

***Freedom and Knowing:
An Inquiry into Hegel's Metaphysical Idea of Freedom.***

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Abstract

In Hegel's philosophy, the Absolute signifies Truth. On the one hand, there is such a thing as Truth, and the human being has the potential capacity to know what Truth is. On the other hand, the actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of the consciousness of Truth constitutes the nature of knowing (*Erkennen*). The very self-consciousness of this actuality is nothing other than the *freedom of consciousness*.

This thesis demonstrates that *to be free* is the self-knowing of oneself as free in the *system*. The truth of such knowing (*Erkennen*) belongs to the knowledge of the *speculative identity* in Hegel's system. To reach such recognition relies on the true recognition of the Absolute as identity, Spirit as difference, and the wholeness of the *system* as the *identity of identity and difference*. Through this interpretation, the consciousness of the wholeness of the whole, which lies at the foundation of the very being of the *system*, relies on the *freedom of consciousness*.

In this respect, Chapter One demonstrates that the reciprocal recognition between temporal finite consciousness and eternal infinite Truth constitutes the very nature of *Erkennen* for the Spirit. Without this mutual recognition, there would be no Concept, no Knowledge, no Spirit, and no God at all, since the very nature of the Concept (*Begriff*) lies in the mutual recognition between finite consciousness and infinite Truth. The aim of Chapter one is, therefore, to demonstrate the self-knowledge of the Absolute as the knowing (*Erkennen*) of Identity by the finite temporal Spirit.

However, this knowledge of Identity is not intelligible except through the act of self-othering for the temporal finite Spirit, which unfolds through the process of Negation. In this respect, Chapter Two is devoted to the exposition of *difference* as the negative movement of self-consciousness toward knowledge. This Chapter demonstrates that the inward negative movement of the self is intelligible only through the representation of the *system*, while, on the other hand, the recognition of the *system* relies on the negative movement of self-consciousness. That is to say, the constitution of the whole depends on its parts, while it is the whole itself that makes the being of its parts intelligible. The *freedom of consciousness*, therefore, must be grounded in the *system*; otherwise, in its linear movement, self-consciousness has no other destiny than the failure of freedom.

Finally, Chapter Three presents the exposition of speculative identity, as the *identity of identity and difference*, which is the actuality and embodiment of Hegel's conception of the Absolute in the self-determination of self-consciousness. This chapter demonstrates that it is the *transcendental self-reflective* movement of consciousness that manifests itself as the reality of the *system* and, through its manifestation, demonstrates itself as the absolute freedom that *being* has through this activity. The final aim here is to affirm that the *freedom of consciousness* is attainable only through the return of the Absolute to consciousness: the phenomenological return that occurs in the *Phenomenology* through the mediation of *Bildung*, and the speculative return that occurs in the *Logic* through the mediation of *method*.

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Table of Contents

Introduction1

Chapter One: History and Knowledge

1. History and the Absolute

1.1. Hegel’s Concept of the Absolute22
1.2. The Necessity of Freedom for Philosophy.....31
1.3. Historicity and History.....37
1.4. Self-externalization of the Absolute.....44
1.5. The Absolute and the System.....49

2. The Absolute and Time

2.1. Revelation and Temporality.....58
2.2. The Absolute and Religion.....62
2.3. Reason and Revelation.....68
2.4. Embodiment of the Absolute in Time: The Absolutization of the Subject.....87
2.5. Time and the Eternal Representation of the Absolute.....95

Chapter Two: Freedom and Negation

1. Self-consciousness and Negation

1.1. Hegel’s Concept of Self-consciousness.....103
1.2. Self-consciousness and Subjectivity.....117
1.3. Freedom and Its Inward Movement.....125
1.4. The End of History.....129

2. The Absolute and Negation

2.1. Negation and the System.....139
2.2. The Ontological Development of the Absolute.....145
2.3. Unity of the Absolute and the Spirit.....150

Chapter Three: Reason and *Bildung*

1. *Bildung* and the Absolute

1.1. Hegel’s Conception of *Bildung*.....159
1.2. Hegel’s Conception of *Aufhebung*.....166
1.3. *Bildung* and the System.....171

2. <i>Bildung</i> and Freedom	
2.1. Method and Freedom.....	180
2.2. Freedom and Speculative Identity.....	187
2.3. Freedom and Truth.....	192
2.4. <i>Erkennen</i> and Method.....	198
Conclusion	205
Bibliography	216

Abbreviations

- CPR.** Kant, I., & Kemp, S. N. *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787) (Edinburgh: Clark Press, 1929).
- EL** Hegel, G. W. F., Geraets, T. F., Suchting, W. A., & Harris, H. S. *The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Zusätze: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).
- LHP III** Hegel, G. W. F., Haldane, E. S., & Simson, F. H. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, vol. III* (1896) (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1896).
- LPH** Hegel, G. W. F., & Sibree, J. *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. In *Great Books of the Western World* (46) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).
- LPR I** Hegel, G. W. F., and Speirs, E. B. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Volume I* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).
- LPR II** Hegel, G. W. F., and Hodgson, P. C. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Volume II: Determinate Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
- LPR III** Hegel, G. W. F., and Speirs, E. B. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Volume III* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).
- PM** Hegel, G. W. F., Wallace, W., & Miller, A. V. *Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- PN** Hegel, G. W. F., & Miller, A. V. *Philosophy of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).
- PR** Hegel, G. W. F., & Knox, T. M. *The Philosophy of Right*. In *Great Books of the Western World* (46) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).
- PS** Hegel, G. W. F., & Miller, A. V. *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- SL** Hegel, G. W. F., and Giovanni, G. D. *The Science of Logic*. Cambridge, UK ; Cambridge University Press, 2010. & Hegel, G. W. F., and Miller, A. V. *The Science of Logic*. UK; London. Allen & Unwin, 1969.
- Werke** Hegel, G. W. F. *Werke in 20 Bänden* (Hrsg. von E. Moldenhauer & K. M. Michel) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970-2001).

Introduction

This thesis seeks to demonstrate that the idea of freedom belongs to the very nature of the *system* in Hegel's philosophy, and it does not belong to the essential reality of the human being as *rational animal*, nor does it belong to *phusis*, or to the nature of a *God* independent from Spirit. Rather, it is the Absolute that is alive and contains its own perfection in Hegel's philosophy. The intelligibility of this vitality and the perfection of the Absolute lie in the discussions on *Bildung* in the *Phenomenology* and *method* in the *Logic*, both of which pursue one common aim: *the freedom of consciousness*. This freedom does not occur by delineating an endpoint to Hegel's philosophy or by defining *Verstand* (understanding) as the reality of human cognition. In fact, in such a case, it is the *consciousness of freedom* that would be crucified. Rather, the *freedom of consciousness* is attainable only through the return of the Absolute to consciousness.

In this respect, within this study, the discussion of Freedom is grounded in the very being of Absolute Knowledge in Hegel's philosophy. That is to say, before knowing (*Erkennen*)¹ arises, the reality of the knowledge of such knowing is taken as the presupposition in the system, as the

¹. Within this study, the German word *Erkennen* in Hegel's philosophy has been translated as *knowing* in the English language. Hegel attributes a conceptual quality to *Erkennen* that makes it different from *Wissen* (*knowledge*). *Erkennen*, in this respect, carries within its nature the quality of the process of knowing by the human subject, while *Wissen* refers to the product of such a process as the definite sense of knowledge, which can be seen as the self-knowledge of the Absolute without mediating such knowledge through any process. In other words, *Erkennen* carries the mediating process in its very connotation, a mediating process that relies on Hegel's view of *Vernunft* (*Reason*), which is grounded in the subjectivity of the human subject. It is through this mediation that "the existence of the world becomes for self-consciousness its own *truth* and *presence*. It is certain of experiencing only itself therein." (*PS*. §232, *Werke* 3: 179). However, in the context of Kant's philosophy, relying on *Verstand* (*understanding*), the process and the result of *knowing* represent one and the same meaning. For this reason, wherever the discussion takes place in the context of Kant's philosophy within this study, the connotation of *Erkennen* and its different forms such as *Erkenntnis* and *Wiedererkennen* has been rendered as *cognition* and *recognition*.

definite and decisive sense of Truth. On the other hand, the intelligibility and actuality of such knowledge are accomplished through the subjectivity of finite temporal human consciousness in its historical development. To know the reality of knowledge through finite temporal human consciousness is what has been introduced as the true meaning of *Erkennen*.

Freedom is grounded in *Erkennen* in this sense. That is to say, to be free is the self-knowing of oneself as free in the system. The knowledge of such knowing is not a particular historical moment for Spirit or any determinate speculative category of thought in Hegel's speculative philosophy. Rather, it is the reflection on the knowledge of the wholeness of the *system* that represents the true knowledge of knowing (*Erkennen*). This knowledge has been represented through the return of the whole to its parts in Hegel's philosophy, a return that is described in this thesis through the discussion of *Bildung* (*Education*) in the *Phenomenology* and the discussion of *method*² in Hegel's *Logic*. In this respect, the final goal of this dissertation is to ground the true meaning of *Erkennen* in Hegel's system in the conception of *Bildung* and *method*. In fact, by looking into *Erkennen* on this ground, the conception of freedom should be founded on the reality of the *system*. In contrast, in its particularity and individuality, the discussion of freedom does not have any result other than the failure of freedom.

By subscribing to such a perspective, we confront two forms of agencies within Hegel's philosophy. One of them belongs to the subjectivity of the finite temporal human subject, who in

². In general, a true philosophical method, by its nature, in Hegel's philosophy, constitutes the Idea. That is to say, a true method of philosophizing that aims at the Absolute must itself be absolute by its very nature. This is evident in *Differenzschrift* (*Werke* 2: 87-93), where Hegel examines the distinction between Philosophy and the System of Philosophy, a discussion that will be further elaborated upon in the course of this study. Furthermore, in the penultimate paragraph of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel affirms that "the method is not an external form, but the soul and the Concept of the content. It is distinct from the Concept only inasmuch as the moments of the Concept, each in itself, in its determinacy, reach the point where they appear as the totality of the Concept" (*EL*, §243. *Werke* 8: 392). Hence, by designating method to Hegel's historicity, I do not refer to an external study that treats philosophy as its subject. Rather, historicity, as method, is by its nature philosophy. As such, it serves to bridge the gap between philosophy and the system of philosophy. In the course of this study, I will demonstrate how this fulfillment occurs through the most distinctive characteristic of Hegel's philosophical method as *Aufhebung*.

its historical development views its subjectivity as its acting-thinking characteristic at the pinnacle of the knowing process (*Erkennen*), toward an ultimate point that could be designated as the truth-for-consciousness in every epoch of its particular historical development as the final endeavor of consciousness to be the truth of its own being.

In Hegel's philosophy, it is the idea of Reason, as the purposive activity of thought, that necessitates such a truth for finite temporal human consciousness. It is, in fact, the idea of Reason that provides a teleological ground to the very temporal movement of consciousness and elevates the movement of self-consciousness from its *passing over* and *coming to be* of various particular moments in its historical development to an idea that, while different from temporality, is by its nature inclusive of all the temporal moments of the experience of self-consciousness. On this account, it is the human striving for Absolute Knowledge that arises as the reality of Reason in Hegel's philosophy. In this respect, what Reason, as "the consciousness of the certainty of being all truth" (*PS*, §231. *Werke* 3: 178), demands is the *reality of the actuality* of consciousness. That is to say, Reason needs to demonstrate itself as the truth of subjectivity. The truth of knowledge, from this perspective, lies in the fact that it is subjectivity that comes to know its truth as substance.

However, this is not the full account of how Reason accomplishes the truth of knowledge in its Absolute sense in Hegel's philosophy, since what Reason, as the self-certainty of being all truth, demands can also be put forward as the *actuality of reality*. The reality of knowledge is self-constitutive and self-grounded in this respect, and it is such self-grounded reality that makes itself actual. This in-and-for-itself reality in its different modes can be realized as God, the Absolute, or the Idea in Hegel's philosophy. Therefore, the Absolute, as the reality in-and-for-itself, has agency in Hegel's philosophy, which in its representational content (*Vorstellung*) and

its conceptual form (*Begriff*) appears in the penultimate and the final chapters of the *Phenomenology*. Beginning with the last two chapters of the *Phenomenology*, the role of subjectivity becomes less dominant, while the agency of the Absolute becomes more prominent. This agency first appears as the revelatory agency of God and later as the self-certainty and self-sufficiency of Truth as Science.³

The central problem that arises here is that the system itself cannot accommodate any relative sense of Truth, as in one case it would be acquired through the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute and in another through the temporal movement of consciousness toward knowledge. Rather, what the system demands is the apprehension of knowledge as one and whole, which is *eternally present* to the human subject as the reality of its being.

In this respect, the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the homogeneity and complicity between the revelatory agency of the Absolute and the temporal movement of consciousness as Absolute Knowledge, as one and the same reality. This complicity will be developed through the exposition of the *freedom of consciousness* as the reality that, while it is accomplished through the subjective process of knowing (*Erkennen*), in its essence belongs to the *pure act of the self-representation of the Absolute* within the system.

³. This standpoint on knowledge cannot be limited to the last two chapters of the *Phenomenology*. In a more radical sense, it is already present in Hegel's Jena writings such as *Differenzschrift* and *Glauben und Wissen*, as well as in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, which are employed in this thesis in order to illuminate the meaning of the revelatory agency of the Absolute. Furthermore, beyond Absolute Knowledge as the final part of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's *Science of Logic*, as the most elaborated systematic exposition of conceptual thought, is regarded as a more comprehensive domain of Hegel's discussion of the dominance of self-grounded conceptual thought as the truth of knowledge. From these standpoints, both the exposition of knowledge and the conception of Freedom acquire different meanings. The reality of knowledge is self-constitutive and self-grounded in this regard. This in-and-for-itself reality, in its different modes, can be realized as God, the Absolute, or the Idea in Hegel's philosophy. Similarly, the conception of Freedom cannot be reduced to the thinking-acting self-determinations of subjectivity within its historical development. Rather, the truth of Freedom lies in the *pure act of the self-representation* of the Absolute within the system.

In general, by considering the reconciliation between the revelatory agency of the Absolute and the subjectivity of temporal human consciousness, my interpretation diverges from two dominant deflationary approaches to Hegel's philosophy: the neo-Kantian⁴ commentators on the one hand and the non-metaphysical interpreters on the other.

While some of the neo-Kantian interpreters of Hegel, like Pinkard and Pippin, can also be considered non-metaphysical interpreters, what distinguishes these two types of interpreters is that neo-Kantian interpreters such as Robert Pippin (1989, 2008, 2019), Terry Pinkard (1994, 2012), Robert Brandom (2009, 2019), and John McDowell (2006, 2018) mostly base their interpretations on Hegel's speculative philosophy, particularly his *Science of Logic*, in order to extend and modify Kant's critical project, which aims to construct a system of philosophy in which the subject attains comprehensive knowledge of its self-consciousness without grounding it in the Absolute dimension of reality.⁵ In contrast, non-metaphysical interpreters such as Axel

⁴. For Kant, freedom is regarded as an abstract rational capacity of humanity. It can implicitly be conceived through the autonomy of rational beings, but it cannot be explicitly inquired into as a subject matter of philosophical knowledge within the boundaries of human cognition, which are determined by the power of *Verstand*. Similarly, Kantian interpreters of Hegel's philosophy do not ground their discussion of freedom in the theoretical and systematic dimension of his thought. Instead, they situate it in the sphere of individuality, social life, and state institutions, particularly through the project of reconciling individuality with the state. For them, this is where the concept of freedom is truly at stake.

⁵. Pippin's speculative-practical reading of Hegel's philosophy is illuminating in this regard. Pippin, in *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, implicitly takes into account the metaphysical ground of Hegel's thought as the reality that leads rational agency from its uneducated standpoint to the achievement of social and historical determination. Yet in his account, it is the collectively predetermined reality of metaphysical thought, which lies in the very nature of the state, that dictates what the subject ought to be and ought to do. On this account, human beings are destined to be free through the authority of the state. The nature of what ought to be, in this respect, belongs to social practices that merge the being of the individual into the reality of the state. In Pippin's words: "being a subject or an agent is not treated by Hegel as an ontological or strictly philosophical question, but as an achieved social status such as, let us say, being a citizen or being a professor, a product or result of mutually recognitive attitudes." (Pippin, 2008, p. 155). Through such an interpretation, it is the practical reasoning of Kant that dominates Hegel's notion of subjectivity, rather than the *freedom of consciousness* as the truth of the embodiment of the subjectivity of the subject within the reality of the state. In contrast, instead of treating freedom as the outcome of Hegel's philosophy, what I have tried to demonstrate in this thesis is that freedom should be understood as the *beginning* by interpreting freedom as the *pure act of the self-representation of the Absolute* within the system. In this sense, both the reality of *consciousness* in the *Phenomenology* and the reality of *being* in the *Logic* are grounded in the very nature of freedom.

Honneth (1995), Francis Fukuyama (1995, 1993), Robert R. Williams (1992, 2012), and Slavoj Žižek (2012) mostly employ Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and the Self-consciousness and Spirit chapters of the *Phenomenology* to develop a foundation for a social-ethical theory, to delineate an ideal society, or to criticize different kinds of social-political theories by employing and developing concepts such as the struggle for recognition, the end of history, the alienation of the modern human subject, and social freedom through their interpretation of Hegel's philosophy.⁶

In brief, from the perspective of neo-Kantian interpreters of Hegel's philosophy, the central issue is to understand the developmental categories in Hegel's *Logic* as self-determinate concepts, which establish knowledge without presupposing any thing-in-itself as a reality beyond the categories. In a simple word, any conception of metaphysics that inquires beyond phenomena, such as the reality of substance or any traditional views of God and infinity, is forever discredited in such an account.⁷

From this perspective, the exposition of Science is none other than the exposition of the categories of thought in both Hegel's objective and subjective *Logic*. In this respect, the developmental categories of thought are intelligible as a more elaborate and extended version of

⁶. By contrast, non-deflationary or metaphysical interpreters of Hegel's philosophy such as Jean Hyppolite (1974), Charles Taylor (1975), Frederick Beiser (2005), Michael Rosen (1984), and Karen Ng (2020), emphasize that Hegel sees substance itself as Geist or Subject, which, through its self-determining agency, grounds the reality of the temporal movement of Spirit as the manifestation of the eternal infinite Absolute. According to these interpretations, the true task of philosophy can be understood as uncovering the true knowledge of the Absolute through the cognition of finite Spirit. That is to say, there is a definite and true sense of knowledge as Absolute Knowledge, and the whole task of philosophy is to know such knowledge, which is carried out through the temporal self-knowing movement of Spirit.

⁷. Through neo-Kantian interpretations, it is the epistemological method, such as the works of Robert Stern (2002, 2009), Kenneth Westphal (2003), and Jacob McNulty (2023), that mostly arises from their outlook on the reality of *Erkennen*. In fact, by ignoring or being indifferent to the Absolute dimension of Hegel's philosophy, *Erkennen* is defined in an entirely different shape. In this respect, it is by setting limits on its own nature and defining the true sense of *Erkennen* as the knowledge of such limits that *Erkennen* finds its ground in epistemological perspectives. The way the system is represented, likewise, belongs to the self-construction of limits within such a perspective.

Kantian *Verstand*, which aims at the reconciliation between the theoretical idea and the practical idea in the form of the Absolute Idea in Hegel's *Logic*.

It is also worth mentioning that although the neo-Kantian interpreters of Hegel's philosophy ground their perspective in Hegel's metaphysics, it is the possibility of metaphysics that concerns them, and not the actuality of metaphysical thought. What is meant here by the actuality of metaphysics can be understood as the revelatory agency of the Absolute itself, as the definite and decisive sense of knowledge, which actualizes its self-grounded reality through the medium of Reason for the human subject. By contrast, by placing emphasis on the possibility of metaphysics, it is the human subject that, through its power of *Verstand*, determines the possible ground of the boundaries of its own knowledge, and the way it represents itself within those boundaries is none other than the truth of metaphysics. From this perspective, human cognition itself concerns possibility, and if there is a ground of knowledge through which to inquire into human cognition, such a foundation should ultimately concern the possibility of cognition rather than the necessity or actuality of an unknown thing-in-itself.

From this standpoint, by *Erkennen*, the neo-Kantian interpreters understand a kind of status or capacity that makes us the kind of rational beings that we are. Therefore, when it comes to the discussion of knowing, beyond the developmental categories of thought in the *Logic*, the Kantian-like chapters of the *Phenomenology* on Consciousness, Self-consciousness, and Reason arise, through the perspective of Kantian interpreters, as the core of the discussion on knowing in both its theoretical and practical dimensions, and finally result in the emergence of social subjectivity in the form of Spirit, without taking into account any Idea as the truth of such subjectivity.⁸ In fact, such a human subject does not have any other destiny than to become stuck

⁸. Some scholars, such as Rudolf Haym in *Hegel und seine Zeit* (1857), explicitly affirm that the most elaborate part of Hegel's philosophy is located in its first three chapters, and that the rest of the *Phenomenology* should be read

in the infinity of the indeterminacy of truth within such an account of knowing, and in effect it is the unintelligibility of truth that arises as the outcome of this perspective, which is, however, the desirable and intelligible result within the ground of Kantian thought.

By contrast, as I have tried to demonstrate in this dissertation, the aim of Hegel's entire system is to revive the conception of Truth and make it intelligible in its most concrete sense, without explicitly attempting to define the characteristics of *Erkennen* as the presupposition of the relation between subject and object within his philosophy. In this respect, the inception of Hegel's philosophy, in contrast to Schelling, Fichte, Kant, and most of his contemporaries, does not take place through the definition of knowing and then the attempt to build his system upon such a presupposition. In other words, instead of relying on the characteristics of subjectivity and delineating the features of knowing in its confrontation with knowledge, it is knowledge itself that articulates knowing. That is to say, it is through the representation of Absolute Knowledge and the Absolute Idea that knowing finds an intelligible ground. Without taking such a ground into account, it becomes inevitable to regard the consciousness of knowing as the truth of knowledge.

entirely separately because its aim is entirely different from the first half of the work. Otto Pöggeler, in *Zur Deutung der Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1961), similarly argues that beginning with the chapter on Spirit, Hegel's aim and method appear to be wholly different from those of the first three chapters. According to Pöggeler, up to the chapter on Spirit it is essentially the relation between epistemological consciousness and the object of knowledge that stands at the center of Hegel's discussion. However, beginning with the chapter on Spirit, a socially and historically self-constitutive form of consciousness suddenly emerges, one that seeks to become Absolute Knowledge. Yet upon reaching Absolute Knowledge in the *Phenomenology*, as Pöggeler notes:

Merkwürdig ist doch, daß Hegel das absolute Wissen, diesen Abschluß der Phän., als allgemeines Selbstbewußtsein charakterisiert: das absolute Wissen ist ein Ich, das dieses Ich ist und aufgehobenes, allgemeines Ich; das allgemeine Selbstbewußtsein ist die Ununterschiedenheit (das Selbstbewußtsein), welche den Unterschied (das Bewußtsein mit seinem Gegenstand) in sich hat. Dieses allgemeine Selbstbewußtsein und damit das Ziel der Phän. (Pöggeler, 1961, p. 280)

(It is striking that Hegel characterizes Absolute Knowledge, the conclusion of the *Phenomenology*, as universal self-consciousness. Absolute knowledge is an "I" that is this very "I", and at the same time a sublated and universal "I". Universal Self-consciousness is the state of non-differentiation, that is, Self-consciousness itself, which contains within itself the difference between consciousness and its object. This universal Self-consciousness, therefore, is the goal of the *Phenomenology*.)

Similarly, if such a conception as freedom is intelligible only at the end of Hegel's philosophy, whether in the chapter on Absolute Knowing in the *Phenomenology*, in the chapter on the Absolute Idea in the *Logic*, or in the final part of the *Encyclopedia*, its meaning appears quite differently. Some interpretations, such as those of Kojève and Fukuyama, proceed in this way, and throughout this thesis I have attempted to critically examine several of them, particularly those interpreters who tend toward the idea of the end of history as the culmination of Hegel's philosophy. In such cases, it is the *consciousness of freedom* that determines its nature as the culmination of its own self-determination.

In brief, what is common among non-metaphysical interpreters regarding the conception of freedom is that such a conception in its most concrete sense is attainable through the agency of the finite human subject in its historical development, which ideally results in the state of communicatively lived freedom. From this perspective, the conflict among subjects over the mutual recognition of their identity gives rise to internal social conflicts that finally lead to the practical and political formation of institutions designed to guarantee the freedom of the individual within the state.

In fact, ascribing the essentiality of freedom to individual activity in its progression toward an ideal moral society is nothing other than reducing the reality of knowledge to subjective activity and eventually marginalizing the role of the Absolute in the system. By contrast, what I have tried to demonstrate in the course of my discussion is that the reality of both identity and freedom belongs to the system. A one-way approach from the subject toward freedom leads only to the failure of freedom. Rather, it is through the self-representation of the Absolute within the system and through the self-recognition of the subject through the medium of *Bildung* that the subject experiences every moment of its being as an expression of its freedom.

In this respect, although in the context of modernity the deflationary readings of Hegel's philosophy tend to reduce the discussion of freedom to the power of self-determination through the agency of the human subject, within the present dissertation it is the *actuality of thought-determination* that lies at the very meaning of self-determination. In this respect, the true knowledge of the conception of freedom belongs to the region of speculative thought for Hegel, and the discussion of it cannot simply be limited to an inquiry into the *free will* of the subject in its immediate form, which is its *infinite indeterminate* power to determine itself. This form, however, may even be recognized from a common-sense point of view as the reality of freedom. Nor is it the case that the particular determination of the subject, as the *finite determination* of itself in a given moment of its history, signifies the true meaning of freedom in Hegel's philosophy. Rather, it is the *infinite determination* of the subject, which is the unity between *indeterminate infinity* and the *finite determination* of itself, that truly signifies self-determination as freedom. Thus, freedom does not designate the subject acting in a particular way, but is in truth the *actualized Whole*.

It is also worth mentioning that the references to the self-representation of the Absolute in both Hegel's speculative philosophy as *being* and in the *Phenomenology* as *consciousness* are viewed from an ontological perspective in this dissertation, rather than through a realistic or existential approach to the Absolute. However, such ontological self-representation does not deny the real existence of the Absolute as God within Hegel's system. That is to say, regardless of the actual manifestation of God, it has an ontological presence in history, and this ontological presence, particularly in philosophy, provides justification for the existential and real presence of the Absolute.

As I have tried to demonstrate in the course of this study, such ontological self-representation of the Absolute within the system, not simply as an outcome but also as a presupposition, occurs for the finite human subject through the medium of Reason. In this respect, it is subjectivity that grasps the ontological reality of God as its own reality. That is to say, regardless of the existential representation of such a reality as God, the finite human subject views its subjectivity through the self-representation of such a conception as the Idea, God, or the Absolute, and through the self-knowing of its subjectivity in the ontological self-representation of the Idea, it does not have any other destiny than to demonstrate the existence of such an Idea as the very being of its own subjectivity. Such a perspective holds both the insight that it is the knowing process (*Erkennen*) that necessitates the Idea and the insight that it is the self-representation of the Idea that necessitates the knowing process (*Erkennen*). In other words, it is the Absolute's self-mediation that necessitates Reason as the consciousness of being all truth, and in turn, it is Reason's own maturation that renders the revelation of the Absolute necessary.

By taking into account such a perspective, my interpretation diverges from both the metaphysical interpretation developed by Reid and Fackenheim's account, in some respects, concerning the relation between the *self-revelatory agency of the Absolute*⁹ and the knowing process (*Erkennen*) toward Absolute Knowledge for finite temporal human consciousness.

In this regard, in the section on Reason and Revelation, after examining Reid's view, which, in its metaphysical account, subordinates the knowledge of Spirit to the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute, and Fackenheim's account, in which the self-representation of God in the system

⁹. The expression *self-revelatory agency of the Absolute* is one I have borrowed from Jeffrey Reid, in his article Reason and Revelation: Absolute Agency and the Limits of Actuality (*Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2017, pp. 182–202). According to Reid's perspective, while the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute refers to the content of knowledge as Truth in itself, it must also be understood as the form of truth, which is the subjectivity of thought. In this sense, instead of viewing revelation solely within a religious context, where God reveals itself to human consciousness as an external infinite power, revelation should also be understood as the process through which human self-consciousness advances toward the knowledge of what the Absolute is.

fails to reach the universality of speculative thought, I argue that, since there is no such thing as *formless content*, the *content* of religious representation (*Vorstellung*) cannot be grasped independently of the *form-determinations* of thought. On the other hand, the Absolute cannot be realized solely as the form of thought; rather, within the system, it must also be recognized as objective reality. In this respect, my final aim is to demonstrate that the outward representation of the Absolute and the inward activity of Spirit are sublated into a single identity within the Concept (*Begriff*).

My emphasis, however, falls on the side that sees the necessary connection between the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute and the knowledge of the Absolute through the mediation of the finite temporal human subject as belonging to Spirit. In turn, taking such a position does not imply simply relying on a humanistic idea of the Absolute or treating the very idea of God as a regulative idea of Reason, as might be understood from a Kantian perspective. Rather, I have tried to demonstrate that it is the recognition of the Idea as identity that grounds the finite Spirit's knowledge of infinite Truth. This identity is the self-knowledge of God, in which there is no longer any sense of *otherness*; rather, it is *pure identity* that lies at the foundation of the self-knowledge of God.

In this respect, overcoming *otherness* through the inward movement of the finite temporal human subject does not simply mean that thought enters into an ad infinitum process of negation and determination. Rather, by entering the realm of religion and, beyond that, the realm of Absolute Knowledge, thought must come to recognize itself in an unmediated way, in its identity with being. That is to say, the finite agent has no other path to knowing the Truth than to recognize itself within the knowledge of the Absolute, which is its *otherness*, but the *otherness* that is recognized precisely through the recognition of *identity*.

This thesis is presented in three parts. In the first part, I explore the conception of identity within the Absolute. I argue that the revelation of the Absolute is a prerequisite for self-consciousness and knowledge. That is to say, as a formal condition, the Absolute remains the determining ground for self-consciousness as long as self-consciousness continues its own self-determination.

On this account, what *Erkennen* implies is grounded in Hegel's idea of Absolute Knowledge itself, which finds its highest expression in his exposition of identity in speculative philosophy and its manifestation as God in his religious lectures. In this respect, the discussion begins with Hegel's *Differenzschrift*, which may be subject to criticism for presenting a conception of the Absolute still influenced by Schelling's notion of the Absolute as an abstract and ontologically rich concept, a conception that becomes more humanized in Hegel's mature systematic works. Yet, on the one hand, this work positions the idea of the Absolute more elaborately at the summit of human knowledge in Hegel's system compared to his other writings; and, on the other hand, regardless of whether the Absolute is viewed in its abstractness or its concreteness, the persistent presentation of its conception is evident throughout all of Hegel's lectures and systematic works.

In this sense, *Erkennen* cannot be simply reduced to the linear progression of self-consciousness in the course of history toward Absolute Knowledge; rather, by presupposing the Absolute in Hegel's system, it is the knowledge of identity that posits itself as the knowledge of the oneness and wholeness of the system, and the entire narration of *Erkennen* through finite Spirit fundamentally belongs to this very knowledge of identity.

Erkennen, therefore, cannot be realized purely as the activity of self-consciousness, nor as a reality that could be explained only through the historical development of consciousness in Hegel's philosophy. Rather, *Erkennen* truly belongs to the knowledge of the Idea, as the truth that

is studied as identity in speculative philosophy, and as the One and the Whole reality, which is studied as God in Religion and as Science in Philosophy. On this account, grounding the discussion in Hegel's perspective on the Absolute brings to light the conception of reason (*Vernunft*) as the appearance of the Absolute, which forms the reality of *Erkennen* itself in the system. That is to say, if there is knowing (*Erkennen*), the knowledge of this knowing belongs to the knowledge of reason, and the most simple and fundamental characteristic of reason is identity. Therefore, *Erkennen* aims at the knowledge of identity in order to know the appearance of the Absolute.

This knowledge is fundamentally grounded in the knowledge of history in Hegel's philosophy. The knowledge of history, in this respect, is regarded as the knowledge of the actuality of reason, as the purposive, self-grounded activity of thought. Therefore, the aim of bringing the conception of history to light is to bridge the temporal subjective knowledge of Spirit with the eternal infinite knowledge of the Absolute in Hegel's system. Overcoming this fundamental division, which can be seen as the main metaphysical dilemma for Hegel, elevates history from being merely a mediation between the agency of the self-conscious subject and the Truth into the metaphysical realm in Hegel's philosophy. History, therefore, is the very self-knowledge of the Absolute as identity, and it is this knowledge of identity that drives the subject to represent itself in the form of history.

What these explanations about the embodiment of reason as the appearance of the Absolute, through the self-representation of subjectivity in its concrete metaphysical shape as history, aim to demonstrate is that the appearance of the Absolute is nothing external to subjectivity. That is to say, if there is Truth, this Truth is known by the self-conscious subject, and this knowledge is

grounded in the knowledge of identity as the self-knowledge of the Absolute. In this respect, it is the knowledge of identity that grounds the reality of *Erkennen* in Hegel's system.

The actualization of the Absolute as the eternal infinite truth takes place through the self-externalization of the Absolute within the system. In this context, the second part of the first chapter is concerned with the distinction between the revelatory mode of the self-representation of the Absolute and the temporal mode of knowledge for finite Spirit. *Erkennen*, in this respect, is not the mode of grasping truth either through the mediation of the eternal infinite truth as God or on the foundation of finite human consciousness; rather, it is the reconciliation between the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute and the inward temporal movement of spirit within the system that makes *Erkennen* intelligible.

The very nature of knowing (*Erkennen*), therefore, grounds itself in the reality of the system in Hegel's philosophy. That is to say, if there is knowing, it belongs to the constitutive relation between the self-knowledge of the Absolute and self-consciousness, which can only be traced through the exposition of philosophy as the system of philosophy, or the exposition of Truth as the system of such Truth. In fact, by annulling this relation, neither the self-knowledge of the Absolute nor the self-consciousness of finite Spirit, taken as separate realities, would unveil the reality of *Erkennen*. That is to say, *Erkennen* does not belong purely to the human side or the Absolute side, but fundamentally arises from the reality of the system as the reconciliation between human self-consciousness and the self-knowledge of the Absolute.

From this perspective, the fundamental question that arises is how the revelation of the infinite and timeless Absolute can be realized by the finite and temporal subject. Does this relationship compel us to assert that Revelation occurs within Time? Or does Time possess an infinite quality that inherently links it to Revelation? Contemplating these questions leads us to

more fundamental inquiries: Do these two paths indicate and necessitate two different methods for uncovering the nature of Truth? Or do they require two distinct realizations of the Absolute? These questions should be taken into account because, for Hegel, the Absolute is One and Whole, and it does not seem plausible to divide it into two dimensions, as a revealed Absolute and a temporal Absolute. Rather, there must be something that establishes the connection between Revelation and Temporality within the context of the self-externalization of the Absolute.

The discussion within the second chapter turns to the reciprocal relationship between self-consciousness's knowledge of the Absolute and the Absolute's knowledge of self-consciousness. The final aim, again, is to demonstrate that *Erkennen* is intelligible only through this reciprocal knowledge. What is demonstrated in this regard is that the inward negative movement of self-consciousness toward Truth necessitates the presentation of the Absolute in the system, and the very self-consciousness of this necessity begets the *freedom of consciousness*. The self-representation of the Absolute, in this respect, characterizes not only the truth of knowing (*Erkennen*) for self-consciousness but also represents the inward movement of self-consciousness as the *freedom of consciousness*.

The freedom of finite Spirit, therefore, occurs through the knowledge of the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute, and it does not simply belong to the permanent, infinite movement of Spirit to negate and determine itself in different shapes. In fact, the outcome of such movement for Spirit is neither freedom nor knowledge, and it is not the task of philosophy to ascribe *Erkennen* to the movement of Spirit in this form. Rather, without the revelation of Truth through the agency of the Absolute, the experience of self-consciousness would be insufficient for knowledge, as it would lack the conception of true identity. On the other hand, the very

conception of *Erkennen* in Hegel's philosophy lies in demonstrating that without the finite knowledge of infinity, there would be no such thing as infinity, just as without the self-representation of the infinite dimension of Truth, as Absolute dimension, there would be no finite knowledge of infinity.

In brief, self-consciousness, by its nature, is action, and this action embraces thinking as its reality in the *Phenomenology*. On the other hand, the outcome of the progression from acting subject to thinking subject is its alienation from action. In this respect, the truth of such recognition lies in negation. Self-consciousness truly knows itself as negation, and its movement toward reality, as the way it knows itself, is a negative movement. However, this negative movement *ought to be* the progressive positive movement toward the Absolute from the standpoint of self-consciousness. This is because the aim of the movement of self-consciousness in its totality is the freedom of consciousness in Hegel's historicity. In this respect, the contradiction arises between *what it is*, as the negative movement of consciousness, and *what it ought to be*, as the freedom of consciousness. The knowledge of this contradiction constitutes Hegel's perspective on *Erkennen*.

Erkennen, in this respect, *ought to be* free, but in practice it is not free. On the other hand, the very nature of this contradiction belongs to the very nature of *Erkennen* itself. That is to say, it is *Erkennen* that recognizes and distinguishes between realizing itself as not free and its own essence as being free. In this sense, *Erkennen* declares its contradictory nature to be insufficient for knowledge.

This contradictory essence of *Erkennen*, which arises through the negative self-knowing inward movement of self-consciousness, results in the final historical destiny of both *Erkennen* and freedom. This final destiny is the point that has been designated as the end of history or the

end of metaphysics, in its different forms, by commentators such as Kojève and Fukuyama. In this regard, the first part of the second chapter critiques the idea of the end of history in order to demonstrate that the freedom of consciousness must be grounded in the Idea, especially with regard to Hegel's perspective on the Idea in the *Science of Logic*; otherwise, in its linear progression, self-consciousness has no other destiny than the failure of freedom. On the other hand, grounding the knowledge of self-consciousness in the Idea is not intelligible without the Idea's knowledge of self-consciousness. In this respect, identity as the Idea must know itself as difference within the system. The movement from identity to difference, in speculative sentences, is best elaborated in the Doctrine of Essence section of Hegel's *Logic*, which is taken up in the second part of the second chapter to show that through the movement from identity to difference, self-consciousness is no longer passing through its temporal and historical moments in alienation. Rather, it recognizes itself as a metaphysical being, for which what has been passed is its *absolute present*.

In the final chapter, the reciprocal recognition of Spirit and the Absolute will be demonstrated as the one and the whole reality. The oneness and wholeness of this reconciliation constitute the nature of *Erkennen*, which is presented through the return of the Absolute to consciousness in the *Phenomenology* and the return of the Idea to being in the *Logic*. Through this return, the conception of history finds its metaphysical ground in Hegel's philosophy. In light of this perspective on history, the negative movement of self-consciousness, as *what has been*, transcends itself into *what it is*, as the positive positedness of *Erkennen*. In fact, it is the copula, as the middle term, that knows itself in the transcendental sense through the absolute return of the Absolute to Spirit. By this recognition, *Erkennen* constitutes the reality of self-consciousness as the self-determination and the self-certainty of Truth.

This eternal infinite reality of the temporal finite Spirit will be brought to light through Hegel's conception of *Aufhebung*.¹⁰ In this regard, by employing the conception of *Aufhebung* as the truth of the experience of consciousness, the aim is to demonstrate that although self-consciousness in practice experiences the world through its negative inward movement, the knowledge of such experience relies on the positive positedness of the dialectical self-reflective movement of thought, which forms the reality of *being*. From the standpoint of *Aufhebung*, by preserving the negative nature of experience for subjectivity, thought demonstrates itself as the very reality of this negativity and, by transcending its negative self-reflectivity, posits its being as positive rational knowledge. The fundamental outcome of ascribing a self-reflective transcendental character to the nature of thought through the speculative standpoint of *Aufhebung* is the emergence of the *system* in Hegel's philosophy, a system that reflects on the self as the *rational agent*.

The self-realization of the system, as temporal finite Truth, in the *Logic* is presented in the last section of this thesis through the discussion of the method in the Absolute Idea chapter of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. The aim of contemplating the method is to demonstrate that the Idea, as the culmination of the *Logic*, is not the dead end of Hegel's speculative philosophy. Rather, method regenerates dialectical thought. From this perspective, the teleological outcome of the method is regarded as the demonstration of the circularity of speculative thought. The circular, self-reflective movement of thought, in this respect, occurs where the consciousness of temporality and the eternity of the Idea become identical. Through the representation of the

¹⁰. *Aufhebung* is a key term in Hegel's dialectic that unites three moments at once: negation, preservation, and transcendence. The most common translations are *sublation* and *suspension*, but neither adequately conveys the full sense of Hegel's intended meaning. For this reason, I retain the original German term *Aufhebung* throughout this thesis.

method at the end of the system, therefore, it is the temporal consciousness of Truth, as the appearance of Truth, that determines itself as the oneness and wholeness of Truth.

On the other hand, the exposition of the method at the culmination of Hegel's system gives rise to the insight in this thesis that neither the movement from identity to difference nor the movement from difference to identity is complete when taken separately as different senses of the exposition of Truth in Hegel's system. Rather, it is the speculative Identity, as the identity of identity and difference, that defines the true sense of *Erkennen* and freedom. This speculative Identity, as has been demonstrated in the course of this thesis, is realized as the transformation of the abstract conception of identity for self-consciousness into the concrete embodiment of its nature as identity. The nature of such an embodiment signifies the true meaning of *Erkennen*.

Erkennen, in this sense, is neither grounded in the practical Idea, where finite temporal consciousness strives to know itself without, in practice, reaching any definite knowledge of its knowing, nor can the true meaning of *Erkennen* be grounded in the theoretical Idea, where the Absolute, as the definite and decisive sense of knowledge, does not know itself as the knowing temporal subject. Rather, in the light of the Absolute Idea, where the theoretical and practical Idea are one and the same, self-consciousness is recognized as the self-determination of identity.

It is therefore the appearance of truth that realizes itself as Truth through the representation of the system. The knowledge of knowing (*Erkennen*), in fact, relies on such recognition in Hegel's philosophy. That is to say, the truth of thinking is subjectivity. The fulfillment of subjectivity gives rise to the realization of freedom as the concept that possesses a substantial reality of its own, and this substantial reality can be regarded as identical with metaphysics.

In this light, by employing the highest self-determinations of thought, namely the Absolute, Concept (*Begriff*), and Idea, which carry within themselves the very meaning of *Erkennen* in

Hegel's speculative philosophy, this thesis contributes to the discussion of the relation between knowing (*Erkennen*) and freedom by demonstrating that the *freedom of consciousness*, as the concrete actualization of *Vernunft*, grounds the true meaning of *Erkennen* in Hegel's philosophy.

On this account, freedom is not an inherent attribute of the human subject but is instead located within the Idea itself, which functions as the ultimate goal of the Spirit's historical realization. In this view, freedom is not merely an abstract principle but the very driving force behind self-knowledge. That is to say, the self-conscious subjectivity strives to know itself precisely because of the idea of Freedom. Freedom, therefore, is not something to be acquired, whether by an individual subject or society. Instead, freedom is the very being of knowledge itself, which makes the process of knowing (*Erkennen*) intelligible. That is to say, freedom is no longer merely the object of study but the foundation upon which all study rests, which forms the educational development of the modern age. This realization of freedom is, by its nature, the process of Education (*Bildung*). To become free is to undergo an educative process in which one comes to know how the reality of *oneself* fits into the reality of *being*, as an active process of reforming self-consciousness in light of the freedom of consciousness. The cultivation of this self-consciousness can be observed in the different manifestations of Absolute Spirit, specifically in Art, Religion, and Philosophy.

