hegel is committed to an absurd belief in a "world spirit". (2) Hegel's philosophy is founded on a mistaken inversion of reality and thought. Schelling:

'Concepts as such do in fact exist nowhere but in consciousness [...] Hegel took them from their natural position by putting them at the beginning of his philosophy'; Hegel conceives the concept 'as something which moves itself', but 'the concept would lie completely immobile if it were not the concept of a thinking subject'; '[We] cannot really contradict these [Hegel's] propositions, or declare them to be false; for they are, rather, propositions that give one nothing. It is as if one wanted to carry water in cupped hands.'

Interpretative issue – the deflationary reading of Hegel. The 'traditional' or 'naive' reading of Hegel is opposed by a deflationary reading, according to which Hegel's conceptions of Reason, Freedom, the Concept, etc. refer to the norms, or criteria of rationality, in human society, such that talk of the Absolute is construed as talk of a certain unsurpassable level of social freedom and rationality, and what may look to be a romantic, ontologically committed metaphysics is in fact a theory of rationality.

The deflationary reading is found in Pinkard and Pippin: 'All of these considerations should, I think, give anyone pause who might take the romantic terminology in the two early essays [Difference, Faith & Knowledge] to be unequivocal evidence of a Schellingian romantic metaphysics, especially one taken to form the core of Hegel's mature philosophy of Absolute Spirit. The apparently metaphysical terminology of Hegel's early works cannot be straightforwardly, without further ado, taken as evidence that Hegel has rejected [Kant's] critical idealism in favor of an indefensible metaphysics of an Absolute Subject or a God within which all beings are pantheistically related ... Moreover, and most importantly, Schelling's "resolution" of the unresolved self-relation problem of Kantian idealism has all of the virtues of theft over hard work ... Hegel rejects (ultimately, but visibly even in these [early] works) Schelling's nonsolution, his various attempts to argue just that there must be some "indifference point" principle that is neither subject

nor object (and so also inarticulable)' (R. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 66, 72, 87).

Some seemingly 'metaphysical' statements from Hegel's *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*: 'Reason rules the world ... world history has therefore been rational in its course ... Reason is the substance as well as the infinite power ... Reason is for itself the infinite material of all natural and spiritual life ... Reason is the substance in the sense that it is that whereby and wherein all reality has its being and subsistence ... It lives on itself, and it is itself the material upon which it works ... Reason is its own presupposition and absolute goal ... this Idea is the True, the Eternal, simply the Power – that it reveals itself in the world, and that nothing else is revealed in the world but that Idea itself, its glory and majesty – this is ... what has been shown in philosophy.' 'The movement of the solar system follows immutable laws. These laws are its Reason ... Nature [is] an organic whole brought forth by Reason'; 'the world is not subject to chance and to external contingencies ... it is ruled by a Providence'; 'in modern times we have come to the point where philosophy has to take up the defense of religious truths ... the time must finally come when we comprehend the rich product of creative Reason that is world history ... To that extent our approach is a theodicy, a justification of the ways of God ... Nowhere ... is there a greater challenge to such intellectual reconciliation than in world history ... It is attained ... through the awareness that this end [of Reason] has been actualized in the world and that evil has not prevailed in it in any ultimate sense' (*Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, pp. 12-18).

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