Chapter One: History and Knowledge

1. History and the Absolute

1.1. Hegel's Concept of the Absolute

In brief, the first stage of my thesis focuses on understanding freedom as Identity within Hegel's system. The conceptual standpoint from which I will approach Identity lies in its immediacy, as the self-positing agency of the Absolute. That is to say, my primary aim is to characterize freedom as the immediate self-positing agency of the Absolute. In this context, first of all, it becomes crucial to address some essential questions: Why is it important to view freedom as an absolute concept in Hegel's system? How does freedom achieve its absoluteness within this framework? And what are the implications of understanding freedom in this way within Hegel's philosophical system? Secondly, as a corollary of the first set of questions, I will explore How does historicity, as a metaphysical approach, emerge from Hegel's speculative philosophy? Additionally, in determining the appropriate standpoint for Hegel's historicity, how does the Ego prefigure Reason in its confrontation with knowledge?

What the Absolute signifies is Truth. That is to say, on the one hand, there is such a thing as the Truth, and the human being has the potential capacity to know what the Truth is. On the other hand, the problem arises when Truth takes a position distinct from the consciousness of Truth, which is recognized and acquired by the self.

Based on this two-sided approach to the idea of the Truth, the central challenge of Hegel's account of the Absolute is to explain the appearance (*Erscheinung*) of the Idea through the finite mediation of human subjectivity. In other words, how can philosophy move on its own from the

idea of Absolute, in and for consciousness, to the Absolute as a timeless and infinite Idea, independent of the finite mind, as Truth? Conversely, we can also consider the reverse trajectory: how does the infinite and timeless idea of the Absolute manifest itself in appearance so that it can be known through the power of understanding?¹¹

It seems that throughout all his works, Hegel's principal speculative aim remained remarkably consistent: "Das Absolute soll fürs Bewußtsein konstruiert werden, [das] ist die Aufgabe der Philosophie" (*Werke* 2: 25) (The realization of the Absolute in consciousness is the essential task of philosophy.) On the other hand, Hegel's speculative philosophy also makes it evident that the Subject approaches the Absolute through the mediation of Reason. As Hegel states: "die Reflexion hat als Vernunft Beziehung auf das Absolute, und sie ist nur Vernunft durch diese Beziehung" (*Werke* 2: 26) (Reflection, as Reason, relates to the Absolute, and it is Reason only through this relation.)¹²

¹¹. My inquiry fundamentally concerns the ontological nature of Hegel's Absolute. More specifically, does it exist solely in relation to us, or does it hold an independent ontological status while remaining self-mediated within and through *Geist*? What, then, is the relationship between the Absolute and its being for us? The conception of Identity, in this regard, provides insight into the relation between the Absolute and the Self.

¹². It should be noted here that the perspective on both the Absolute and Reason in this section is primarily rooted in the *Differenzschrift*, one of Hegel's early writings from the Jena period, when Hegel was still under the influence of Schelling. In this work, the sense in which Hegel speaks of Identity and Reason is ontologically rich. However, later in the *Phenomenology* and subsequently in the *Logic*, the notion of *pure identity* with which he begins is an abstract and impoverished one. It is the *identity* that must enter into the speculative dialectic of thought in order to attain its speculative character, where the unity of identity and difference is ultimately represented as speculative Identity. Similarly, from the beginning of the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel presents Reason as the self-grounded activity of thought, whose relation to the Absolute appears to be immediate and unmediated. In contrast, in the *Phenomenology*, the certainty that Reason has of being all reality is grounded in the subject's endeavor throughout its historical progression, and it is tied to the representation of Spirit in this context. In general, in the *Differenzschrift*, the Absolute, Reason, and Identity are presented primarily in relation to two central concerns: the establishment of the true System of philosophy, or, put differently, the establishment of Truth in the form of a philosophical system, and the critique of various philosophical systems within the context of German Idealism. In contrast, in the *Phenomenology*, we encounter a more concrete conception of Identity and Reason than in the *Differenzschrift*, where it is the agency of the self, as Spirit, that plays the protagonist role. However, in this section, the reason I began with both Identity and Reason from the perspective of the *Differenzschrift* is to present the Absolute as self-positing identity. Presenting the Absolute in this way serves to raise the fundamental concern that there is such a thing as the *knowledge of Truth*. It is this notion of the *knowledge of Truth* that I have introduced as Identity, which can be understood as the self-positing agency of the Absolute. In other words, this section focuses on exploring how the philosophical system begins by presenting the Absolute in its immediacy as self-positing identity. Furthermore, this is also the sense in which freedom can enter into the philosophical system. Without adopting this stance, the

The word *Reason*, in its etymological and archaeological roots, such as *ratio* in Latin, and *logos* (λόγος) in Greek, does not simply represent the externality of being as truth in relation to thought. Instead, it embodies thought's reflection on being, manifesting the power of thinking, thought, language, or calculation. That is to say, reason is the purposive, self-grounded activity of thought directed toward the truth of the knowledge of being. Thus, reason is not merely concerned with knowing something. Rather, it is its own truth and the manifestation of that truth in being, as language, arithmetic, and logic, at which it aims. In this respect, reason is not simply an abstract concept; rather, it is a concept with the capacity to actualize itself. By breaking down *Vernunft* in the German language, *Ver*, in one of its applications, implies an inseparable verbal prefix that denotes a transition of the object into a state or process of making something whole or complete. *Nunft* also derives its origin from *nehmen*, which mostly suggests the action of taking or grasping. Thus, linguistically, *Vernunft* is not just about experiencing or observing but speculatively comprehending, integrating, and synthesizing ideas or phenomena. However, Hegel takes *Vernunft* further, seeing it as the very structure of reality itself. He interprets it as the universal rational principle that governs reality and history. In this context, *Vernunft* signifies both the reality and actuality of thought itself and its relation to being. The reality of *Vernunft* is explored in Hegel's *Logic*, while its actualization is most effectively traced in the *Phenomenology*.

In the present discussion, however, the focus in this section is not on the activity of Reason as Spirit, where consciousness strives to become the certainty of the reality of all being. Rather, the emphasis is on Reason as the appearance of the Absolute, which I aim to ground in the

conception of freedom would remain confined to the first six chapters of the *Phenomenology*. For this reason, what led me to approach this thesis through the *Differenzschrift* is the conviction that, above all, the conception of freedom must take its place within the system. What constitutes the system, as most clearly presented in the *Differenzschrift*, is the self-positing agency of the Absolute.

realization of the Absolute in its immediacy, as the self-positing agency that stands without opposition. In this context, considering the Absolute in its immediate form reveals that Reason is simply its appearance, and not the result of Spirit's completed journey as Absolute Knowledge. This relation between the Absolute and its appearance brings forward the conception of Identity in its most immediate and simple form, where the Absolute and Reason are identical before any further speculative development or determination takes place.

Beginning with the *Differenzschrift* and culminating in the *Logic*, it is fundamentally *Verstand* that is shaped and determined by *Vernunft*. More generally, this is because the essential characteristic of *Vernunft* is identity, whereas *Verstand* continually expands into manifoldness as a process driven by *Vernunft*. The sole aim of Reason, in this regard, is to suspend such a rigid antithesis between itself and understanding. At the same time, Reason maintains its distinction from understanding by integrating all differences into its very identity. In this sense, identity must first be recognized as the One and the Whole characteristic of the Absolute, through which and within which the truth of *being* is revealed to the subject. Seen from the reverse trajectory, identity serves as the sole mediation through which understanding approaches Truth.

To recapitulate the discussion so far, first, it appears that Reason, within the context of Hegel's philosophy, can be understood as the appearance of the Absolute. However, this appearance retains its connection to the Absolute through the power of Identity. When Reason posits itself as appearance, Identity becomes the immediate knowledge of appearance; otherwise, the knowledge of appearance would be entirely reduced to the power of understanding. Secondly, the Absolute does not aim to bring unity. Rather, by its very nature, it is the immediate identity of subject and object. When we speak of the immediate identity of subject and object, we are referring to the immediate self-positing of the Absolute. This self-positing, while expressing

identity, is at the same time an expression of difference. That is to say, the self-positing of the Absolute carries within it the ontological movement of the Concept (*Begriff*). Therefore, the identity that belongs to the knowledge of the Absolute, even in its immediacy, does not take the form of abstract or pure identity. Rather, it must be understood in a dynamic and actual sense, since it contains the movement of the Concept (*Begriff*) and, in expressing identity, it also contains the knowledge of difference.

Hegel's philosophy, in this regard, seeks to demonstrate the unity between subject and object without dividing them into two distinct domains, which are subjective knowledge and objective reality. In Houlgate's words: "all Hegel is trying to do is make sense of the relation between the human thought and the rational structure of being _the rationality that informs and structures both nature and human thinking and is in that sense 'absolute.'" (Houlgate, 1994, P. 10). It also does not nullify objective reality in favor of subjective knowledge, as Kant formulated in his philosophical system.¹³ Likewise, it does not attempt to differentiate and then reconcile the Subjective subject-object relation with the Objective subject-object relation, a method that

¹³. Although the modern subjective-objective distinction can be seen as the offspring of Kant's philosophy, it appears that the objective side is necessitated by the subjective side, not as a realistic necessity but as an idealistic one. In this sense, Hegel may be justified in viewing Kant's philosophy as 'subjective idealism' or 'psychological idealism' rather than as genuinely 'transcendental idealism.' As he states in *Glauben und Wissen*:

Dies macht das Wesen des formalen oder psychologischen Idealismus aus, welcher die *Erscheinung* des Absoluten ebensowenig nach *ihrer* Wahrheit erkennt als die absolute Identität - eins ist schlechthin unzertrennlich vom anderen - und in welchen die Kantische, aber besonders die Fichtesche Philosophie alle Augenblicke übergleitet. (*Werke 2*: 312) (This sort of idealism [psychological idealism] can no more cognize the *appearance* of the Absolute in *its* truth than it can cognize the absolute identity, the one being completely inseparable from the other. Kantian, and more particularly Fichteian philosophy are forever sliding into this psychological idealism.) (Translation by W. Cerf & H. S. Harris, Hegel, 1977, p. 76).

This critique of Hegel to Kant stands directly in opposition to his own genuine philosophical attitude that *the Truth is the whole*. While the account given to the reality of subjective knowledge in Kant's philosophy does not have a perspective of the whole, it therefore does not have any implication for Truth. For further discussion of this interpretation, see Beiser, F. C. *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), and Houlgate, S. "Substance, Causality, and the Question of Method in Hegel's Science of Logic," in *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling, Hegel*, ed. S. Sedgwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Schelling sought to employ.¹⁴ Furthermore, it does not bring about the Absolute Identity between Subject and Object through the method of *Sollen* (*ought to be*)¹⁵ rather than *Sein* (*to be*), a distinction that, according to Hegel, characterizes Fichte's approach.¹⁶

Finally, the third factor that further develops the relationship between subject and object is the role of freedom within this interaction. If Reason is situated within the subjective realm in opposition to objective being, then the very realm of freedom itself becomes conditioned and limited by its opposition to *being*, which is not in accordance with what freedom is supposed to be. At first glance, it may seem that the agent, as subject, experiences the highest degree of freedom by liberating itself from objective being. However, within the framework of Hegel's philosophy, the self must nullify its independence in relation to objective being in order to truly realize its freedom. That is to say, the subject must be united with *being* to fully actualize its

¹⁴. For Schelling, the subjective-objective relation, by its nature, merges into a single universal 'I.' In this respect, the 'I' realizes its freedom by integrating both the subjective and objective dimensions of its knowledge. As he states:
The self exists only in that it appears to itself; its knowing is a form of being. The *know*, am the same who *am*, my knowing and my being mutually exhaust each other, the subject of consciousness and the subject of activity are one. In consequence of this identity, my knowing and free action are also identical with free action as such. (Schelling, 1978, P. 185).

For a comprehensive account of Schelling's idealism, see Joseph L. Esposito, *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977). For a Kantian interpretation of Schelling's idealism from a historical perspective, see also Christopher Lauer, *The Suspension of Reason in Hegel and Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2010).

¹⁵. The main characteristic of *Sollen* for Hegel is that *what ought to be* does not have actuality and consequently lacks any affirmative sense of reality. As he states in the context of his criticism of Kant's Critical Philosophy in the *Encyclopedia of Logic*: "It [what only ought to be] is something believed that can only claim subjective certainty, not truth; i.e., *not* that objectivity which corresponds to the Idea." (*EL*. §60. *Werke* 8: 142-143). The fundamental task of *Sollen*, therefore, is to determine the legitimate determinations of subjective thought as distinct from any reality of an Idea beyond such thought determinations. "The result of the reflections about the various stages of consciousness [in the method of *Sollen*] is then said to be that the content of all that we know about is only appearance." (*EL*. §60. *Werke* 8: 146). For a comprehensive critical reading of the role of *Sollen* in Hegel's philosophy see Westphal, M. "Hegel's Angst vor dem Sollen," *Owl of Minerva*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 187-94 (1994).

¹⁶. In brief, Hegel's problem with Fichte's system is that, although he genuinely takes 'I = I' as the Absolute principle of speculation, the system through which he attempts to demonstrate this identity does not truly display it. This is because speculative identity is conceived as an abstract identity, *Sollen* (*ought to be*), which serves as a presupposition of philosophy rather than as a systematic philosophy that seeks to actualize it as speculative identity *Sein* (*to be*). The critiques of both Fichte's and Schelling's philosophies are founded in the *Differenzschrift* (*Werke* 2: 52-115).

freedom. To put it more simply, this unification implies that we know and understand ourselves precisely to the extent and in the ways that we know our world. This constitutes the fundamental thesis of Identity in Hegel's Philosophy, a principle that remains enduring in Hegel's thought throughout his works.

In this respect, identification, along with freedom, does not imply exclusion. To express it more concretely, this realization of freedom does not imply that, for identification to be meaningful, an individual must fully own every action, always act with complete self-direction, or feel entirely independent when making choices. Likewise, freedom should not be understood as the unrestricted will of the individual to create its own identity. Rather, identification represents the highest form of inclusion when considered in relation to the conception of the Absolute. In this context, when I speak of identification as freedom, from a practical standpoint, it can be understood as $We=I$ and $I=We$. On this basis, the universal Idea realizes itself as identification in its particularity. The Idea of Freedom also realizes itself as the knowledge of freedom, which serves as a prerequisite for individual actions and wills to recognize themselves as *self-knowing agents* in their relation to *being*.

The *self-knowledge of the agent* signifies history. The philosophical history holds value and significance only if it remains grounded in this perspective. Otherwise, it ceases to present the history of the one, eternal Reason. Instead, it becomes merely a narrative of the contingent transformations of the human spirit and a collection of arbitrary actions, which the historian ascribes to Reason. Rather, history expresses the metaphysical stage in which the gap between the Idea and the Self is filled. The thing is that history is not separate from either the Idea or the Self; rather, insofar as it represents the Self, it is the representation of the Idea. In this sense,

history is the form of thought itself, not an external reality in which the Self merely discovers its own nature. Instead, it is history that forms the truth of the Self.

Ascribing knowledge to history implies that Truth is revealed to human thought not at the end of history, but truth exists in its presentations. This means that the presentation of history to the Self carries the knowledge of Truth. In this sense, history itself constitutes knowledge that holds the truth of the Self. What qualifies history to be regarded as a metaphysical method upon which a philosophical system can be built, in this sense, can be traced to Hegel's view on the necessity of understanding philosophy as the system of philosophy, which aims at Truth.¹⁷ Within this framework, the system itself derives its legitimacy and authority from its representation of Truth, where "Die freie Vernunft und ihre Tat ist eins, und ihre Tätigkeit ein reines Darstellen ihrer selbst." (Free reason and its action are one, and its activity is a pure self-representation of itself.) (*Werke*, 2: 46).

Different attitudes toward the realization of freedom arise in the context of various interpretations of *ein reines Darstellen ihrer selbst* (a pure act of self-representation). Further, in general, it is within the interpretation of *ein reines Darstellen ihrer selbst* that interpreters of Hegel find different trajectories for engaging with his philosophy. Before delving into the different interpretations, I first need to reiterate the distinction between Reason and Consciousness in the context of my discussion. In brief, Reason is subject to itself, whereas Consciousness is subject to otherness. In simple terms, there are no other reasons for Reason, just as there are other self-consciousnesses for the Self, through which the Self, by knowing its otherness in them, is going to find its own self-consciousness. In brief, Otherness belongs to

¹⁷. The difference between philosophy and the system of philosophy is elaborated in *the Verhältnis des Philosophierens zu einem philosophischen System* section of the *Differenzschrift* and in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, particularly *Werke* 3: 22-41(*PS*, §17-§40.) I will further explore this issue in my chapter on Education.

Consciousness. On the other hand, the nature of Reason is Identity. That is to say, Reason is known as Reason precisely through Identity. This is analogous to the claim that the subject has the knowledge of itself as *being the agent* by Reason. Otherwise, it is not going to see its nature as the subjective agent. Rather, it is its passivity that is going to constitute its nature.

In this respect, on the one hand, we can stand with Kant in claiming that because Reason contains no otherness, its outcomes are necessarily antinomies. Of course, antinomies cannot serve as a reliable foundation for dialectical knowledge, and remaining indifferent to them may be the best way to accept this ever-troubling standpoint of philosophical knowledge, which is Reason itself.¹⁸ From this perspective, Reason is dead. Even if we consider it alive, it lacks any constructive dialectical activity. In other words, the dialectical activity of thinking, in this regard, is not the direct product of Reason itself. Instead, it emerges through self-consciousness, which is formed by *Verstand* and thereby contributes to dialectical movement.

On the other hand, for Reason, it is the power of *Aufhebung* (suspension) that gives it vitality in Hegel's system. What *Aufhebung* produces is, at the same time, the negation, preservation, and transcendence of the Ego in the dialectical activity of consciousness. On this basis, we can say that the very nature of dialectical activity in Hegel's system belongs to Reason. Its actualization, however, is what matters for Self-consciousness. This actualization, as I will discuss in later

¹⁸. The best exposition of the role of Reason in constructing antinomies can be found in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (A409/B436–A425/B453), where Kant develops his account of *The Antinomy of Pure Reason* by viewing Reason as the power that “does not really generate any concept. The most it can do is to free a concept of understanding from the unavoidable limitations of possible experience, and so to endeavor to extend it beyond the limits of the empirical, though still, indeed, in terms of its relation to the empirical” (A409/B435). Although both Hegel and Kant address the Concept as *Begriff* and understand it in the sense of *greifen*, as the act of grasping the unity between *being* and *thinking*, Kant locates the being of the Concept within the categories of understanding, whereas Hegel regards the being of the Concept as the Idea itself, which can be realized by the Subject through the mediation of Reason. The Concept, in this realization, is free because it thinks and determines its own categorial content. At the same time, Categories serve as the means through which the Concept realizes itself as Absolute Being. Thus, understanding Truth as a system of categorial self-determination is essential for fully grasping the nature of the Concept.

pages, constitutes the very process of *Bildung*. From this standpoint, my contention is to show that throughout Hegel's works, the concept of *Aufhebung*, which he refers to as *speculative identity*¹⁹, demonstrates that the unity and difference between self and freedom form the basis of all rational, self-conscious knowledge.

Stepping back to the main discussion, although providing a strict and comprehensive definition of freedom seems to be an impossible task within the context of Hegel's philosophy, much like attempting to define philosophy itself in a strict sense, one common aspect in defining it is the implicit presence of *ein reines Darstellen ihrer selbst* in the realization of freedom, which different commentators attempt to render explicit through various interpretations.

1.2. The Necessity of Freedom for Philosophy

Stephen Houlgate is one of the commentators who identify the idiosyncratic aspect of Hegel's metaphysics in its presuppositionlessness.²⁰ In his analysis, pre-Kantian metaphysics inherently assumes that there is something outside the subject that is real and that the subject has the capability of knowing it. Furthermore, a continuity between pre-Kantian thought and Kant's critical philosophy can be observed. This continuity appears in the idea that, even though our fundamental concepts do not necessarily have to conform to or correspond with objects, they

¹⁹. See the section *Die Wesenheiten oder die Reflexionsbestimmungen* in *Werke* 6: 35-74. Hegel discusses how identity, in its full speculative sense, is inherently linked to difference. He contrasts this with abstract identity, emphasizing that true identity consists in the unity of identity and difference. In this sense, identity is complete only when it is understood not abstractly, in separation and isolation as an empty formal tautology ($A=A$), but in relation to another determination, which is difference.

²⁰. In general, Houlgate's notion of presuppositionlessness is directed toward Hegel's opening of the *Science of Logic*. Houlgate's aim is to show that Hegel's philosophy "begins from self-critical openness to being rather than from the assumption of absolute closure." (Houlgate, 2006, p. 58). In this regard, it stands in direct opposition to my critique. See Stephen Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth, and History: An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1991), particularly Section Two, *Thinking Without Presuppositions*. See also Chapters Three and Six of Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2006).

must initially arise through our experience of being affected by things.²¹ Hegel, by contrast, endorses the metaphysical conviction that thought can determine the inner nature of things by itself. This does not simply mean that Hegel upholds a purely idealistic metaphysics. Rather, as Houlgate emphasizes, Hegel's approach rejects even the presupposition that reality is distinct from thought. In this respect, Hegel does not construct his idealistic approach in opposition to this presupposition. Instead, he proceeds without it and refuses to accept the standpoint of any being other than thought from the outset. In brief, what Houlgate seeks to defend can be understood as the assertion that *being is the thought of being* and *the thought of being is being*. This perspective aligns with Hegel's approach in the *Logic*, where he begins with the categories of *being*, which subsequently unfold as the categories of *thought*. Or, as Houlgate himself formulates it: "Being is the sheer immediacy of which thought is immediately aware." (Houlgate, 2006, p. 121)

Within this realization, freedom can be seen as the foundation of presuppositionless thought, which freely and necessarily determines itself. That is to say, even when Hegel's philosophy is regarded as presuppositionless, the concept of freedom finds its place in defining what presuppositionlessness entails or put differently, in the self-representation of presuppositionlessness. This is where it becomes difficult to entirely ignore presuppositions in constructing Hegel's philosophical system, even in accepting presuppositionlessness as a foundational aspect of his system, which is *Logic* itself. Furthermore, in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel considers the necessity of philosophy to be grounded in the same condition as the presupposition required for philosophy, which needs to be posited for reflection.²² Put differently,

²¹. Hegel's most comprehensive analysis of various traditional metaphysical perspectives, along with their critiques by Empiricism and subsequently by Kantian critical philosophy, is best presented in his *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (Werke 8)*, particularly from Remark 26 to Remark 60.

²². See *Bedürfnis der Philosophie* section of *Differenzschrift (Werke 2: 20-25)*

what philosophy needs to recognize is the presupposition itself, which must be articulated. This presupposition can first be understood as the Absolute itself: "Es ist das Ziel, das gesucht wird; es ist schon vorhanden – wie könnte es sonst gesucht werden?" (*Werke 2: 24*). (It is the goal that is being sought; however, it is already present. Otherwise, how could it be sought?)²³

Every philosophical system that aims at the Absolute necessarily involves the concept of freedom. This is precisely what the *pure act of self-representation* signifies in the construction of a philosophical system. That is to say, Hegel's *Logic* must begin with the presentation of the Absolute from the very outset, since it constitutes the immediate certainty of truth itself. Of course, this is not something with which Houlgate would entirely disagree.²⁴ However, the key difference is that, for him, self-representation unfolds as a process and is only fully realized at the end. As he notes:

The absolute truth about the thought of being _the fact that, in thinking being, thought is thinking the self-determination of reason itself_ only becomes completely clear at the end of the process. At this point the 'circle' of Hegelian pure conceptual analysis is completed and what was unthought at the beginning is made fully explicit. (Houlgate, 1991, p. 61)

Merold Westphal, in a different context, recognizes Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a criticism without presuppositions. From Westphal's perspective, Hegel's inquiry into phenomenal

23. The second presupposition can also be understood as *difference* itself, which emerges in the knowledge of the Absolute through consciousness. In light of this insight, by viewing the Absolute as Identity and Consciousness as difference, Hegel sees the task of philosophy as uniting these presuppositions by recognizing identity in difference and difference in identity. This process leads to Absolute Identity as the unity of identity and difference. By this realization, the Absolute is not merely the starting point or the outcome of philosophy but is instead the very representation of philosophy itself.

24. Houlgate analyzes and addresses various critiques of his interpretation in *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2006), particularly from pages 54 to 59.

knowledge in its totality constitutes a *criticism of criticism* itself.²⁵ That is to say, the entire *Phenomenology* should be understood as an examination of phenomenal knowledge as a means of criticizing both pre-Kantian and Kantian critical philosophy. The central idea underlying the *Phenomenology*, in this respect, is that human consciousness is not subject to, nor can it tolerate, any limitations or finite attributes. Furthermore, for Westphal, presuppositionlessness holds no relevance to the Absolute standpoint of thought and its relation to the Subject. In his view, one does not need to “already be in the realm of Absolute Knowledge to follow Hegel’s argument” (Westphal, 1979, p. 9). The fundamental difference between this interpretation and Houlgate’s position is that Westphal rejects any constructive movement toward Absolute Knowledge, even as an outcome of the *Phenomenology*. In this regard, he asserts, “Far from being the way of Science, *Phenomenology* will be the way of endless despair” (Westphal, 1979, p. 12).

This kind of interpretive effort, in general, arises within existentialist interpretations, which neither strictly adhere to any method in the construction of Hegel’s system nor do they rely on truth in its Absolute sense. Instead, they critique the concept of the Absolute for overlooking the subjective experience of the individual and argue that the Absolute cannot be fully comprehended through rational thought alone. In this view, freedom is also not related to the concept of the Absolute but should instead be understood within Hegel’s ideas of finitude and the historical and cultural dependence of individual subjects.²⁶

²⁵. See Merold Westphal, *History and Truth in Hegel’s Phenomenology* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), particularly pages 8–19.

²⁶. On the reception of Hegel within existentialist philosophy, particularly Hegel’s influence on later existentialist thought, see Michael Baur, *Hegel: Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2014), 169–181. For a discussion of the historical continuity between Hegel’s philosophy and existentialist thinkers, see Robert C. Solomon, *From Hegel to Existentialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

On the other hand, by fully acknowledging the division between subjective knowledge and objective reality as the fundamental presupposition in Hegel's entrance into philosophy, different commentators emerge. Based on this foundation, the implication of freedom in Hegel's system is primarily situated on the subjective side. However, freedom in this context cannot be understood as merely finding peace within subjectivity, as Romanticism tends to approach it.²⁷ Instead, it emerges as the subject's striving to overcome the objective nature of its knowledge. However, overcoming objective reality does not signify a realistic distinction between subject and object; rather, it represents an idealistic separation, where the Idea views this division from the perspective of identity.²⁸ This is the context in which the role of history in Hegel's philosophical system has been a central subject of investigation for commentators such as Taylor, Hyppolite, and Pippin on the one hand, and for political and social interpreters such as Habermas, Kojève, Žižek, and Isaiah Berlin on the other.²⁹ In this regard, the study of history first and foremost

²⁷. In brief, Romanticism holds that we can truly know Nature only because we share the same essence, not by dominating or analyzing it through the categories of understanding. Rather, true knowledge of Nature arises from a sense of unity with the spiritual force that created it and continues to manifest through it. However, a fundamental problem emerges when the very nature of this knowledge isolates the subject and alienates it from objective reality. That is to say, the self-representation of the subject as a revelation of objective reality can, at the same time, be interpreted as the negation of objective reality. In this sense, "the self is the point immediately at rest in the element of its being" (PS §633, *Werke* 3: 465). In other words, what remains as truth is the subject itself, now separated from its knowledge, which is objective reality. This truth can no longer be ascribed to the universality of the self as Spirit in its confrontation with Nature; rather, it belongs to individuality. Jeffrey Reid's *The Anti-Romantic: Hegel against Ironic Romanticism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) is particularly illuminating in this regard. He argues that "Hegel's deep intuition, which underlies his entire critique of Romanticism, is that ironic subjectivity posits a world that excludes any possibility of objective truth, in order to then escape or reject this world, either in pleasure-seeking, through inner feeling or in death" (Reid, 2014, p. 2). Hegel's most explicit critique of Romanticism can be found in the section *Das Gewissen. Die schöne Seele, das Böse und seine Verzeihung* (*Werke* 3: 464–494), within the *Der Geist* chapter of the *Phenomenology*.

²⁸. Pippin discusses the speculative idealistic nature of the concept of Identity in *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), particularly on pp. 79–88. In this regard, while I acknowledge Pippin's idealistic perspective on the foundational divisions between subject and predicate, as well as universal and particular, I interpret them in terms of Hegel's conception of Identity. As Pippin states, "they are not objects or kinds of things at all, but ultimately, the self-determination of pure subjectivity, of pure thought thinking itself." (Pippin, 1989, p. 83).

²⁹. I will address the social-political interpreters in the next chapter.

reflects the subject's endeavor to overcome its objectivity. However, at the same time, within the historical process, the subject gets agency to recognize itself as the *pure act of self-representation* by means of its objectivity. That is to say, for knowledge to exist, there must be an object to be known, just as the will necessitates an obstacle to act upon. As Taylor puts it, "rational understanding is not possible without a clear consciousness of the distinction between subject and object, self and other, the rational and the affective. And just because of this, Hegel will insist that the ultimate synthesis incorporate division as well as unity." (Taylor, 1977, p. 48)

The problem with this approach arises from viewing the interaction between subject and object as the *ultimate synthesis*, a perspective that commentators such as Taylor uphold. In this view, as Taylor himself contends, "It is necessary to its self-realization that spirit move from the greatest outwardness to full self-consciousness." (Taylor, 1977, p. 390). Although this perspective is strongly supported by Hegel's insights in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*³⁰, the issue emerges when history is treated as a trajectory through which the hidden Idea is gradually revealed to the self through self-consciousness. And what is this Idea? It is the truth of its knowledge, its freedom, and its realization as Absolute Knowledge.

According to this interpretation, however, it is the knowledge of the Idea that brings history into being as the true realization of the self. In other words, the problem arises when interpreters approach history by dividing it into its constituent elements, such as Self-Consciousness, Spirit, Absolute Knowledge, and Freedom, and then demonstrating how these parts attain identification

³⁰. Some of Hegel's remarks in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* clarify this discussion: "The history of the world begins with its general aim. The realization of the idea of spirit, only in an implicit form, that is, as nature; a hidden, most profoundly hidden, unconscious instinct; and the whole process of history is directed to rendering this unconscious impulse a conscious one." (*LPH*, p. 164. *Werke* 12: 39-40). However, in what follows, Hegel makes it explicit that: "The union of universal abstract existence generally with the individual _the subjective_ that this alone is truth, belongs to the department of speculation, and is treated in this general form in logic." (*Ibid*) While the first passage suggests that history functions as a methodological framework within Hegel's philosophy, which many of the interpretations mentioned emphasize. The second passage shifts the perspective by indicating that the Idea of history itself attains its Absolute standpoint in *Logic*, where it realizes its free nature.

within the Absolute. In this approach, history itself becomes alienated, while it is supposed to overcome the alienation of Spirit. In fact, this realization naturally arises when history is viewed as the medium that connects the self to its knowledge. However, this is a concern that will be elaborated fully in the next chapter.

In general, the principal critique here is that the movement from the outwardness of Spirit to self-consciousness is not consistent with the true realization of freedom. In such interpretations, both freedom and the Absolute become fully aware of themselves only at the end of the historical process. Within the present interpretation, however, the self-representation of the knowledge of the Absolute, as it reflects upon its nature as Subject, is what constitutes history. In this view, history is the self-representation of the Absolute itself, and the Absolute cannot be positioned as the end of history or as something external to it.

1.3. Historicity and History

Before continuing to discuss the realization of freedom as Absolute, I would first like to distinguish historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*)³¹ from history (*Geschichte*) in the context of Hegel's thought. The present discussion does not seek to categorize different types of historical investigations as Hegel did, nor to compare various approaches to Hegel's historicity. Rather, distinguishing history from historicity sets the stage for the later parts of this thesis, which explores the distinction between the Outwardizing (*Äußerung*) of the Absolute and the Inwardizing (*Verinnerlichung*) of self-consciousness. This distinction clarifies how self-consciousness approaches history as its truth. In Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Spirit undergoes

³¹. For a comprehensive historical account of the concept of historicity, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), and Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1936).

Erinnerung (alienation) in history, alienating itself in different shapes before ultimately reconciling with itself. That is to say, the movement of self-consciousness is inherently an inward movement, in which it finds itself in alienation and then seeks to overcome it. The process of historicity, in this respect, can be understood as the overcoming of inwardness, which differs from the Absolute standpoint, where the knowledge of the self is revealed as the Idea of History. The key difference lies in whether history is regarded as the Idea itself or as a method. When the Idea and method are identified with one another, it is Education that emerges, the topic I will address in the final chapter of this thesis.

In general, historicity can be understood as the method of studying history itself. This method aims to actualize what is abstract and to serve as a bridge between universal thought and self-consciousness. Furthermore, historicity varies across different ages based on humanity's interaction with the external world in each period. For instance, historicity in the Middle Ages engages with its object in a different manner compared to the modern age. In this sense, historicity refers to the appearance of the self and its relation to its actuality in that age. This relation, when interpreted by historians, is often presented as the truth of humanity in that particular age. However, presentations of different viewpoints on truth may pass on historically correct assertions without including any relevance to what Hegel recognizes as Absolute. This is because the Absolute is not subject to historical change, whereas the truth that historicity seeks is always conditioned by the specific age to which the historian belongs. That is to say, the Absolute, as truth, is the pure act of self-representation that transcends historical epochs. As a particular truth, however, it remains confined to the era in which it emerges.

The subject matter of history, from the standpoint of the Absolute, is the self-representation of the subjective agent, not an external truth that the historian simply uncovers. Rather, by its

nature, history is the truth of thought's agency in its self-representation. That is to say, from this perspective, history represents Reason as the purposive, self-grounded activity of thought. In this respect, history is constructed through its realization of the Absolute, as it comes to know itself as Spirit through human agency. On the other hand, historicity as a method can be understood as the process of bringing something into consciousness, transforming it into self-consciousness, attributing this self-consciousness to Spirit, and ultimately embodying the knowledge of Spirit as Absolute Knowledge or conceptual knowledge (*begreifendes Wissen*). However, it seems that the modern subject follows a reverse trajectory in relation to its knowledge, in the sense that the way it perceives history is none other than the actuality of its knowledge. That is to say, history knows itself as actual. The Subject, having been sublated into knowledge and having become knowledge that knows itself as Absolute, now necessarily manifests itself in this knowledge. This manifestation is what we call history in the modern age. Put differently, historicity can be understood as the process of bringing something into the context of history to uncover its truth. This may apply to the history of Life, the history of Spirit, the history of science, or anything else whose truth is none other than the Subject's Truth, since it is the subject's truth that unfolds in the history of all things.³²

From this perspective, Hyppolite can be regarded as one of the commentators who engages with the same foundational concerns as I do. He states: "Consciousness is not therefore alien to the absolute. On the contrary, the historical development of consciousness is the reflection back on itself of the absolute." (Hyppolite, 1974, p. 31). In this respect, the subject of historical

³². Although it may seem somehow irrelevant to the subject of this study, it seems that this perspective on the Absolute is sufficient to convince the reader why, for Hegel, there necessarily exists only one science, which is philosophy. In this sense, *Wissenschaft*, as characterized by German Idealist philosophers such as Schelling, Hegel, and Fichte, does not merely indicate philosophy as one science among others. Rather, it is the only science truly deserving of the name. From this standpoint, philosophy can be regarded as synonymous with Science in the context of German Idealism.

inquiry is Spirit, not in isolation from the Absolute but as the pure act of self-representation through which it comes to know itself as Absolute Knowledge. That is to say, the subject matter of history is not the transformation of truth but rather the self-representation of the Subject as Truth, which constitutes its very nature.

What drives (*Trieb*) history in this regard is the sphere in which it becomes acquainted with the knowledge of the Absolute. In simple terms, history knows its aim from the outset, since its nature is tied to the act of pure self-representation. This act, which was latent within it, is now revealed through the agency of the self, which comes to recognize itself as Spirit, as the truth of its being. Hence, the conception of truth is what history possesses knowledge of, and because of this knowledge, it engages in the act of self-representation. Otherwise, as Hegel himself states, history would give us "nichts als eine Erzählung zufälliger Begebenheiten des menschlichen Geistes und sinnloser Meinungen, die der Vernunft aufgebürdet werden." (*Werke* 2: 47) (Nothing but a narration of accidental activities of the human spirit and senseless opinions that are imposed upon Reason.)

Viewing history in this way leads commentators such as Hyppolite to recognize the most idiosyncratic aspect of Hegel's historicity as Identity, followed by *Aufhebung*. As he states:

"Organic life has no history. Only spirit has a history, that is, a development of itself by itself such that it retains its identity in each of its particularizations, and when it negates them, which is the very movement of the concept, it simultaneously preserves them in order to raise them to a higher form." (Hyppolite, 1974, p. 33)

Of course, the culmination of this higher form is the Absolute itself. However, this does not merely suggest that the Absolute is simply present as its highest stage in Absolute Knowledge.

Rather, when considered from the standpoint of history, it is the self-representation of the Absolute that drives it to attain the standpoint of being the knowledge of truth.

By examining history as the self-representation of the Absolute through the medium of Identity, my aim is not to disregard objective being or to consider it as something less worthy of contemplation. Rather, the study of objective being, in this sense, is going to be the main constituent of knowing the subjective agency. The key point is that, in the modern era, the subject no longer perceives objective reality as a cosmic order with which it must define its relationship in order to attain freedom. Instead, the objective order is inherent within the self-knowledge of its own agency. That is to say, its nature is nothing other than the objective realization of the world. By the language of Reid: “for Hegel, science is a discourse that is not only objectively true, but is also, itself, true objectivity.” (Reid, 2007, p. 5). In this sense, science signifies both truth and the actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of truth as objective reality. Or to put it differently, science contains within itself both the Absolute and objective reality, holding them together rather than separating them in its approach to the world. However, this separation remains the subject of study for the scientist. Above all, through this perspective, we can say that what lies at the heart of science is Identity itself.

However, one could argue that this perspective is built upon an unnecessary and superfluous distinction between the *transformation of truth by consciousness* and its *self-representation as the Absolute agency of thought*. Throughout both trajectories, it is ultimately the self that represents its subjective agency in the form of historicity. That is to say, in both cases, the actor is the same, and in both, the actor is the self-conscious agent who recognizes itself as Spirit. This suggests that the nature of this distinction is spurious. Furthermore, one could argue that the distinction being made stands in contrast to Hegel’s effort, particularly in his exposition of the

Phenomenology, where his aim was to unify these two perspectives. If that is the case, why insist on fully separating them now?

The separation between consciousness and the Absolute is a central concern, since without such a distinction, discussing the Concept, especially in its German sense as *Begriff*, becomes unintelligible. This applies to the concept of life, the concept of the world, the concept of the 'I,' and, more broadly, the concept of freedom, which, in the present interpretation, fundamentally shapes the very nature of the reconciliation between consciousness and the Absolute. That is to say, in order to legitimize Identity as the means through which the Concept is realized, it becomes inevitable to establish a distinction between subjective thought and objective truth. However, this does not indicate a rigid distinction between subjective thought and objective reality, nor does it assign truth exclusively to one over the other, as in the distinction between Realism and Idealism. It also does not function in the same way as Kant's distinction between Understanding (*Verstand*) and the thing in itself (*Ding an sich*), which serves to define the legitimate boundaries of human understanding. Rather, by recognizing the subject as a self-defining agent, there must be a domain where its agency is realized, and that domain is history itself.

History, by its nature, manifests the very confrontation between the subjective agency of thought and objective reality. At the same time, it is this confrontation that allows history to be regarded as knowledge capable of resolving conflicts. In this sense, history comes to recognize its own nature as Absolute, and its aim is the knowledge of Identity. This knowledge of Identity concerns the distinction between subjective agency and objective reality, or, more precisely, the conflict between Identity and Difference. In this sense, history finds its place in Hegel's system

not merely as a method of reflection that advances philosophical inquiry but, more fundamentally, as the true realization of the Absolute through its Absolute standpoint as Identity.

However, the main problem still persists. How can the Absolute, as a timeless and infinite entity, be known through the mediation of Spirit or Self? Does Spirit exist in time only because history serves as the bridge between the timeless Absolute and the actualized Spirit that knows itself within time? In other words, can history, in Hegel's system, be regarded as the possibility of the realization of Spirit? If this is the case, is history inherently tied to the prerequisite of time in Hegel's speculative philosophy? In this respect, does it occupy a role similar to *a priori* knowledge of the self in relation to its experience, which unfolds temporally in Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic? That is to say, is history the form in which the actuality of Spirit is realized?³³

What I have attempted to elaborate so far is that the Absolute knows itself as Identity, and it is this knowledge of Identity that drives the Self to represent itself in the form of history. However, the question remains as to how the timeless and infinite Idea can be represented to consciousness. To further explore this point, I will examine the distinction between *Äußerung* (outwardizing) and *Verinnerlichung* (inwardizing), as well as their relevance to *Entäußerung* (self-externalization) and *Entfremdung* (alienation). This analysis will be conducted through

³³. This realization can also be acknowledged from a common-sense perspective, where the history of everything is understood as its existence in time. If history is regarded as an Absolute concept, then it can be seen as the bridge between the infinite Absolute and the temporal representation of Spirit. In contrast, when time itself is considered the foundation of history, historicity emerges as the method of studying something in a temporal manner. In the first perspective, the study of history is the study of the revelation of the Absolute. In the second, history is nothing other than the examination of phenomena within time. This approach is more commonly applied to the study of history in fields such as biology or the evolution of animals in experimental science. However, applying the same method to the history of metaphysics, logic, or, on a larger scale, the history of philosophy, may be problematic. For this reason, when history enters the domain of philosophical inquiry, it takes on a different form, as it is meant to be. I believe this point is not only exclusive to Hegel's understanding of history but has also significant implications for various domains of human science, when philosophers regard history as more than mere informative knowledge, its influence extends to fields such as Dilthey's hermeneutics, Heidegger's existentialism, Foucault's archaeological inquiries, and Freud's psychology.

treating of the final section of Hegel's *Logic* and the Introduction and Absolute Knowledge chapters of the *Phenomenology*.³⁴

1.4. Self-externalization of the Absolute

As widely accepted by commentators, the beginning of the *Logic* coincides with the culmination of the *Phenomenology*, as Pure Being (*Reines Sein*) is the point at which the identity of *thought* and *being* is realized in its absolute sense. In this realization, Pure Being, posited as the starting point of the objective side of Hegel's *Logic*, expresses *self-grounded subjectivity*, that is, the recognition of itself as Absolute Knowledge. Hegel considers this self-knowledge to be the culmination of Spirit's entire historical development, wherein Truth is no longer alienated from the self. As he elaborates in the final chapter of the *Phenomenology*:

Truth is not only *in itself* completely identical with certainty, but it also has the shape of self-certainty, or it is in its existence in the form of self-knowledge. Truth is the *content*, which in 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. (*PS. §798, Werke 3: 582-583*).

This is the point at which absolute thinking is completely identical with the object it thinks. Pure Being represents pure nothingness, and both share the characteristic of undetermined immediacy (*unbestimmte Unmittelbare*).³⁵ Moreover, the very fact that the logical beginning

³⁴. This is the concern I will pursue throughout this thesis. In the next part of this chapter, *Äußerung* (outwardizing) and *Entäußerung* (self-externalization) of the Absolute will be at the center of my investigation. The following chapter will focus on *Verinnerlichung* (inwardizing) and its relevance to *Entfremdung* (alienation). In the final chapter, I will explore the integration of *Äußerung* and *Verinnerlichung* in relation to the modern individual, where the concept of Education becomes the central subject of inquiry.

³⁵. The discussion on the *beginning of the Logic* takes place in the section titled *Womit muß der Anfang der Wissenschaft gemacht werden? (How should the beginning of science be made?)* (*Werke 5: 65–79*), which comes before the discussion of Being in the *Science of Logic*. Here, Hegel introduces the concept of Pure Being as simple immediacy (*unmittelbarkeit vorhanden*): "Simple immediacy is itself an expression of reflection and contains a reference to its distinction from what is mediated. This simple immediacy, therefore, in its true expression is *pure*

includes absolutely no content, neither determinations nor any relation to otherness, reveals the freedom of the Absolute to think itself without reference to anything. This appears to be the greatest power of thought with which Hegel begins, as subjectivity explains itself as the object of knowledge, which is the *Science of Logic* itself in its simple immediacy. That is to say, *Logic* begins with the Concept (*Begriff*), not as Being attempting to separate itself from the Concept, but as its simple immediacy. In this sense, Pure Being, as the inception of speculative philosophy, can be understood as both the content and the form of science.³⁶ That is to say, the content of science is nothing other than knowing itself, or, to put it differently, *Logic* is nothing other than the *thinking of thinking*.

The *thinking of thinking* is the most profound and free activity of thought, beyond which nothing greater can be conceived as freedom in human beings. The realization of freedom, in this sense, is none other than the realization of the Absolute. Since we have the potential to know the Absolute, we can approach freedom through the knowledge of the Absolute. Moreover, the knowledge of the Absolute is the knowledge of reality. In Hegel's terms, this realization lies in the fact that:

being. Just as pure knowing is to mean knowing as such, quite abstractly, so too pure being is to mean nothing but being in general: being, and nothing else, without any further specification and filling.” (*SL*. p. 69, Miller. p. 47, di Giovanni. *Werke* 5: 68). In this respect, although at first glance *simple immediacy* may seem identical to *undetermined immediacy* (*unbestimmte Unmittelbarkeit*), it differs from *undetermined immediacy*, with which the *Qualität* section of the *Logic* begins. The difference between the two lies in the fact that the adjective Pure is not attached to the definition of Being at the beginning of the *Qualität* section, where *undetermined immediacy* is realized as being without quality. “Because it is indeterminate being, it lacks all quality; but *in itself*, the character of indeterminateness attaches to it only in contrast to what is *determinate* or qualitative.” (*SL*. p. 81, Miller. p. 58, di Giovanni. *Werke* 5: 82). In this sense, *Pure Being* can be realized as the Absolute itself, insofar as nothing stands in opposition to it. However, *Being* lacks such essentiality and confronts determinate being. Regardless of the difference between these two concepts and their relevance to Absolute Knowledge at the beginning of Hegel's *Logic*, it seems that starting with Pure Being and its equation with Pure Thought serves as the starting point of the system. This starting point confronts and even functions as a critique of the Transcendental Aesthetic with which Kant begins and the Absolute Judgment with which Fichte begins, both of whom attempt to construct the philosophical system upon the transcendental characteristics of the Ego.

³⁶. See *Werke* 8: 388-391 (§236-§239)

Everything actual *is* only in so far as it possesses the Idea and expresses it. It is not merely that the object, the objective and subjective world in general, *ought to be congruous* with the Idea, but they are themselves the congruence of Notion [*Begriff*] and reality; the reality that does not correspond to the Notion is mere *Appearance*. (*SL*. p. 756, Miller. p. 671, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 464)

That is to say, what the *thinking of thinking* aims at is the ultimate realization of reality itself. However, what makes this knowledge controversial is that, while we can recognize the *thinking of thinking* as the pinnacle of human freedom, it is also the most obscure and abstract activity of thought. It is the point at which the Absolute, having attained the highest knowledge of *being*, begins to explain its nature in speculative terms at the most abstract identity. That is to say, the Absolute, having reached its fullest phenomenological knowledge through history, now seeks to externalize this knowledge. This externalization takes place through the categories on both the objective and subjective sides of the *Science of Logic*.³⁷

However, the truth of speculative logic, as the presupposition of *Logic*, in which thought thinks itself both as the content and form of knowledge, is subject to criticism. How is it possible for thought, in its absolute sense, to find itself in pure immediacy? If pure immediacy is

³⁷. In general, in my interpretation, the *Phenomenology* can be understood as a process in which negation plays the protagonist role, with identity itself emerging as the product of this negation. In contrast, in the *Science of Logic*, identity assumes the central role. Through this realization, I will approach consciousness in the *Phenomenology* as the process of negation, particularly in relation to the realization of the Absolute. Likewise, In the *Phenomenology*, freedom is understood as the infinite process of determination through the power of negation. In the *Logic*, however, the Absolute inevitably narrates itself as identity, and this narration is nothing other than the system itself. All the categories, both on the objective and subjective sides, seek to realize the Absolute as identity. In this sense, all categories embody identity. Thought, as pure being, in this sense, is not merely developing as the consciousness of truth but is also striving to externalize thinking as the truth of being. To clarify this distinction, we can refer to Stanley Rosen, who states:

In the *PS*, spirit is studied as appearing in its object; in the *SL*, spirit is studied ‘as such’ or in and for itself; that is, it is studied as emerging from the concept, whereas in the *PS* the concept emerges from consciousness, or more precisely, appears from consciousness, an appearance that is in one sense illusory, since the emergence is empirical or subjective, not logical. (Rosen, 2014, p. 472).

understood as unmediated immediacy, which appears to be the only way it can be conceived, then how can it be realized as *something* other than simple, *unmediated nothingness*? We can take this inquiry a step further and ask: if the Concept, which we can potentially think, must fundamentally arise through mediation, then does this not imply that an unmediated Concept would be unthinkable? Hegel leads us to consider precisely this issue at the beginning of the *Logic*. The question then becomes: how can any concept be considered immediate at all?³⁸

All of these questions bring us back to the initial question posed at the beginning of this chapter: what is the relationship between the Absolute and its appearance? If Pure Being is regarded as the appearance of the Absolute, as its very being, or as the self-movement of the dialectical activity of thought, which establishes its position from the outset in relation to the objective world as the *self-representation of the agency of thought*, then why is it situated at the beginning of Objective Logic rather than as the culmination of Subjective Logic? To put it differently, how can an unmediated beginning for *Logic* be mediated from the outset through subjective truth? At this point, it appears that the Absolute, in both its analytical and synthetical senses,³⁹ cannot bridge the gap between objective unmediated reality and subjective knowledge, because both sides remain *unmediated immediacy*. What is lacking on both sides is the *mediation* that connects them. In other words, what initially appears as their commonality, *unmediated*

³⁸. In some respects, it is also justifiable to claim that Pure Being is the pure negation of Pure Thought or the pure negation of the Absolute. This would be the only way to ascribe *mediation* to the representation of Pure Being as simple immediacy. This implies that Pure Being, by its very nature, is the pure negation of the Absolute, and the form it takes as nothingness signifies the absence of Truth in Being. As a result, this leads to the equivalence of nothingness with Being, or Being as nothing. In this scenario, we do not encounter the *unthinkable concept*; rather, we have a thinkable and determinate concept of nothingness, which emerges as the pure negation of the Absolute.

³⁹. Analytical and synthetical cognitions refer to different methods of realizing the relationship between subjective knowledge and objective reality. In brief, for Hegel, the problem with both modes of cognition arises from the fact that analytical cognition does not provide meaningful content for thought, while pure synthetical cognition fails to sustain a true unity between thought and reality. That is to say, analytical cognition does not give a true account of the realization of difference within identity, while synthetical cognition does not provide a true account of the realization of identity within difference. See *Werke* 6: 502–541.

immediacy, can now be recognized as their most fundamental point of divergence. In this respect, how is it possible that the subject, which is substantially equal to its predicate or object in both an analytical and a synthetical sense, can at the same time be distinct from it?

For me, the answer to all of these questions does not fully come to light until the final section of *Logic*, where, in the Absolute Idea, Hegel states:

The logical Idea is the Idea itself in its pure essence, the Idea enclosed in simple identity within its Notion prior to its *immediate reflection* [*Scheinen*] in a form-determinateness. Hence, logic exhibits the self-movement of the absolute Idea only as the original *word*, which is an *outwardizing* or *utterance* [*Äusserung*], but an utterance that in being has immediately vanished again as something outer [*Äusseres*]; the idea is, therefore, only in this self-determination of apprehending itself; it is in *pure thought*, in which difference is not yet *otherness*, but is and remains perfectly transparent to itself. (*SL*. p. 825, Miller. p. 736, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 550)

From this perspective, the Absolute Idea is the presentation of Pure Being not as its cause or end, but simply as the thinking of Pure Being. Put it simply, if there is an objective reality, there must also be a subjective agency capable of knowing it as such. Conversely, there must be an objective reality through which the subjective agent recognizes its own agency in its confrontation with it. The *unmediated immediacy* is the knowledge of the Subject as the Absolute Idea, which relates to simple objectivity. That is to say, the Absolute Idea is not something alien to objective reality; rather, it is the Idea of objective reality itself. We cannot recognize it merely as the final unveiling of Pure Being; instead, it is nothing other than the revelation of Pure Being for the subjective agent. It was present from the very first page of *Logic* as Pure Being, and the entire investigation has been devoted to explaining and elaborating on its nature. From this

perspective, the self-externalization of the Absolute Idea emerges as the central contention of Logic. “What we now have is the knowledge that the content is the living development of the Idea, and this simple looking back [in the stages of consciousness] is contained in the form.” (EL. §237, *Werke* 8: 389)

The appearance of the Absolute is, therefore, nothing external to it. It is the Absolute thinking itself, as the simplicity of thought that generates reality as identical to its mode of thinking. That is to say, if reality exists as objective being for the subject, it is due to the realization of identity in the Absolute Idea. Otherwise, without the Absolute Idea, the self would be entirely separated from its being and would act as an agent without ascribing the 'I' as the thinking subject to its actions.

1.5. The Absolute and the System

The self-externalization of the Absolute is rooted in the system itself. If Truth has any meaning, that meaning is inherent within the system. Regardless of how truth is understood across different philosophical traditions, what role philosophers play in discovering it, or whether it is unfolded as an external objective entity or as an internal characteristic inherent in the subject, truth belongs to the system itself. The essential characteristic of the system, without which it would cease to be a system, is *method*. In this sense, it is the *method* itself that is revealed as Truth. It is not merely a matter of claiming that if there is any truth, it must be produced systematically by the philosopher. Rather, what *method* signifies above all is that *Truth is the whole*. In this sense, *method* expresses the self-representation of the Concept (*Begriff*) itself as the self-grounded and self-determining activity of thought. As Hegel states:

The method has emerged as the *self-knowing Notion* [*Begriff*] *that has itself*, as the absolute, both subjective and objective, for *its subject matter*, consequently as the pure correspondence of the Notion and its reality, as a concrete existence that is the Notion itself. (*SL*. p. 826, Miller. p. 737, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 551)

In this respect, there is nothing external to *method* that allows it to be treated as a separate subject of inquiry. Even the philosopher is subject to the very *method* they seek to contemplate. This is because *method* is grounded in the equality of *thinking* and *being*. If there is any perspective from which the philosopher confronts the Absolute, that perspective must itself be subject to this equality.

In contrast to my interpretive effort, the separation of *method* from the Concept (*Begriff*) is a prevalent approach among epistemological commentators of Hegel's philosophy. For them, the question of the relationship between the Absolute and its appearance takes on a new form, typically articulated as the relationship between the Spirit's knowledge as an epistemic whole, acquired through *method*, and the whole that is Absolute Knowledge. The problem here is not merely about *what* the relationship is between knowledge derived from the experience of the object and Absolute Knowledge. Rather, it fundamentally concerns *how* to proceed from the knowledge of the object to the subjective knowledge of the Absolute. In other words, the primary effort should focus on examining the parts as consciousness manifests at each stage of its development. This examination should then demonstrate how each part contributes to the understanding of the Absolute as the Whole.

However, the problem with such interpretations may arise when the emphasis on the part, by its very nature, undermines the integrity of the Whole. As Hegel himself states at the very beginning of the *Phenomenology*:

Since philosophy moves essentially in the element of universality, which includes within itself the particular, it might seem that here more than in any other science the subject-matter itself, and even in its complete nature, were expressed in the aim and the final results, the execution being by contrast really the unessential factor. (*PS*. §1, *Werke* 3: 11).

In general, epistemological interpreters regard the true realization of the infinite and timeless Absolute as being rooted in the inquiry into the finite world. From this perspective, the discussion of the *method* emerges in the context of realizing the finite stages of consciousness, rather than focusing on the nature of the *method* as the Absolute. In other words, the *method* is distinct from the Absolute, yet simultaneously oriented toward it. This orientation toward the Absolute through the *method* leads to different interpretations of the *method* itself.

For instance, Tom Rockmore, in *Hegel's Circular Epistemology*, interprets Hegel's *method* as the *positive circular epistemological doctrine*, where presuppositionlessness is considered the very essence of Hegel's methodology for uncovering the nature of the Absolute. In this regard, Rockmore states: "Hegel is correct to hold that thought can have no foundation, but that theory can justify itself in a nonlinear, circular manner through the relation of the results obtained to its beginning." (Rockmore, 1986, p. 108). Kenneth R. Westphal, in *Hegel's Epistemology: A Philosophical Introduction to the Phenomenology of Spirit*, gives another epistemological perspective by interpreting Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a *method* through which Hegel attempts to bridge the gap between cognitive and practical consciousness. As Westphal explains:

The forms of consciousness Hegel considers in the *Phenomenology* are based on various ways in which human knowledge appears ... All of these appearances are, Hegel believes, more or less adequate and more or less accurate manifestations of our actual cognitive

capacities and abilities, and of the actual objects and events we engage through those capacities and abilities. (Westphal, 2003, p. 8).

This interpretation represents another way in which the *method* is considered external to the Absolute. A similar scenario appears in Robert Brandom's *semantic pragmatic approach*, as presented in *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*. This interpretation presents the *Phenomenology* as illustrating how “Hegel envisages a reciprocal dependence of meaning and use, of the contents of concepts and the practices of applying them.” (Brandom, 2019, p. 15). Within this analytical perspective, the Concept, initially unintelligible in its abstract nature, reveals its meaning and subsequently puts that meaning into action.

The central issue with all these interpretations lies in their inability to account for the fulfillment of the Absolute. Without this fulfillment, the Absolute remains trapped in the distinction between its beginning and its end, between meaning and action, or between the content of concepts and the practices of applying them. Furthermore, when it comes to the chapters on Religion and Absolute Knowledge in the *Phenomenology*, epistemological interpreters tend to avoid engaging in discussions on these areas or have little more to contribute. This limitation arises because concepts such as intellectual intuition and Revelation, while appearing legitimate within the domains of Religion and Absolute Knowledge, are considered incompatible with the methodological framework of epistemological interpretations.

However, the present analysis suggests that the discussion of *method* properly belongs to the Absolute Idea chapter of Hegel's *Logic*. Yet its implicit presence in the *Phenomenology* can be seen, on the one hand, in the claim that “The true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of such truth” (*PS*. §5. *Werke* 3: 14), and, on the other hand, in what has been elaborated in this section, namely that the very nature of the scientific *method* is deeply tied to

the *pure act of self-representation* by the subjective agent. This activity of the subject, as previously mentioned, constitutes the concept of freedom for the agent. Through the system, however, this free activity constitutes the very essence of science, as Hegel himself illuminates:

Since the Notion [*Begriff*] is the object's own self, which presents itself as the *coming-to-be of the object*, it is not a passive Subject inertly supporting the accidents; it is, on the contrary, the self-moving Notion which takes its determinations back into itself. In this movement the passive Subject itself perishes; it enters into the differences and the content, and constitutes the determinateness, i.e. the differentiated content and its movement, instead of remaining inertly over against it. (*PS. §60. Werke 3: 57*)

In simple terms, we can say that for Hegel, it is the object that is measured by the Concept (*Begriff*). Through this perspective, when we speak of the self-representation of the Concept, it appears as the free action of the Concept, essentially bringing the equation of substance and subject into the light. This does not mark the end of philosophizing but rather presents the speculative system, where the system constructs itself through its own movement. This movement is nothing other than Truth. It is the realization of Truth that becomes embodied in the system. In this sense, the philosopher's task cannot be reduced to seeking an external system and relating it to the knowledge of experience. That is to say, the system is not merely something the philosopher discovers through confronting Truth. Rather, it is impossible to speak of and analyze Truth without the system.⁴⁰

⁴⁰. This idea can also be understood in a different light, drawing on Hegel's famous assertion in the *Philosophy of Right*:

The teaching of the concept, which is also history's inescapable lesson, is that it is only when actuality is mature that the ideal first appears over against the real and that the ideal apprehends this same real world in its substance and builds it up for itself into the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk. (Hegel, 1954, p. 7. *Werke 7: 28*).

In this respect, it may now become clearer how the self-movement of the Absolute and its embodiment as appearance are revealed through its self-externalization (*Entäußerung*) within the system. This does not imply merely setting forth the Absolute within the system; rather, it is the presentation of the Absolute that makes the system itself meaningful. What is indicated here as the revelation of the Absolute can be understood as its self-externalizations. The self-externalization of the Absolute begins where science itself begins. That is to say, without the realization of science as *method*, speaking of Truth becomes meaningless within a systemless approach to philosophizing.

According to Hegel, the modern age represents the beginning of science. As he stated: “Science does not appear in Time and in the actual world before Spirit has attained to this consciousness [historical self-certainty] of itself.” (*PS*. §800. *Werke* 3: 583). Based on this view, although the Absolute as Truth has existed throughout the history of philosophy, it was Revelation that constituted its nature as the timeless and infinite manifestation of Truth before the modern age. However, when Truth takes the shape of the Self in the modern age, Self comes to know itself in Time, or more precisely, the Spirit knows itself in Time. Consequently, the Absolute as Truth is no longer a mere abstract, timeless absolute; rather, it becomes Absolute Knowledge that must be self-externalized in a temporal manner.

The self-externalization of the Absolute opens two distinct paths: the first through Revelation and the second through Temporality. From the standpoint of Revelation, *Truth has revelatory agency*. On the other hand, from the standpoint of Temporality, *Truth is the self-revelation of the agency of the self*, the self that, through its historical development, has attained historical self-certainty. In brief and in simple terms, the first realization posits that Revelation, in unveiling the conception of the Absolute, occurs when Truth, as a timeless and infinite objectivity, cannot

realize itself as subjective Truth. In this context, although Revelation is the self-externalization of Truth as Origin, which may be understood as the Archē (ἀρχή), Apeiron (ἄπειρον), God, or any other name that indicates self-grounded agency, it still represents a gap between objective Truth and subjective knowledge. On the other hand, in the second realization, if anything needs to be revealed, it is through the agency of the self that this revelation occurs. That is to say, the revelation no longer takes place outside the self; rather, it is the self that reveals its own agency as Truth. In this sense, the self-externalization of the Absolute takes place in Time.⁴¹ This Time is not external to the subjective agent but serves as the foundation for internalizing the Truth.

The problem that arises here is how the revelation of the infinite and timeless Absolute can be realized by the finite and temporal subject. Does this relationship compel us to assert that Revelation occurs within Time? Or does Time possess an infinite quality that inherently links it to Revelation? Contemplating these questions leads us to more fundamental inquiries: Do these two paths indicate and necessitate two different methods for uncovering the nature of Truth? Or do they require two distinct realizations of the Absolute? These questions should be taken into account because, for Hegel, the Absolute is One and Whole, and it does not seem plausible to divide it into two dimensions, as a revealed Absolute and a temporal Absolute. Rather, there must

⁴¹ The most explicit interpretation of Time in this context can be found in the *Philosophy of Nature* as the “negative unity of self-externality” (EN. §258. *Werke* 9: 48), in the sense that “it is not in time that everything comes to be and passes away, rather time itself is the *becoming*.” (EN. §258. *Werke* 9: 49). From this perspective, Time can be seen as the most fundamental activity of the subjective agent in knowing itself. Although, this interpretation of Time may appear consistent with Kant’s opening of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the context in which Kant opens the discussion of Time is entirely different from Hegel’s. For Kant, the subject’s capacity to receive representations of objective being necessitates Time; without Time, the possibility of representing the object to the understanding would be entirely meaningless. Hegel, in contrast, is concerned with the truth of Time. The truth of Time can be distinguished from the understanding of Time by posing some well-known questions in the history of philosophy, particularly among medieval philosophers such as: Was there such a thing as time before human beings existed? Or is there any temporality inherent in the very nature of God? For Hegel, however, it is neither the Kantian nor the medieval conception of Time that embodies the truth of Time. Instead, for him, Time, while it may be seen as a self-grounded entity, can also be understood as nothing apart from its relation to the subjective agent, as “pure being-within-self as sheer coming-out-of-self.” (Ibid) In this sense, Time can neither be separated from the finitude of actual things in nature nor from the eternity of Truth. Rather, it can be understood as the *eternal representation of the Absolute*, encompassing both the aspects of Revelation and the Temporality of Truth.

be something that establishes the connection between Revelation and Temporality within the context of the self-externalization of the Absolute.

We need to keep in mind that the essential question involved here is: *How* can the appearance of the Absolute be known? This is not the same as asking *what* the relationship between the Absolute and its appearance is. Rather, it goes a step further by aiming at the knowledge of the appearance of the Absolute, which, in turn, is the knowledge of the Absolute itself. This is because, by understanding the appearance of the Absolute as inseparable from the Absolute, and by acknowledging that we have the potential knowledge to approach the Absolute through our access to its appearance, we realize that by examining how the appearance can be known, we can grasp the knowledge of the Absolute itself.

In this regard, two possibilities can be put forward within the context of Hegel's philosophy concerning the self-externalization of the Absolute: Revelation and Temporality. Revelation evokes the infinite and timeless Truth, while Temporality evokes the knowledge of finite Spirit. However, both of these forms of knowledge belong to Spirit, as it is Spirit that manifests as the appearance of the Absolute. In other words, two distinct methods of apprehending the Truth ultimately aim at the same One Truth. Although the possibility of two parallel ways for apprehending the Absolute may at first glance appear legitimate and intelligible, it can lead to relativism or perspectivism regarding the conception of Truth, which is untenable within a systematic rational framework such as Hegel's system. This is because the system itself cannot digest any relative sense of Truth, as in one case it would be acquired through Revelation and in another through temporal knowledge. Rather, what the system demands is the apprehension of Truth as One, as an *eternal present*.

Although the relationship between Truth and Revelation has only been briefly discussed here, the aim of introducing it was to set the stage for claiming that *the Self-externalization of the Absolute is the Self-internalization of Time*. This claim will be addressed in detail in the next section. In brief, this claim is rooted in the understanding that the historical self, which embodies its nature through historical development in the *Phenomenology*, knows itself as the temporal self. On the other hand, it is Absolute Knowledge that constitutes its temporality. However, the Absolute, by its very nature, is the timeless and infinite Truth. Therefore, to be regarded as a system, which means Science as the knowledge aspect of Absolute Knowledge, it must be revealed in a temporal manner. This revelation occurs through the self-revelatory agency of the self. In other words, the Self-externalization of the Absolute is the Self-internalization of Time. In this sense, what is revealed as Truth for the subject is eternally present for it. Yet, this does not mark the end of philosophy for Hegel. Rather, it signifies the modern turning point where philosophy transforms from the *love of knowledge* to *actual knowledge*. To become actual knowledge means to bring the Absolute into consciousness, and to do so is to look at its nature as history, in a temporal context.

It is in this sense that the conception of History attains a metaphysical status in Hegel's philosophy, not merely as a narration of the developments of consciousness but as the actualization of Truth. This actualization involves transforming the timeless and infinite revelatory Truth into temporal and finite Truth. Thus, in this realization, History is not external to the self as a mere medium for uncovering the revelatory knowledge of the Absolute. Rather, History itself is the self-externalization of the Absolute. This self-externalization occurs within History through the self-internalization of Time.

2. The Absolute and Time

2.1. Revelation and Temporality

In brief, the main question I pursue in this section is how the appearance of the Absolute can be known through finite beings as the knowledge of Spirit. Put differently, how does the Absolute become Spirit in Hegel's system? Hegel raises this question in a different form at the beginning of the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*. In this context, the subject matter of philosophy is introduced as the relationship between cognition and the Absolute. For Hegel, this is a two-sided relation: on the one side, how can the modes of cognition grasp the truth of the Absolute? On the other side, how can the cognition be known through the representation of the Absolute? These appear to be two distinct concerns for Hegel. The first concern arises when *activity* is attributed to consciousness, which is seen as the power that, through its progression, comes to grasp the Absolute. In this context, the problem is that using cognition as the medium to uncover the nature of the Absolute ends up reshaping and altering the Absolute, and "does not let it be what it is for itself" (PS, §73. *Werke* 3: 68). On the other hand, the second concern emerges when cognition is understood as *passive* in its relation to the Absolute. In this case, the cognition must be capable of receiving the truth as "the passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us" (Ibid). Yet here too the problem remains, since the representation of truth through the medium of consciousness fails to reveal the truth as it is in itself.

In this respect, the entire task of philosophy appears to consist in finding and actualizing an appropriate form of cognition capable of grasping the truth. Throughout the phenomenological journey, this cognition, through its activity, becomes the Absolute itself, as Absolute Spirit at the end of the sixth chapter of the *Phenomenology*. However, once the section on Religion begins, the standpoint of consciousness changes. Here, it is the passivity of cognition in relation to truth

that becomes the subject matter for consciousness. In this domain, consciousness has access to truth only through representation, or picture thinking (*Vorstellung*). In this sense, the essential feature of *Vorstellung* is that it reveals a spiritual content in a form that remains external to that content.

In general, Hegel's aim does not appear to be to put forward an unresolvable dichotomy or duality between the Absolute and cognition. Rather, as discussed in the preceding section, it seems that even from the standpoint of *pure being* in the *Logic*, where Hegel begins his system of science, it is the Absolute, in its identity, that posits itself as the reality of being. That is to say, the distinction between the Absolute and the standpoint of cognition is not a presupposition from which Hegel begins his philosophy. He does not assume that "the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other, independent and separate from it, and yet is something real" (PS, §74. *Werke* 3: 70).

On this basis, as we saw in the preceding section, the relation between the Absolute and its appearance is constituted by the system itself. It is through the system that the self-externalization of the Absolute is revealed to the knowing agent as the knowledge of Spirit. That is to say, truth is the essential element of the system, without which the presentation of the system would lack any philosophical significance. Hence, if there is a form of knowledge that designates Spirit as the knowledge of finite being, and if this knowledge arises through the development of finite human consciousness across the first six chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, then it must include the conception of truth as something that is realized through the system. Without this realization, what remains is only the infinite movement of consciousness, without any determination through which the knowledge of truth could be legitimately ascribed to what consciousness is directed toward.

The necessity of the system for Spirit becomes clearer when we recognize that it arises from both the finitude and the infinitude of the experience of consciousness. The finitude of consciousness becomes the subject matter of the system because its knowledge concerns the experiences of finite being, which unfold in a temporal manner. At the same time, the infinitude of consciousness is also central to the system, since the realization of Reason and Truth is fundamentally rooted in the infinite activity of consciousness. If there is such a thing as truth, it must be infinite, not limited by any particular age, method, or perspective. As elaborated in the first part of the preceding section, it is Reason in this sense that grasps the infinitude of truth.

In this sense, the fundamental task and destiny of the system can be understood as the reconciliation between finite and infinite being.⁴² Spirit, insofar as it is known through the finitude of the self, is also the infinity of its being. However, what designates the truth of being is neither the finitude of Spirit nor its infinity, but rather the reconciliation between these two aspects. This reconciliation is the ultimate goal and destiny of the system.

The realization of this reconciliation, as explored in this section, is the subject of inquiry through an examination of the relation between revelation as the path to approach the infinity of the Absolute and temporality as the path to approach the finitude of consciousness.⁴³ What I aim

⁴². The relation between infinity and finitude can also be recognized as a central philosophical concern in the *Philosophy of Religion*. As Hegel states:

This reconciliation must correspond with the highest demands of knowledge, and of the Notion, for these can surrender nothing of their dignity. But just as little can anything of the absolute content be given up, and that content be brought down into the region of finiteness; and when face to face with it knowledge must give up its finite form. (*LPR I*, p.16. *Werke* 16: 25).

⁴³. What I mean by the finitude of consciousness is Spirit itself, not in the sense of considering it through its distinct moments such as Consciousness, Self-consciousness, Reason, and Spirit taken in isolation. Rather, Spirit as the totality of all its moments represents temporality. That is to say, when Spirit becomes self-conscious of all its historical moments as necessary moments of its development, it also becomes self-conscious of its temporality. This realization of temporality is lacking in Religion. This is because, in Religion, “Spirit’s existence is distinct from its self-consciousness, and its reality proper falls outside of religion.” (*PS*. §678. *Werke* 3: 497). Therefore, it is by means of revelation that truth in Religion is represented to Spirit. As Hegel puts it:

The course traversed by these moments [Consciousness, Self-consciousness, Reason, and Spirit] is, moreover, in relation to religion, not to be represented as occurring in Time. Only the totality of Spirit is in

to demonstrate is the integration of both infinity and finitude in the conception of Spirit. In other words, my contention is that the conception of Spirit in Hegel's philosophy, while constituted through the progression of finite historical moments of consciousness, is equally grounded in the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute.

This reconciliation constitutes the very nature of freedom in Hegel's system. It is the merging of the finite and the infinite within knowledge that causes the concept of freedom to continually surpass itself. While it takes on determinate form, it must always be regarded as something essentially indeterminate. In other words, it is the integration of the finite into the infinite that gives the concept of freedom the meaning that resists being fixed at any particular point in time or within any specific historical age.⁴⁴ That is to say, if there is any knowledge that must be understood as the system, it does not belong exclusively to the temporal knowledge of Spirit within a particular age, nor does it simply belong to the eternal, self-revelatory knowledge that remains external to the self. Rather, it is the finitude within infinite knowledge, and the infinity within finite, temporal knowledge, that defines the fundamental task of Hegel's system.⁴⁵ In this

Time, and the 'shapes', which are 'shapes' of the totality of *Spirit*, display themselves in a temporal succession; for only the whole has true actuality and therefore the form of pure freedom in face of an 'other', a form which expresses itself as Time. (PS. §679. *Werke* 3: 498)

⁴⁴. From this perspective, it might appear convincing from both Platonic and religious perspectives that what is truly real is the infinite form of every concept. If there is any reality to the concept of freedom, it lies in the Idea itself, which gives freedom its reality. Similarly, in religion, it is God who is essentially free. However, for Hegel, the actualization of freedom takes place in human knowledge, particularly in human history, and this is what defines Spirit. In other words, the actuality of freedom becomes attainable through philosophy, because philosophy provides knowledge of the relation between infinite reality and finite beings. This knowledge, insofar as it pertains to the nature of infinity, arises from finite consciousness in both its active and passive modes.

⁴⁵. The finitude of the infinite and the infinitude of the finite must be understood within the concept of Identity in Hegel's philosophy. Within a rational framework, the outcome of this relation leads to what Hegel calls true infinity, as the self-relating infinity. As Hegel elaborates on this concept:

if we say that the infinite is the '*nonfinite*,' then by saying that we have already expressed what is true: for, since the finite itself is the first negation, the nonfinite is the negative of negation, the negation that is identical with itself, so that it is at the same time true affirmation. (EL §94. *Werke* 8: 200)

This true infinity avoids the false opposition between finitude and infinity, which would otherwise result in the *bad infinity*, characterized by endless progression without any resolution. The distinction between the true and bad

respect, knowledge must be *eternally present*. It must be present to the self not as something relative to a particular age or method, which vanishes immediately and then takes on another form. Rather, knowledge must exist as the *eternal now*, remaining eternally present to the self as its reality.

In this sense, Time is connected both to the finite form in which Spirit is embodied and to the eternal nature of Truth. That is to say, Time can be understood as the eternal form in which the Absolute reveals itself, which brings together the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute and the temporality of Truth. This is the “Spirit that knows what it is, it does not exist before, and nowhere at all, till after the completion of its work of compelling its imperfect ‘shape’ to procure for its consciousness the ‘shape’ of its essence.” (PS §800. *Werke* 3: 583). On this basis, the alienation of the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute can be overcome through the internalization of its content by the human Spirit. This means that the knowledge of the Absolute originates within human consciousness and has no meaning apart from the activity of human will.

2.2. The Absolute and Religion

Although finding the place and realizing the conception of Revelation is one of the most challenging issues in relation to Hegel, who is notoriously known as a rational and systematic thinker, it seems that, in general, Revelation occurs when Truth, as a timeless and infinite objectivity, cannot realize itself as subjective truth and thus is revealed as external truth to the

infinity is essential for understanding the progressive movement toward freedom and Absolute Knowledge in both the *Phenomenology* and *Logic*, as only true infinity can unify the finite and infinite. Hegel characterizes bad infinity in the following way:

If we suppose that we can liberate ourselves from the finite by stepping out into that infinite, this is in fact only a liberation through flight. And the person who flees is not yet free, for in fleeing, he is still determined by the very thing from which he is fleeing. (EL §94. *Werke* 8: 199-200)

subject. In this sense, Revelation by its nature indicates a gap between objective truth and subjective knowledge.

From this perspective, what revelation stands for is external to the knowledge of appearance by finite beings. To have knowledge of revelation, this externality must be overcome. That is to say, the alienation of Truth from the consciousness of truth must be overcome in order to know what revelation stands for.⁴⁶ It is more than just a difficult task; it appears to be impossible within Hegel's system. This is because, above all, revelation is a null category for Hegel, and speaking about it within the speculative domain seems to be an impossible task.⁴⁷

On the other hand, it is often claimed that revelation is true because it simply declares itself to be true. It is neither mediated through reason nor through understanding; rather, in its most

⁴⁶ In grammatical terms, the problem of the intelligibility of revelation for consciousness can be understood as the interaction between subject and predicate arising through the acceptance of the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute. If self-consciousness is the agent, positing itself as subject, then the self-revelatory agency of God must be the predicate of the knowledge of Spirit, which makes no sense. On the other hand, if the subjective activity belongs to the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute, then it is God who manifests its agency as the subject, and subsequently, consciousness would be the predicate of the subjectivity of God. In this case, it is the alienation of self-consciousness from being the subject of its own consciousness that fundamentally arises.

⁴⁷ It seems that very few modern philosophers have made the effort to incorporate the category of revelation into philosophical knowledge, as it is most often either overlooked entirely or left to the domain of faith. The main reason for this attitude is that autonomy stands at the center of modern thought, and it completely resists accepting the heteronomy inherent in the concept of revelation. This is because heteronomy lacks the capacity to produce categories of thought within consciousness. This issue can be seen as central to the project of dividing theoretical and practical reasoning in Kant's philosophy. Paul Ricoeur, in his article "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation", *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 70, no. 1–2, 1977, pp. 1–37, presents a comprehensive and interesting account of this division. Although he attempts to show the discrepancy between philosophical reasoning and religious revelation from a hermeneutical perspective, since revelation follows what he describes as the "total heteronomy under the verdict of the magisterium, the opposed pretentious claim of philosophy is the claim to a complete transparency of truth and a total autonomy of the thinking subject." (Ricoeur, 1977, p.19). However, what is fundamental in the act of the subject, for Ricoeur, is the essential realization that subjective autonomy is necessary for objective reality, thus linking autonomy with heteronomy. As he states, "the conquest of a new concept of truth as manifestation _ and in this sense as revelation _ demands the recognition of our real dependence which is in no way synonymous with heteronomy" (Ricoeur, 1977, p.21). In this sense, the fact that the independence of revelation relies on the dependency of hermeneutical subjective experience is the point where heteronomy and autonomy necessarily merge into a single activity. For a detailed discussion, see Walker, John. "The Concept of Revelation and Hegel's Historical Realism." *Hegel-Studien* 24 (1989): 79–96; and Holzer, Vincent. "Religion et révélation dans la période moderne: De Kant à Fichte." *Revue théologique de Louvain* 49 (2018): 365–386.

general sense, it can be recognized as unmediated truth. It is self-authorized truth, the truth that does not tolerate any temporal limitations. As Hegel states at the very beginning of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*: “We know that in religion we withdraw ourselves from what is temporal, and that religion is for our consciousness that region in which all the enigmas of the world are solved.” (*LPR I*, p.1. *Werke* 16: 11). The concern that arises here is that the very concept of God prohibits His appearance in the empirical world. Instead of God's appearance, it is the conception of truth that relates finite beings to the knowledge of God. Therefore, first of all, God is neither appearance, nor the appearance of truth, nor the appearance of finite being. There is nothing that appears as God; rather, what God designates is the real nature of truth, as Truth itself. This means that, while revelation provides its own verification through the self-revelatory agency of God, this internal verification remains totally external to subjective knowledge. This is because revelation lacks any recognizable quality that would allow us to characterize our relationship to it as one of knowledge.

Thus, we are once again left with the side of finite historical beings as the appearance of truth. Then the principal question arises: how do finite beings attain the appearance of truth through revelation? That is to say, while the content of revelation, which is inherent in religious doctrine and is often presented through claims and proofs such as miracles and testimony, appears to consciousness as something external, this externality must be transfigured into something internal for consciousness through knowledge. Otherwise, how could consciousness gain access to the revelatory content of Truth?

In general, we can begin to address this question by considering that, even though we as finite human beings do not have direct access to the eternal nature of Truth as God, we can access its appearance through the knowledge of Truth. This distinction can also be expressed in terms of

the difference between faith and knowledge. Although faith indicates a subjective and immediate certainty about the nature of Truth, knowledge, by contrast, rests upon the search for the objective necessity of what is recognized as Truth. Put differently, the truth associated with faith does not involve the *form* of Truth but stands external to it. By contrast, the knowledge of Truth, by its nature, belongs to the *form* of Truth. In this respect, although the content of both faith and knowledge is Truth, which is God itself, what is known as Truth is not pure immediate certainty, but rather the self-certainty of the subjective agent. In other words, although faith and revelation may provide the immediate affirmation that *God is, what God is* lies in the knowledge of Spirit as mediated knowing.

In Hegel's philosophy, this knowledge does not refer to the restricted and categorized function of cognition with respect to the knowledge of particularities; rather, it is the kind of knowledge through which the infinite can be found within the domain of the finite. It can be understood as immediate knowledge, not in the naïve sense, but as the immediacy that results from mediated knowing. In Hegel's terms, the relationship between immediate and mediated knowing can be expressed through the idea that, while "religion and ethical life are a matter of believing, or immediate knowing, they are radically conditioned by mediation, which is called development, education, and culture" (EL, §67. *Werke* 8: 157). In this respect, what serves as the foundation of the immediate knowledge of Truth is the mediated knowledge of Spirit within its finite experience. Hence, "what the principle of immediate knowing rightly insists on is not an indeterminate, empty immediacy, abstract being, or pure unity on its own account, but the unity of Idea with being." (EL. §70. *Werke* 8: 160). In this manner, the certainty of Truth in immediate knowledge does not simply belong to believing, intuiting, or thinking as acts of a particular subject, but to the nature of Spirit itself.

This is not a one-sided relationship in which mediated knowing alone necessitates immediate Truth; another side of this perspective must also be taken into consideration, namely that the revelatory agency of the Absolute is equally necessary for the finite knowledge of Spirit. This aspect can also be illuminated through Hegel's speculative philosophy.

According to *Logic*, Essence is not abstract; rather, it is the understanding of actuality that gives rise to the realization of Essence. On the other hand, it is through its development that Essence finds its actuality. Both realizations share a common principle, namely that "Essence must appear" (EL, §131. *Werke* 8: 261).⁴⁸ The concept of God does not seem to be an exception in this regard. That is to say, the nature of God, like every other nature, must develop and reveal itself through its own process of development to consciousness. It is not the opposite of appearance; rather, the revelation of God can be seen as both its Essence and its appearance in nature and history. In other words, "since it is the essence that exists, existence is appearance." (Ibid). This is not to say that God Himself is appearance or that there is something identifiable as the appearance of God; rather, it affirms that what *appears to be truth* cannot be distinct from or entirely separated from *Truth*.

This is the claim that opens the gate to temporality in Hegel's philosophy, since what appears to be truth for finite beings cannot be separated from the Truth of God. In other words, if there is such a thing as Essence, there must also be the appearance of Essence, and subsequently, there must be the realization of the appearance of Essence by consciousness. In this realization, just as the existence of Essence is necessary for its appearance, it is appearance that, in turn, necessitates

⁴⁸. However, in Hegel's *Logic*, it is in actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) that the reality of Essence is located, not in its appearance (*Schein*). That is to say, the ideality of Essence *is* actuality and not its abstract and impoverished mode of being as appearance. As Reid notes on this matter:

If we take 'essence' as an expression of meaning, which I do (the essence of something is its meaning), then 'mere appearance' or *Schein* is Being with only a glimmer of meaning. It is body without soul or the shadows on Plato's cave wall. Our goal, in Essence, is to derive meaningful/essential *Being*, in the form of Actuality. (Reid, 2026, p. 82-83).

this essential existence. It is the logical necessity that rests on the identity of content in religion and philosophy, which is Truth itself. That is to say, the appearance of Truth is Truth itself.

Within the system, it is impossible for something to appear to be truth without being Truth. This claim can be most clearly illuminated through the realization of the Absolute Idea, in which both content and form are unified in a single universal shape as thought itself, which is equal to the truth of thought and, ultimately, to Truth itself. As Hegel notes in the final section of the *Science of Logic*:

The determinateness of the Idea and the entire course followed by this determinateness has constituted the subject matter of the science of logic, from which course the absolute Idea itself has issued into *an existence of its own*; but the nature of this its existence has shown itself to be this, that determinateness does not have the shape of a *content*, but exists wholly as *form*, and that accordingly the Idea is the absolutely *universal Idea*. (SL. p. 825, Miller. p. 736, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 550)

On this account, Spirit must appear and develop itself in time, but it appears in time only insofar as it knows its moments as the universal Idea. This universal self-knowledge of Spirit is Reason itself, in which consciousness is identical with self-consciousness, and the knowledge of the whole as the Absolute is tied to the realization of the temporal moments of history.

It seems that neither Spirit nor religion, taken by themselves as separate forms of truth, can be considered genuine knowledge. This is because each is limited by what it does not comprehend: Spirit by the revelatory truth, and religion by the temporal subjective truth. Thus, although both can be said to share the same content, neither, when taken separately, possesses the form of absolute knowing, which is instead the knowledge of the actual nature of their identity. This knowledge of the identity between Spirit and revelation occurs through the medium of reason.

That is to say, it is the activity of reason that can be recognized as the medium through which the revelatory agent comes to recognize itself as the finite, spiritual, historical being. This is because the only medium through which the finite historical being can connect itself with the universal Idea is reason, which is the infinite activity of thought carried out by the finite being. In other words, it is the only medium that, while being the self-consciousness of the development of Spirit, knows itself as the infinite activity of thought.

2.3. Reason and Revelation

Although the difficulties involved in our discussion from the outset regarding the appearance of the infinite in a finite historical form still persist, this is because the knowledge of the appearance of truth by finite temporal beings cannot be delineated by designating the historical form as merely a pointer to the infinite Truth beyond it. In other words, how could the knowledge of Spirit be both absolute and finite if it is presented under the representational form of thought? This representational form must be transfigured into self-consciousness for Spirit; otherwise, like an intuition, a belief, or even a mental image, it would have no other destiny than to remain a vanishing and transient moment for consciousness.

In this respect, we must first consider the ongoing presence of the representational form of thought. This presence should not be understood as something constituted by an external power, for in that case, it would remain the representation of something external to thought, and the continuity of the representational content of truth would, in this manner, belong to something outside thought. In this realization, the problem that arises is twofold: the persistent alienation of thought from truth, and the absence of freedom within such a representational form.

The persistent alienation of thought from truth is logically unintelligible. This is because, on the one hand, if Truth belongs to the representation of external reality in relation to Spirit, the objective reality presented to thought can be regarded as *formless content*. Such content would remain alien to the form of thought, and its inherent content would be lost in its confrontation with a form alien to its nature. This would result in a *contentless form* of thought, or, to put it differently, in pure abstract thought. Therefore, in this scenario, we are left with a pure abstract content as Truth that is alien to the pure abstract form as thought. The result of this configuration is nothing other than the absolute nullity of knowledge itself.⁴⁹

However, in this interpretation, the nullification of knowledge results entirely from a negative attitude toward both the finitude of Spirit and the infinity of Truth. By contrast, within the context of Hegel's philosophy, the reciprocal recognition between the finite and the infinite is indispensable, and each must be known through the other. Without this mutual recognition, there would be no concept, no knowledge, no Spirit, and no God at all, since the very nature of the concept (*Begriff*) lies in the recognition between finite consciousness and infinite Truth.

Two corollary attitudes can be drawn from this perspective. First, with reference to the contention in the previous section, we can say that it is the presupposition of absolute knowledge in Hegel's system that brings the recognition between the finitude of Spirit's historical knowledge and the infinity of Truth into the light. That is to say, the very nature of identity belongs to the knowledge of the Absolute. The second attitude can also be put forward as the claim that knowledge, by its nature, is essentially metaphysical. In other words, if there is such a thing as knowledge, its subject matter is the recognition that takes place between finite Spirit and

⁴⁹. On the other hand, as previously mentioned, the concept of freedom is tied to the self-grounded and self-determined activity of thought. If the ongoing representation of an objective reality constitutes the representation of truth for the subjective agent, then it is the subjective agency itself that loses its freedom.

infinite Truth. In this regard, knowledge is philosophy, and no other discipline is more suited to serve as the subject matter of this investigation than philosophy itself.

In this respect, the subject matter of knowledge is how the recognition between finite Spirit and infinite Truth occurs. Is it the finite Spirit that necessitates the infinite Truth as the essential element of its being? Or is the finite Spirit contingent upon the recognition of infinite Truth?⁵⁰ Reflecting on these questions has led different interpreters of Hegel's philosophy to adopt different approaches to his system. In what follows, after presenting my own perspective on this issue, I will examine the interpretations of Reid and Fackenheim in order to shed light on this topic.

The affirmative sense of knowledge indicates that "the finite sublata itself and to posit the infinite as its truth." (*LPR II*, p. 257. *Werke* 16: 312). On the other hand, the infinite "has to sublata its abstractness, particularizing itself and positing within itself the moment of the finite" (*LPR II*, P. 258. *Werke* 16: 312). Therefore, even in its alienation from external content, Spirit must enter into the process of internalizing that content. As Hegel describes this process of internalization in the *Science of Logic*:

⁵⁰. In Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, which forms the primary subject of study in this section, there is textual evidence supporting both of these perspectives. As Hegel states, on the one hand: "The mediation is established in such a way that the consciousness of the infinite derives from the finite, so that finite being is the ground of the infinite. More specifically, it is the case that the finite is expressed as having only a positive relation to the infinite. The proposition runs: The being of the finite is the being of the infinite." (*LPR II*, p. 263). On the other hand, one might interpret that what is essential in the context of Hegel's theological studies is infinite truth: "The finite presupposes the infinite; so the finite posits or poses, but its posing [Setzen] is rather a presupposing [Voraussetzen], i.e., it posits in such a way that the infinite rather is the first, essential element." (*LPR II*, p. 265). This dependency can also be seen in a more radical form, in which the finite experience dissolves into the infinite: "the being of the finite is not its own being but that of the *other*, the infinite; in other words, what gives rise to the infinite is not the being of the finite but the nonbeing of the finite; the nonbeing of the finite is the being of the infinite." (*LPR II*, p. 264). However, my contention in this section is that the dependency between finite Spirit and infinite Truth constitutes a logical necessity that belongs to the very nature of science.

As intuited or even in ordinary conception, the object is still something *external* and *alien*. When it is comprehended, the being-in-and-for-self which it possesses in intuition and pictorial thought is transformed into a *positedness*; the *I* in *thinking* it pervades it. But it is only as it is in thought that the object is truly *in and for itself*; in intuition or ordinary conception it is only an *Appearance*. (SL. p. 585, Miller. p. 516, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 255)

Hence, it seems that, as an appearance of truth, the content remains outside the knowledge of Spirit. To become knowledge, it must be grasped by thought. In this sense, what knowledge indicates is the internalization of the alien content of Truth and its integration into the form of thought. Through knowledge, we do not merely possess the truth of a content that remains external to its form. Rather, what constitutes the very nature of knowledge is the overcoming of this alienation by identifying the content with its own form.⁵¹ The essential question that then arises in relation to the subject matter of this section is: How does the revelatory content of the Absolute take on the form of knowledge in Hegel's system?

Another way to approach this problem is to say that Spirit is, in its essence, the historical self-consciousness of its own activity, and what it overcomes must belong to the very nature of this activity, not to something external to it. In this respect, we can say that Spirit flourishes, and its flourishing arises from what is overcome. What it overcomes is nothing other than itself. This constitutes the fundamental activity of Spirit and sets the stage for considering history as metaphysical knowledge within the domain of Hegel's philosophy. That is to say, the persistence

⁵¹. We can think of it this way; the very conception of *Vorstellung* indicates that Truth, as *being*, appears to thought as something *other* than thought, and the reason it takes the form of representation is precisely because of this *otherness*. Truth represents itself in thought as revelation in religion. It is not recognized by thought in a mediated way; rather, thought must recognize itself as unmediated Truth. That is to say, thought must be infinite and must recognize its own reality as the Absolute. On the other hand, the recognition of *otherness* as the truth of recognition rests in the recognition of the identity between thought and being.

of the representations of Truth belongs to the very nature of Spirit, and what is represented as truth must be internal to its nature.

In the context of Hegel's philosophy, this self-grounded activity of Spirit belongs to *reason*. When we assume that it is up to human reason to determine the truth of revelation, we implicitly ascribe to reason a kind of knowledge that fundamentally belongs to the domain of Spirit. With this interpretation of revelation in mind, even the question of whether there is sufficient evidence to validate the truth of God's self-revelation through the knowledge of Spirit loses its relevance before it is addressed. This is because such an interpretation leads us into a form of rationalism that subordinates God to the demands of reason. That is to say, we believe in the content of revelation only because reason demands it. Therefore, what reason demands is God Himself, and revelation does not stand outside of Spirit; rather, it is the representation of Spirit. In this view, the rational knowledge of religion does not alter the content of religion but gives it the proper form through which it can be grasped as rational. The knowledge of revelation, in turn, gains its determination through the form that belongs to reason.

This is not a concern of assigning priority to either God's Truth or Spirit's knowledge. Rather, it is to affirm that, regardless of whether revelation is viewed as the pure content of truth and reason as the self-grounded activity of thought, revelation and reason share the same form, which is the form of thought itself. It is through this form that the identity between them takes place, and this identity is nothing other than the knowledge of God. In other words, the sameness of content does not imply identity, since identity must include within itself the act of thinking identity, and this act belongs to the form of truth.

The common form, in this respect, is the Idea. It is through the self-consciousness of the Idea that the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute realizes itself as the knowledge of finite Spirit.

That is to say, God Himself is the self-knowledge of the Idea, and reason is what makes the knowledge of the Idea of God intelligible to finite Spirit. Without this intelligibility, there is no Idea, and there can be no realization of the self-consciousness of the Idea. Put simply, if there is such a concept as self-grounded, self-sufficient Idea, which is God Himself, then the knowledge of the Idea belongs to the self-grounded activity of Spirit, which is Reason. It is in this realization that historical spirit and God become one Spirit.

In Reid's interpretation of the same concern, which reflects the relation between the revelatory agency of the Absolute and the knowledge of the Absolute, greater weight is given to the side of revelation. In this view, it is Spirit's knowledge that is subordinate to the revelatory agency, as "Absolute self-knowledge is made possible through Revelation, an act that involves humanity in divine self-consciousness, where all that is known, and that which knows, are never merely human." (Reid, 2017, p.187).

However, Reid's intention is not to create a division between the Absolute's self-knowledge and Spirit's knowledge of the Absolute. Rather, it is to emphasize that the presence of the Absolute is the real presence of God, and that the knowledge of the Absolute is the self-knowledge of this presence. By ascribing both content and form to it, this self-knowledge of the Absolute plays a complementary role in the self-knowledge of the Idea by finite Spirit. That is to say, the knowledge of the Idea by finite Spirit is not intelligible without presupposing and participating in the self-knowledge of the Absolute. This contention, as Reid himself is well aware, can be traced as a central theme throughout the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, where the main idea is expressed as: "The finite is therefore an essential moment of the infinite in the nature of God, and thus it may be said it is God Himself who renders Himself finite, who produces determinations within Himself." (*LPR I. P. 198. Werke 16: 191*)

In my interpretation, however, the gap between the knowledge of Spirit and the revelatory content can be understood in the context in which “It is in fact the business of speculative thought to apprehend all objects of pure thought of nature and of Spirit, in the form of thought, and thus as the unity of the difference.” (*LPR I. P. 22. Werke: 16: 30*). That is to say, what demands and thereby necessitates the revelatory Truth for its own knowledge is the self-knowledge of Spirit. It is the infinity of Truth that becomes the object of knowledge for the human mode of infinite knowing, which is Reason.⁵² My emphasis, therefore, falls on the side that sees the necessary connection between the self-revelatory agency of the Absolute and the knowledge of the Absolute as belonging to Spirit’s side.⁵³ In this respect, “Reason is the region in which alone religion can be at home.” (*LPR I. P. 204. Werke 16: 196*)

It is the realization of reason in this sense that necessitates revelatory truth as religion. In this respect, if Hegel places the Religion chapter after Reason and Spirit in the *Phenomenology*, it is based on the necessity that revelatory truth must be recognized as Spirit and Reason, in order to show that these are nothing other than Spirit’s knowledge of the Absolute, and beyond that, nothing other than the Absolute’s self-knowledge of itself. In this sense, Spirit can no longer be seen merely as the appearance of the Absolute, nor even simply as its ground, but as the Absolute’s self-knowledge of itself, which is at the same time the self-knowledge of Spirit.

⁵². It seems that for Hegel, both the infinite and the finite can be ascribed to Reason as the activity of human thought, and it is within this activity that the true conception of identity lies. For him, the identification of difference between the infinite and the finite also applies to the very nature of God. As he puts it:

For the logically developed and rational consideration of the finite, the simple forms of a proposition have no longer any value. God is infinite, I am finite; these are false, bad expressions, forms which do not adequately correspond to that which the Idea, the nature of the real object, is. The finite is not that which is, in like manner the infinite is not fixed; these determinations are only moments of the process. It is equally true that God exists as finite and the Ego as infinite. (*LPR I. P. 199. Werke 16: 192*)

⁵³. In general, I believe that, based solely on the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, both Reid’s interpretation and my own can be regarded as legitimate. However, when turning to the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*, it is the necessity of the representation of infinite Truth through the phenomenological and speculative development of finite Spirit that stands at the center of the relation between the self-knowledge of the Absolute and finite Spirit.

Although the result of this interpretation may appear to align with what is also found in Reid's interpretation, the difference lies in the *process* through which Spirit arrives at the knowledge of the Absolute. In my view, it is the movement of Spirit that necessitates the knowledge of the Absolute, whereas in Reid's interpretation, it is the revelatory agency of the Absolute that necessitates the Absolute's knowledge of Spirit.

Hegel's idea of revelation can be understood here as his ontological commitment to his metaphysics, which is grounded in the realization of the part through the whole. In this respect, the idea of revelation cannot be restricted to a particular instance of truth arising within a specific mode of human knowledge in a given historical period. Rather, what the concept of revelation signifies is the wholeness of truth as it is realized by the parts in their relation to that wholeness. That is to say, the idea of revelation stands at the crux of the realization of the infinite by finite beings.

From this perspective, what constitutes the culmination of the first six chapters of the *Phenomenology* can be seen as the finite endeavor and toil of consciousness to realize itself as Absolute Spirit. This stage can be known as the stage in which the full expression of both subjective agency and revelatory objective agency takes place. On the one hand, it is the highest stage of knowledge in which subjective Spirit manifests its thought determinations. On the other hand, from the objective side, as the chapter on Religion begins, Absolute Spirit can be recognized as the stage at which "God manifests Himself, and gives Himself objectivity." (*LPR I. P. 25. Werke* 16: 33).

This objective side, in general, is the subject matter of the philosophy of religion in Hegel's system. As he states: "Of the other parts [of the system], God is the result; here [In the philosophy of religion], this End is made the Beginning, and becomes our special Object, as the

simply concrete Idea, with its infinite manifestation.” (Ibid). Absolute Spirit, in this respect, can be understood as the double agency of thought and being. Insofar as it is the expression of historical thought determinations, it is equally the reality of the manifestation of God's nature. That is to say, the Absolute cannot be realized solely in the form of thought; rather, within the system, it must also be recognized as objective reality. In Hegel’s words: “The relation to such an object is therefore the thought of the subject; the object is the Essence, that which exists for the subject. The thought is not merely subjective, but also objective.” (*LPR I*. P. 195. *Werke* 16: 188).

In this respect, the journey of finite consciousness toward the realization of itself as whole is the ultimate effort of consciousness to become Absolute Spirit. The problem arises, however, when this ultimate point is encountered as an indeterminate one, in which finite consciousness is unable to determine itself within infinity. Instead, it loses itself in the infinite progression of its knowledge, without attaining a determinate realization of the infinite for itself.

This is the point at which the realization of the whole in relation to its parts comes to light in Hegel’s philosophy. If all of Spirit’s effort has any aim, it is to know itself as the whole, which cannot be accomplished unless the whole has the knowledge of its parts. This knowledge is made manifest in the Christian religion through revelation. The whole must also know itself in its parts.⁵⁴ In other words, the knowledge of the whole in relation to its parts is necessary for the

⁵⁴. The relation between the whole and its parts cannot be understood merely as one constituted by sensuous connections such as love, devotion, and grace between finite Spirit and God. Rather, it is rational thought that must establish and articulate this relation. In this sense, the content of religious representation must itself be rational in order to ground the relation between the whole and the parts. Otherwise, the mode of representing the Absolute would fall short of being absolute, and the content of truth would remain alien to its form. Such alienation stands in contrast to Hegel’s aim of reconciling divine revelation with the knowledge of Spirit. In this regard, as Stephen Rocker, drawing on Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, observes:

religion by its representational mode alone cannot unite the human and divine without recognizing its destiny in *begreifende Vernunft*. The representations of religion must be *aufgehoben* ... As religion has its destiny in thought, and philosophy as the activity of pure thought has its embodied life in rational religion, so that ultimately absolute religion and absolute philosophy have a sublated unity. (Rocker, 1995, p. 88).

In brief, it appears that the truest expression of the whole is absolute knowledge, which is philosophy itself. All religious concerns in Hegel’s philosophy, in this light, fall within the domain of rational reflection. This perspective stands in contrast to efforts that attempt to interpret the relation between the whole and its parts from the perspective

parts to have knowledge of the whole. Otherwise, knowledge would remain an infinite oscillation, in which the parts, as moments in the experience of consciousness, would constitute the meaning of knowledge without ever arriving at completion.

This is not to say that the knowledge of the whole is contingent upon the knowledge of its parts, or that it is merely a condition for the parts to know themselves in the whole. Rather, the knowledge of the whole in relation to its parts is a necessary form of knowledge, and it is this necessity that constitutes the meaning of freedom within the system. It also does not imply that, we have the knowledge of Spirit as the finite's knowledge, which intersects with the knowledge of God at a particular historical moment, and that, after this intersection, Spirit finds itself in the state of Absolute Knowledge. Rather, it is the infinity of finite knowledge and the finitude of infinite truth that find their realization through the interaction between spirit and religion. This constitutes the highest sense of freedom that can be ascribed to the activity of consciousness; to see its infinite and enduring truth in its finite and transitory being, and to recognize its finite and transitory truth within its own infinity. Not as the indeterminate infinity that merely disperses itself through historical moments, but as the infinite truth that recognizes the finite moments of its being as its own reality.

However, Reid may see such an interpretation as belonging to the broader collection of commentators that, while contrasting or diverging from one another, ultimately miss Hegel's central intention. As Reid explains in his reading of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*: "humanity has come to ignore the self-revelatory agency of God, and now understands

of romanticism. At the same time, attributing essential significance to rational reflection does not negate the fact that rational reflection and religious representation are fundamentally distinct and remain in tension within Hegel's system. Rather, it is necessary for them to engage in dialectical activity in order to be unified.

religion exclusively in terms of human experience” (Reid, 2017, p. 187). In the present interpretation, however, the claim that it is the self-knowledge of Spirit that necessitates the revelatory agency of the Absolute finds its ground in the necessity of reconciling Spirit’s knowledge with the self-knowledge of the Absolute. The very knowledge of this necessity belongs to Spirit; yet this necessity unfolds in worldly expressions of the shapes of consciousness, without having the force to elevate itself into the realm of the infinite. In Hegel’s words: "Knowledge has taken possession of all finite material and drawn it into its territory, all determinate content has fallen to its share; but although it gives it a necessary connection, it is still unable to give it the absolute connection." (*LPR I*, p.15. *Werke* 16: 24).

In order for the absolute connection to be possible, first of all, the presence of the Absolute itself, as Truth in-and-for-itself, is necessary. This presence is not necessitated by Spirit’s knowledge, but it stands as self-sufficient truth. Given this presupposition of absolute knowledge in Hegel’s system, the question that then arises is: how can Spirit necessitate the self-knowledge of the Absolute for-itself?⁵⁵

What the Absolute possesses, which is lacking in the nature of finite beings, is being-in-and-for-itself. Conversely, what the Absolute itself lacks can be understood as the presence of finite determination within it. Although we may say that finite Spirit determines itself within the infinity of the Absolute, this determination may be seen as a progressive sublation in vain when its transition to the infinite is regarded as an external act. In this respect, all of Spirit’s effort can be understood as a perpetual repetition of the negation of its limitation in order to become infinite. However, the problem arises that, even after negating itself, both in its

⁵⁵. It is not a question that aims to demonstrate that Spirit makes the knowledge of the Absolute necessary for itself. Rather, the main intention in this section is to show that it is the knowledge of Spirit that constitutes the *necessary relation* between itself and the Absolute.

phenomenological and speculative progress, what emerges at every stage of its development is not the determination of the Absolute, but rather a new limit. As a result, the determinate infinite does not arise from this perpetual repetition of Spirit's negation and determination.

What we have here is the perpetual, abstract sublation of limits. Consciousness comes to know its limits in a purely negative way, through the progression of its shapes that remains incomplete without the realization of affirmative infinity. Although this progression unfolds through the infinite negation of its limits, it lacks the affirmative sense of the infinite. Rather, it is through the perpetual return to its limits that finite Spirit comes to know itself.

Freedom from this recurring act of finite Spirit takes place through the Absolute's knowledge of Spirit. What Spirit lacks is the form of freedom that belongs to the self-knowledge of the Absolute. In order to attain this knowledge, finite Spirit must be one with the Absolute. The oneness of Spirit with the Absolute brings about the unity of the finite and the infinite within the system. This unity must not be understood as if finite Spirit reaches the infinite by sublating its moments through force, nor as if the infinite degrades itself in order to assume a finite shape, with absolute knowledge eventually resulting from such mutual recognition. Rather, the unity of finite and infinite is not an external unification, but a relation in which each already contains this unity within itself. The finite, therefore, is not merely sublated into the infinite as a power external to it; instead, infinity belongs to the very nature of sublating its own moments.⁵⁶

⁵⁶. See *Werke 5*: 125-174 (*SL*, pp. 116-156, Miller, pp. 90-125, Di Giovanni). Based on the explanations provided in this section of Hegel's *Logic*, we can generally say that it is *negation* that constitutes the foundation of any relation between the finite and the infinite within the system. In brief, the finite indicates *quality*, as being *something* determinate. The infinite, on the other hand, can be understood either as the negation of the finite or, when considered from the starting point of the *Logic*, as *pure being* without any determination. However, as the exposition of *Logic* advances, it is not only the finite that transcends itself and assumes new determinations. Rather, in Hegelian dialectic, the negation of the finite also develops. It is negation, therefore, that sublates itself and recognizes itself in its own negation. In this respect, the recognition of negation gives rise to the concept of *true infinity* within the system. Infinity in this sense can no longer be regarded simply as the negation of the finite, which leads to the abstract infinite. Instead, it appears as the self-determination of negation that is *eternally present* to Spirit. As Hegel explains:

From the perspective of Hegel's *Logic*, what takes place here is a transition between reality and ideality, and this transition leads to the identity of the Real and the Ideal. The Idea is Real, and the Real is Idea. On this account, finite Spirit, by becoming self-conscious of its moments as moments of the Idea, comes to recognize itself as the Idea. At the same time, it is infinite truth that plays a complementary role in this realization, which means that it is the Absolute itself that realizes itself in the moments of Spirit. This is the manner in which the distinction between the Idea and the Real vanishes in absolute knowledge, since it is the Absolute itself that realizes and articulates its Idea as the moments of its reality. This is the point where passivity and activity, necessity and freedom merge into a single activity. This unity represents the culmination of the *Phenomenology* in the chapter on Absolute Knowledge, which is presented as the Concept (*Begriff*).

From these explanations, we can conclude that the true meaning at the heart of revelation is the freedom of spirit, which is God Himself. Without the revelation of truth, the experience of reason would be insufficient for knowledge, as it would lack the conception of true identity.⁵⁷ In that case, infinite truth would not be known as the whole and one, but would remain dispersed in the *ad infinitum* moments of Spirit's knowledge.

This infinite as the consummated return into self, the relation of itself to itself, is *being* but not indeterminate, abstract being, for it is posited as negating the negation; it is, therefore, also determinate being for it contains negation in general and hence determinateness. It *is* and *is there*, present before us ... True infinity taken thus generally as *determinate* being which is posited as *affirmative* in contrast to the abstract negation, is *reality* in a higher sense than the former reality which was *simply* determinate; for here it has acquired a concrete content. It is not the finite which is the real, but the infinite. Thus reality is further determined as essence, Notion, Idea, and so on. (*SL*. pp. 148-149, Miller. pp. 118-119, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 164).

⁵⁷. The unity of content and form must have its unity from *form* itself. It is important to recognize that the very concept of identity possesses a dialectical rather than a static nature at its heart. When identity is attributed to the duality of content and form, it is the dialectical activity that persists within both content and form which gives identity its true meaning. This identity can indeed be recognized from the standpoint of philosophy, yet the content of identity, as discussed in the first part of the preceding section, is necessitated by the Absolute itself. In fact, without grounding the very nature of identity in the Absolute, the concept of identity would lack any foundation in thought.

In line with the same concern, but placing the freedom of Spirit on the side of historical Spirit and necessity on the divine side, Fackenheim, in another effort to investigate the relation between Revelation and Reason, argues that if the representational content of religion is presented as its most idiosyncratic aspect in comparison to the rational content of philosophy, then attempting to reduce or equate religion's representational form to reason would overlook Hegel's central intention in introducing the representational character of religion. In other words, the representational form of religion, in contrast to the rational form of philosophy, must hold a specific meaning that needs to be taken into account, rather than being simply absorbed into the systematic rational abyss of Hegel's system.

The most idiosyncratic aspect of *Vorstellung* for Fackenheim, which cannot be fully embraced through its English translation as *representation*, is its dialectical expression in an active form, where what is represented cannot be understood as something passively given and then simply accepted as a fact by thought. Rather, it is the representation of the infinite in a finite way that lies at the heart of *Vorstellung*. This form not only implies that the infinite requires finite Spirit in order to be presented, but more importantly, it points to the idea that, as Fackenheim notes, "religious representation moves towards, but fails to reach, the universality of the speculative thought" (Fackenheim, 1968, p.155). This is precisely where philosophy must take up its task; to bring to completion the *infinity* implicit in the representation of religious truth.⁵⁸ In other words,

⁵⁸. A similar perspective on the critique of the concept of representation can be found in William Desmond's paper "Hegel and the Problem of Religious Representation", *Philosophical Studies* (Dublin) 30:9-22 (1984). As he states, "Vorstellung is something intermediate between purely rational thought and thoughtless sensuousness. Indeed, Vorstellung expresses a form of thinking, though a form of thinking not fully free from the need of a sensuous image." (Desmond, 1984, p. 11). In light of this critique, although the content of revelation is absolute and represents the truth that is, by nature, self-sufficient and self-grounded, the mode through which this content is represented is not itself absolute, and it has been necessitated by finite spirit, which suggests that it is the human finite Spirit that strives to disclose the nature of the representational form of revelation. For a more comprehensive discussion of this perspective, see Lauer, Quentin. *Hegel's Concept of God*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982; and his *Hegel's Idea of Philosophy*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1971.

it is a two-way relation. Just as infinite truth must be presented to finite Spirit, finite Spirit must also recognize itself as infinite truth. The first dimension belongs to religion, while the second task belongs to philosophy, which must raise itself to the dimension of infinity.

The most interesting aspect of Fackenheim's approach is that, even as distinct domains, neither philosophy nor religion can be seen as alien to one another. While the infinite belongs to religious representation, the constitution of this representation belongs to Spirit's knowledge. That is to say, the knowledge of infinity, by its nature, belongs to the very structure of the representation of infinity. Without the knowledge of infinity, there would be no such thing as infinity, just as without the infinite dimension of truth, there would be no knowledge of infinity.⁵⁹ However, in his exposition of the *Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, it seems that the emphasis is placed on the side of infinite truth rather than on Spirit's knowledge of infinite truth. As Fackenheim notes, "Hegelian thought, then, can achieve its transrepresentational goals only if it is not finite and human but rather infinite and divine." (Fackenheim, 1968, p. 162)

Christian religious content, in this sense, is not a dead object like a sculpture or something found in nature. Rather, it is the content that transcends itself and moves within the relation of

⁵⁹. Based on this interpretation, we can also arrive at the point that it is the side of freedom that emerges from the interaction between the infinite and the finite for the modern human. In this sense, the modern human is free because it recognizes infinite truth through its finite existence. This recognition, which was absent in both the Greek and medieval periods, is presented to humanity in the modern age as the recognition of its finite being within infinite truth, not as something alien or external to itself, but as the knowledge of the infinite that belongs to its very nature. With regard to the conception of religion and its relation to freedom for the Greeks, Hegel believes that the unity of humanity with nature lies at the heart of their religious culture. The nature of God had not yet been separated from finite Spirit; rather, this immediate unity between God and Spirit represents the unity of human Spirit with its own nature. In other words, there is no being that stands as alien to the nature of Spirit. Instead, human Spirit is truly at home with its own nature, and this natural, unbroken unity is the freedom in which the Greeks lived. Moreover, due to the instinctive unity between the natural and the spiritual, the human being had not yet experienced a separation of form and content. Its truth was identical with its being, without any radical division within its nature. In medieval philosophy, however, it is the metaphysical conception of God that becomes the subject of inquiry for finite Spirit. With this conception of God, the division between form and content emerges during this period.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ In this sense, Hegel sees a dialectical activity at work within the nature of Christian religious content, which leads him to regard Christianity as the rational religion. That is to say, this content already contains form within itself, just as truth contains rationality at its core. However, this rationality must be presented in a form that is essentially rational, which is philosophy as the highest stage of knowledge. In this respect, the recognition that content is identical to its form is a philosophical, not a properly religious, recognition. It is reason that clearly discerns and explicates the movement of this recognition between content and form.

Reason enables the transition from the representational revelatory content, which does not yet possess the shape of thought, to its realization as actual thought. In other words, it is reason that renders the thought-content actual and gives it the form of thought. Hence, reason cannot be satisfied with the merely representational content of religion and seeks to resolve religious content into its rational necessity. In short, reason mediates the immediate representation of religion, which remains externally related to thought, with the aim of internalizing and

60. The inherent dialectical activity in the Christian religion is most clearly expressed in the doctrine of the Trinity. It can be understood as the self-differentiation of God, which both reveals God's self-knowledge to finite beings and simultaneously provides the dialectical ground through which Spirit comes to recognize its own necessity. For some commentators, such as Peter Hodgson (2005), and Cyril O'Regan (2001, 1994) this process reflects the conceptual necessity of God's being, which necessitates the presence of Spirit as the living embodiment of divine being. As Hodgson, drawing on Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, explains, the Trinity of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can be interpreted within a conceptual framework in which "In the first moment God subsists in abstract universality; then the universal 'sets itself forth' or appears as finite, particular, differentiated, separated; finally the now-concretized universal returns to itself as absolute subjectivity, absolute presence-to-self, or absolute spirit." (Hodgson, 2005, p. 127). On the other hand, for commentators such as Robert Williams (1992) and Dale Schlitt (2012, 1990), it is the personal and moral dimension of Spirit that brings forth the necessity of a higher reality. From this perspective, although the Idea can be realized as God Himself, it is the Son that represents the otherness of God in its abstract form, and the Holy Spirit is the reconciliation of identity and otherness accomplished by Spirit. That is to say, reconciliation, by its nature, involves the self-conscious activity of Spirit, which mediates the knowledge of the Idea and the knowledge of otherness. In the language of Schlitt:

It is above all in this third element that God exists as absolute Spirit. This third element is the final reconciling moment in the religion of absolute subjectivity, the moment thereby giving fullest expression to what Hegel has called the Christian principle or the idea of Christianity as the self-consciousness of freedom or the freedom of self-consciousness. (Schlitt, 2012, p. 131).

integrating its content into the system of thought. On the other hand, religious content is absolute, and by its nature it mediates the relation between the divine and Spirit. However, the difficulty that arises is that this mediation lacks the logical necessity of the absolute as it is given in representational form.

One of the commentators on Hegel's philosophy who has been especially inspiring for me in this regard is Walter Jaeschke. In his book *Reason in Religion: The Foundations of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, Jaeschke presents the idea that the essential task of theology is to preserve the Idea of God as it becomes realized in the form of Spirit. In Hegel's system, this task is assigned to the philosophy of religion. Its aim is not merely to provide various logical, ontological, cosmological, or teleological arguments to prove the existence of God, but rather to preserve and ground the necessity of God in its process of being actualized as Spirit. In other words, for Hegel, it is the presence of Spirit that both represents and necessitates the representation of God. As Jaeschke explains:

It is indeed incumbent on his philosophy to prove that the doctrine of the trinity is nothing other than the representational form of this idea of the identity of concept and reality—that this identity is apprehended by religion only in "the happily naive forms of representation that are available" (LPR 3:79) as the begetting of the Son by the Father and as the unity of the Father and the Son in the Spirit. Such proof could reside solely in mutual recognition on the part of the representational and the conceptual forms. But this recognition, by definition, must come from the side of the conceptual form. For according to Hegel it pertains to philosophy to understand itself and its other, whereas religious representation takes cognizance only of their nonidentity. Insight into the speculative concept of spirit is

achieved only by a mode of thinking that itself thinks the identity of concept and reality and to that extent is no longer religious consciousness as such." (Jaeschke, 1990, p. 307).

The knowledge of Spirit is, therefore, the actual unity in which the otherness of the Son and God belongs. In other words, the self-differentiation of God finds its resolution in the unity of Spirit, through which Spirit comes to know itself as absolute knowledge. This interpretation, however, raises a potential concern; if the self-division of God originates from God Himself and the Holy Spirit is the synthesis of this divine necessity, then how can Spirit be said to necessitate God and unify Him with His otherness as the Son? To address this concern, it must be clarified that the notion of necessity in this context refers to mutual or, more precisely, circular dialectical necessity, rather than ontological necessity. That is to say, the necessity discussed here does not imply a temporal or logical priority between God's knowledge and Spirit. Instead, it is the self-knowledge of Spirit that brings forth the circular dialectical necessity as Hegel presents it in the structure of his system.

What reason mediates, therefore, as the representational form of revelation, cannot simply be presented as the truth of God Himself in the sense that reason must necessitate God's existence within the boundaries of speculative thought. Rather, what it mediates and seeks to necessitate is the *representational necessity* that lies between infinite truth and finite knowledge. In other words, what reason attempts to mediate is *mediation* itself. This reflects the idiosyncratic aspect of the Absolute when it confronts the reality of thought. It is a metaphysical difficulty that is not unique to Hegel's philosophy but can also be traced in the works of his contemporaries.⁶¹ That is

⁶¹. In general, Hegel's central concern can be expressed as the establishment of a philosophical system which can rationally explain the Absolute. Within the context of German Idealism, this rational explication of the Absolute separates him not only from Kant, who famously rejects any rational arguments for the existence of God, but also from figures associated with Romanticism, such as Schleiermacher and Jacobi. For Schleiermacher, "Religion's essence is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and feeling ... [On the other hand] Metaphysics proceeds from finite human nature and wants to define consciously, from its simplest concept, the extent of its powers, and its receptivity, what the universe can be for us and how we necessarily must view it." (Schleiermacher, 1996, pp. 22-

to say, reason, in effect, does not have access to any reliable source of truth other than its own act of mediation, and what connects its very nature to the concept of infinite truth is the knowledge of this mediation.

This is the *formless pure truth* of its own nature that reason confronts. If it were to overcome this truth, it would, in effect, overcome its own nature, which is the finite and limited aspect of itself. On the other hand, by determining itself within the *formless pure content*, reason seeks to set aside the infinite indeterminacy that results from the repetition of different forms. It no longer understands itself merely as the thinking subject, but as the true content of its form, as the truth of the identity between form and content. In this way, absolute knowledge can be realized as the identity that unites human reason with the truth of revelation. The self-revelation of the Absolute is thus understood as the process in which the Absolute thinks itself through our thinking of the Absolute. This is the process in which the outwardness and inwardness of the representation of the Absolute come to coincide in a single identity, the identity that is the offspring of reason.

In this respect, since there is no such thing as *formless content*, the content of religious representation cannot be grasped or recognized on its own, apart from the form-determinations of thought. Religious representations must therefore be brought into the unity of content and form in order to be recognized as the revelatory agency of the Absolute. To be considered as rational

23). Hegel also differs from Jacobi, who claims that "reason without freedom would merely be a blind necessity that becomes aware of itself ... God lives in us, and our life is hidden in God. If God were not present in us in this way, i.e., immediately present through His image in our innermost self, then what – outside of Him – would make Him known to us? Images, sounds, signs which only impart what is already understood? Spirit to spirit: what?" (Jacobi, 2024, pp. 131-133). Hegel's interpretation of Christianity as the rational religion cannot be reduced to immediate knowing, intuitive knowledge, or feeling alone. Rather, it is grounded in *mediated reasoning* through which Spirit approaches the Absolute. What is rational, for Hegel, is both eternal and temporal, both abstract and concrete, and at once One and Whole. Each of these qualities could, on its own, be attributed to the nature of God. However, in the context of Hegel's philosophy, the challenge arises when *mediated reasoning* must recognize itself in God's nature as being One and Whole. This means that for *mediated reasoning*, the reconciliation between finite being and infinite truth, necessity and freedom, thought and being, Spirit and nature, and all other fundamental dualities becomes the central task of inquiry in the realization of Truth as the unified whole.

and active content, the religious content must be sublated from its isolated and static nature into a new content that embraces the form of thought. This is the content that is given to us through religious revelatory representation. It is in this way that Hegel's speculative philosophy receives the representational content of revelation and transforms it into the pure form of divine knowledge.

Our task now shifts from the question of how the revelatory agency of the Absolute can be recognized through the knowledge of finite Spirit to the question of how reason mediates itself in such a way that it becomes necessary in order to discover and determine within itself the knowledge of the infinite and to make this knowledge its own. This is, in essence, the question of how reason knows itself as reason. To contemplate this question is also to contemplate the nature of God, namely, how God represents Himself as truth. The difference, however, lies in the fact that reason necessitates its own representational form within the framework of finite human knowledge, a necessity that was lacking in the religious dimension of truth.

2.4. Embodiment of the Absolute in Time: The Absolutization of the Subject.

Following the discussion in the previous section, the subject matter of philosophy is God Himself. That is to say, the Absolute is the one and only subject of philosophy. None of the perspectives presented in the previous section overlook the presence of the Absolute in the movement of subjective spirit toward self-knowledge.⁶² On the contrary, it is the representation

⁶². Philosophers such as Feuerbach and Marx oppose this perspective. From their point of view, it is the *idea of God* that forms the essence of religion, not God Himself as a real being. These debates are mostly carried out by left-Hegelians who attempt to present Hegel as an atheist thinker by seeking to limit the role of the divine in his philosophy, and focusing instead on the experience of finite human beings. For Feuerbach, religion by its nature signifies the process by which humanity alienates itself from its concrete and sensuous existence and takes refuge in an empty beyond. In his view, the turning point in history is the moment when human beings recognize that the only God is man himself. From this perspective, Hegel is seen as dehumanizing philosophy because he transforms it into an abstract speculative system of ideas, rather than developing it in relation to anthropological reality and living individuals. In the words of Feuerbach: "Things when existing in God are not the same as when they exist apart from him; they differ from real things to the same extent that things that are objects of logic differ from things that

of the Absolute that renders the dialectical process of recognition between finite Spirit and Infinite Truth intelligible. If there is such an Idea as God, it must be necessitated by Spirit's knowledge of the Idea, and for this relation to be considered necessary, the presence of Spirit's knowledge must also be necessitated.⁶³ Otherwise, as previously mentioned, there would be no concept, no God, and no knowledge. What would remain is merely the endless approximation of Truth by the finite Spirit, pursued in vain.

From this perspective, religion cannot be reduced to the study of how God reveals and represents Himself to finite Spirit, and the philosophy of religion cannot be viewed simply as the way finite Spirit approaches the existence of God. Rather, by concretizing the reality of God through the process of incarnation, religion also addresses the question of how Spirit realizes itself in time. In other words, it is the realm of knowledge in which God comes to know Himself as Spirit. Seen from the standpoint of modern human understanding, this perspective appears more tangible in the context of science than in that of religion, since the subject matter of truth

are the objects of real perception." (Feuerbach, 1966, p. 15). Feuerbach concludes that what we possess is the *conception of God* or *metaphysical truth*, rather than God as Truth itself. From a more radical perspective, Marx, by setting aside the theological dimension of Hegel's philosophy, interprets religion as "the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve about himself" (Marx, 1970, p. 132) and defines the true task of philosophy as "to unmask human self-alienation in its secular forms" (Ibid). This interpretation illustrates Marx's shift from Hegel's idealism to a materialist perspective, effectively marginalizing the Absolute.

⁶³. In this realization, necessity, freedom, and the relation between them are constituted by the reciprocal *otherness* of the Absolute and Spirit. More precisely, the self-knowledge of the Absolute depends on being known by Spirit, and Spirit comes to recognize its own nature through its otherness to the Absolute. In this regard, the final aim and destiny of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and the *Science of Logic* can be understood as the reconciliation of the Absolute and Spirit within the Idea. The manifestation of this reconciliation as mediated by Spirit represents the highest degree of freedom it has ever achieved, in the sense that, by recognizing its nature in the Absolute, its knowledge of itself is no longer subject to any limitation. However, relying solely on the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, it appears more legitimate to say that the double necessity, both in the sense of actively necessitating Spirit and passively being the subject of this necessity, belongs to the very nature of the Absolute. It is through this necessity that Spirit recognizes the Absolute as its otherness. As Hegel expresses in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*:

It is only the absolute Idea which determines itself, and which, in determining itself, is inwardly certain that it is absolutely free in itself; and in thus determining itself it implies that what is thus determined is allowed to exist as something which is free, as something in-dependent, as an independent object. The Free exists only for the Free, and it is only for free men that an other is free too. (*LPR III*, p. 36. *Werke* 17: 243).

for science is not an abstract and timeless reality, but the temporal representation of reality itself.⁶⁴ In this respect, the task of Hegel's philosophy becomes intelligible as the movement from Religion to the dimension of Absolute Knowledge and the grounding of science on that basis.. The question that now arises is how religion, as the realm of infinite truth, can give rise to science, which belongs to the domain of temporality.

To demonstrate the transition from infinite truth to temporal truth, I will refer to Hegel's well-known assertion that "Gott selbst ist tot"⁶⁵, which provides the foundation for viewing the Absolute not as something beyond, but as *absolute presence*. The death of God, in a speculative sense, signifies that "the negation, is itself a divine moment, is in God Himself; that otherness or Other-Being, the finite, the negative, is not outside of God, and that in its character as otherness it does not hinder unity with God." (*LPR III*. P. 98. *Werke* 17: 297).⁶⁶

⁶⁴. The position of science suggests that infinity must be realized within the finite realm and made actual through the experiences of human life. "It is in this way that the content shows that its determinateness is not received from something else, nor externally attached to it, but that it determines itself, and ranges itself as a moment having its own place in the whole." (*PS*. §53. *Werke* 3: 52)

⁶⁵. Hegel uses the phrase 'Gott selbst ist tot' and takes it from a Lutheran hymn that originates in the seventeenth century. It appears that he refers specifically to a hymn found in Johann Rist's *Himmlische Lieder* (1607–1667), titled *O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid!*, which contains the following lines:

O große Noth!
Gott selbst liegt tot,
am Kreuz ist er gestorben,
hat dadurch das Himmelreich
uns aus Lieb' erworben.

Hegel uses this phrase to emphasize *the death of God* as a necessary moment in the dialectical development of Spirit, a moment that ultimately leads to the reconciliation of God and Spirit. This interpretation is closely connected to the Lutheran theological tradition. It does not represent a declaration of divine absence but instead expresses the idea of divine self-alienation through the crucifixion of Jesus.

⁶⁶. From another perspective, the phrase 'God is dead', can be understood in the *Phenomenology* as referring to the alienation experienced by finite Spirit. This alienation results from the failure of self-consciousness to unite itself with infinite Truth. As Hegel expresses: "It is the consciousness of the loss of all *essential* being in this *certainty of itself*, and of the loss even of this knowledge about itself the loss of substance as well as of the Self, it is the grief which expresses itself in the hard saying that 'God is dead'." (*PS*. §752. *Werke* 3: 547).

The utterance of the death of God, not only in Hegel's philosophy, but also in its various forms of assertion among the philosophers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, does not merely indicate an atheistic approach to the existence of God or a delineation of limitations in human understanding. Rather, it points above all to the need for a new approach to the realization of Truth in modernity. That is to say, the separation of God from Being is not merely a theoretical doctrine. In fact, what lies at the heart of this separation is the annulment of the idea of Absolute, which once served as the foundation of knowledge. The separation of the Absolute from *being* marks the beginning of a new epoch, as the Enlightenment, in which knowledge, by its very nature, requires grounding in a new foundation. In this respect, as Williams points out: "the term 'death of God' in Christological context implies the death of the abstract, immutable 'apathetic' divine." (Williams, 2013, p. 86).⁶⁷

Temporality, within the context of the Enlightenment, can be understood as an attitude that reflects subjective certainty, which in itself is indifferent to the actuality of objective certainty. Hegel is undoubtedly the philosopher who attempts to revive the dimension of objective necessity as absolute. On the other hand, as is well known by Kant, the temporal and spatial dimensions constitute the very certainty of the subjectivity of the subject.⁶⁸

⁶⁷. For an elaborative discussion regarding the relation between the 'death of God' and knowledge, see also Williams, R. R. *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), and Jaeschke, W. "Philosophy of Religion after the Death of God," in *Philosophy and Religion in German Idealism*, pp. 1–20 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2004).

⁶⁸. *Glauben und Wissen* is Hegel's attempt to revive the role of Reason in philosophical thought by demonstrating the identity between the revealed God and philosophical subjectivity. In this work, Hegel criticizes the philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte. Each of these philosophical approaches can be seen as part of the Enlightenment project, in which the central aim was to interpret religious faith in relation to reason, and in doing so, pushing the Absolute outside the domain of Reason. In brief, what is fundamentally flawed in Enlightenment philosophy is the domination of the concept over the finite. True knowledge, from the standpoint of the Enlightenment, reflects the nature of the finite subject rather than the nature of Knowledge itself. For Hegel, this attitude leads to nothing but the annulment of the Absolute, Reason, the Concept, and consequently, Knowledge. If there is knowledge, which for Hegel is philosophy itself, it must embrace the very conception of the Absolute. Therefore, Hegel's philosophical aim is to

It is with Kant that the conception of knowledge takes on a temporal form. What can be known is temporal. “Appearances may, one and all, vanish; but time (as the universal condition of their possibility) cannot itself be removed.” (*CPR*. p. 75: A31/B47). It is both the presupposition and the ultimate goal of *understanding* (*Verstand*) to recognize itself as temporal. In other words, there is no concept of knowledge that is separate from what is temporal. In this respect, the perspective of temporality moves from the margins to the center of philosophy with Kant. In Hegel's philosophy, however, it is neither the task of science to adopt a one-sided attitude toward the conception of Truth through the mediation of the finite spirit, nor is it its destiny to impose limits on the very conception of knowledge. Rather, it is the absolutization of the subject that lies at the core of the nature of science.

In this respect, the death of God cannot be interpreted as the absence of God. Rather, it must be understood as the transcendence of the Absolute from its abstractness into its temporal being. This process is expressed throughout the entire project of the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* in Hegel's system. It consists in the elevation of the pure abstractness of Thought into Nature, then into Spirit, and finally into the realization of Thought as the Idea. This realization is the moment in which Nature and Spirit are brought into reconciliation through the self-determination of the Idea. As Hegel puts it: “Life, however, the highest form in which the Idea exhibits itself in Nature; is simply something which sacrifices itself and whose essence is to become Spirit.” (*LPR III*. P. 42. *Werke* 17: 248). The *life of Spirit*, insofar as it has not yet found itself in unity with

demonstrate Reason at work within philosophy, rather than to define its shortcomings through a negative stance toward it. This perspective on Knowledge, within the context of the Enlightenment, cannot be fulfilled without the reconciliation of the Absolute with Temporality. What is Absolute must be revealed in its temporality as the embodiment of its nature within science.

Spirit, can therefore be regarded as the moment in which “‘being’ passes over into ‘having been’” (*PS. §763. Werke 3: 555*).

In this realization, the death of God aligns with the transition that occurs between life and death. We can say that if existence entails death as the movement from nature to spirit, then the conception of God is not an exception in this regard. This appears to be the meaning that lies at the core of the assertion that ‘God is dead’. That is to say, in order to exist, God, like all living beings, must also die. This is not a process carried out by Spirit alone. Rather, it is the Absolute itself that renders itself temporal and intelligible to the knowing subject. This explicitness lies at the very heart of Science. It represents a constructive process through which humanity discovers its unity with God, rather than remaining in a condition of despair and grief over the separation between the human and the Absolute. In other words, the death of God gives expression to the dialectic of death and birth, which, in the modern period, signifies a fundamental shift within the self and in the self’s relation to the divine.

From this perspective, the death of God can be understood as the self-consciousness of the temporality of the Absolute. This self-consciousness is the self-knowledge of the Absolute in coming to know itself as the subjectivity of the subject. The aim must now be centered on the subject as universal, rather than attributing universality solely to the being of the Absolute. As Hegel follows this line of thought in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

The [absolute] essence has thereby [by the process of positing itself as universal] come to be its own Self in its sensuous presence; the immediate existence of actuality has ceased to be something alien and external for the absolute essence, since that existence is superseded, is universal. This death is, therefore, its resurrection as Spirit. (*PS. §779. Werke 3: 566*)

This accomplishment is the presentation of the Absolute as the subjectivity of the subject. That is to say, Spirit is now equipped with the self-certainty that what belongs to its history as its past is also its present. This present is not something that vanishes within the passing stream of infinite present nows. Rather, what lies at the very nature of its being is the *absolute present*. The past, therefore, comes to be more than an infinite sequence of successive events. It becomes something that belongs to the Absolute dimension of truth, through which Spirit finds its absolute representation.

The realization of the Absolute in this manner embraces the metaphysical cornerstone of Hegel's philosophy, namely that Substance must be realized as Subject. This does not refer solely to the one-sided, infinite self-consciousness of the subject, which, after negating and determining itself, comes to recognize itself as Substance. Rather, the idiosyncratic aspect of Hegel's metaphysics is that, at the same time, Substance also knows itself as Subject. That is to say, it is the Absolute that represents itself as the *present* for subjectivity, and in this representation, the subjectivity of the subject has no other destiny than to know itself in its *otherness* as the Absolute and to act in accordance with that knowledge.⁶⁹ In this respect, the *absolute present* can also be understood as the point Hegel reaches at the culmination of his reflections on the destiny of history in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*:

⁶⁹. In Hyppolite's interpretation, the transformation from the Religion chapter to the Absolute Knowing chapter in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* can be understood as the transition from the representational territory of religion, where "the community is indeed truth that knows itself, but it is not conscious of producing this truth." (Hyppolite, 1974, p. 569), to the domain of Absolute Knowledge, where "the production of truth as a development of the self belongs to it." (Ibid). According to this reading, this transformation represents the transcendence of consciousness from its abstract representational dimension to the point at which it knows itself as the self-consciousness of the subjectivity of the subject. The entry into Absolute Knowledge, in this respect, reveals to the subject the self-consciousness of history. This revelation marks the unification of substance as the Absolute and subject as the knowing agent. As Hyppolite writes in the penultimate paragraph of the Religion section of *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*:

Actual spirit, the spirit of history, becomes its own self-knowledge, and that this knowledge of itself is presented to its consciousness in history, indeed imply the dialectical reconciliation of finite human existence with essence; but when this reconciliation is grasped as our work, this double requirement leads to a divine humanity which temporally poses an eternal truth. (Hyppolite, 1974, p. 570).

While we are thus concerned exclusively with the idea of spirit, and in the history of the world regard everything as only its manifestation, we have, in traversing the past, however extensive its periods, only to do with what is present; for philosophy, as occupying itself with the true, has to do with the eternally present. Nothing in the past is lost for it, for the idea is ever present; spirit is immortal; with it there is no past, no future, but an essential now. (*LPH*. p. 190. *Werke* 12: 105).

At first glance, based on the progression of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, it may appear that it is simply the subject who, by venturing into reality, realizes the truth of beings as its own product. However, the most complex aspect of Hegel's philosophy is that it is the Truth itself that comes to know itself as temporality. In this sense, the quality of the self-knowledge of Truth can be attributed to Reason. It is this very quality that constitutes the relation between substance and subject in Hegel's system. This is not to say that Reason is equal to the Absolute, or that the destiny of Reason is to become an Absolute-like being. Rather, it is to say that Reason serves as the bridge that concretizes the abstractness of the Absolute through its realization in temporality. It is in this sense that, although Reason possesses the self-certainty of Truth, by the end of the chapter on Reason, it is still striving to become Truth. In Hegel's words: "reality directly comes to be for it [Reason] a reality that is just as much *not* that of Reason, while Reason is at the same time supposed to be all reality." (*PS*. §239. *Werke* 3: 185).

The reality of Reason, therefore, can be understood as the very being that constitutes the two-sided relation between the Absolute and Spirit. That is to say, insofar as the Absolute knows itself as temporal reality, the subject recognizes itself in the Absolute. What is Truth is the very nature of the reconciliation between Absolute and Spirit, Substance and Subject, infinity and temporality, and God and Man. This reconciliation is the subject matter of philosophy itself. It is

from the standpoint of Reason that the most intuitive and evident reality of existence as temporality can simultaneously be seen as the most abstract reality of beings as God. In brief, the realization of Reason in this way establishes the ground for viewing temporality as the *absolute now* in Hegel's philosophy. This realization, in turn, opens the theoretical dimension for criticizing the views of Hegel's contemporaries on the Enlightenment, for whom neither God nor Reason provides any rational foundation for constituting the subjectivity of the subject.

2.5. Time and the Eternal Representation of the Absolute

As briefly mentioned, the division between the human and the divine in the Enlightenment bears monumental significance for the temporality of subjectivity. What emerges from this era is a form of subjectivism, and the most certain truth of this subjectivism is no longer the Absolute beyond, but temporality itself. The reconciliation discussed in the previous section thus becomes, in Hegel's philosophy, the reconciliation between temporality and the Absolute. This reconciliation takes place within the very nature of science for modern humanity. That is to say, in order to preserve both the being of God and the agency of the subject, the embodiment of the Absolute must occur in time. Hegel's project, in this respect, can be understood as the task of absolutizing the subject in order to achieve reconciliation between God and the human.

In Reid's account, the absolutization of the Subject, both from the perspective of Hegel's *Logic* and the *Phenomenology*, is constituted through an eternal Now in Hegel's system. This Now is not an instance or a fleeting glimmer among infinite nows, but the matured Now, constituted by the knowledge of its own history. That is to say, the Now is the *absolute present*, a present that knows itself as such in relation to the knowledge of its past. Otherwise, as is the case with immediate knowledge in the *Phenomenology*, the Now, lacking self-consciousness, has no other destiny than to be regarded as the vanishing moment in the experience of consciousness.

The *absolute now*, therefore, is not the vanishing moment of experience, but the actuality of experience, which can be understood as the culmination of subjectivity in its self-knowledge of all its past. That is to say, what truly is, is the Now, the self-certain, self-grounded subjectivity.

As Reid puts it:

the logic of the concept in its temporal unfolding shows that Hegelian history leads to a “Now” understood as a self-knowing (*gnothi seauton*) where the selfhood of humanity (what Hegel calls Spirit) recognizes itself in the history of its own course, apprehended as essentially past. It is precisely this self-recognition in the world as having become that Hegel calls “Reason” in the historical context. (Reid, 2025b, p.9)

This is precisely how the *present* attains its metaphysical stance in Hegel’s philosophy. That is to say, by attributing Reason to it, Spirit perceives all passing moments of experience as moments of the *present*. It is the self-consciousness of Spirit that constitutes the entire reality inherent in the modern understanding of Temporality. What Reason above all demands is the reality of actuality and the actuality of reality. This is both the comprehension and the task that Spirit carries by its very nature, through the self-certainty of being all truth, which it owes to Reason.

Through the progression of history, Hegel claims that the unity of Substance and Subject takes place over time through a dialectical movement and mediation that occurs by means of the subject itself. On the other hand, Substance is the whole, encompassing the entire historical process of knowing. The knowledge of Substance, therefore, is not confined to any specific historical period but refers to the subject’s knowledge of the Absolute through its historical self-knowing. That is to say, the true realization of knowledge lies in the fact that it is subjectivity that comes to know the subject. This insight is latent in the true realization of Temporality in

Hegel's system. What is temporal is not something external to the subject, and the temporality of truth expresses the subjectivity of the subject. Indeed, it can be understood as the realization of the subject as Substance.

What is above all important in this context is the persistence of the same conceptual framework through which we viewed the relation between God's knowledge of Himself and the finite spirit's knowledge of God. As previously mentioned, human self-consciousness necessarily elevates itself to the standpoint of God's self-knowledge. Correspondingly, the spiritual God, through His self-differentiation as the dialectic of incarnation, comes to know His truth in the self-consciousness of Spirit. Hence, we can conclude that the process of Identity is something that persists in both Religion and Science. That is to say, Truth is the self-consciousness of truth across both domains of knowledge. However, the puzzling aspect of this insight is that we are not directly engaged with Truth itself in either Religion or Science. Rather, what both Hegel and Kant are concerned with is the *consciousness of truth*. The difference arises when, for Kant, what we rightly possess is only the consciousness of truth, whereas for Hegel, the consciousness of truth indicates Truth.

In fact, it is Spirit that matures to recognize its reality as temporal. An immature Spirit is not yet historical. This does not mean that Spirit, before getting the self-consciousness of itself as the truth of being, lacks any history. Of course it has a history, but it does not yet possess the self-knowledge of itself as a historical being. This is precisely the point at which we can shed light on the role of Reason in reconciling temporality with the non-temporal conception of the Absolute. In Hegel's system, Reason is the purposive, self-grounded activity of thought, and its purposiveness is directed toward the self-certainty of consciousness as the actuality of truth. That is to say, Reason aims at true actuality in Hegel's system, an actuality that is the product of

Spirit. Therefore, Reason must be temporal, since it is directed toward the finite's knowledge of truth. Yet, at the same time, the reality of Reason as the infinite truth of human knowledge is the aspect through which it embraces the Absolute and thus is not temporal. It is this reconciliation between consciousness and the self-consciousness of truth that is ascribed to Reason, and its most concrete and bold manifestation is history in Hegel's metaphysics. Put briefly, for history to know itself as history, it requires Reason as the central element of its nature.

This claim aligns with the view that, for Hegel, it is the modern human who is metaphysical. On this account, Temporality transcends itself. It does not merely signify temporality within the context of Hegel's metaphysics; rather, what it truly reveals is Truth itself. It is knowledge that knows itself in its temporality, and this self-relation lies at the very heart of what Hegel understands as Science. From this perspective, Religion does not fall outside the domain of knowledge, nor does it represent a reality whose expiration has passed for modern thought. Instead, it is the truth of Religion as Absolute that comes to know itself in its temporality. That is to say, the embodiment of the Absolute appears as temporality within Hegel's system.⁷⁰ It is the process through which the recognition of Substance as Subject, and Subject as Substance, reaches maturity. The self-consciousness of this maturity belongs to the very nature of Science.

⁷⁰. In contrast to my view, there are interpreters such as Kojève who, by not relying on the Absolute and by rejecting the notion of truth in its absolute sense within Hegel's philosophy, attempt to portray a one-sided relation between Time and the Concept (*Begriff*) in the *Phenomenology*. More broadly, what these scholars aim to criticize in Hegel's system is the dominance of the Concept over Time. However, from the standpoint of such critics, what is truly temporal is the movement of self-consciousness. This movement, by its very nature, is the signifier of temporality, without any need to establish temporality on the foundation of the metaphysical dimension of knowledge. In Kojève's words: "Existence is essentially *change* _ that is, a *temporal* entity. On the other hand, there is change *only* in existence _ that is, Existence is not only *temporal*, but Time itself." (Kojève, 1969, p. 103). A serious question that may arise in relation to such interpretive efforts is: why should we need something *beyond* in order to know Temporality? This dilemma could also be seen as the reason Kant begins his philosophy with the *Transcendental Aesthetic*. As Burbidge argues in his critique of Kojève's perspective, the issue is not the externality of Time to the Absolute, but rather the internality of Temporality to the activity of thought. This internality, in fact, is the central concern of Hegel's speculative philosophy. As Burbidge states: "In pure thought there is no distinction between the concept of thought and the act of thinking. Therefore, when we think a concept and thought moves to thinking a related concept, that movement itself forms an aspect of thought." (Burbidge, 1973, p. 407).

For Hegel, the very nature of temporality grounds itself in infinity. The richest experience of time as *absolute presence* can only be known when subjective Spirit recognizes itself as a temporal being. Subjective Spirit is the manifestation of the Absolute and, in itself, is the absolute presence of all its past as its history. Its absoluteness lies in viewing the human not as an alienated individual being, as existentialism might suggest, but as a metaphysical and social being whose determination is rooted in its history. Its destiny, therefore, is nothing other than the destiny of its community.⁷¹

By grounding Time in the *absolute present*, and by examining temporality through the dual agencies of the Absolute and Spirit, the accomplishments of Hegel's system depend on the capacity of Reason to interpret determinacy as a *relation-to-other* that is internally constitutive of the Absolute, which is, in itself, *a relation-to-self*. More specifically, the realization of Truth lies in the fact that the identity of the Absolute with its knowledge must be transformed into a negative relation to the knowledge of Spirit. This is the process by which the externality of knowledge becomes internal to self-consciousness. The difference between the *self-related* knowledge of the Absolute and the *other-related* knowledge of Spirit is that, in order for Spirit to attain the self-knowledge of the Absolute, it must first acquire the knowledge of Identity. However, this knowledge of Identity is not accessible except through the act of self-othering, which unfolds through the process of Negation. In this sense, identity as negative self-relation is inseparable from a relation-to-other that is internal to it. At the core of this position lies the idea

⁷¹. The *absolute present* can also be understood within the context in which Houlgate interprets the metaphysical stance of time in Hegel's system as "the idea that the now or the present is *self-negating* or *self-sublating*." (Houlgate, 2006, p. 127). In this respect, we can even dissolve any distinction between Time, now, and present by ascribing to Time the quality of *self-sublation*. That is to say, the coming to be of the Now and its passing away belong to the very absolute nature of Time. This is the way in which Time can be grasped as the *absolute present*, not in the sense of an infinite succession of moments, but rather as the eternity of the present. "Eternity will not come to be, nor was it, but it is." (PN. §258. *Werke* 9: 50).

that the self-externalization of the Absolute must be transformed into the self-internalization of Time. The process of the self-internalization of Time begins with Self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. It is at this point that the concept of Negation begins to articulate its own history.

Through its development, self-consciousness knows itself not merely as a part of the experience of Spirit destined to unite with absolute knowledge, but rather as the truth that, until now, had been presented to it externally through the Absolute and is, from now on, presented internally through reflection into itself. This inward movement marks the transcendence of its subjectivity and the realization of its universality within the life of the community. What we now encounter is self-consciousness as the self-grounded activity of Spirit, for which knowledge is the knowledge of its own inwardness, not the knowledge of an Absolute existing outside of itself. It is here that God reveals Himself in the form of a knowing that knows itself. The constitution of self-knowing in self-consciousness, in this respect, can be understood by examining its nature as pure negativity. "Thus, what in religion was content or a form for presenting an other, is here the Self's own act; the Notion requires the content to be the Self's own act." (*PS*. § 797. *Werke* 3: 582)

Indeed, what the action of finite being signifies is its self-knowledge in its *otherness*. That is to say, *relation-to-other* constitutes knowledge for finite beings. Thus, it appears that the foundation of knowledge must be grounded in the principle that *relation-to-other* is to be transformed into *relation-to-self*. It is through this process that Spirit comes to know itself as Science. The self-knowledge of Spirit, in this respect, can be understood on the basis of Hegel's rational commitment to the Spinozist principle that all determination is essentially negation. Hence, to be determinate is to stand in *relation-to-other*, an *other* that is at the same time the

negation of the self. In this manner, it is negation that must become central to the project of the absolutization of the subject.

To recapitulate and summarise, human self-consciousness comes to know itself within the self-knowledge of the Absolute. Absolute Knowledge, in turn, situates itself within the dimension of Temporality as the self-consciousness of Spirit. From the standpoint of human self-consciousness, this represents the transition that occurs from the side of Spirit. If something must be known as Truth, it is Spirit itself, since it is Spirit's self-knowledge that necessitates the representation of the Absolute. On the other hand, from the standpoint of the Absolute, Spirit owes its representation to the very nature of the Absolute. That is to say, as previously discussed, Spirit cannot generate anything other than the infinite passing over and coming to be of moments appearing in different shapes in Time. In simple terms, if we are seeking the conception of Truth, as philosophy does, then it is the Absolute that must reveal itself to Spirit.

The identity between this two-sided activity of knowing, which moves from the self-consciousness of Spirit to the self-knowledge of the Absolute, and then returns from the self-knowledge of the Absolute to the self-consciousness of Spirit, constitutes the very nature of knowing (*Erkennen*) in Hegel's system. If there is such a thing as Truth, then the knowledge of Truth is rooted in this reconciliation, which dissolves the separation between Absolute and Spirit. According to Hegel, the manifestation of this reconciliation as Absolute Spirit takes place in three domains: Art, Religion, and Philosophy. Truth, on this account, is not a stable reality that exists beyond and apart from knowing. Rather, Knowledge itself is Truth. That is to say, to the extent that the subjective agent knows the Truth, the Truth must also know itself in the subjective agent. This is the sense in which "humanity is the historical actor in the self-consciousness activity of God or the Idea," (Reid, 2025b, p. 11). The study of the manifestation of the Absolute

is another name for the study of History in Hegel's system. This History is not concerned with a mere sequence of random events in time. Rather, it is an inquiry into Spirit's temporality as seen from the standpoint of the Absolute.

In the next chapter, my primary focus is on the Self-Consciousness chapter of the *Phenomenology*, particularly on interpreting Hegel's remark that "Substance is, as Subject, pure, *simple negativity*" (PS, §18. *Werke* 3: 23). When freedom is understood within the context of self-consciousness, it tends toward movement through negation, which I describe as the inward movement of the subject. Self-consciousness, in this interpretation, cannot withstand freedom. Yet, self-consciousness approaches freedom passively, as it remains caught in an infinite cycle of negation and determination. That is to say, when freedom is mediated through self-consciousness, it takes the form of negation and, through this process, determines itself as the consciousness of freedom. In other words, through self-consciousness, we encounter the imperative *Ought to be free*, whereas through the Absolute, we encounter *Being free*.

Chapter Two: Freedom and Negation

1. Self-consciousness and Negation

1.1. Hegel's Concept of Self-consciousness

Following Hegel's claim that "self-consciousness is *Desire* in general" (*PS*. §167. *Werke* 3: 139)⁷² we can add that this desire aims to be knowledge. Indeed, self-consciousness is the initial step toward knowledge in the *Phenomenology*, where the truth that was *other* to consciousness is to be realized by the self as its own truth. However, at this stage, being knowledge does not yet occur explicitly for the self. This is because, to be knowledge, the self must be in the state of self-grounded subjectivity. It is at this point that consciousness truly recognizes itself as the subjective agent. Yet, the form of consciousness that emerges at the stage of self-consciousness is the realization of its truth in its *otherness*, where truth remains alienated from the self, and the self is compelled to negate itself in order to realize truth for itself. In this respect, through its development, self-consciousness can be understood more in terms of *what it is not* than *what it*

⁷². There is a general consensus among interpreters that by *Desire* (*Begierde*), Hegel does not mean the animalistic nature of the human being, as the ordinary meaning of *Begierde* might suggest in both German and English. Rather, *Desire* refers to the naïve self-certainty of the self that becomes conscious of itself as self-consciousness by being "certain of the nothingness of this other" (*PS*. §174. *Werke* 3: 143) and by explicitly affirming that "this nothingness is *for it* the truth of the other" (*Ibid*). In other words, *Begierde* expresses the less developed certainty that the knowing agent possesses in its initial confrontation with knowledge. According to Pinkard's interpretation, this minimal form of certainty constitutes self-consciousness as the starting point for entering the social sphere. As he explains:

although in consciousness there is a relation between a conscious subject and a world of putatively independent objects, in self-consciousness the terms of the relation are not independent of each other. This is constituted, as Hegel puts it, by the "I" relating itself to itself. Self-consciousness is the awareness of one's conceptual activity, even though this awareness may not be adequate to what is really going on in such activity. (Pinkard, 1994, p. 47)

Contrary to both my interpretation and that of Pinkard, Butler, in a truly interesting account, transcends the concept of *Desire* itself and places it as something that arises only after self-consciousness emerges. That is to say, in her view, to have *Desire* presupposes self-consciousness. *Desire*, in this sense, is "the illumination of its own opacity ... This is part of what is meant by the *reflexivity* that *desire* is said to embody and enact. Eventually, the reflexivity enacted by *desire* will be identical with absolute knowledge itself." (Butler, 1999, p. 24)

is.⁷³ That is to say, as I will elaborate further, in its self-determination in its otherness, which constitutes the true nature of self-consciousness, the self remains alienated from itself. This indicates that the self is *what it is* by virtue of *not being itself*.

On this account, the approach of self-consciousness toward Truth takes place through striving for knowing (*Erkennen*) rather than through the actualization of knowledge. It is, as Hegel describes, “the struggle against an enemy, to vanquish whom is really to suffer defeat” (*PS*. §209. *Werke* 3: 164). Hegel is not merely discussing the interactions among a multitude of self-conscious beings at the stage of self-consciousness; rather, he is illuminating the nature of self-consciousness itself, in which both otherness and sameness are inherently present. Indeed, the self must “rid itself of its self-externality” (*PS*. §187. *Werke* 3: 149) to become identical with its own consciousness. In this process, it is *absolute negation* that determines the relation of the self to the other. This does not simply mean that the self enters a struggle to determine itself as a free individual. In a broader sense, *absolute negation* is Hegel’s method for ascending through the movement of self-consciousness toward the status of knowledge. It represents the transition from the negative standpoint of consciousness, as skepticism and despair, to the constructive standpoint of knowledge as Absolute Knowledge.

⁷³. The entire aim of self-consciousness throughout its development can be understood as the effort to dwell within one unified existence, rather than to perceive itself as divided into different realities. The reality of the self must be Real, One, and Whole. When viewed through this perspective, neither the experience of Stoicism, which is defined by the universality of thought as abstract freedom, in which it is “thinking which thinks itself, the unchanging and the genuine certainty of itself” (*PS*. §205. *Werke* 3: 161); nor the experience of Skepticism, where “the negativity of free self-consciousness comes to know itself in the many and varied forms of life as a real negativity.” (*PS*. §202. *Werke* 3: 159) can be considered sufficient with regard to the actualization of knowledge. Ultimately, for self-consciousness, it is the divided unhappy consciousness that results from the striving to become knowledge. This is the stage in which “The duplication of self-consciousness within itself [sameness versus otherness], which is essential in the Notion of Spirit, is thus here before us, but not yet in its unity.” (*PS*. §206. *Werke* 3: 163)

The central question, when viewed from this perspective, is how the movement of self-consciousness results in knowledge within Hegel's system. That is to say, how does *absolute negation* become Absolute Knowledge in the *Phenomenology*? Do negation and knowledge contradict one another? Or do they complement each other? Or is there a relation of precedence between the two? If so, which one takes priority?

This fundamental question can be traced through Bruno Bauer, one of Hegel's earliest theological interpreters. In his *Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs*, published in Wigand's *Vierteljahrsschrift* in 1845 (vol. 3–4)⁷⁴, Bauer argues that Hegel owes his conception of substance as infinite, eternal truth to Spinoza, while his notion of true selfhood, or the finite temporal 'I', reflects his Fichtean background, in which the absolute self, as the absolute knowledge of the self-conscious 'I', is identical with the self-conscious 'I' itself. The interaction between these two fundamental axes of Hegel's thought leads to the emergence of the idea of the equality of substance and subject. Through Bauer's interpretation, the entire task of Hegel's philosophy is to overcome the contradiction between absolute knowledge and spiritual knowledge, which by its nature is grounded in the identity of substance and subject, and to make this unity the reality of the One and the Whole. Overcoming such a contradiction, as Bauer writes in the *Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs*:

⁷⁴. In this article, Bauer is indeed concerned with Hegel's philosophy, but not in order to defend it. Rather, he seeks to critically reassess and transcend it through his engagement with Feuerbach's critique of religion. Bauer's primary concern lies in the relation between the self-knowledge of God and the knowledge that arises from human self-consciousness, and in how these two forms of knowledge reveal themselves as one and the same reality, namely the Absolute. For further reading on this concern, see Bauer, B. *Kritik der Geschichte der Offenbarung: Die Religion des Alten Testaments in der geschichtlichen Entwicklung ihrer Prinzipien dargestellt* (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1983); and Strauss, D. F. *Die christliche Glaubenslehre in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und im Kampfe mit der modernen Wissenschaft* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973). For an insightful interpretation of Bauer's account concerning the unity between the self-knowledge of the Absolute and the subjectivity of self-consciousness, see Moggach, D. "The Subject as Substance: Bruno Bauer's Critique of Stirner." *The Owl of Minerva* 41, no. 1 (2009): 61–83.

Er konnte es aber nur dadurch, daß die Aufstellung der Frage, wie sich das Selbstbewußtsein zum absoluten Geist und der absolute Geist zum Selbstbewußtsein verhält, nicht mit Halbwahrheiten oder Phantasien verschleiert, sondern für immer unmöglich gemacht wurde. Es war nach zwei Seiten möglich. Entweder muß das Selbstbewußtsein wieder in der Glut der Substanz verbrennen, d. h. das reine Substantialitätsverhältnis feststehen und bestehen; oder es muß aufgezeigt werden, daß die Persönlichkeit der Urheber ihrer Attribute und ihres Wesens ist, daß es im Begriffe der Persönlichkeit überhaupt liegt, sich selbst zu beschränken und diese Beschränkung, die sie durch ihr allgemeines Wesen setzt, wieder aufzuheben, da eben dieses Wesen nur das Resultat ihrer inneren Selbstunterscheidung, ihrer Tätigkeit ist. (Bauer, 1848, pp 87-88).

(It could be done only by posing again the question of how self-consciousness relates to the absolute spirit, and how the absolute spirit relates to self-consciousness. This could not be done by concealing it with superficial reconciliations or fantasies, but by rendering such a question impossible once and for all. There were, however, two possible ways. Either self-consciousness has to be consumed again in the fire of substance, that is, the pure relation of substantiality (*Substantialitätsverhältnis*) can persist and exist. Or it must be shown that personality (*Persönlichkeit*) is the author of its own attributes and of its own essence (*Wesen*), and that it lies to the very concept of personality itself in general to set limits to itself (*sich selbst zu beschränken*), and to sublimate again this limitation which it posits through its universal essence (*allgemeines Wesen*), since this very essence is nothing other than the result of its inner self-differentiation (*Selbstunterscheidung*), of its own activity (*Tätigkeit*)).

In this perspective, although we can first affirm that the substantiality of any form of subjective consciousness, whether taken as individuality, particularity, or universality of consciousness, belongs to the universality of substance, it is, in effect, self-consciousness that dissolves the subjectivity of the subject into the universality of substance. This dissolution occurs through the thinking and acting character of self-consciousness. That is to say, it is, in practice, only within self-consciousness that all relations, oppositions, and contradictions are brought into unity. The essentiality of substance, in this sense, fundamentally belongs to the essentiality of its representation through self-consciousness. The very substantiality of this essentiality constitutes the true nature of *Erkennen* in Hegel's philosophy. As Ferro points out in his epistemological reading of the *Phenomenology*, "There is no identity, however simple, without determination: for something to be what it is, it must be different from everything else, and this difference can only be found in its properties." (Ferro, 2022, p. 162).

At the same time, as elaborated in the previous chapter, it can be affirmed that it is the presence of the Absolute that holds priority over the realization of truth in the system. In this respect, self-consciousness, which indeed indicates that *the self is the truth of its being*, is not an exception. That is to say, the representation of self-consciousness as the truth of its being belongs fundamentally to the representation of the Absolute. Moreover, as Hegel explains:

only the *abstract moments* of the substance belong to *self-consciousness*; but since these, as pure movements, spontaneously impel themselves onward, self-consciousness enriches itself till it has wrestled from consciousness the entire substance and has absorbed into itself the entire structure of essentialities of substance. And, since this negative attitude to objectivity is just as much positive, it is a positing, it has produced them out of itself, and in so doing has at the same time restored them for consciousness" (*PS*. §801. *Werke* 3: 584)

Through this perspective, substance is present in self-consciousness, but its presentation does not negate the movement of self-consciousness toward substance. Indeed, the presentation of substance within the movement of self-consciousness is the manner in which substance comes to realize itself as subject. However, from the standpoint of the subject, this narrative takes an entirely different form. From the subjective side, the entire edifice of the Absolute is constructed upon the foundation of human self-consciousness. All that exists is the subject's zeal and effort to become knowledge. What is known is nothing other than its own knowledge, and if there is such a reality as substance, it is the result of the subject's endeavor to know itself. At the same time, the human subject may remain indifferent to the reality of substance, since the being of substance has no direct bearing on its knowledge of itself. That is to say, it is from the side of substance that the being of the subject is necessitated, whereas the subject, in its progression, remains indifferent to the being of substance. Broadly speaking, to clarify this distinction in philosophical terms, we can say that the movement from subject to substance is a *realistic* movement, while the movement from substance to subject is an *idealistic* one.

Self-consciousness, in this respect, is the inward movement of the self that, above all, represents its insufficiency in relation to the conception of Truth. On the other hand, the aim of self-consciousness is to become Science, which declares "its power to lie simply in its *being*" (*PS*. §76. *Werke* 3: 71). The ideal for self-consciousness is therefore to attain Identity, since its very nature suggests that it *ought to be* the truth of its own being. However, a problem arises when we recognize that "in coming on the scene it is not yet Science in its developed and unfolded truth." (*Ibid*); rather, self-consciousness declares itself to be insufficient to its truth. Being self-conscious, in this sense, means recognizing a distinction between how the world appears from the perspective of the self, which constitutes the very meaning of knowing

(*Erkennen*) for consciousness, and how it might exist independently of that perspective as Absolute Knowledge. Viewed in this way, self-consciousness involves an awareness of internal division between knowing and knowledge, a recognition that, by its very nature, it is not self-sufficient to the Truth. This negative attitude results in the contradiction that lies not outside self-consciousness but within it. That is to say, the contradiction is not something external to the self; rather, self-consciousness is, by its very nature, *contradiction*.

Relying on the contradictory inward movement of self-consciousness and its desire to become knowledge, Kojève interprets this aspect of Hegel's philosophy through an anthropological perspective, in which human reality is actively made rather than passively found by an external source. That is to say, from this standpoint, philosophical discourse enters into the dialectical activity of self-consciousness, in which the human being finds itself as a historically situated being engaged in the process of knowing itself. "It is to say (on the metaphysical level) that Being realizes itself not only as *natural World*, but also as a *historical* (or human) *World*." (Kojève, 1969, p. 259). In simple terms, history has no independent existence except insofar as it is seen as the result of *work*, which is the precondition for the being of self-consciousness.

In this respect, self-consciousness owes its being to the nature of the slave rather than the master. It is the slave who strives to know itself and attempts to express its reality as the reality of being. However, his labor aims at truth, but it is not Truth itself. Rather, it is the contradiction of Truth, a contradiction that nevertheless declares itself to be Truth. In this sense, for self-consciousness, Truth is Negation. Negation, in this context, is the only power that enables the slave to approach the knowledge of itself. Historical progress, therefore, can be defined as the progressive realization of freedom and rationality achieved by the slave in the process of

knowing itself, the process which is inseparable from its *work*. Through his *work*, the slave earns recognition and, as a result, attains its own type of mastery.

Hegel's master, on the other hand, does not in fact negate anything. This is because the master's negativity is abstract rather than concrete. The master does not need to determine its being, since its being is already assumed as pure Being. In contrast, it is the slave who seeks to determine itself in its otherness. For the slave, *determination through otherness* becomes the reality of its own being as self-determination. This reality is the sole and complete outcome of the slave's work. It is through its *work* that the slave contradicts itself, and in this contradiction, it begins to find its freedom. Freedom, for the slave, is therefore the result of self-determination through the inward negative movement of the self. It is the outcome of its *work* and does not belong to its immediate being. Rather, its being is *absolute negation*.⁷⁵

The inward movement of the self, on the other hand, can be seen as the path through which the self strives to overcome contradiction. That is to say, self-consciousness is a dramatic character, always in conflict. It is both the contradiction and the process of overcoming the contradiction. To overcome contradiction is to enter the process of knowing (*Erkennen*). In fact, negation is the only tool available to the self for realizing itself in its otherness. From this perspective, viewing the other as contrary to the self takes on a different and reversed meaning. Self-consciousness sees the other as its own self. The other, for self-consciousness, is its essential life, without it, the self's essential being would be diminished.

⁷⁵. For further reading on Kojève's interpretation of Hegel, see Goldford, Dennis J. "Kojève's Reading of Hegel," *International Philosophic Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 4 (1982), pp. 275–294; and Riley, Patrick. "Introduction to the Reading of Alexandre Kojève," *Political Theory*, vol. 9, no. 1 (February 1981), pp. 5–48.

On this account, it is the striving for knowing (*Erkennen*) that arises as the subjective participation in the development of truth inherent in the meaning of self-consciousness, rather than knowledge as the objectively definite sense of truth. In this sense, the self knows what indicates truth; indeed, the self declares *itself* to be the truth. For the self, truth is the way it approaches the other's truth as its own knowledge. What is true is the *process of knowing* (*Erkennen*) itself, not something external to that process. To discover external truth is, in fact, nothing other than to internalize it within the self's own *process of knowing*. That is to say, the truth of the other is self-knowing.

Within a different context, the self-representation of Truth as the absolute knowledge of self-consciousness is brought to light through McDowell's interpretation of the master-slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology*.⁷⁶ On this account, the self-knowledge of self-consciousness relies on Hegel's inspiration from the Kantian *apperceptive* unity of self-consciousness, whose unity is the unity of the 'I think' in every moment of its experience of consciousness. That is to say, in light of the representation of all empirical perception as *transcendental apperception*, the self-knowledge of the self, as its self-identity, does not rely on its knowledge of *otherness*; rather, it is

⁷⁶. The orthodox interpretation of Hegel's master/slave dialectic is grounded in the idea of mutual recognition between two distinct self-conscious individuals, whereas McDowell's heterodox reading suggests that Hegel allegorically illustrates two different aspects of a single self-consciousness, and that the truth of recognition fundamentally belongs to the self-knowing of one consciousness. As Sören Lichtenthäler points out, the main question that arises amid the interaction between these two readings is as follows:

Geht es im Selbstbewusstseinskapitel darum, dass das Selbstbewusstsein eines einzelnen Subjekts nur durch das Zustandekommen eines komplexen Anerkennungsverhältnisses zwischen (mindestens) zwei Subjekten ent- bzw. bestehen kann? Oder geht es darum, dass das Selbstbewusstsein eines einzelnen Subjekts als komplexes Anerkennungsverhältnis zwischen zwei unterschiedlichen Aspekten seines eigenen Bewusstseins zustande kommt bzw. als solches besteht?“ (Lichtenthäler, 2019, p. 227) (Is the chapter on self-consciousness about whether the self-consciousness of an individual subject can only arise or exist through the emergence of a complex relation of recognition between (at least) two subjects? Or is it rather about whether the self-consciousness of an individual subject comes about, or exists, as a complex relation of recognition between two different aspects of its own consciousness?).

For a detailed reading, see Zander, F. *Herrschaft und Knechtschaft: Die Genese des Selbstbewusstseins in Hegels "Phänomenologie des Geistes"*, Ein Kommentar (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2014).

through the absolute knowledge of itself that the self is certain of itself as *identity*, and it is in light of such knowledge of *identity* that the self recognizes *otherness* as difference from itself.⁷⁷ However, this knowledge of *identity* is not yet permanent knowledge for the self at this stage. Rather, it merely indicates the temporary knowledge of the self as individual, for whom acting and thinking consciousness are immersed into one single consciousness as *apperceptive consciousness*. This self-consciousness is the consciousness of Life in its immediacy within this interpretation. In this respect, the self realizes such self-consciousness as the freedom of consciousness.⁷⁸ In the language of McDowell:

What it actually is is my self-consciousness, not someone else's. When that becomes clear, empirical consciousness will be integrated with apperceptive consciousness, and the otherness of the world that confronts my empirical consciousness will be purged of its threat to open a gulf between subjective and objective. (McDowell, 2006, p. 42).

Considering such an interpretive effort, the whole of Hegel's systematic project, at least in the *Phenomenology*, must be understood as the movement from Identity to Difference, and then as the grasping, within Difference, of the truth of the Absolute's knowledge of itself. However, one

⁷⁷. This interpretation stands in opposition to Houlgate's reading, as he resists positing any presuppositions in interpreting Hegel's philosophy. In this respect, as a reaction to McDowell's interpretation, Houlgate responds in his article "McDowell, Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit," *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2009, pp. 13–26. Following this, a sequence of responses continues between the two scholars: McDowell, J., "Response to Stephen Houlgate," *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2009, pp. 27–38; Houlgate, S., "Response to John McDowell," *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2009, pp. 39–51; and finally McDowell, J., "Response to Stephen Houlgate's Response," *The Owl of Minerva*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2009, pp. 53–60.

⁷⁸. The meaning of *Erkennen*, from this perspective, should not be reduced to the reciprocal recognition between master and slave. The implications of McDowell's perspective within the sphere of practical philosophy become evident when one considers that the very nature of *Erkennen* is intelligible and disputable only within the shared institutional life of the state. As Stekeler-Weithofer emphasizes in *Eine Kritik juridischer Vernunft: Hegels dialektische Stufung von Idee und Begriff des Rechts*, Hegel's account of lordship and bondage is not a historical narrative but a conceptual analysis that illustrates how relations of domination (*Herrschaft*) are sublated (*aufgehoben*) in the emergence of free and reciprocal relations within the modern state.

may criticize this viewpoint by asking: where is Difference located in such a case? That is to say, if the Kantian *apperceptive 'I'* is presupposed as the backbone of Hegel's thought in introducing self-consciousness, how is it intelligible to discuss the transcendence of the self? In other words, since the *apperceptive 'I'* already possesses absolute knowledge of itself as Identity, how can the transcendence that occurs as the movement of negation and determination, introduced as *Aufhebung* through the conscious experiences of *becoming* the self, be intelligible? This is fundamentally to ask how, without presupposing any division in the nature of self-consciousness, experience and, subsequently, *Erkennen* itself could be intelligible?

Further, by accepting such a presupposition of the *apperceptive 'I'* for Hegel, one is immediately confronted with his critique of Fichte's *absolute 'I'* in the *Differenzschrift*.⁷⁹ For Fichte, to have consciousness presupposes having self-consciousness, not in the form of empirical consciousness but in the form of absolute consciousness. Consciousness, therefore, is built upon absolute self-identity, the $I = I$, through which Difference finds its intelligible ground. Difference, in this sense, does not exist within its nature as an independent reality with a separate destiny or an autonomous narration belonging to its essence. Rather, Difference, by its nature, is demanded through the self-representation of Identity. That is to say, it is the idea of the absolute identity of the 'I' that brings to light its own reality as Difference.

Up to this point, Hegel is in agreement with Fichte; however, the moment at which he diverges from Fichte's thought lies in the claim that Difference must necessarily enter the reality of the system in order to be known as Identity. In this respect, the true meaning of the reality of Identity belongs to the reality of the system and not to an abstract identity taken as the presupposition of Difference. In this sense, the one-sided relation between Identity and

⁷⁹. See *Werke* 2: 52-93

Difference disappears, and Identity must also be constituted through the reality of Difference. Difference, in this respect, is likewise real, and its reality lies in its power to transcend itself from its abstractness, which exists in its otherness to Identity, to its selfhood, which exists in its unity with Identity. From this perspective, it is no longer the case that empirical consciousness must conform to absolute self-knowledge as Identity in order to find intelligibility within the system; rather, the ideality of Identity belongs to the reality of empirical consciousness.

This double relation between the ideality of absolute self-knowledge and the reality of experiential consciousness can be explained through the distinction Hegel makes in his *Encyclopaedia of Logic* between *being-for-itself* and *being-there*. Both *being-for-itself* and *being-there*, however, carry the meaning of *being* at their core. The *ideality* of *being* belongs to being-for-itself, which, for Hegel, is the persistent infinite 'I' as *Spirit* and recalls the apperceptive 'I' of Kant, while its *reality*, as *being-there*, belongs to *nature* or the *otherness* of the 'I'. As Hegel puts it:

Ideality has a content only because it is the ideality of something: and this '*something*' is not merely an indeterminate this or that _ on the contrary, it is being-there characterized as '*reality*' _ to which, when it is maintained on its own, no truth pertains. (*EL*. §96. *Werke* 8: 204).

On this account, it can be affirmed that although reality belongs to the *ideality* of Identity for Hegel, the *ideality* of Identity by itself cannot provide a self-sufficient and decisive expression of the Absolute. Rather, absolute self-knowledge must be grounded in the consciousness of *reality*. For such consciousness, therefore, the representation of *otherness* is an indispensable part of its being. The representation of *otherness*, in this respect, truly constitutes the very nature of

Erkennen in Hegel's philosophy. That is to say, without *otherness* there is no *Erkennen*. The necessity of representing *otherness* for self-consciousness within the system is precisely the point at which the discussion of *Erkennen* takes place in the *Phenomenology*. The intelligibility of *Erkennen*, in this respect, depends on the fulfillment of the ontological gap between the *ideality* of Identity and the consciousness of *reality*.

This is a speculative requirement that must be fulfilled in Hegel's philosophy: to know the identity of difference through the perspective of difference itself. This knowledge is fundamentally grounded in the derivation of the Absolute's self-knowledge from pure self-consciousness. The knowledge of this derivation, however, is temporal and finite, and appears as *Erkennen* in Hegel's philosophy. On this account, first, any discussion of *Erkennen* belongs to the constitutive relation between the self-knowledge of the Absolute and transcendental self-consciousness. Second, what *Erkennen* truly aims to demonstrate is that empirical consciousness becomes identical with transcendental self-consciousness within the system.⁸⁰

The difference between McDowell's point of view and the exposition of self-consciousness in the present work is that, for McDowell, the self-representation of the Absolute for the self at this stage signifies the freedom of consciousness in the stage of Life. For the present interpretation, however, self-consciousness at this stage still strives to be the self and remains insufficient to its knowledge, and it is precisely this insufficiency that makes the conception of freedom intelligible

⁸⁰. In contrast to the present interpretation, Matthew Peters, in an insightful account supporting McDowell's reading in *The Self-Sublation of Empirical Consciousness: Developing McDowell's Heterodox Interpretation of Hegel's Lord/Bondsman Dialectic*, aims to demonstrate that it is absolute self-consciousness, as the self-relating moment of self-consciousness, that prescribes the law of Identity and consequently governs all differentiation within the system. On this account, there exists one consciousness that is the whole, the pure 'I', which does not logically take into account any difference or otherness within itself. That is to say, absolute self-knowledge is the *apperceptive 'I'* itself, and it is as a result of this pure 'I' that the discussion of Difference, as the moment of the alienation of empirical consciousness, arises in Self-consciousness.

to it. The intelligibility of freedom, in this respect, relies on the negative inward movement of self-consciousness, and in practice its freedom is none other than the failure of freedom, which results in unhappy consciousness. More generally, the fundamental questions that arise in confronting McDowell's interpretation can be put forward as follows: if self-consciousness, from the beginning of its narration, knows itself in the context of Kantian *apperceptive consciousness* as the self-certain unity of the 'I think' in every moment of experience, then why is self-consciousness by its nature the movement toward knowledge? What does this movement signify in such a case? And since the very nature of self-consciousness is negativity, where does this negativity lead within such a view?⁸¹

In fact, the problem arises from the fact that the truth encountered by self-consciousness carries a different implication compared to speculative Truth as Knowledge. The distinction between the two can be understood as the difference between the inward movement of the self and the outward representation of the Absolute. This distinction also aligns with the difference between temporality and revelation, as elaborated in the previous chapter. For Absolute Knowledge, the central concern is the *self-externalization of truth* as the subject matter of study. In contrast, self-consciousness is essentially concerned with the *self-internalization of truth*.

The question of the relation between truth for self-consciousness and the Absolute then takes a new form: how can self-consciousness, without yet attaining the status of Truth as Absolute Knowledge, internalize truth? Does this merely suggest breaking the nature of Truth into different shapes and attributing to it a kind of relativism, which would clearly be inconsistent

⁸¹. This point will be illuminated through the return from the Absolute to consciousness by employing the conceptions of Education and Method in the final chapter of this work. The aim is to demonstrate that the truth of identity is fulfilled in the relation between the self-inwardization of truth as the negative movement of consciousness toward truth and the self-externalization of the Absolute as the positive positedness of truth through the return of the Absolute to consciousness.

with Hegel's view of Truth as One and Whole, or should we understand truth in self-consciousness in a way entirely distinct from the notion of Truth as the Absolute? In this regard, the aim of this section is to study the nature of the relationship between the way self-consciousness engages with truth through its inward movement and its relation to Truth in its Absolute sense.

In the first part of this section, the internalization of truth is the subject of my inquiry. In the second part, I will discuss the relation between the inward movement of the self-conscious subject and the outward representation of the Absolute. Finally, my aim is to demonstrate that the conception of Education arises when the self-internalization of the subject unites with the self-externalization of the Absolute within the system. This is the topic I will discuss in the final chapter. More broadly, what I intend to demonstrate in this chapter is that the inward movement of the self is intelligible only through the representation of the system, while, on the other hand, the reality of the system relies on the agency of the self. That is to say, the constitution of the whole depends on its parts, while it is the whole itself that makes the being of its parts intelligible.

1.2. Self-consciousness and Subjectivity

Self-consciousness, as the emergence of the ongoing practical activity between 'I's, can be understood as the mediation between the *immediate examination of consciousness in its indifference to its object of knowledge* and the *emergence of rational society*, where the maturity of Spirit is realized in human history. From this standpoint, self-consciousness contains within itself both the immediacy of consciousness and the actuality of Spirit. Self-consciousness is

mediation, and it is through this mediation that *thinking* can be truly ascribed to the nature of self-consciousness. Indeed, mediation is the *act of thinking that relates to itself as the 'I'*.⁸² In other words, what mediation mediates is itself. In this respect, to clarify the true nature of self-consciousness, the first question that arises is: what is the being that is capable of relating to itself as subject?

Although much of the modern history of philosophy after Descartes can be seen as a series of diverse attempts to answer this question through epistemological, anthropological, sociological, existential, and other approaches, Hegel's response, while distinct from all of them, is nevertheless inclusive of their insights. For Hegel, self-consciousness is the subject's *act of reflecting* upon itself. In the most concise terms, self-consciousness is subjectivity. But what does this subjectivity mean? Is it the act of self-reflection that constitutes the meaning of subjectivity, or is it the subject's act of reflecting on the other that lies at the heart of subjectivity?

In fact, Hegel's account of self-consciousness unites both of these expressions into one. The self's movement toward knowledge is an inward movement toward knowing itself. Yet, the negative aspect of this movement lies in the fact that the inward movement of the self can only be realized outwardly through its effort to know itself in relation to *other* self-consciousness. That is to say, the truth of the self presents itself as an inward movement, while at the same time, Truth is located in being objectified and recognized by the other. Self-consciousness is the reality of its own being, and yet it owes its reality to the being of the other. Subjectivity, therefore, is the process by which self-consciousness takes the other to be itself, while simultaneously seeking to negate the external self that it recognizes as *other*.

⁸². This 'I' is the same empirical consciousness that from the perspective of McDowell transcends itself to the apperceptive consciousness.

The struggle now is to demonstrate that to be the self is to not be the other. Thus, the appearance of the other to self-consciousness, as an independently existing self, conflicts with self-consciousness's notion of itself. That is to say, for truth to be for-itself, it must be internalized by the subject, and this internalization is nothing other than the struggle for recognition. "The road can therefore be regarded as the pathway of doubt, or more precisely as the way of despair." (PS. §78. *Werke* 3: 72). Therefore, self-consciousness, by its very nature, expresses the struggle to become the self. It is only through the negation of otherness that self-consciousness can demonstrate what it is. However, the *absolute negation* at work here does not imply the destruction or ignorance of the other, as the "natural negation of the consciousness" (PS. §188. *Werke* 3: 149), in which both self and other are left "free only indifferently, like things" (PS. §188. *Werke* 3: 150). Rather, Hegel clearly distinguishes between natural negation, which is *death*, and *Aufhebung* (*suspension*), which simultaneously negates, preserves, and transcends the other. Self-consciousness, in this respect, concerns itself with conscious negation as *Aufhebung*. That is to say, self-consciousness, in becoming aware of itself as self, negates itself, and this negation does not simply indicate death. Rather, it indicates the preservation of the self in the medium of life.

Relying on Self-consciousness, the principal characteristic of an agent lies in its *action*. That is to say, *I think* does not, by itself, fully express the nature of self-consciousness. Rather, it is the *action* taken by the agent in relation to knowledge that determines the nature of self-consciousness. Nevertheless, the ideal and final aim of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology* is to realize itself as *I think*. The expression of action by the agent, in the stage of Self-consciousness, takes place through *work*. Work constitutes the essential being of the slave's commitment to serving the master. However, in serving the master, whom the slave recognizes as

other and external to itself, the slave inevitably enters into the *inward movement of self-knowing* through its *work*. This is the moment in the *Phenomenology* where knowing and acting, for the first time, meet one another. In coming to know itself in its otherness to the master, the action of the slave is no longer a matter of simple work. Rather, it becomes a *rational action* that reflects the emergence of agency. As Hegel elaborates: “Now, however, he [the slave] destroys this alien negative moment, posits *himself* as a negative in the permanent order of things, and thereby becomes *for himself*, someone existing on his own account.” (*PS*. §196. *Werke* 3: 154)

This is the process through which, by knowing itself in its otherness, the slave confronts the notion of identity, which is acquired through its own labor rather than as a result of the Absolute. In this regard, the slave perceives its work as its truth, since its knowledge is achieved through the mediation of its own labor. However, the freedom of the slave results from its relation to the master and is not yet self-related in the way the master realizes freedom as an *unmediated truth*. In fact, the slave strives to become free by negating its essential life, which reflects its inadequacy in relation to the conception of truth. However, the negation of its own being, which is defined as its essential nature, represents the *failure of its freedom*. The negative activity of the slave’s consciousness, in this sense, remains internal, as “fear remains inward and mute, and consciousness does not become explicitly for itself.” (*Ibid*)

In fact, *rational action* in its most implicit sense indicates an action that is not compelled by an external power over the self, whether through physical or mental force. Rather, an action is rational when it is freely chosen by the self, which means the action through which the self determines itself as agent. This self-determination of the self as agent, in the dialectic of master and slave in Self-consciousness, however, has no destiny other than the failure of freedom, but it

becomes the point of departure for the discussion of the idea of freedom in the *Phenomenology*. Indeed, the self-determination of the agent is *the awareness of its freedom*.⁸³

However, this outlook on rational action and freedom is not explicitly admitted by Hegel as the true nature of freedom in the *Phenomenology*, but it can be regarded as the foundation for the discussion of *free will* in Hegel's philosophy, especially in its practical dimension. As he states in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*:

It [the will] is the *self*-determination of the ego, which means that at one and the same time the ego posits itself as its own negative, i.e. as restricted and determinate, and yet remains by itself, i.e. in its self-identity and universality. It determines itself and yet at the same time binds itself together with itself. The ego determines itself in so far as it is the relating of negativity to itself. As this self-relation, it is indifferent to this determinacy; it knows it as something which is its own, something which is only ideal, a mere possibility by which it is not constrained and in which it is confined only because it has put itself in it. _This is the freedom of the will and it constitutes the concept or substantiality of the will. (*PR*. p. 14. *Werke* 7: 54).

Furthermore, in the Preliminary Conception section of the *Encyclopedia of Logic*, Hegel introduces the concept of freedom in connection with his presentation of logic as a system of pure thought-determinations. He describes freedom as "being at home with oneself in one's

⁸³. *The awareness of freedom* through the agency of the self is different from the richer expression of freedom as it appears in the discussions within the Reason, Spirit, Religion, and Absolute Knowledge chapters. However, in effect, the awareness of freedom is the manifestation of the failure of freedom rather than the true expression of freedom. Yet it is through the Absolute's perspective that these two expressions are distinguished. From the subjective side, the failure of its freedom is the true expression of its freedom. This is because it is the way the subject realizes its action in the world, not as *concept*, but simply as action. The expression of freedom, in this sense, finds the same ground as the expression of the Will.

other, depending upon oneself, and being one's own determinant." (*EL*. §24. *Werke* 8: 84). A few lines later, he clarifies the idea in simpler terms by saying, "freedom is only presents where there is no other for me that is not myself." (*Ibid*)

Based on this insight, two essential elements can be distinguished in the nature of freedom: first, *self-determination*, and second, *overcoming of otherness*. This is not about breaking down the idea of freedom into parts in order to understand its nature; rather, it seems that, for Hegel, when he speaks of the idea of something, its actualization is inherently contained within its concept. In this respect, freedom, in a more Hegelian sense, can be understood as *being with oneself in overcoming its externality*.

To illustrate this standpoint on freedom, we can refer to Isaiah Berlin's explanation of the natural ground of the self-realization of freedom in the context of modernity, where "the only true method of attaining freedom is by the use of critical reason ... as something which I freely will in the course of the natural functioning of my own rational activity." (Berlin, 1958, pp. 13-14). Berlin's characterization of freedom involves the examples of the mathematician and the musician in his book *Two Concepts of Liberty*, which best express his perspective on positive freedom. As Franco briefly elaborates on these examples:

For the mathematician, the truths of mathematics do not appear as an alien necessity but as a product of his own rational capacity with which he freely identifies. Likewise, the musician does not see a piece of music as something externally imposed upon him by the composer but, rather, as something that he has so completely absorbed and understood that, it loses its alien or unfree character. (Franco, 1999, p.181)

For Hegel, however, it is not that objective reality exists separately from the self, with the self finding freedom only by knowing and determining itself in relation to this external reality. Instead, it seems that the self, or more precisely, self-knowing, recognizes the knowledge of objective reality as an expression of its own freedom. One possible result of adopting this perspective is the recognition that knowing (*Erkennen*), by relying on its own nature, has no limitations, and consequently, *rational action* in its free nature does not tolerate any limitation.

From the perspective of Stirner, as one of Hegel's early interpreters, this point represents the manifestation of the triumph of philosophy, which takes place not in antiquity nor in the Middle Ages, but in modern philosophy, where the magnificent edifice of philosophy manifests itself in the freedom of individuality, who has liberated himself from every form of idea. In this interpretation, not only ideas such as God or even the State can no longer serve as masters over human freedom, but the freedom of consciousness, for Stirner, signifies that the Individual or the *Egoist* must not even subordinate himself to the idea of Man. As he writes in *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*: "Allerdings ist notwendig, daß der Mensch herrenlos sei; aber darum soll auch nicht wieder der Egoist über den Menschen, sondern der Mensch über den Egoisten Herr werden." (Stirner, 1901, p. 129). (It is necessary that man should be without a master; yet we must not let the abstract Man rule over the individual egoist; rather, the egoist should rule over the idea of Man.) This represents the point at which philosophy comes to an end, for hereafter there is nothing more to be achieved by human self-consciousness, which sees itself as a fully self-determinate entity without relying on any idea as the determinate ground of its reality.⁸⁴

⁸⁴. The philosophy of Stirner, therefore, not only stands in opposition to the traditional approaches to Hegel's philosophy, which mostly rely on the Absolute and the religious dimension of Hegel's thought, but also places him in contrast with the humanistic and idealistic interpretations of Hegel's philosophy, such as those of Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx. For a well-interpreted reading of his ideas in relation to the present discussion, see Mautz, K. A. *Die Philosophie Max Stirners im Gegensatz zum Hegelschen Idealismus* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt,

However, for Hegel, the consciousness of freedom cannot simply be reduced to the self-determination of consciousness, especially in its radical form, as Stirner conceived it. Knowing, for Hegel, arises from the thinking and acting of overcoming otherness in his philosophy. It is, in fact, this thinking-acting movement of consciousness that makes the freedom of consciousness intelligible.

On the other hand, we can find epistemological, or even metaphysical, efforts to impose limits on knowing. These efforts mostly indicate that the act of knowing is nothing other than the setting of boundaries on the nature of knowing. That is to say, it is limitation that constitutes the essence of knowing.

This can be understood in the way Kant approaches knowing, whereby at the stage of Understanding (*Verstand*), knowing categorizes itself, and at the stage of Reason (*Vernunft*), it recognizes its own limitations. Certainly, Kant would not reject the idea of freedom for the sake of his philosophical method. However, his definition of freedom tends to focus on *self-determination* rather than embracing the *overcoming of otherness* as part of its meaning.⁸⁵ Looking at it from the other side, his perspective on freedom as *autonomy* or self-determination could be seen as giving his philosophy a distinct structure.

My aim here is not to compare Hegel's idea of freedom with Kant's. Instead, I want to highlight that the concept of freedom is an essential component of knowing (*Erkennen*) in shaping a rational philosophical system. This idea applies not only to Kant and Hegel but to all philosophical traditions and methods, especially since Descartes, as most Western scholars have

1936), and Stepelevich, L. S. (2009). "At the End of the Path of Doubt: Max Stirner." *The Owl of Minerva*, 41(1), 85–106.

⁸⁵. For a detailed interpretation, see Allison, H. E. *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), and his *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

considered the concept of freedom in a more subjective sense, as a key factor in shaping human thought and our understanding of the world. What makes Hegel's philosophy unique is that he addresses this issue both consciously and comprehensively. For Hegel, knowing (*Erkennen*) inherently embodies freedom, which means that he does not view freedom as a separate goal or restrict it to a specific domain of his philosophy. Instead, he sees freedom as integral to the very process of self-knowing. In other words, freedom is what knowing carries within its nature. If knowing and freedom have any ultimate aim, it is their realization in the Absolute, which represents the self-consciousness of the infinite whole as achieved through finite human beings.

Furthermore, by equating freedom with self-knowing, interpretations that claim endpoints in Hegel's philosophy, such as the end of metaphysics, history, art, religion, or even modernity, should be approached with greater caution. This is because the free nature of knowing resists such definitive endpoints. This perspective has led thinkers like Kojève and Fukuyama to interpret Hegel's work as the culmination of metaphysical thought, where metaphysics reaches its ultimate expression by uniting all reality and thought within a self-knowing Absolute.⁸⁶ However, considering the free nature of the Absolute implies that Hegel's philosophy transcends both traditional and critical metaphysics rather than abandoning metaphysics altogether.

1.3. Freedom and Its Inward Movement

Among all of Hegel's works, the Self-Consciousness chapter of the *Phenomenology* is the most elaborative treatment of the most basic awareness we have of ourselves as agents. In general, it seems that self-consciousness is the key to entering the realm of Hegel's practical

⁸⁶. I will discuss and critique these scholars' interpretations in the subsection on the End of History.

philosophy. The common point in all practical interpretations is that knowledge, by its nature, cannot be ascribed to the knowledge of an object as a passive comprehension of the properties it possesses in itself. Rather, what constitutes knowledge is the active self-determination of the subject. The reason for this attitude toward self-consciousness is that “consciousness of an ‘other’, of an object in general, is itself necessarily *self-consciousness*, a reflectedness-into-self, consciousness of itself in its otherness.” (PS. §164. *Werke* 3: 135). From an epistemological point of view, we can also claim that in Self-Consciousness we have already arrived at the conclusion that the entire *Phenomenology* seeks to demonstrate, namely, that the objects of consciousness are never separate from the subject, but must be constituted through a form of spontaneity of subjective activity.

Relying on the practical domain of Hegel’s philosophy, we cannot consider the simple activity of self-consciousness as substance, as in the project undertaken by Descartes, which aimed to prove the self-sufficiency of a rational entity that does not rely on any other being for its existence.⁸⁷ Rather, for Hegel, what is essential is not simply the relation to itself, but the recognition of itself in its otherness, which defines the essentiality of the self. Building on this foundation, substance cannot be defined on a stable ground; instead, the reality of substance also relies on self-knowledge in its otherness. That is to say, the self does not refer to itself as self-

⁸⁷. The true substance for Descartes is God Himself. However, the term substance, in a relative manner, can also be ascribed to both thinking and corporeal being. As Descartes explains in the *Principles of Philosophy*:

By *substance* we can understand nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence. And there is only one substance which can be understood to depend on no other thing whatsoever, namely God. In the case of all other substances, we perceive that they can exist only with the help of God's concurrence. Hence the term 'substance' does not apply *univocally*. (Descartes, 1988, p. 210).

For Hegel, in contrast to Descartes, true substance is the subject itself. In this respect, although both Descartes and Hegel can be seen as sharing the view that self-consciousness is the truth and certainty of the self’s being, their differing attitudes toward the meaning of substance make the aims of their philosophical systems fundamentally different. For Hegel, the being of substance is deeply tied to the activity of the subject in the process of knowing itself. In this respect, arriving at a true definition of substance depends on his entire philosophical system.

consciousness in an explicit and positive way. Rather, it relates to itself as a self-conscious subject in a negative manner. This corresponds to the claim that the 'I' at the stage of self-consciousness is insufficient to its nature, and that to find its sufficiency, it must inevitably enter into the process of knowing itself.⁸⁸

In fact, unlike his predecessors, for Hegel, the self-certainty of the 'I' as self-consciousness is not a presupposition or an unshaken axiom that expresses the ultimate destiny of the 'I'. Rather, the transcendence of the 'I' to the stage of substance is the aim of all philosophical effort for him. Not only through his own philosophy, but through the rational trajectory of the entire history of philosophy, the goal is to show the self-conscious 'I' as substance. The 'I', in this sense, is no longer the epistemological 'I'; rather, it is the *idea* of the 'I' as the historical 'I'. Hegel's goal,

⁸⁸. This interpretation of self-consciousness can also be understood in the context of Hegel's criticism of Fichte's absolute fundamental principle of human knowledge ($I = I$). For Fichte, the absolute judgment $I = I$ is "the basis of all consciousness, and first and alone makes consciousness possible." (Fichte, 1868, p. 63). This proposition is considered valid both in its form and content. As Fichte states regarding this absolute judgment:

The positing of the Ego through itself is, therefore, the pure activity of the Ego. The Ego *posits itself*; and the Ego is by virtue of this its mere self-positing. Again, *vice versa*: the Ego is and *posits* its being, by virtue of its mere being. It is both the acting and the product of the act; the active and the result of the activity; deed and act in one; and hence the *I am* is expressive of a deed-act; and of the *only possible* deed-act, as our science of knowledge must show. (Fichte, 1868, pp. 68-69)

Through my interpretation, however, the activity of the 'I' in Hegel's philosophy, at the stage of self-consciousness, can be seen in contrast to the context of Fichte's absolute judgment. The *I am*, rather than being a self-positing identity, is the expression of the negative inward movement of the self, its preservation, and, ultimately, its transcendence toward self-knowing. Reid, in his article, *Hegel's Ontological Grasp of Judgement and the Original Dividing of Identity into Difference*, explains in detail that the self-positing of the Ego in Fichte's absolute identity must also be understood as self-differentiating. As Reid, from the perspective of Hölderlin, expresses:

Fichte's foundational principle, $I = I$, cannot express an identity without contradicting itself. This is because, for the "I" to be an "I" it must be a self-conscious subject and for it to be self-conscious it must be able to take itself as the object of its reflection. (Reid, 2006, p. 35)

Hegel's critique of Fichte in the *Phenomenology* addresses the same issue: that Fichte's Absolute Identity lacks the indication of *otherness* at its heart. As Hegel expresses:

As self-consciousness, it is movement; but since what is distinguishes from itself is *only itself* as itself, the difference, as an otherness, is *immediately superseded* for it; the difference *is not*, and it [self-consciousness] is only the motionless tautology of: 'I am I'; but since for it the difference does not have the form of *being*, it is *not* self-consciousness. (PS. §167. *Werke* 3: 138)

then, cannot simply be limited to demonstrating the self-certainty of the 'I' as the foundation of all rational thought. Rather, his goal is to provide an account of how the 'I' knows itself as historical subjectivity.

As mentioned in the previous subsection, the movement of self-consciousness toward knowledge is a movement toward itself, not a movement outward from itself. The inward movement of the self can be defined as the internal movement through which the self strives to overcome its objectivity as its otherness, while at the same time determining itself within that otherness. It is, therefore, the negation of itself that opens the gate for the subject to enter the domain of knowledge, and the outcome of this negation is the consciousness of its freedom. That is to say, in order to become a self-determinate being and to know itself as a self-conscious being, the self must overcome its otherness. In fact, and in effect, to liberate itself from this otherness, which is nothing other than self-knowing, the self inevitably enters into the process of negating and determining itself. It is, therefore, in its internal movement toward itself that the self confronts the idea of freedom, not simply as something separate from itself, but as an idea that is presented in its action and its striving to know itself.

This is the idea of freedom on which social-practical interpreters of Hegel's philosophy rely to interpret his works. In general, the conception of freedom based on the notion of *negation* is the most widespread understanding of freedom, especially in the political and sociological context of the modern era. It is rooted in the belief that freedom is attainable through *struggle*, in various contexts such as different attitudes toward political, social, and individual rights. This is because it is through negation that the subject comes to realize itself as a determinate being, and what it negates is the other's determination of itself, something the subject is also supposed to determine itself within. The negation of its otherness, therefore, implies that the subject strives to free itself

not only from the other's determination of itself, but also from the self-consciousness of itself that it negates for the sake of self-determination. Negation, in this sense, is both the foundation of conflict and the remedy for overcoming it.

What I aim to demonstrate about this realization of the conception of freedom is that self-consciousness has no other destiny than to be free. That is to say, self-consciousness, through its inward movement, *ought to be free*. This is because self-consciousness, by its nature, is directed toward knowledge, and through its recognition of otherness, it must liberate itself from that otherness. Otherwise, there would be no self-consciousness, no knowledge, and not even the self.

However, this attitude toward freedom leads some commentators to place an endpoint on the idea of freedom in Hegel's philosophy and to claim the *end of history* or even the end of the Idea. The majority of these commentators base their interpretations solely on self-consciousness and either ignore or reject the reality of the Absolute in Hegel's system in its various forms. In this respect, their interpretations reduce the freedom of self-consciousness to a *dead end for itself*. That is to say, the idea of freedom comes to function as its own opposition in the practical sense, which culminates in the *end of history*. In brief, my concern with all these types of interpretations is that they involve a confusion or misunderstanding between the *consciousness of freedom* and the *idea of freedom*, which lies at the heart of many social-political readings of Hegel's philosophy. In fact, what these interpretations tend to do is directly equate the consciousness of freedom with the idea of freedom. Criticizing these interpretive efforts is the subject of the discussion that follows.

1.4. The End of History

Hegel never explicitly used the phrase the *end of history* in the way it has been interpreted by some of his commentators. However, the idea can be traced to his insight in the *Philosophy of History*, where the ultimate goal of history is the representation of the realization of freedom for humanity, and that history reaches a kind of culmination when the modern constitutional state, as the German World, in the full maturity of Spirit, achieves self-consciousness of freedom through its political institutions. This is the point at which the true realization of the concept of freedom occurs through subjectivity. What the true realization of the *concept* of freedom indicates, however, is its realization as the *idea* of freedom. This means that the *idea of freedom* has actualized all the moments in the development of the *consciousness of freedom* as its own reality. In this sense, the distinction between the *idea of freedom* and the *consciousness of freedom* is set aside through the reconciliation that takes place between Spirit and self-consciousness. This is the moment in which self-consciousness liberates itself from being merely its own inward truth and comes to see its nature as the culmination of the outward representation of Spirit. As Hegel puts it in the *Philosophy of History*: “Spirit is essentially the result of its own activity: its activity is the transcending of immediate, simple, unreflected existence, the negation of that existence, and the returning into itself.” (LPH. p. 189. *Werke* 12: 104).

On this account, ascribing the phrase *end of history* to the culmination of Hegel’s historicity arises from a misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the *immediate* transition from the *consciousness of freedom* to the *idea of freedom*. In brief, what lies at the root of this misrepresentation, which is shared by both left-Hegelian commentators such as Kojève and right-Hegelian interpreters such as Fukuyama, is the assumption that the consciousness of freedom is the immediate representation of the idea of freedom. As a result of this misrepresentation of the idea with consciousness, the idea of freedom begins to work against

itself. In fact, this is the only sense in which the definition of the *end of history* can be meaningfully articulated within Hegel's philosophy of history: that the idea of freedom reaches a point in its development where, in its totality, it contradicts itself. However, as I will demonstrate in the course of the discussion, this is not the true realization of the idea of freedom. Rather, freedom in its true sense remains the metaphysical foundation of Hegel's historicity.

What I aim to do, therefore, is to criticize interpretations of the realization of freedom that lead to the idea of the *end of history*, as well as the *end of metaphysics*, which appears to be the inevitable consequence of interpreting Hegel's philosophy as culminating in the end of history. On the other hand, what I am trying to demonstrate is that history cannot be fully actualized in an End, since through the dialectical progression of self-consciousness, history necessarily continues to generate new antitheses without ever stopping or settling at a fixed point as its concrete temporal reality.

The representation of the Absolute, on the other hand, is necessary for the true realization of the idea of freedom. In fact, the problem with all misinterpretations concerning the end of history arises when the representation of the Absolute is ignored or blurred in relation to the reality of freedom. By removing the relation between the Absolute and Spirit, history will inevitably be regarded as its own End, and it will determine itself as the end of its being. This view is expressed by commentators who often ignore or conceal the presentation of the Absolute in Hegel's system in various forms. On the other hand, the idea of freedom itself is the truth of the Absolute in Hegel's system. However, this necessary representation of freedom does not occur for the Absolute without the inward movement of self-consciousness toward knowing itself. This is the topic I will explore in the following section on the Absolute and Negation.

In fact, the dialectical movement of human self-consciousness requires the complete actualization of the idea of freedom into the concrete reality of human societies as its ultimate goal. The actualization of human freedom is not a theme limited to the *Phenomenology*; rather, it is an insight that underlies Hegel's entire system. As he expresses in the *Philosophy of Mind* of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*:

This liberation of spirit, in which it proceeds to come to itself and to actualize its truth, and the task of this liberation, is the supreme and absolute right [*Recht*]. The self-consciousness of a particular people is the bearer of the current stage of development of the universal spirit in its embodiment and is the objective actuality in which the spirit sets its will. The will of the other particular national spirits has no rights against this absolute will, this people is the world-dominating people: but equally the universal spirit strides beyond its current property, as a particular stage, and then delivers it over to its chance and judgement. (*PM*. §550. *Werke* 10: 352-353)

Hegel's perspective seems to be clear in this passage: the idea of history cannot be determined at a definite point as the culmination of metaphysical thought. In fact, it is metaphysics itself that transcends its own boundaries in Hegel's system, and in its progression, history continually generates new antitheses toward the actualization of Spirit. It is at this point that spiritual necessity becomes inseparable from freedom. What Hegel is discussing is not the ultimate actualization and fulfillment of the idea of freedom. Rather, it seems that he outlines the self-consciousness of freedom as the ideal fulfillment of freedom in different historical periods or stages, such as in Greek philosophy, the French Revolution, and above all, the German World. This has led interpreters such as Kojève and Fukuyama to misinterpret and misplace the self-

consciousness of freedom with the actualization of the idea of freedom, and consequently to claim the end of history in Hegel's philosophy.⁸⁹

In what follows, I will briefly discuss Kojève's and Fukuyama's interpretations of Hegel's philosophy in light of their claim regarding the end of history. In his series of lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which is known as the *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, Kojève argues that it is through Hegel's philosophy that metaphysics reaches its complete and final destination. This culmination, according to him, declares the essential finitude of metaphysical thought and thus implies the end of history at its heart.

What lies at the foundation of the necessary culmination of metaphysical thought for Kojève is the *death of Man*. "It is only by understanding [Man of] himself in this [Hegelian] Science as mortal _that is, as a historical free individual_ that Man attains fullness of consciousness of a self that no longer has any reason to negate itself and become other" (Kojève, 1969, p. 258). In fact, from Kojève's perspective, the existential destiny of the human being, as its death, expands into the domain where Man comes to recognize and determine himself as human, which is history. That is to say, the negation of Man is the negation of history. The first can be seen as the *negation of self-consciousness*, and the second as *absolute negation*. As Kojève puts it: "History in its entirety is only an evolution of the 'contradiction' (*Widerspruch*)" (Kojève, 1969, p. 252).

⁸⁹. Indeed, there is more reliable evidence in Hegel's works to demonstrate that human self-consciousness, Spirit, and subsequently the idea of freedom are never at rest and they are always active within the never-ending metaphysical order of the universe. "The movement is the circle that returns into itself, the circle that presuppose its beginning and reaches it only at the end." (*PS*. §802. *Werke* 3: 585). In fact, what is necessitated by recognition (*Erkennen*) is the very nature of this movement. In grammatical terms, *what is is what has been*. In this regard, we cannot distinguish or separate the process of knowing (*Erkennen*) from knowledge (*Wissen*). This idea can also be traced to Aristotle's principle in *Metaphysics* Λ (*Book XII*), where he writes: "The moving causes are causes in the way preexisting things are." (*Metaphysics* 1070a, Aristotle, 2016, p. 200). In this respect, the reality of being relies on the reality of movement, and by annulling the movement of substance toward subject and vice versa in its various forms, we diminish the very nature of being in Hegel's system. Such a view seems to be more of an anti-philosophical interpretation posited as a mode of philosophizing.

Therefore, what is negated is not merely Man himself. Rather, the negation is directed toward the very source and foundation of Man's self-consciousness as an agent, which is history. "If, then, Man's complete satisfaction is the goal and the natural end of history, it can be said that history completes itself by Man's perfect understanding of his death." (Kojève, 1969, p. 258).⁹⁰

In this respect, the end of history, like the end of man, signifies that "his death prevents him from doing something other than what he has already done." (Kojève, 1969, p. 257). That is to say, the *appearance* and the *actualization* of negation become one, and their unity constitutes the realization of self-consciousness in its history as *absolute negation*. However, it seems that the foundation of Kojève's idea of the end of history lies in his quest for the negative essence of self-consciousness in its movement toward Spirit, and he imposes this essential negativity upon the nature of history. As he expresses earlier in his text: "For History to exist, there must be not only a given reality, but also the negation of that reality and at the same time a ('sublimated') preservation of what has been negated." (Kojève, 1969, p. 232)

In fact, by limiting the activity of self-consciousness, Kojève attempts to impose a limit on metaphysics and, consequently, on the idea of history. This judgment seems to stem from focusing solely on the nature of the subject, without any reference to or reliance on the Absolute. That is to say, both the activity of self-consciousness and its end are treated as one. In fact, the end is interpreted as a return to the subject itself, but a return from what origin?⁹¹ This is the

⁹⁰. While Kojève's interpretation of Hegel focuses only on a small portion of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and ignores Hegel's other writings, for nearly two generations his reading shaped how Neo-Marxist thinkers like Georg Lukács (1978) and Herbert Marcuse (1954) approached Hegel's philosophy.

⁹¹. The true exposition of the return of the Absolute to Spirit, in my interpretation, takes place through Education. Philosophy, as the culmination of Absolute Spirit and the consummation of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, is not the end of the system or the conclusion of metaphysical thought. Rather, it constitutes the entire trajectory that self-consciousness has undertaken in its effort to reach the Absolute. At this point, the Absoluteness of self-consciousness begins to narrate its own history as its own self-determination. This narration is not the end of Spirit but is the result of the self-certainty of modern individuality, which stands at the highest stage of self-knowledge and

point that Kojève's interpretation fails to address. This is because his account follows a linear path, moving from the beginning of subjectivity to its end, where the end of history appears as the actualization of Spirit. On the other hand, a reading of the *Phenomenology* makes it evident that:

It is only through this movement [from the predicate to the subject] that the content could be represented as Subject ... Hence, the mere anticipation that the Absolute is Subject is not only *not* the actuality of this Notion, but it even makes the actuality impossible." (*PS*. §23. *Werke* 3: 27).

In this respect, the error Kojève commits in his interpretation is to equate substance with subject without grounding this in the conception of the Absolute in Hegel's philosophy. One could even argue that what he attempts to do is to declare the end of metaphysics without actually engaging with Hegel's metaphysics at all.

Following Kojève, Fukuyama, building on the premise of liberal democracy's ideological triumph over Marxism within the Western political context, reinterprets Hegel's philosophy of history and adapts Kojève's notion of the end of history to argue that liberal democracy constitutes the final and complete form of human government. The end of history, in this context, signifies the culmination of humanity's ideological development and the universal acceptance of Western-style liberal democracy as the ultimate structure of political institutions.

Although Kojève's interpretation of the end of history, especially within the Marxist tradition, opened up some revolutionary approaches in the contemporary socio-political discourse among

recognizes its own nature as a metaphysical being, whose truth is none other than the truth of the other, and no other than truth as the Whole.

scholars,⁹² for Fukuyama, the end of history is closely tied to the end of the idea of freedom, as humanity has nothing further to struggle for, particularly following the defeat of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. In fact, the end of history signifies the cessation of ideological evolution. What we are confronted with, therefore, is not merely the elimination of a historical stage followed by the emergence of a new one, but rather Western liberal democracy constitutes the endpoint of humanity's ideological revolution and its universalization. That is to say, the End represents the consummation of humanity's ideological development in its conscious pursuit of a universal principle for social and political structure.

We need to keep in mind that, from the perspective of Fukuyama, democratic liberalism represents the *ultimate choice* made by humanity in its pursuit of freedom. It is not the result of any deterministic force external to human will. In other words, the freedom attained by humanity

⁹². For some contemporary political interpreters of Hegel's philosophy, such as Žižek, the end of history does not imply the termination of the self-determinate activity of the human will. Rather, this end opens up new revolutionary potential within human history. In this context, the post-revolutionary state emerges after the collapse of metaphysical thought, as the situation gives rise to "laborers reduced to an appendix of machinery; reality dominated by the virtual/ideal self-movement of capital's circulation; a hierarchy persisting in the very form of "plebeianization" _paradoxical reversals which seem to give body to all the twists and turns of the most sophisticated dialectic." (Žižek, 2012, p.256). In fact, it does not appear that Žižek defends the idea of the end of history. Rather, he radicalizes it by portraying self-consciousness as lacking a metaphysical foundation and progressing toward a non-reconciled, incomplete, and antagonistic historical structure. That is to say, for Žižek, the end of history is not an ideal. On the contrary, it represents the failure of self-consciousness in its development toward a harmonious and just human society. Likewise, for Habermas, modernity is an unfinished project and not the final stage of human self-consciousness. However, unlike Kojève and Žižek, Habermas approaches Hegel from the perspective of Kant and post-Kantian thinkers. As a result, the trajectory and outcome of his inquiry into Hegel's historicity are entirely different. In fact, Habermas critiques the notion of *completeness* in ideologically defined socio-political states, whether in the form of Marxism or liberal democracy. What makes Hegel's philosophy significant for him is the idea that history remains open and unfinished, which requires the continuous self-determination of consciousness. As he expresses this view about the self-developmental process of recognition in the *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*:

In modernity, therefore, religious life, state, and society as well as science, morality, and art are transformed into just so many embodiments of the principle of subjectivity. Its structure is grasped as such in philosophy, namely, as abstract subjectivity in Descartes's '*cogito ergo sum*' and in the form of absolute self-consciousness in Kant. It is the structure of a self-relating, knowing subject, which bends back upon itself as object, in order to grasp itself as in a mirror image —literally in a 'speculative' way. (Habermas, 1987, p. 18) However, the fundamental problem that remains is the nature of the infinite representation of Spirit without a determinate aim. This, in my critique, is precisely what makes the presentation of the Absolute necessary for self-consciousness.

in this historical period is considered as the complete embodiment of this conception through their own self-consciousness. That is to say, there is no further possibility beyond this point that could extend the expression of freedom beyond its present fulfillment. In fact, this perspective on history does not indicate the end of history in a progressive sense. Rather, it carries within itself the annulment of history. This implies the dramatic character of the post-historical age, in which every culture and nation becomes homologous, and the particular history of each nation becomes increasingly irrelevant. In this context, culture and history no longer belong to the essential beings of a nation's life. This is because, in effect, there is only One culture, and that culture is the Whole, within which every nation determines the essential content of its existence.

Fukuyama describes this dramatic vision as follows:

"Technology provides a uniform horizon of production possibilities at any given level of scientific knowledge, and forces all societies employing technology to organize themselves in certain ways ... the state can play varying roles in promoting or retarding the process. But the broad outlines of the process _urbanization, rational authority, bureaucratization, an ever-ramified and complex division of labor _can be found in all developing cultures."
(Fukuyama, 1995, p. 32)

One could criticize this viewpoint by claiming that the *final determination* of freedom essentially places the burden of historical determination on the shoulder of freedom itself, and that freedom, in such a case, would be replaced by determination. That is to say, it is historical determination that both determines and terminates the nature of freedom. However, this deterministic perspective on freedom can be interpreted by Fukuyama as the absolute power of humanity to determine and dominate its own destiny, rather than relying on any external source

for its determination. From this perspective, for Fukuyama, as for Hegel, the true manifestation of human self-determination is the State. As he expresses:

It [the State] constituted a recognition that it was man who had created the Christian God in the first place, and therefore man who could make God come down to earth and live in the parliament buildings, presidential palaces, and bureaucracies of the modern state.
(Fukuyama, 1993, p. 199)

However, unlike in Hegel's philosophy, where the Absolute provides a teleological ground, this self-grounded activity, which lacks any conception of the Absolute, arrives at no true teleological outcome. It comes to a confused halt at a fixed and final point in its knowledge, with one eye turned toward the past and the other fixed on the *final present*,⁹³ without ever reaching the Absolute ground of its knowing.

Indeed, Fukuyama, like Kojève, overlooks the teleological aspect of history, that is Freedom, upon which Hegel's metaphysics is grounded. Moreover, in following Kojève's footsteps, Fukuyama disregards the reality of substance as *change* and focuses his discussion on history not in the context of the philosophical inquiry pursued by Hegel, but rather on the superiority of a particular socio-political tradition over others in modernity.

For Fukuyama, the end of the idea of freedom signifies the highest degree of freedom that human consciousness has achieved so far within the framework of Western liberal-democratic institutions. In fact, through this realization of the end of history, it is not only the idea of history that is being annulled, but also what underlies it, which is freedom itself.

⁹³. Rather, the absolute ground of the self's knowledge, in its temporality, is located in the *absolute present*, where the revelation of the Absolute and the temporality of self-consciousness are united in a single activity. This is the topic I explored in the second section of the first chapter, and I will return to it in the chapter on Education.

Indeed, the *freedom of consciousness* must be grounded in the Idea; otherwise, in its linear progression, self-consciousness has no other destiny than the failure of freedom. That is to say, self-consciousness requires the Absolute to be timeless and permanent. Without such grounding, the death of self-consciousness, whether in the form of individual death, or the decline of a particular socio-political tradition such as Marxism or Liberalism, has no fate other than the grave.

On the other hand, what is permanent and timeless is the universal, which is the Idea itself. If there is any fact or reality about history, it must be universal and not confined to a particular age. That is to say, self-consciousness needs to transcend itself toward universality. Self-consciousness *ought to be* Knowledge in order to reach the standpoint of this universality, that is, to know itself as Absolute Knowledge. This point does not signify the end of self-consciousness; rather, it is the moment when self-consciousness recognizes itself as substance. How this recognition takes place, and in what manner it occurs, is the subject of my discussion in the next section. The focus of the following section, therefore, will be the movement of the Absolute toward Spirit. This movement belongs to Hegel's speculative philosophy, and my interpretation will mostly rely on Hegel's *Science of Logic* in this regard.

2. The Absolute and Negation

2.1. Negation and the System

As explained in the previous section, *absolute negation* is the starting point in Hegel's system for the progression from self-consciousness to knowledge. This progression represents the transition from the negative standpoint of consciousness to its constructive standpoint, which

is realized as Science. This understanding of self-consciousness raises a fundamental question: how can Absolute Knowledge as Science, be the phenomenological outcome of self-consciousness?

In brief, the constitutive relation between the Absolute and self-consciousness can be expressed as: *to be is to be thought*. Although this expression is reminiscent of *Cogito ergo sum*, it belongs to the highest adventure of Spirit for Hegel, whereas in Descartes's philosophy, it appears as the initial self-certainty of self-consciousness. We can even claim that it is the maturity of *Cogito ergo sum* that lies at the heart of Hegel's entire philosophy. It can be understood as the project that, while it begins with the self-certainty of *being thought* at the stage of self-consciousness, aims to demonstrate the Absolute as the most free and universal mode of *being thought*. That is to say, the *absolute negation*, which thinks itself as its truth at the stage of self-consciousness, actualizes itself and becomes self-identical in its maturity by reaching the stage of *absolute thought*. This is the trajectory through which the universality of thought consequently penetrates and determines all reality. As Hegel elaborates this dialectical trajectory as the syllogistic dialectic occurring between Nature, Spirit, and the logical Idea in the *Encyclopedia Logic*:

It is Spirit that knows the logical Idea in Nature, and elevates it to its essence. Equally, in third place, the logical Idea itself is the middle; it is the absolute substance of Spirit, and of Nature, that which is universal and all-pervading. (*EL*. §187. *Werke* 8: 339)

From this perspective, the Absolute can be defined both as the middle term as *becoming*, as the *syllogistic movement*, and, on the other hand, as *to be*, as the absolute moment of the *embodiment of syllogistic movement*. This double recognition of the Absolute results in the self-recognition of the 'I' as substance. This is the moment when the inward movement of the self, as

its negation, reaches the constructive knowledge of itself as Absolute Knowledge. “The ‘I’ is not merely the Self, but the *identity of the Self with itself*; but this identity is complete and immediate oneness with Self, or *this Subject is just as much Substance.*” (PS. §803. *Werke* 3: 587). That is to say, there is no longer any division between the subject and the predicate, and the *absolute negation* of self-consciousness determines itself as Absolute Knowledge. The subject is both *becoming* and *to be* in this respect, and both subjectivity and objectivity are grounded in the ‘I’.

Absolute thought finds its determination not simply in its *abstract being*; rather, its essential truth lies in its determination outside of itself, in the concrete nature of *absolute negation*. When this occurs, we can argue that the real development of thought is the *self-determination of identity mediated by difference*. That is to say, we no longer have the abstract eternal repetition of the syllogism of identity as the truth of being, as was the case in Fichte's absolute judgment $I = I$. Rather, *becoming* as *absolute thought* preserves every instant of negation as the identity of the ‘I’.⁹⁴ The ‘I’, as the *embodiment of the Absolute* in this respect, is not simply the subject of reality. Rather, the ‘I’ is the Absolute’s own exposition as the predicate of reality. In simple terms, the Absolute is not an external reflection on the experience of self-consciousness. Rather,

⁹⁴. This fact can also be understood based on the interaction taking place between *being* and *nothingness* in the opening of the discussion of the Quality section in the *Encyclopedia Logic*. In brief, the result of the interaction between *being* and *nothing* is the embodiment of *becoming* as a *restless determinate movement*. In this sense, the development of thought through the mediation of *becoming* becomes increasingly concrete and determinate. In the language of Hegel:

The *drive* to find in being or in both [being and nothing] a stable meaning is this very *necessity*, which leads being and nothing further along and endows them with a true, i.e., concrete meaning ... Every subsequent meaning that they acquire must therefore be regarded as only a *more articulate determination* and a *truer definition* of the *Absolute*; hence, any such determination or definition is no longer an empty abstraction like being and nothing, but is instead something concrete within which both being and nothing are moments. _In its highest form of explication nothing would be *freedom*. But this highest form is negativity insofar as it inwardly depends itself to its highest intensity; and in this way it is itself affirmation_ indeed absolute affirmation. (EL. §87. *Werke* 8: 186-187)

In fact, it seems that *becoming* plays the role of both *mediation* and the *overcoming of mediation*. It is the same function we ascribed to the essentiality of self-consciousness as *absolute negation* in the preceding discussion. That is to say, *becoming* holds the *absoluteness of thought* as the essentiality of its being, and at the same time the *nothingness of negation* that manifests itself as its syllogistic movement. However, in the end, *becoming* is the One and Whole through the realization of the ‘I’ in the system as the Absolute.

the representation of the Absolute is internal to the system. This is also best illustrated through Hegel's own metaphor in the Absolute Relation section of the *Science of Logic*: "Just as the light of nature is neither *something* nor a *thing*, but its being is only its showing or shining [Scheinen], so manifestation is self-identical absolute actuality." (*SL*. p. 554, Miller. p. 489, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 218)

In general, it is the standpoint from which we can claim that the Absolute is none other than the totality of the *objective determination* of *subjective reality*. However, one can criticize this interpretation by claiming that, although *subjective reality* can certainly be related to the Absolute dimension of Hegel's thought, it cannot be equated with the determination of the Absolute as *objective reality*. This is because, in such a case, it would resemble something close to Berkeley's Absolute Idealism, which we would then encounter. Furthermore, this interpretation can be seen as relying on Hegel's own critique of Schelling's Absolute in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

Nowadays we see all value ascribed to the universal Idea in this non-actual form, and the undoing of all distinct, determinate entities (or rather the hurling of them all into the abyss of vacuity without further development or any justification) is allowed to pass muster as the speculative mode of treatment. (*PS*. §16. *Werke* 3: 22)

Therefore, simply viewing the Absolute as the *undifferentiated unity* of subject and object, which lacks the speculative exposition of the development of its concrete content, is not what Hegel's system aims at. Rather, the Absolute must develop dialectically and not merely remain as an *undifferentiated identity*.

On the other hand, the common thread among interpreters of the Absolute in Hegel's philosophy generally attempts to reduce the Absolute to its historical development and its

recognition as the Absolute Spirit. One of the prominent interpreters of Hegel in this regard is Pippin. What Pippin aims to demonstrate in his book, *Hegel's Idealism*, in brief, is the marginalization of the distinction between the *ideal content* of the Absolute, as its internal permanent truth, which is the Absolute Idea, and its *real content*, as the temporal external movement of self-consciousness toward truth. In this regard, the entire trajectory of Hegel's speculative philosophy must be read in terms of the teleological framework by which "thought determines for itself the conditions under which any subject must think in order to think objectively at all." (Pippin, 1989, p. 246).⁹⁵ The point here is to see how self-consciousness becomes the object of its own knowledge as the Absolute Spirit, and how, by reaching this stage, the Absolute realizes its own determination as subjectivity.

While Pippin strongly emphasizes, in both *Hegel's Idealism* and *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, the teleological dimension of Hegel's philosophy, it seems that the realization of the Absolute as subjectivity, for him, is ultimately a presupposition rather than the telos of Hegel's metaphysics. This can be seen as the result of his Kantian background in the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy. As he contends in the final chapter of *Hegel's Idealism*:

Hegel tends to use the notion of 'absolute' as a replacement for the Kantian 'a priori.' His understanding of an absolute or a priori Notion, involving as it does his claims about the 'autonomy,' ... Hegel has also, with his use of 'absolute,' transformed the Kantian idea of necessary. For Hegel, 'Notional Judgments,' as he had called them, are indeed 'necessarily true,' although as with Kant, it would not be correct to take him to mean what

⁹⁵. This is reminiscent of Kant's entire philosophical project. This is also what Pippin attempts to do in his overall philosophical engagement with Hegel: to interpret him from the perspective of Kant's philosophy. Pippin, although claiming that his interpretation aims at the teleological aspect of Hegel's speculative philosophy, in effect seems unable to provide a truly constructive account of the Absolute Idea.

contemporary philosophy understands as metaphysical necessity, true in all possible worlds. (Pippin, 1989, p. 250)

In fact, what Pippin is trying to do is to identify a metaphysical step in Hegel's philosophy within the practical domain. The Absolute Idea, in this respect, provides this stepping stone, upon which Hegel's practical philosophy could be grounded. In this regard, while the Absolute is not the *end* in-and-for-itself, it has been interpreted as the foundation for the transition of metaphysical thought toward subjectivity.

Although such an interpretive effort resolves the problem of delineating an *end* to metaphysical thought in Hegel's philosophy by sketching a reasonable complicity between self-consciousness and the Absolute, which implies the transcendence of their interaction through Hegel's speculative philosophy; what it lacks is a true account of the Absolute Idea at the end. This is not to demand an *end* to the Absolute Idea, but rather to ask what the interaction between subjectivity and the Absolute ultimately aims at. In other words, what is the final destiny of this interaction in Hegel's speculative philosophy between objective and subjective logic?

Indeed, the Absolute needs to manifest itself as the system, and not merely as an end in the happy ending of its phenomenological development as Absolute Knowledge. This realization of the Absolute lies at the foundation of the entirety of Hegel's *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic: the dialectical exposition of the Absolute*. This is not to say that the exposition of the system requires the separation of self-consciousness from the Absolute. Rather, the true exposition of the system relies on the Absolute's recognition of self-consciousness. It is now the moment when the Absolute knows itself as the agent, not from the perspective of self-consciousness, but from its own speculative standpoint. This is what necessitates the system in Hegel's philosophy. That is to say, the Absolute, by its nature, is neither a *presupposition* nor an

end. Rather, it is the *mediation* through which the rational system is grounded. In fact, it is through the system that the Absolute knows itself as subjectivity. Knowing subjectivity as the Absolute, therefore, is what constitutes the very nature of the system. What is Real, One, and Whole is the reality of the system itself.⁹⁶

2.2. The Ontological Development of the Absolute

For Hegel, substance is to be thought through subjectivity rather than to exist objectively. The aim of Hegel's entire system is to transform the definition of the Absolute as the objective reality, external to the subject, into a definition of it as the metaphysical foundation of all determinate being. This trajectory taken by the Absolute can be seen as the *ontological development of the Absolute*. Here, we return to the central question with which we began at the start of this chapter: how can Hegel's metaphysics move from self-consciousness, which, at the same time, can be seen as the category of the objective side of Hegel's *Logic*, to Absolute Knowledge, or, in the speculative domain, to the Absolute Idea?

In the first chapter of Book One: The Objective Logic, in the *Science of Logic, contradiction*, as the sublation of the moments of identity and difference, can be understood as the *process of becoming*. That is to say, in effect, it is contradiction that transcends its being through the recognition of itself as both identity and difference. In fact, it is contradiction that knows itself as the subject of knowing, neither identity nor difference. Moreover, the development of the entire set of categories on the objective side of Hegel's *Logic* fundamentally belongs to the nature of this contradiction, and each logical moment is grounded in nothing other than contradiction itself. This is, in essence, the central scenario of Book One. In this sense, we can acknowledge

⁹⁶. The presentation of such a system constitutes the very nature of *Bildung* in modernity. This is the topic that I will explain in detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

the existence of a hidden character in Book One; one that Hegel does not explicitly discuss, especially in the form of a category, but that is nevertheless presented at the heart of the dialectical movement of the categories, which is the presentation of the subject as *negativity*.

In Section One of Book Two: The Doctrine of the Essence, at the opening of his discussion on the Ground, Hegel contends that “Essence is only this its negativity which is pure reflection. It is this pure negativity as the return of being into itself.” (*SL*. p. 444, Miller. p. 386, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 80). The *return of being into itself* is the true meaning of the ontological force that grounds every existing category that appeared in the shadow of subjectivity on the objective side of Hegel’s *Logic*. This reflects Hegel’s own interpretation of Essence, presented earlier in the text, as the *mediated knowing* which “starts from an other, from being, and has a preliminary path to tread, that of going beyond being or rather of penetrating into it. Not until knowing inwardizes, recollects [erinnert] itself out of immediate being, does it through its mediation find essence.” (*SL*. p. 389, Miller. p. 337, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 13)

My intention here is not simply to open and develop a one-way ontological path from the subject to Hegel’s objective categories and then return to the second book to develop the subjective categories. Rather, my aim is to demonstrate that it is the two-way relation that constitutes the relation between the objective and subjective sides of Hegel’s *Logic*. That is, as much as objective logic belongs to the subjective presentation, the subjective side of Hegel’s *Logic* could not be presented in the absence of the objective categories. In simpler terms, we can understand this claim in the sense that pure thinking without particular thoughts is not thinking at

all, or pure extension without extended particulars is not extension at all, just as the presentation of *to be* without *being thought* makes no sense.⁹⁷

Indeed, there is no Ground apart from the process of grounding. That is to say, the Ground itself exists as the existing thing, as the process through which it realizes itself as Essence. In simpler terms, the totality of Spirit's experiences as the thought determinations of the finite, while in their separation may appear distinct from the Absolute, are, in themselves, nothing other than the Absolute's self-determination. In fact, it is the insufficiency of the experience of self-consciousness, which was the topic of discussion in the preceding section, that transcends itself through the realization of itself as substance.⁹⁸

⁹⁷. Although this claim may, at first glance, appear similar to Kant's statement that "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (Kant, 1929, p. 93. A51/B75), the intention and aim behind this claim are entirely different for Kant and Hegel. Indeed, for Kant, this claim rests on the idea that understanding, without the presentation of actual content in the form of sensory experience, would be nothing more than empty form. Conversely, sensory experiences without the categories of understanding are merely raw, chaotic, meaningless, and empty content. Hegel, on the other hand, does not attempt to necessitate such a relation. Rather, both content and form belong to the activity of thought itself, and pure abstraction in the form of empty content or form is rejected in this regard. In fact, for Hegel, what we have is *concreteness*. Even *pure nothingness* is, in fact, *pure being*, and it has no other destiny than *becoming*. This is because the very nature of the dialectical activity of *becoming* belongs to thought.

⁹⁸. This can be designated as the point where Hegel moves beyond the Spinozist conception of substance, which tends more toward the inwardizing and solitude of being. According to Spinoza in the Ethics: "I understand Substance (*substantia*) to be that which is in itself and is conceived through itself: I mean that, the conception of which does not depend on the conception of another thing from which it must be formed." (Spinoza, 1941, p.1). In fact, for Spinoza, the more *being* inwardizes itself and breaks every mediation with objects in order to become more self-related and *unmediated*, the more it can be called substance. Hegel's substance, on the other hand, tends toward *mediation* by entering into dialectical activity and aims to know itself as the subject. As Hegel criticizes Spinoza's substance in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*:

As all differences and determinations of things and of consciousness simply go back into the One substance, one may say that in the system of Spinoza all things are merely cast down into this abyss of annihilation. But from this abyss nothing comes out; and the particular of which Spinoza speaks is only assumed and presupposed from the ordinary conception, without being justified. Were it to be justified, Spinoza would have to deduce it from his Substance; but that does not open itself out, and therefore comes to no vitality, spirituality or activity. His philosophy has only a rigid and unyielding substance, and not yet spirit; in it we are not at home with ourselves. (*LHP III*, p. 288. *Werke* 20: 194)

However, the self-sufficiency of self-consciousness, by its nature, through its transcendence in interaction with the Absolute, gives rise to the question of whether the self-sufficiency of the Absolute, as the other side of this interaction with self-consciousness, is also indebted for its essentiality to its relation with self-consciousness. That is to say, is reality complete in itself before being thought, or does the Absolute need to be related to something other than itself to be considered complete? In other words, is the Absolute, by its nature, self-sufficient, or is it contingent upon the reality of Spirit? Hegel's answer in this regard appears to be clear and decisive: "There is nothing in the finite which could preserve for it a distinction against the absolute; it is a medium which is absorbed by that which is reflected through it." (*SL*. p. 532, Miller. p. 468, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 190). In fact, the fundamental reason for this attitude toward the Absolute cannot merely be seen as grounded in the idea that, since substantive identity is inherent in the meaning of the Absolute, nothing like negation or contradiction can penetrate its nature. It must also be viewed from the perspective that the very *cognition of negation* also relies on the nature of the Absolute, and if the finite cannot make any distinction between its own being and the being of the Absolute, it is because the Absolute is the *negative reflected into itself*.⁹⁹ By relying on this perspective, we can confidently affirm Hegel's idea that

⁹⁹. Although self-consciousness has been introduced as *pure negativity*, it lacks the force of *reflecting into its own negativity*. However, lacking this characteristic at the same time constitutes the very nature of experience for the subject. That is to say, the development of self-consciousness into Spirit, and likewise the development of all the categories of objective logic, can be seen as the outcome of this absence. Otherwise, the self-sufficiency of self-consciousness would be the topic of Hegel's opening discussion on the nature of the Subject, and in this sense, the presentation of substance and the Absolute would no longer make sense within the system. The outcome of such an attitude toward self-consciousness can be seen in the philosophers of Empiricism, as Hegel criticizes them:

Empiricism elevates the content that belongs to perception, feeling, and intuition into the *form of universal notions, principles, and laws*, etc. This only happens, however, in the sense that these universal determinations (for instance, 'force') are not supposed to have any more significance and validity on their own account than that which is taken from perception, and no justification save the connection that can be demonstrated in experience. On its *subjective* side, empirical cognition gets a firm hold from the fact that in perception consciousness has its *own immediate presence and certainty*. (*EL*. §38. *Werke* 8: 108)

“the exposition of the absolute is, in fact, its *own* act, which *begins from itself* and *arrives at itself*.” (Ibid)

It is this *self-reflective* characterization of the Absolute that defines the ontological development of the Absolute. At the opening of the discussion on Actuality in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel distinguishes the *absolute relation* from the Absolute. The *absolute relation* is “the unity of the absolute and its reflection.” (SL. p. 529, Miller. p. 465, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 186). In fact, it is the *reflection of the Absolute into itself* as the *absolute relation* that represents the point of departure from viewing the Absolute simply as a fixed, *abstract identity* that is unrelated to and separated from the reality of Spirit, to seeing the Absolute, in its embodiment, as the reality of Spirit. In the language of Hegel: “The absolute is the absolute only because it is not abstract identity, but the identity of being and essence, or the identity of inner and outer.” (SL. p. 533, Miller. p. 469, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 191)

In this respect, we can see identity in the *absolute relation* as the inner unity of contradiction. In fact, the entire process by which self-consciousness becomes Spirit, and likewise the development of the objective side of Hegel’s *Logic*, cannot be understood as independent moments apart from their relation to the Absolute. In other words, the process of knowing (*Erkennen*) cannot be separated from knowledge (*Wissen*).¹⁰⁰ That is to say, things are not intelligible in themselves without the conceptual knowledge of their inner unity. The unity of

¹⁰⁰. In Hegel's works, *Wissen* generally refers to knowledge in its most definitive sense, which aims at the fulfillment and actualization of truth. It encompasses both immediate and mediated forms of knowledge. On this account, even in contexts such as Sense-certainty, this immediate knowledge can still be considered *Wissen*, as Hegel appears to introduce the knowledge acquired through Sense-certainty in its definitive sense. By contrast, *Erkennen* involves the active process of cognition or recognition, where knowledge is not simply possessed but progressively realized through the movement of negation, determination, and supersession. Put differently, *Erkennen* strives toward becoming *Wissen* and reflects the developmental process through which knowledge is achieved, while *Wissen* represents the accomplished, fully actualized state of knowledge. This distinction is particularly significant in the final chapter of the *Phenomenology* on Absolute Knowledge, where the boundary between *Wissen* and *Erkennen* becomes fully articulated.

intelligibility, in this respect, can be realized as the *absolute relation*. It indicates the presentation of the Absolute in every moment of consciousness. This presentation lies at the very foundation of *Wissenschaft* in Hegel's philosophy. In fact, what the system above all represents is that there is such a reality as the Absolute that overarches every moment of consciousness. It is the system, as the form of the Absolute, that thinks itself, and in doing so, brings to light the reality of the experience of finite Spirit. Otherwise, without the representation of the system, what the experience indicates would be nothing but *pure negativity*, as the *infinite repetition of vanishing moments* that pass away. In this regard, *absolute relation*, through its ontological development, is the *memory of absence*, which preserves and transcends all moments of negation.

2.3. Unity of the Absolute and the Spirit

I have tried so far to illuminate the conception of the Absolute, not simply from the Absolute's own decisive self-standing adequacy, as what the Absolute thinks when it thinks itself, but in terms of Hegel's presentation of the Absolute as the phenomenological movement of reality, which is at the same time the speculative movement of thought. That is to say, viewing the Absolute from the standpoint of the transitory moments of Spirit and the objective categories of Hegel's *Logic*. In fact, the Absolute, in Hegel's philosophy, cannot be realized simply as the disclosure of reality at a specific phenomenological point in history or as a moment in the logical progression of the categories of thought. Rather, the Absolute is the being that effectively flows within the experience of consciousness.

On this account, the experience of consciousness, on the other hand, is neither in contradiction with nor indifferent to the Absolute. Rather, it is the result of the free and concrete self-determination of the Absolute. Indeed, to be finite means to be limited and determined by other finite beings, rather than to be viewed as opposed to the Absolute. At the same time, for

Hegel, the ultimate truth and the essence of this sphere of non-identity is identity. What this identity holds at its heart, therefore, is the *negative movement toward non-identity*, which flows through the interaction among finite beings. In this respect, the *self-positing identity within difference*, as the *negation of the negative moments of Spirit*, constitutes the very nature of the Absolute.

From this perspective, it no longer seems right to view the nature of the Absolute as the infinite truth whose necessity must be studied through philosophy, as medieval philosophers approached the notion of God. That is to say, necessity is not the final word on the nature of the Absolute. On the contrary, it is the inquiry into the *free self-positing* embodiment of the Absolute that shapes Hegel's way of philosophizing about the true nature of the Absolute. In this regard, the free self-positing nature of the Absolute is the dialectical movement of thought itself. It is form, as *pure thought*, that thinks itself as *pure content*: the content that is nothing other than the *dialectical movement of thought itself*. Therefore, the form of the Absolute, as the activity of thinking, can only be explained in terms of its own posited content, as the self-positing movement within the dialectical progression of thought's categories. It is in this sense that the freedom of the Absolute can be demonstrated through the agency of thought by its own self-positing activity. In fact, this free self-positing activity is the most fundamental characteristic of knowledge.

However, these claims may appear problematic for several reasons. If the Absolute is the self-reflection of thought, then how can we conceive of *pure Being* as a reality such as God? Is this a claim that declares the possibility of a self-positing activity of thought without any reliance on a Being external to thought? Does this claim ultimately culminate in an *absolute idealism*, which

Hegel explicitly does not endorse?¹⁰¹ On the other hand, where does *necessity* stand when all things are reduced to the self-positing activity of thought? Does the elimination of *necessity* imply, in this context, the elimination of the very conception of *freedom*?

The peculiarity of Hegel's form of idealism lies in the idea that the existence of God as absolute reality becomes actual only through its particularization in the knowledge of finite human beings. In fact, Hegel offers no ontological, teleological, or cosmological arguments for the proof of God, nor does he engage in any theological fundamental doubt in his discussions of religion, whether in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* or in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Rather, the most relevant topic of discussion for him regarding religion is the *knowledge of God*. In this respect, to say that Hegel humanized God is not to claim that he rejects or doubts the existence of the concept of God. The necessity of the concept of God, in this sense, is also tied to the necessity of thought to conceive the Absolute as the reality of thought's own being. This necessity is recognized through the recognition of the free self-positing nature of thought itself.

This perspective on God is not even controversial among contemporary right-Hegelians, and it is evident in the works of scholars such as Taylor, Rosen, and Beiser¹⁰² that Hegel's inquiry

¹⁰¹. By *absolute idealism* here, I refer to the philosophy of Fichte. However, absolute idealism during the Enlightenment does not necessarily imply a rejection of Nature as a reality distinct from that of Thought, particularly in the views of the Romantics and even in Kant's philosophy. For a comprehensive study of this topic, the reader can consult Frederick Beiser's paper, "The Enlightenment and Idealism", in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, edited by Karl Ameriks (Cambridge University Press, 2000). In Beiser's historical interpretation, what absolute idealism ultimately aims at during the Enlightenment is not the separation of Thought and Nature, but rather their reconciliation.

¹⁰². However, it is not easy to categorize these scholars as either right or left Hegelian interpreters. In fact, most contemporary interpretations of Hegel's philosophy lack a definite orientation that would justify labeling them strictly as right or left Hegelians. It seems that after the Cold War, and with the spread and domination of liberal-democratic culture across various political, economic, and social domains, most interpreters, except for some in France, have taken a more analytical orientation toward Hegel's idealism. This orientation contains elements of both left and right perspectives at its heart. Michael Rosen, Frederick Beiser, and even Charles Taylor are not exceptions in this regard. On the other hand, any expression of the Absolute within analytical interpretations is rooted in how

into the Absolute, which is at the same time God's self-knowledge of Himself, concerns the knowledge of ultimate reality that we come to know through the dialectical movement of thought. In this respect, there is no issue in considering an objective reality beyond the reality of Spirit. In fact, Hegel postulates a form of idealism in which the reality of God and Spirit is ultimately one, and what is Real is this *oneness*. It is the free, pure, self-positing activity of thought that ultimately posits itself as this *oneness*. This positedness is the Absolute Spirit in the *Phenomenology*, where the formal division between the universal objective and the particular subjective is set aside. In other words, subjective life, as the rational development of self-consciousness, and the self-actualization of God meet and merge into a single activity, whose manifestation can be seen in the highest domain of Absolute Spirit: Philosophy. In fact, from the standpoint of Absolute Spirit, self-consciousness at the stage of Philosophy is mature enough to affirm its *oneness* with the self-actualization of God. Therefore, Philosophy, in the framework of Hegel's idealism at the highest level of Absolute Spirit, begins by presupposing its reality as inseparable from the reality of God. That is to say, from the standpoint of philosophy, the attempt

the *Idea* in Hegel's philosophy is understood. However, it often reflects an interpretation that is *indifferent to the Idea*, rather than viewing Hegel as a truly idealistic thinker. In this respect, as Rosen states in his recently published work *The Shadow of God*, in the context of criticizing Marxism:

In direct contrast to German philosophy, which descends from heaven to earth, here [in Marxism] we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. (Rosen, 2022, p. 29)

This critique of Rosen can be expanded to include the common point among contemporary interpreters of Hegel, who tend to regard the *Idea* as something still alive and draw its liveliness from the activity of finite human beings. Beiser, similarly, can be seen as one of the interpreters who, while admitting Hegel's absolute idealism as his metaphysical approach toward reality, keeps an eye on Hegel's historicity by understanding it as the way in which human dialectical self-consciousness determines metaphysical reality. In the language of Beiser:

Hegel's own concept of the infinite or unconditioned is entirely immanent: the infinite does not exist beyond the finite world but only within it ... whether the unconditioned is beyond this world or the world as a whole, it still remains the unconditioned. (Beiser, 2005, p. 55)

to prove such an objective necessity as God's existence is not separate from inquiring into the reality of Spirit.¹⁰³

Through Hegel's speculative philosophy, the relation between subjective knowledge and the knowledge of God can be best illustrated in the transition that occurs from Hegel's Objective Logic to the Subjective Logic. In Hegel's preliminary discussion on the Concept (*Begriff*) in the *Logic*, the Concept is regarded "not merely as a subjective presupposition but as the absolute foundation." (*SL*. p. 577, Miller. p. 508, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 245). The truth of the Concept, in this sense, can be realized as *purely self-mediated being*. This is the stage beyond *substance*, "something higher, the *Notion* [*Begriff*], the *subject*." (*SL*. p. 580, Miller. p. 511, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 249), where the transcendence of substance occurs. Therefore, what the *absolute foundation* implies is something above the necessity of substance. Indeed, it is above necessity itself.¹⁰⁴ This idea can be grounded in the limitedness of the system. Indeed, a true System does not tolerate any limitation, even when this limitation is imposed by the most fundamental internal characteristic of the system, which is *substance*. Rather, it is substance that must liberate itself from its blind and inner identity. In liberating itself, it manifests the freedom of the Concept as "its positedness within itself, and subsequently in its other is posited as simply and solely

¹⁰³. However, in practice, it was secular thought that tended more toward reading and interpreting Hegel's works than traditional theological metaphysics. This strand of secular thought, in its confrontation with Hegel's idealism, appears above all in the efforts of both Existentialism and Marxism to interpret Hegel's works in a context where they adopt the idea of dialectical historicity while leaving aside all pretensions to the Absolute. In fact, what they leave aside is Hegel's idealism itself.

¹⁰⁴. Substance, as necessity, implies the end. However, for Hegel, it is the dialectical nature of substance that keeps it alive. In this respect, substance needs to be free by its nature. On the other hand, the freedom of substance is only possible through the presence of the subject. In fact, it is the *immanent dialectical subjective presence* that necessitates substance. That is to say, it is freedom that is the truth of necessity. As Hegel puts it in the *Logic*:

The *unity* of substance is its relation of *necessity*; but this unity is only an *inner* necessity; in positing itself through the moment of absolute negativity it becomes a *manifested* or *posited identity*, and thereby the *freedom* which is the identity of the Notion [*Begriff*]. (*SL*. p. 581, Miller. p. 512, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 251).

identical with itself.” (SL. p. 582, Miller. p. 513, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 251). In fact, the most fundamental characteristic of freedom for Hegel can be found here, as *to be posited in other as absolutely self-identical*. Freedom, in this sense, cannot simply be interpreted as *freedom from necessity* or *freedom in necessity*. Rather, it is to say that the most fundamental characteristic of necessity is its freedom.

This idea of freedom, as *to be posited in other as absolutely self-identical*, is not limited to Hegel’s speculative domain. In the *Phenomenology*, this idea can also be ascribed to the relation between Self-consciousness and Absolute Spirit. In fact, it is at the stage of Absolute Spirit that the human being transcends itself from the accidental conditions of experience by placing itself in an explicit relation to the Absolute. The self is no longer passing through its temporal and historical moments in alienation. Rather, it recognizes itself as a metaphysical being, for which what is past is its *absolute present*. In fact, nothing outside it liberates it from alienation. Rather, it is its self-realization as *to be posited in other as absolutely self-identical* that constitutes its freedom. That is to say, the self is the *identity of its identity and non-identity*. It is, therefore, the freedom of the subject that necessitates its being as substance. In this respect, the definition of substance cannot be reduced to the Spinozian substance: *Substantia est causa sui*, rather “substance raised to the freedom of the Notion [*Begriff*].” (SL. p. 582, Miller. p. 513, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 251)

Indeed, philosophy, as the consummation of Absolute Spirit in Hegel’s *Encyclopedia*,¹⁰⁵ is not the endpoint of metaphysical thought. Rather, this consummation is, in my interpretation, the

¹⁰⁵. In Hegel’s exposition of the system in the *Encyclopedia*, Absolute Spirit can be seen as the culmination of his entire system. It is the stage at which the whole history of Spirit becomes the subject matter of its own inquiry through *philosophy*, which is itself the highest stage of Absolute Spirit. While in Art and Religion the internal necessity of their *content* remains separate from their *form*, philosophy embraces its *content* as its own necessity by

initiation of *Bildung*¹⁰⁶ in the Enlightenment. This is the point where reason and self-consciousness become one: the Absolute. That is to say, the purposive activity of thought becomes *one* with the self-consciousness. In this respect, the self becomes the metaphysical self, and it is metaphysics that constitutes the meaning of *Bildung*. In other words, the self dwells in metaphysics in modernity. Metaphysics, in this sense, is not an abstract realm separated from human life; rather, the very concrete reality of the self belongs to metaphysical thought.

In fact, the conception of *Bildung* fundamentally belongs to philosophy, and the most sublime reality of *Bildung* is the *freedom of consciousness*. This is the stage of Science “that self-consciousness should have raised itself into this Aether in order to be able to live _and [actually] to live_ with Science and in Science.” (*PS*. §26. *Werke* 3: 29). In this respect, the recognition of freedom as *absolute negativity*, which in practice was the failure of freedom, is now transcended into *absolute freedom* for the subject. That is to say, the knowledge of the self no longer aims at *ought to be free*, but rather, *it is free*.

With *Bildung*, then, we are entering the domain of the universality of thought rather than its individuality and particularity. Education is the exoteric domain of the Absolute in this respect. As Hegel puts it: “Only what is completely determined is at once exoteric, comprehensible, and capable of being learned and appropriated by all.” (*PS*. §13. *Werke* 3: 20). The complete determination of thought belongs to Science in modernity, the age in which reality is grounded in

reaching the absolute freedom of Spirit. In fact, while *philosophy* stands at the summit of Absolute Spirit, it is not a reality separate from Art and Religion, but rather *philosophy* is their very reality.

¹⁰⁶. Etymologically, *Bildung* comes from the verb *bilden*, which can be translated as *to form* or *to shape* in English. The suffix -ung also turns the verb into an action or process. In this realization, an internal process of development and maturation is inherent in it. Therefore, we can understand *Bildung* as including a sense of activity that can be ascribed to the cultural or spiritual maturation of the subject. Furthermore, the process inherent in *Bildung* is deeply tied to *Aufhebung* in Hegel’s philosophy, as the process through which the self-alienation of Spirit results in its transcendence toward Absolute Spirit.

the equation of *to be* and *to be thought*. This is the postulation of Hegel's metaphysics upon which *Bildung* in modernity is grounded.¹⁰⁷ However, this is not simply to say that metaphysical thought is taught in a systematic format in universities and schools in a comprehensive and intelligible manner through the medium of the system in modernity. Rather, *Education* itself rests in the reality of metaphysics.

What I am going to contribute in my discussion on the Absolute, in the final chapter of this thesis, is that the outcome of the interaction between self-consciousness and the Absolute is not the *end of philosophy*. Rather, it is the emergence of *Bildung* in the Enlightenment as the self-grounded and self-expanding reality of the Absolute. In fact, not only does Hegel's philosophy not announce the end of metaphysical thought, but it represents the stage at which metaphysical thought becomes *intersubjective*. The whole of philosophy is Education in this regard, not a particular period or a special tradition within it, as it is the whole that demonstrates the equation between the subject and the object of its knowledge.

Finally, my aim in bringing the conception of Education to light is to demonstrate that the embodiment of freedom in modernity is intelligible only in the way it takes place through the system. This is the stage of the identity of the self with the system. With Education, there is no individual in this respect; what we have is the universal. The being of the self, therefore, cannot

¹⁰⁷ Reid, in his article "The State University: The University of Berlin and Its Founding Contradictions" in *Real Words* (pp. 71–84), employs *Bildung*, as the interrelation between state and philosophy, to approach the new conceptual structure of the University of Berlin. This structure would later extend to universities in the United States and over time to universities around the world, where education is based on state authority rather than being under the authority of the church. On the other hand, what lies at the foundation of state authority in representing the modern conception of Education is universal reason. Reason, in this respect, as Reid states, "which evolves into the concept of spirit, must be grasped as the activity (the life) of thought manifesting itself in the world as the human oeuvre: the state, religion, art and, above all, the ultimate work which comprehends all the others, philosophy." (Reid, 2007, p. 77)

be separated from the universality of the system. This is the point at which self-consciousness becomes one with the Absolute reality of itself, which is Absolute Knowledge.

As I point out here, *Bildung* is the topic that I will engage with in the next chapter of my thesis. To inquire into the subjects mentioned above, I will focus on the Introduction and Absolute Knowledge chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as well as the Absolute Idea chapter of the *Science of Logic*.

Chapter Three: Reason and *Bildung*

1. *Bildung* and the Absolute

1.1. Hegel's Conception of *Bildung*

In the history of modern philosophy, by making human consciousness the center of the universe through its power of reasoning, *Bildung* plays a key role in the insights of thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries regarding Truth. If there is such a reality to be known as Truth, it must be known through human reasoning and understanding, which are equally shared by all humans. It is the very nature of *Bildung* in this sense that shapes the main elements of *Geisteswissenschaften*, or human sciences, among German Idealist philosophers in the nineteenth century. The Enlightenment, in this respect, can be understood as the transition from a Cartesian self-constitutive *Cogito* to a consciousness of intersubjective comprehensive *culture*, which takes place through the mediation of human reasoning.¹⁰⁸

With the rise of the Enlightenment, the conception of *Bildung* can no longer be regarded as a sterile institutional concept belonging to the elitist bourgeois society. Rather, Education is the way the human is defined as human through the essentiality of reasoning for its existence. In this sense, what Education implies is the *reflection of the self upon its own reflection*.¹⁰⁹ It is this self-

¹⁰⁸. In fact, the translation of *Bildung* simply as Education may not seem to capture what *Bildung* truly signifies. The issue is not only with Education but also with other possible translations such as Culture, Cultivation, or Formation.

¹⁰⁹. In the Spirit chapter of the *Phenomenology*, the discussion of *Bildung* takes place in the section *Der sich entfremdete Geist*. *Bildung* appears here as the mediating power that transcends the individual from its alienated stance in order to overcome this alienation. Overcoming the alienation of the self, in this respect, occurs through the actualization of the individual. However, at this stage, the self has not yet reached Absolute Knowledge to realize that *Bildung* is the *reflection of the self upon its own reflection*. Rather, in the Spirit chapter, *Bildung* remains external to its nature and points to the fact that “Only that which externalize itself, and, therefore, only the universal, obtains an actual existence.” (*PS*. §489. *Werke* 3: 364). In fact, even at this stage, it is the individual that externalizes itself for the sake of its actualization, and through this externalization the self confronts the fact that “the measure of

reflective characteristic of *Bildung* that transcends the Cartesian *Cogito*, from its pure self-certainty, to the view of the human as the *rational agent* that resides within metaphysics in Hegel's philosophy. In this respect, the term is no longer confined to the pedagogical process of immersing the particular in the universality of the system, but above all refers to the equality of form and content within the system.

In fact, the universality of the system, which is its most essential characteristic, indebts its essentiality to the universality of reasoning among all human beings. In such a context, if the self, either as a particular group or as an individual, does not recognize its essentiality, as its power of reasoning, through the system, it will protest against the system.¹¹⁰ This is because there is a reciprocal relationship between the particular and the universal. *Bildung* is the insight that the individual's essence is not separate from the universal, but is formed through and participates in it. In this sense, *Bildung* refers not only to the relation between the pedagogical and institutional elements of a state that shape and form individuals within it, but it also aims to the knowledge that the *self-consciousness of the individual* constitutes the very reality of the constitutional laws of the state. This teleological scheme indicates a narrative of the individual's development toward the Absolute. At this point, *Bildung* represents its metaphysical character,

its culture is the measure of its actuality" (Ibid). Therefore, through its confrontation with culture, the self comes to be an immediate subjective reality through which "the self knows itself as actual only as a *transcended* self." (PS. §491. *Werke* 3: 365). In the exposition of the *Phenomenology*, it is in Absolute Knowledge, and subsequently in the Introduction that follows Absolute Knowledge, that Hegel speaks of culture (*Bildung*) in its maturity as the self-reflection of the rational agent.

¹¹⁰. From this perspective, many social conflicts in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries emerge from the exclusion of certain groups from *Bildung*, such as women's social movements in different parts of the world. This is not simply to say that such protests aim at women's access to the resources of constitutional education as their essential rights. But above all, this protest is against a system that fails to recognize them as rational agents. In this regard, the conception of *Bildung* also belongs to the foundation of the legitimization of the system. That is to say, any particular social group, and even any individual, must be recognized as part of the system and identified with the system in order to achieve its freedom. In this respect, it is the process of the formation of the particular through the universality of the system that constitutes the very meaning of *Bildung*.

which is its striving to shape (*bilden*) by reflecting the image (*Bild*) of its own essence. In simpler terms, *Bildung* is the Self, which reflects into its nature as universal thought, which is the system. That is to say, *Bildung* is the entire developmental process through which the self becomes the Absolute. In the language of Hegel: “The series of configurations which consciousness goes through along this road is, in reality, the detailed history of the *education* (*Bildung*) of consciousness itself to the standpoint of Science.” (*PS*. §78. *Werke* 3: 73).

In this respect, the concept of *Bildung* is not simply limited to dividing knowledge into different branches for humanity as distinct categories, and then teaching them within the various fields of theoretical and practical knowledge in educational institutions. Rather, *Bildung*, in a more comprehensive perspective, finds its ground in the reconciliation that takes place between the infinite activity of thinking as reasoning and the temporality of human experiences. In simple terms, if there is Truth, such Truth must be understood by human reasoning through its temporal experiences. From this perspective, we may first contend that *Bildung* refers to the formation and actualization of human knowledge through its concrete embodiment. That is to say, it should not merely be conceived as the abstract internal representation of Truth in the human mind, as “the arbitrary combinations of an imagination [*Einbildungskraft*] that has only been disorganized by its thoughts, an imagery that is neither fish nor flesh, neither poetry nor philosophy.” (*PS*. §68. *Werke* 3: 64). As a result, *Einbildung*¹¹¹ (imagination, illusion), as the mere formation of an image of truth within the human mind, is not the subject of discussion in approaching the reality of Spirit. Rather, it is the dialectical movement inherent in the conception of *Bildung* that

¹¹¹. Hegel distinguishes between *Einbildung*, as an image-like representation, and true conceptual thought as *Begriff*. However, *Einbildung*, especially in its manifestation as *Vorstellung* in the *Phenomenology*, can be regarded as a preparatory stage in cognition, which cannot attain truth on its own and must be sublated (*Aufhebung*) through its cultural development (*Bildung*) into full conceptual thought (*Begriff*). This is the topic that I will examine in detail in the next two subsections.

designates the true knowledge of the reality of Spirit, which is the “long process of culture [*Bildung*] towards genuine philosophy, a movement as rich as it is profound, through which Spirit achieves knowledge.” (*PS*. 68. *Werke* 3: 63).

Secondly, as a corollary of the first point, *Bildung* remains within the territory of philosophy rather than being limited merely to the pedagogical task that belongs to educational, social, and political institutions of modernity. We can even cautiously claim that, for Hegel, *Bildung* is prior to pedagogy. It is, therefore, taken up by the highest form of Spirit, which conceives *Bildung* as philosophy, where its main concern is the historical realization of the principle of reason immanent in the world. At the same time, the historical representation of reason does not belong exclusively to modernity or the Enlightenment for Hegel; rather, what constitutes *Bildung* is the entire history of metaphysics. In this respect, even the representation of the Absolute as God in the Middle Ages, as a power that is although transcendental yet at the same time immanent in the reality of Spirit, carries the implication of *Bildung*. In fact, the significance of Christianity with regard to the constitution of the concept of *Bildung* rests on its emphasis on the unity of God and Spirit.¹¹²

However, Hegel’s conception of *Bildung* cannot be limited simply to the representation of the entirety of humanity’s historical knowledge. Rather, in its speculative ground, it is also thoroughly self-reflective. This insight carries significant philosophical implications. First, *Bildung* is not merely the representation of humanity as the *rational agent* in the modern world, defined by *what it is* on the basis of *what has been*. Rather, *what it is*, is what transcends itself. In

¹¹². See Lauer, Q. “Religion, Reason, and Culture: A Hegelian Interpretation.” *The Owl of Minerva* 25, no. 2 (1994): 173–86.

fact, the copula, as the middle term, that is *to be*, is transcendental. That is to say, *Bildung* cannot be defined on a stable and definite ground. Rather, by its very nature, it implies that thought, not in its abstraction but in its concrete actuality, is dialectical. It is precisely this self-transcendental characterization of *to be* that determines the reality of modernity for Hegel, and which he designates as culture. Culture (*Kultur*)¹¹³, in this respect, does not belong simply to the past, nor to the present or future, but it is the *absolute present* for the rational agent. It is, in fact, the reality of the presentation of the self as the *rational self-transcendental agent* in modernity that lies at the heart of Hegel's view of *Bildung*. In this respect, *Bildung*, as Hegel defines it in the opening pages of the *Phenomenology*, can be seen as the point of departure from the "earnestness of life in its concrete richness" (*PS*. §4. *Werke* 3: 14) toward the "true shape in which truth exists" (*PS*. §5. *Werke* 3: 14) as *Wissenschaft*.

Nevertheless, *Wissenschaft* does not designate the final point of dialectical activity as the point at which *Bildung* narrates the complete and concrete historical recognition of the human *richness of life*. Rather, the last stage of the development of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, that is Absolute Knowledge, must be understood as the point at which the dialectical activity of thought effectively reaches its true account of itself as *Bildung*. The true account of *Bildung* in this sense represents the outset of inquiry into its *self-reflective* nature, not the endpoint of its experience. That is to say, the true account of dialectical thought is not the end

¹¹³. Although the word *Kultur* is common in German, it is a term that Hegel rarely uses in his philosophical writings. In fact, it is *Bildung* that carries the deepest sense of the historical and spiritual development of the self-cultivating Spirit, while *Kultur* mostly signifies the external products of such a self-cultivated Spirit. In this sense, what concerns Hegel in the discussion of *Bildung* is the Spirit's self-cultivating process toward absolute knowledge, the stage at which Spirit recognizes such knowledge as its own reality. That is to say, *Bildung* is the self-knowing process that results from Spirit's self-actualization, while the manifestations of such knowledge in the different stages of Spirit's development signify *Kultur*. The discussion of *Bildung*, in this respect, is a metaphysical concern in Hegel's philosophy.

of knowledge. Rather, as John Smith points out, it is the point at which “the highest formation of consciousness consists in the memory of its own development.” (Smith, 1988, p. 237)

Another implication of ascribing the *self-reflective characterization of thought* to the very essential nature of *Bildung* is that the dialectical nature of thought does not beget *Bildung* as a fundamental reality separated in essence from its cognitive process. Rather, in Hegel’s speculative philosophy, the dialectical nature of thought *is Bildung*. In this respect, we cannot separate the reality of thought from the reality of *being*. Indeed, this insight led Hegel to regard *Bildung* as the *essentiality of life*, since to speak of it is not to discuss an external reality that merely explains the various characterizations of the self, as might be understood through the general meaning of culture in common sense. Rather, in the speculative sense, *Bildung* is the *self-reflective reality of thought*. That is to say, *Bildung* does not simply refer to the history of the self-actualization of the rational agent to be the Absolute Knowledge. Rather, it is the reflection on this history that constitutes the very nature of *Bildung* in Hegel’s philosophy.

From this perspective, it is for *Bildung* that the alienation of Spirit, overcoming this alienation, and its supersession become the subject matter of reflection, not for an individual who merely experiences a glimpse of alienation, zealous effort, or satisfaction in any society at any point in world history. We might even say that, for the individual, the vanishing moments of its experience in each epoch can be regarded as the highest stage of the historical maturity of Spirit in its rational development. Yet this is not the case for *Bildung*, which is the very self-consciousness of the *infinite dialectical* nature of the rational agent. In fact, if we seek the truest

account of the reality of humanity, it is to be found in *Bildung* rather than in the historical experiences of any particular group within world history.¹¹⁴

In this respect, *Bildung* is the unification of the process of recognition that takes place through the *rational agent* as “the pathway of *doubt*, or more precisely as the path of despair.” (*PS*. §78. *Werke* 3: 72), and the destiny of this path as being one with the true knowledge of the Absolute, which Hegel describes as “self-restoring sameness, or this reflection in otherness within itself.” (*PS*. §18. *Werke* 3: 23). This unification truly represents *Bildung* as *absolute self-reflection* in Hegel’s system. In this sense, relying on this transcendental essential characteristic of cognition, it does not seem reasonable to ascribe an End to metaphysics or to history as the *final word of Spirit* in fully comprehending the reality of humanity at the stage of Absolute Knowledge. Rather, both Hegel’s speculative and systematic philosophies, as his *Science of Logic* and his *Encyclopedia*, emerge as the outcome of Absolute Knowledge, within which the essential subject matter is the *dialectically absolute self-reflective nature of thought*.

In brief, my general perspective in this chapter is to narrate *Bildung* metaphorically as the Absolute standing before its own painting and gazing into this *grey in grey* image as a reality that, while external to it, is nevertheless its own reality. In fact, the domain of *Bildung* is the region in which the Absolute, as the rational agent, narrates itself, and the rational agent is at the same time subject to its own knowledge. From this perspective, I aim to demonstrate that viewing the Absolute as the endpoint of metaphysical thought is not the right interpretation of its role in Hegel’s system. Conversely, reading Hegel’s philosophy while ignoring or being

¹¹⁴. Both of the mentioned characteristics, the dialectical movement of thought and its self-reflective characterization, are brought together in the conception of *Aufhebung* in Hegel’s speculative philosophy, which I will explain in detail in the next subsection.

indifferent to the Absolute also kills the very meaning of *Bildung*. That is to say, being indifferent to the Absolute is being indifferent to *Bildung*, and consequently being indifferent to recognizing Hegel as a systematic philosopher.

In fact, what truly signifies the reality of the Absolute in Hegel's system is the *transcendental self-reflective* characterization of *Bildung*. In this respect, *Bildung* justifies the Absolute to recognize its reality as *concrete rational eternity* that, while not separate from the *self-conscious embodiment of Spirit*, at the same time carries the reality of Reason as *purposive infinite speculative activity* at its heart. This viewpoint on the Absolute is gained on the basis of *Bildung*, and in turn this understanding of *Bildung* is rooted in the representation of the Absolute in Hegel's philosophy. Without the Absolute, therefore, there is no such thing as *Bildung*, and consequently no basis upon which individuality and particularity could recognize themselves within universality. In Hegel's speculative philosophy, the concept through which *Bildung* views the Absolute as the *dialectically self-reflective reality of thought* is *Aufhebung*. That is to say, Education has its truth in the conception of *Aufhebung* in Hegel's system.

1.2. Hegel's Conception of *Aufhebung*

Although in Hegel's philosophy the being of the Absolute, as Truth, can be seen both as a presupposition and as the destiny of his system within different interpretive efforts, at none of the stages of its phenomenological maturity does Spirit recognize its truth as if it were the final meaning of Truth for itself. Rather, in Hegel's speculative philosophy, "we learn by experience that we meant something other than we meant to mean; and this correction of our meaning compels our knowing to go back to the proposition [e.g., *God is being, or the actual is the*

universal], and understand it in some other way.” (PS. §63. *Werke* 3: 60). From the perspective of *Bildung*, this *transcendental self-reflective* activity of consciousness is the truth of Experience, not the vanishing moments of the experiences of consciousness. That is to say, if there is such a thing as the truth of experience, it belongs to *Bildung*. The inquiry into such truth in Hegel’s speculative philosophy takes place through the mediation of *Aufhebung*. In the chapter on Spirit, in his discussion of *Die Bildung und ihr Reich der Wirklichkeit*, Hegel elaborates further on his viewpoint on *die reine Bildung*:

What is learnt in this world is that neither the actuality of power and wealth, nor their specific *Notions*, ‘good’ and ‘bad’, or the consciousness of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (the noble and the ignoble consciousness), possess truth; on the contrary, all these moments become inverted, one changing into the other, and each is the opposite of itself ... True Spirit, however, is just this unity of the absolutely separate moments. (PS. §521. *Werke* 3: 385-386)

The unity of the separated moments of experience lies in the reality of *Bildung*.¹¹⁵ That is to say, experience by its nature does not have meaning apart from entering the rational process of

¹¹⁵. Even from a psychological and pedagogical aspect, *Bildung* can be seen as the unity and reconciliation of the consciousness of a person torn between opposing forces. This disrupted consciousness, on the one hand, “has directed its gaze to the world of actuality” (PS. §525. *Werke* 3: 389), and on the other hand “its gaze is in part turned only inward and negatively against it.” (Ibid). Such disrupted consciousness ultimately has no destiny other than vanity, in which “all content is turned into something negative which can no longer be grasped as having a positive significance” (PS. §526. *Werke* 3: 390). In fact, it is the destiny of the *alienated self-consciousness* that we confront again in the stage of Spirit, but here it is *Bildung* that reflects on the nature of self-alienation in consciousness. From the standpoint of *Bildung*:

The consciousness that is aware of its disruption and openly declares it, derides existence and the universal confusion, and derides its own self as well; it is at the same time the fading, but still audible, sound of all this confusion. This vanity of all reality and every definite Notion [*bestimmten Begriffs*], vanity which knows itself to be such, is the double reflection of the real world into itself: once in this *particular self* of consciousness *qua* particular, and again in the pure *universality* of consciousness, or in thought. (PS. §525. *Werke* 3: 389)

In this respect, the fundamental task of *Bildung*, especially in a pedagogical sense, can be seen as merging the individuality of consciousness into the universality of thought, as the remedy for the self-alienated Spirit. However, this remedy does not belong exclusively to Absolute Knowledge. Rather, in its historical order, it first appears

Aufhebung, which is the medium through which experience reflects into itself as the moments of the universality of *Bildung*. In the language of Hegel: “the demand for this dissolution can only be directed to the *Spirit of culture* [*Geist der Bildung*] itself, in order that it return out of its confusion to itself as *Spirit*, and win for itself a still higher consciousness.” (*PS*. §524. *Werke* 3: 389)

From this perspective, as elaborated in the previous chapter, although self-consciousness in practice experiences the world through its negative inward movement, the knowledge of this experience lies in something other than that inward movement. In fact, it is the reflection into the negative experience of consciousness that constitutes the speculative meaning of experience, which is its true meaning in Hegel’s philosophy. That is to say, we have, on the one hand, the experience of the object of consciousness, and on the other hand, the experience of that experience, which is the truth of the Experience. Within this process, “the first object, in being known, is altered for consciousness; it ceases to be the in-itself, and becomes something that is in-itself only *for consciousness*. And this then is the True: the being-for-consciousness of this in-itself.” (*PS*. §86. *Werke* 3: 79). The Truth of Experience, in this respect, does not simply rely on the narration of the phenomenological development of consciousness; rather, it is the speculative inquiry into the dialectical movement of thought that reflects the truth of the Experience.

Thus, reflection into the negative experience of self-consciousness has a positive implication for the Absolute. In fact, what is experienced as the negative moments of self-consciousness is the same activity that performs the negation. That is to say, the reflection on the negative experience of consciousness implies the self-reflecting negative dialectical movement of thought,

through faith, where the reconciliation between the particularity of Spirit and the universality of God takes place.

which results in Absolute Knowledge in the *Phenomenology*. Through this reflection, the subject is no longer merely the moment of experience, but the experience transcends itself to become the *subjective substance*.¹¹⁶ In fact, by adopting a speculative standpoint, we can claim that *Aufhebung* is the truth of the experience of consciousness in this regard.

When we interpret things from the standpoint of *Aufhebung*, therefore, it is no longer the representation of reality to thought, in the way categories of thought approach this external reality, that has the indication of Truth. Rather, it is the *dialectical self-reflective* nature of thought that forms the reality of beings. The significance of *Aufhebung*, in this respect, lies in something that *abstract rational thought*, before the emergence of modernity, was unable to do. Thought is now able to know something both as the appearance of truth for consciousness and also as the negation of that appearance. As the consummation of this process, it embodies its own concrete reality as the Truth of the appearance of truth to consciousness. This means that thought, by preserving the negative moments as the appearance of truth for consciousness, demonstrates itself as the reality of this negativity, and through this *negative self-reflection*, it posits its being as *positive rational knowledge*. In the language of Hegel:

When the dialectic has the negative as its result, then, precisely as a result, this negative is at the same time the positive, for it contains what it resulted from sublated within itself, and it cannot be without it. This, however, is the basic determination of the third form of the Logical, namely, the *speculative* or positive rational [moment]. (*EL*. §81. *Werke* 8: 176)

¹¹⁶. In Hegel's philosophy, the most important lesson that we can take from experience is that Truth is not substance in-itself, as the final word of the experience of consciousness. Rather, subjectivity remains open to such a conception as Truth in Hegel's system. From this perspective, the end of philosophy does not refer to the Truth that results from *Bildung*, but instead aims to reach the truth of the Absolute as *Bildung*. That is to say, it is the Absolute that truly understands itself as *Bildung*, and in its narration it is the *Absolute's point on the reality of self-consciousness* that is to be narrated.

In fact, this is how *Aufhebung* works in Hegel's system. *Aufhebung* holds both the reality of negativity and the positedness of thought within its nature. As a result, the transcendence of the negativity of thought is the same as the immanence of its positedness. This indeed constitutes the very nature of *Bildung*. This is the thought that knows its negative movement as the reality of being, not as something separated and opposed to the nature of being by transcending the reality of being beyond its boundaries. For Hegel, however, it is thought that transcends itself to demonstrate the reality of being as its own reality. The result of this *self-reflective transcendental* movement of thought is the emergence of the *system* in Hegel's philosophy, not as the final destiny of speculative thought, but as the *Truth that narrates itself speculatively*.

The speculative self-reflective narration of the Absolute, which has been seen from the standpoint of *Bildung*, is not merely a speculative logical concern for Hegel. Rather, the speculative narration of the Absolute is the actual solution to the division between the determinate boundaries of human understanding, defined as *Verstand* in Kant's philosophy, and the conception of Truth, especially realized as God's truth, which is attainable by faith for human beings. In fact, for Hegel, it is the speculative narration of the Absolute as *Wissenschaft* that provides the remedy to this critical modern division between *Verstand* and *Truth*. The task of *Bildung*, therefore, cannot simply be limited to the articulation of a *speculative self-reflective* rational system through which the human attains knowledge of the Absolute, a bridge by which self-consciousness relates itself to the Absolute in order to overcome its alienation. It is, in fact, the Absolute's narration of itself as the *system* that fundamentally finds its significance in Hegel's conception of *Bildung*. That is to say, the conception of *Bildung* is the internal representation of Truth. It is not, therefore, the culmination of all dialectical progression. Rather, *Bildung* is the manifestation of the *self-representational* reality of thought. Put simply, there is no such thing as

a reality external to thought that represents the reality of thought, such as the *system* through which all representations of Truth *ought to be* intelligible to the rational agent. Nor, by employing *Verstand*, can the self be defined as a self-grounded entity that, by determining the boundaries of its cognition, determines the rational system within which it dwells. Rather, the *self-reflective transcendental* nature of thought constitutes the *system*, neither by imposing limits on its own nature nor on the system. On this account, *Bildung* represents the most actual and concrete freedom for the rational agent. In fact, and in effect, it is the *system* itself, as the rational embodiment of subjectivity, that is the Truth of the representation of the conception of freedom, and any concern about freedom with regard to individuality and particularity belongs essentially to the freedom of the system.

1.3. *Bildung* and the System

For Hegel, the most complete exposition of the system takes place through his last work, the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. It is not simply a regular published book about *self-reflective transcendental* thought that narrates itself speculatively within the three regions of Logic, Nature, and Spirit. Rather, it is, above all, the book in which “the teaching content of philosophy is the content of philosophy itself.” (Reid, 2007, p. 80). That is to say, the pedagogical content of knowledge is the same as its form. In other words, to be known is the same as absolute knowledge. This is the “passage of the Notion into consciousness” (*PS*. §806. *Werke* 3: 589) which we reach at the culmination of the *Phenomenology*, where the Absolute sacrifices itself to be known through the self-knowing Spirit. “This sacrifice is the externalization in which Spirit displays the process of its becoming Spirit in the form of *free contingent*

happening, intuiting its pure Self as Time outside of it, and equally its Being as Space.” (PS. §807. *Werke* 3: 590). However, in its sacrifice, the Absolute is not killed but remains eternally present for Spirit, whose presentation flows in the *absolute now* in every moment of the representation of Spirit.

The externalization of the Absolute, therefore, takes place through the exposition of itself in the form of Science, which unfolds in the three speculative domains of knowledge: Logic, Nature, and Spirit. The topics inherent in these three regions, to which Hegel refers in his *Encyclopedia*, consist of the logical and historical forms of thought that he had already speculatively examined in both the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*.¹¹⁷ Yet he returns to them again, first in a systematic way and second in a pedagogical way.¹¹⁸ In fact, both the systematic and pedagogical expositions of Science are rooted in the fact that the Absolute, from the standpoint of *Bildung*, must be “exoteric, comprehensible, and capable of being learned and appropriated by all.” (PS. §13. *Werke* 3: 20). The exoteric comprehension of the Absolute

¹¹⁷. Reid, in the last chapter of his book *Hegel's Grammatical Ontology*, distinguishes between the phenomenological representation of the content of philosophy and its conceptual representation. The first takes place in the *Phenomenology*, and the second in both *Hegel's Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. From Reid's perspective, it is only the representation of the *Science of Logic* that lies in reaching conceptual thought (*Begriff*) at the culmination of the *Phenomenology*, not Hegel's entire system of the *Encyclopedia*. However, as he expresses:

the rest of the system will deduce itself, not because of some spooky pre-determination but because the complete speculative sentence is already presupposed; it has already been demonstrated as the absolute wisdom (aka absolute knowing) attained by the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Thus, the articulation of the *Encyclopedia* take place within the framework of speculative language, where the copulative 'is' no longer expresses different forms of failed identity. (Reid, 2021, p. 216)

We should keep in mind, however, that passing from the *Phenomenology* to the *Logic* does not indicate a form of formalism that reduces philosophy to logic. Rather, it is the self-knowing Spirit that narrates itself speculatively. In this respect, *Bildung*, as the concrete reality of self-reflective thought, arises as the culmination of the *Phenomenology*, and not as any abstract form of idealism or formalism.

¹¹⁸. In Hegel's *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, although the presentations of the *Zusätze* (additions) to most paragraphs come from student lecture notes taken during his classes, the nature of these contributions, which appear in later editions of the work after Hegel's death, demonstrates that his pedagogical courses at the university were based on the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. It also shows that the systematic and numerical content of this book provided the framework for the *Zusätze*, which were added as part of its content. That is to say, in practice, the content of philosophy becomes one with its pedagogical content.

implicitly carries Hegel's fundamental idea beyond the mere exposition of the system, that is, "The Truth is the Whole". (PS. §20. *Werke* 3: 24). This is because "It is the whole which, having traversed its content in time and space, has returned into itself, and is the resultant *simple Notion* of the whole." (PS. §12. *Werke* 3: 19). That is to say, from the perspective of *Bildung*, "The true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of such truth." (PS. §5. *Werke* 3: 14).

The goal of Hegel's system, therefore, as mediated by *Bildung*, is not simply to produce a highly educated modern obedient democratic individual, ready to immerse intellectually and voluntarily into the rational authority of the state, an individual who ideally does not recognize its self-determination within the state apart from the authority of the state. Rather, the consummation of *Bildung*, for Hegel, is to educate the individual to be fully aware that the highest reality of its being relies on the universality of the system. On this account, it is not the sense of uniformity and obedience to the state's laws that lies at the foundation of the conception of education. Rather, above all, it is about the existence of being as Truth, that is Absolute, as Truth that can be recognized only through the reality of the *system*. That is to say, the rational system is prior to the self-consciousness of the individual, and if there is such a thing as rationality for the individual, it belongs essentially to the *system*.

It is, therefore, the *system* that reflects on the self as the *rational agent*. How, and in what manner, the reflection of the Absolute to the rational agent occurs is at the core of the conception of *Bildung*. It does not indicate dehumanizing knowledge such as reliance on external revelatory knowledge of God or the authority of the state, and obedience to them. Rather, it is Truth as the system that legitimately ascribes essentiality to the reality of Spirit. Otherwise, if there is no such thing as Truth, whose embodiment takes place through the system, then the never-ending finite empirical knowledge of the self, governed by the force of *Verstand*, would determine its reality.

This reality, as *passing away* and *coming into* new experiences, is not Real and One. Instead, it is the *never-ending abstract becoming* that is condemned to be *nothing*, as the eternal return to the *nothingness* of itself, which the skeptic philosophers rightly portrayed as the destiny of self-consciousness. By contrast, Hegel's dialectic is destined to *to be*, and as I have put it earlier, the *transcendental self-reflective* reality of the system lies in *to be*. Hence, it is in fact the *transcendental self-reflective* being that manifests itself as the reality of the system, and through its manifestation demonstrates itself as the *absolute freedom* that being has through this activity.

This manifestation of *being* in its absoluteness, as Hegel puts it, “contains the passage of the Notion [*Begriff*] into *consciousness*. For the self-knowing Spirit, just because it grasps its Notion, is the immediate identity with itself which, in its difference, is the *certainty of immediacy*, or *sense-consciousness*.” (PS. §806. *Werke* 3: 589-590). As Hegel continues following this expression, this point, as the culmination of the *Phenomenology* in Consciousness reaching the standpoint of *Wissenschaft*, which is *the passage of the Notion*, is “the beginning from which we started ... is the supreme freedom and assurance of its self-knowledge” (Ibid). However, this self-certainty belongs to the concrete embodiment of conceptual thought, the *Begriff*, and not to Sense-certainty. That is to say, it is from the standpoint of the Absolute in its actualization that the Sense-certainty of consciousness is the “knowledge of infinite wealth for which no bounds can be found.” (PS. §91. *Werke* 3: 82).¹¹⁹ It is, therefore, the Absolute Spirit that knows itself in the shape of the *Begriff*. In other words, it is self-consciousness that realizes itself in the shape of conceptual thought. On this account, “Truth is not only *in itself* completely identical with

¹¹⁹. Thus, we have returned again to the fundamental subject of metaphysics: *being*. Yet this return is not from the perspective of empty thinking, but rather from *absolute self-reflective* thinking that narrates *being*. The exposition of *being*, in this respect, is the *positive externalization* of the Absolute. This externalization, in fact, constitutes the self-internalization of truth within the phenomenological development of consciousness, as well as the dialectical progression of the categories of thought in Hegel's *Logic*.

certainty, but it also has the shape of self-certainty, or it is in its existence in the form of self-knowledge.” (PS. §798. *Werke* 3: 582-583).

In fact, the designation of Truth as self-consciousness, in its various shapes, such as the designation of substance as subject, demonstrates that the ideal trajectory to Truth begins from Truth itself. This is simply because Knowledge is *conceptual knowledge (Begriff)*. From this perspective, it is the *Begriff* that makes *Bildung* legitimate and provides it with a speculative ground to become self-conscious Spirit. Moreover, we can claim that it is only *conceptual thought* that has the power of speculative narration.¹²⁰

However, the self-certainty of Truth is not the last word of Spirit. Rather, *Bildung* sees it as the beginning of a new age, the *Enlightenment*, in which thought narrates itself as the *concrete embodiment of conceptual thought*. The Subject, in this respect, considered from the standpoint of *Bildung*, is “reborn from the Spirit’s knowledge” (PS. §808. *Werke* 3: 590) in the new shape in which “Spirit emptied out in Time [History, as the *conscious, self-mediating* process of becoming]; but this externalization, this kenosis, is equally an externalization of itself; the negative is the negative of itself.” (Ibid). From the standpoint of *Bildung*, we can thus realize the

¹²⁰. That is not to say that any other way of inquiring into the conception of truth is totally worthless. Rather, every other way of narrating the conception of truth ultimately finds its essentiality in speculative narration through conceptual thought. Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, where he designates three methods of treating history, 1. Original history, 2. Reflective history, 3. Philosophical history, is a good example in this regard. The true exposition of the knowledge of history is the task of philosophical history, more than of the other two. This is because, although “philosophy dwells into the region of the self-produced ideas, without reference to actuality” (LPH. p. 156. *Werke* 12: 20), it is the only region in which “the history of the world presents us with a rational process.” (LPH. p. 157. *Werke* 12: 20). The exposition of this *rational process*, therefore, lies at the foundation of the recognition of truth, while philosophy, as *Wissenschaft*, is itself the Truth. That is to say, for any effort to expound truth, there must exist Truth. In a wider perspective, we can view this from the perspective that speculation on history lies at the foundation of Hegel’s view of *Reason*, which *governs the world*. In this respect, it is the absoluteness of history that provides the speculative ground for metaphysical thought. On the other hand, consciousness of truth alone does not provide this speculative ground because, as explained in the second chapter, it tends toward a negative inward movement toward truth. In fact, the *positive external* exposition of Truth belongs to the *system* itself, and the reality of the positedness of such Truth constitutes the very nature of *Bildung* in Hegel’s philosophy.

Absolute as the return of speculative thought to *alienated Spirit*, both in Space, that is Nature, and in Time, that is History.¹²¹ This return is the presence of the *absolute now* for Spirit.

This scenario does not belong exclusively to the culmination of the *Phenomenology*, but is also the case in the culmination of the *Science of Logic*, in the chapter on the Absolute Idea. Here, as with Absolute Knowledge, we do not find any further discussion or division of the dialectical progression into a higher level of *speculative self-grounded* thought. Rather, the main task is now to contemplate the whole of the dialectical progress of thought. On this account, the Absolute Idea is “*being, imperishable life, self-knowing truth, and is all truth... It is the sole subject matter and content of philosophy. Since it contains all determinateness within it, and its essential nature is to return to itself through its self-determination or particularization*”. (*SL*. p. 824, Miller. p. 735, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 549)

It is the *absolute form* of thought that we confront when we encounter the Absolute Idea, a form that is indeed completely fulfilled. On the other hand, the content of this *absolute form* is inherent in the entire progression of the categories of thought from Being to the Idea. The content, in this respect, is fully immersed in the absolute form of the Idea. That is to say, the content has been integrated into the *form's existence for-itself*, that is, the Idea. Thus, the content is also fulfilled through its unity with its form. However, the fulfilment of content and form in their *oneness* does not indicate the fulfilment of speculative thought as the final point of its development. Rather, what remains to be thought is the *method* as the *universality of the form of thought*.

¹²¹. In fact, it is the *alienated Spirit* that, in the exposition of Hegel's *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, passes from its self-reflective ground, which gives it full maturity as *Logic*, to the *Philosophy of Nature* as the absolute negation of itself, which has no history, and then to its own history as the *Philosophy of Spirit*, which is the consummation of the *Encyclopedia*.

The question of *method*, in the final chapter of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, is concerned with the possibility of developing a comprehensive understanding of *universal thought that thinks itself*. It is distinct from *method* in its Cartesian sense, as *intuition intuiting* itself as the most fundamental and primitive consciousness of the subject. In this respect, for Descartes, intuition finds its ground in the first confrontation with self-reflexive thought. It is here that the exposition of philosophy begins to be grounded on the first principle of the *Meditations on First Philosophy*: *Cogito ergo sum*. That is to say, for Descartes, once *method* has been determined, then, on the foundation of the self-certainty of the subject, knowledge expands beyond the subject to the knowledge of God, and then to the knowledge of the world, or in the language of the Enlightenment, Nature.

For Hegel, however, the discussion of *method* occurs at the culmination of the *Logic*, as the point where self-reflexive thought declares itself as the Absolute Idea that already contains all determinations within itself. That is to say, the Absolute Idea, in its actuality, is the absolute knowledge of its knowing. The question of *method*, therefore, does not concern applying a set of epistemological rules to develop from thought's self-certainty of itself to its certainty of *being*. Rather, it is now the Concept (*Begriff*), as the equation of thought and being, that declares itself as the *method*. In this respect, as Hegel puts it:

The method is not merely an aggregate of certain determinations, but the Notion [*Begriff*] that is determined in and for itself; and the Notion is the middle term only because it has equally the significance of the objective, and consequently in the conclusion the objective does not merely attain an external determinateness by means of the method, but is posited in its identity with the subjective Notion. (*SL*. p. 827, Miller. p. 738, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 553).

Thus, firstly, the *method* declares itself as *to be*, which is the middle term. That is to say, it carries self-determination within its nature. In this respect, it is not the knowing Spirit that constructs and advances toward the *method* by ascribing ontological rules to it, to be expanded and advanced to Truth. Rather, it is *method* itself as “the absolutely infinite force, to which no object, presenting itself as something external, remote from and independent of reason, could offer resistance or be of a particular nature in opposition to it, or could not be penetrated by it.” (SL. p. 826, Miller. p. 737, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 551). Subsequently, the fact that objective being, by means of the *method*, does not gain any reality beyond its identity with the subjective Concept [*Begriff*] returns us to the first part of the Objective Logic in Hegel’s discussion of Being, where *to be* is also *not to be*, and the eternal dialectical interaction between them produces *Becoming* as the *eternal presentation* of the subjective dimension of *Logic* into its objective side. In this respect, it is the ongoing presence of *Becoming* that lies at the heart of *method*. On this account, both *Being* and *Becoming* lie at the very conception of *method* for Hegel. This double presence of *method* is nothing other than saying that the ultimate destiny of *method* is to demonstrate Truth as the Whole. This Wholeness, as mediated by *method*, in fact manifests the *circular dialectical* truth of thought in Hegel’s system.

By bringing the discussion of *method* into the light, my aim is not to go beyond the Absolute Idea and delineate another endpoint in Hegel’s philosophy. Rather, as I have pointed out in different places in this thesis, my aim is first to affirm that the conception of freedom is intelligible in Hegel’s philosophy only through the reconciliation between self-consciousness and the Absolute, a reconciliation that unfolds in the *Phenomenology* through Hegel’s insight on *Bildung*. Likewise, in Hegel’s *Logic*, it is the presence of *method* that plays this role as the

essential life of dialectical conceptual thought. On this account, it is through the presence of *method* that freedom becomes intelligible within Hegel's speculative philosophy.

From this perspective, freedom belongs to the very nature of the *system* in Hegel's philosophy, and it does not belong to the essential reality of human being as *rational animal*, nor does it belong to *phusis*,¹²² or to the nature of a God independent from Spirit. Rather, it is the Absolute that is alive and contains its own perfection in Hegel's philosophy. The intelligibility of this vitality and the perfection of the Absolute lies in the discussions on *Bildung* in the *Phenomenology* and *method* in the *Logic*, both of which pursue one common aim: *the freedom of consciousness*. That is to say, *the freedom of consciousness* is what the *system* truly aims at. This freedom does not occur by delineating an endpoint to Hegel's philosophy. In fact, in such a case, it is the conception of freedom that would be crucified.¹²³ Rather, the freedom of consciousness is attainable only through the return of the Absolute to consciousness: the phenomenological return that occurs in the *Phenomenology* through the mediation of *Bildung*, and the speculative return that occurs in the *Logic* through the mediation of *method*.

¹²². However, what Hegel has in mind about Nature in his works is the modern conception of it as externality and extension. Nature, in this sense, is essentially death because of the absence of the conception of Spirit within it. However, in the Greek conception of *phusis*, as Hegel was well aware and elaborated on in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, *phusis* is not separated from Spirit but is the internal dimension of the presence of Spirit.

¹²³. This insight is fundamentally rooted in Hegel's inspiration from Christianity in his philosophical writings. In the context of Christianity, it is the crucifixion of Christ that makes the human being free. In this respect, as mentioned earlier, it is through the crucifixion of the Absolute that conceptual thought penetrates into the reality of finite Spirit.

2. *Bildung* and Freedom

2.1. Method and Freedom

In both the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*, we saw that the movement of dialectical activity proceeds through the mediation of negation. However, the culmination of the dialectical movement does not have a merely negative result.¹²⁴ Rather, the most significant aspect of the dialectical movement is “to hold fast to the positive in *its* negative, in the content of the presupposition, in its result.” (*SL*. p. 834, Miller. p. 744, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 561). For Hegel, the *positive positedness* of the negative movement of thought is not only “the most important feature in rational cognition” (*Ibid*), but it is also the subject matter of “the whole of logic.” (*Ibid*). In fact, the *positive positedness* of thought is the very self-certainty of the *Begriff* with which the *Logic* begins.

In this respect, if there is negativity in the dialectical movement of thought, this negativity is in the service of the *positedness of positivity*. This is not to deny the essential reality of the negativity of thought as the “innermost source of all activity, of all animate and spiritual self-movement, the dialectical soul that everything possesses and through which it is true” (*SL*. p. 835, Miller. p. 745, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 563) and to take complete refuge in Absolute Idealism. Rather, the negativity of thought refers above all to the systematic exposition of the Idea,¹²⁵ in

¹²⁴. In fact, to ascribe the negative result as the culmination of the negative dialectical activity of Spirit is none other than to claim the end of metaphysical thought or the end of history.

¹²⁵. The Idea, for Hegel, must be understood as “the absolute unity of Concept and objectivity.” (*EL*. §213. *Werke* 8: 367). What the Idea signifies is the *absolute self-relating process*, and it must “not to be taken as an idea of *something or other*, any more than the Concept is to be taken merely as determinate concept.” (*Ibid*). From this perspective, neither the Idea nor the Concept should be understood in the Platonic or Lockean sense, as universal existential realities or universal mental representations, such as the Idea or the Concept of the Tree. Rather, for Hegel, “the Absolute is the universal and One Idea, which particularizes itself in the act of judging into the system of determinate ideas whose whole being consists, nonetheless, in their returning into the One Idea, i.e., into their truth.” (*Ibid*). In this respect, what lies at the truth of the Idea is the return of all determinations into the *One Idea*. In

which negativity is the *dialectical soul* of the *system*. In this respect, it is the *dialectical soul* that externalizes itself through the negative movement of self-consciousness, and its being, as explained in the preceding chapter, can no longer be reduced to the *alienated inward movement* of self-consciousness.

However, this does not imply reducing the Absolute Idea to the temporal knowledge of self-consciousness. Rather, it indicates that the whole, as movement, can only be grasped through the dialectical movement that is *identical* to the whole itself. The search for the Absolute Idea, in this respect, takes its authentic form as the quest for the dialectical movement of self-consciousness. In other words, the Absolute Idea, or Absolute Knowledge, knows itself through *reflexive thought*, which in its concreteness is nothing other than the inward movement of self-consciousness. Yet this inward movement of self-consciousness is not actual unless it becomes self-constituting knowledge through the *Absolute's knowledge of itself*.

This point can also, in simpler terms, be seen at the beginning of Hegel's *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, where he identifies the *ideality of the Idea* as being one and the same with the *inward concrete embodiment* of Spirit. As he states:

The same development of thinking that is presented in the history of philosophy is presented in philosophy itself, but freed from that historical outwardness, i.e., purely in the

fact, the Idea is not, for Hegel, mere *form*, but the *unity of form and content*. For example, in the political sphere, the constitution of any given form of state, whether oligarchy or democracy, does not in itself represent the Idea. Rather, it is the embodiment of the individual in the state and the individual's identification with the state that constitute the truth of the Idea of the state. The Idea, therefore, must necessarily be concretized through the actualization of subjectivity. Thus, when Hegel defines the Idea as the unity of Concept and objectivity, it indicates that the ideality of the Idea lies in the possession of all the inner speculative articulation, which is externally presented through subjective presence. From a more comprehensive perspective, we may legitimately claim that, for Hegel, the reality of the Idea is both logical and ontological. That is to say, the Idea is not realized as a complete reality of thought that rests only within the logical dimension; rather, its accomplishment depends on its activity, which is the self-knowing of the subject in the ontological dimension.

element of thinking. Free and genuine thought is inwardly *concrete*; hence it is *Idea*, and in all its universality it is the Idea or *the Absolute*. (*EL*. §14. *Werke* 8: 59)

The *negative inward movement of self-consciousness*, therefore, through the mediation of the Idea, becomes the *positive outwardness of Spirit*, which is History. Conversely, the *outwardness of the Idea or the Absolute*, through the mediation of Spirit, becomes *inwardly concrete*, which is *the freedom of consciousness*. The nature of this contrast, however, belongs neither to a specific stage in the development of Spirit nor to the truth of the Idea. Rather, it is the whole that presents itself “as a circle of circles, each of which is a necessary moment, so that the system of its peculiar elements constitutes the whole Idea_which equally appears in each single one of them.” (*EL*. §15. *Werke* 8: 60).

However, Hegel establishes his system as the Whole by employing the *method* that seeks to demonstrate the *wholeness of the Whole* as the truth of the whole.¹²⁶ Yet, there is no such thing as the *whole word* or the *whole moment* for Spirit. This is because of the *circularity of wholeness*, which comes at the end, where self-consciousness and the Idea meet and merge into a single activity. This *oneness*, however, is not the *final word* of Spirit; rather, it is the embodiment and actuality of metaphysical thought that emerges as the reality of self-consciousness. It is the thought that *reflects on its own reflection on being* as the Absolute Idea. This is the point at which the main dilemma in the realization of both Truth and Freedom arises in Hegel’s

¹²⁶. Looking at *method* as the *wholeness of the dialectical movement of thought* indicates another fundamental difference from the Cartesian method, especially in the context of modernity. For Descartes, the necessity of discussing *method* arises at the beginning of a new era in philosophy, in which he separates himself from past philosophical traditions and begins philosophizing on the foundation of self-grounded and self-certain thought. In this sense, Descartes presents *method* as the starting point of a new educational process for humanity, where all prior experiences of Spirit are set aside, and the Truth of being, that is ‘I,’ God, and the World, comes to be rationally expressed through the mediation of human self-grounded thought. Hegel’s *method*, on the other hand, not only includes all the moments of the development of consciousness but also, from its very beginning, already stands upon Absolute Knowledge as its most certain speculative ground.

philosophy. The question here is: where is the *consciousness of wholeness* located in Hegel's system, if there is no *final word* about the whole for consciousness?¹²⁷ In fact, in reaching the Absolute Idea, self-consciousness does indeed arrive at the *consciousness of the whole*, but as a result of this consciousness, the self enters the infinite circularity of its actuality rather than the final ideality of its embodiment.

This is one of the fundamental questions in Hegel's philosophy, because in the ontological absence of the *consciousness of wholeness*, contradictory interpretations arise within his system. What lies at the foundation of interpretive efforts that take seriously the end of metaphysics and the end of history in Hegel's philosophy can, in fact, be seen as the acceptance of the absence of such a *consciousness of wholeness*. In this absence, metaphysical thought has nothing more to say except its circularity, through which the historical materialist can illuminate every facet of the reality of Spirit without relying on any conception of spiritual notions such as the Absolute.¹²⁸ Likewise, from a Kantian analytical perspective, the absence of the *consciousness of*

¹²⁷. Harris expresses this dilemma from a broader perspective in *The Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel* as the question, "How can the finite encompass the infinite and the absolute?" (Harris, 1983, p. 287). However, within this interpretation, the knowledge of the infinite is the same as the business of all philosophy, which is the *knowledge of knowing*. In fact, presupposing the reality of something such as the Absolute Idea and separating that reality from the reality of the finite has caused the misunderstanding that infinity must lie beyond the reality of the finite. Instead, as Harris explains, "the absolute Idea is immanent in our consciousness that it becomes the ideal of our intellectual and practical derives and expresses itself in them; and it could not be so immanent if it were not the actual whole of which they are essential moments." (Harris, 1983, p. 289). In this perspective, which can be considered an analytical Kantian interpretation, the most explicit proof of the being of the Absolute Idea is simply the self-consciousness of finite spirit, and it is not in fact the case that the speculative development of finite spirit *proves* the Absolute Idea as the consummation of its knowledge.

¹²⁸. As explained in the preceding chapter, Marxism, along with subsequent interpretive efforts referring to it, such as those of Kojève and Žižek, as well as the attribution of the liberal democratic culmination to the end of history by scholars such as Fukuyama, falls into this category.

wholeness provides justification for interpreting Hegel as remaining on Kantian ground, since such a wholeness would remain outside the boundaries of self-consciousness.¹²⁹

Further, it is the conception of freedom that will be crucified through this perspective. For modern human beings who reside in the bubble of circular metaphysical thought, how can such a conception as freedom be justified and intelligible? In this respect, even this insight can be seen as the fundamental ground of the existentialist insight in marginalizing or rejecting any conception of the Absolute and subsequently believing that human freedom is intelligible only within the region of individuality and not through metaphysical thought. That is to say, through the perspective of Existentialism, the circularity of thought not only fails to liberate the individual but also fundamentally kills the very intelligibility of freedom for human beings.

To come back to the heart of the matter, in our consideration of the *method*, the discussion of the *method* in the *Science of Logic* takes place in the last pages of the book, where speculative dialectical thought reaches its consummation as the Idea. Yet this is not in effect the end of dialectical thought, for the speculative *method* regenerates the dialectic. Finally, the teleological outcome of the *method* can be regarded as demonstrating the circularity of speculative thought. Further, from the standpoint of the Idea, as the culmination of the last part of Hegel's *Logic*, we can claim that the *method* is not a moment of Spirit; rather, it is the wholeness in which temporality and eternity become identical.

The reason for the introduction of the *method* at the end of the system can be put forward as the need to present the actuality of science and its truth as internal to the existence and development of each stage of consciousness. In fact, without the presence of the *method*, the

¹²⁹. As explained in the preceding chapter, this is the perspective through which interpreters such as Pippin and Habermas approach Hegel.

teleological aspect of Hegel's thought will collapse. That is to say, without the *method*, the Idea will be totally separated from the reality of human self-consciousness. In this respect, it is the *method* that guarantees the ontological existence of the Idea within the movement of self-consciousness. That is to say, it is from the standpoint of the *method* that the negativity of thought must be transcended. Otherwise, without its transcendence, consciousness will remain in *infinite negativity*. The *method* is, therefore, the framework that holds firmly every part of the system as the One and Whole. Without it, the wholeness of the system will collapse.

The externalization of self-consciousness is not, therefore, something that belongs to its own reality as a self-grounded rational being directing itself toward the reality it calls Truth as the end of all its endeavor. Rather, it is the internalization of Truth through the system that makes the moments of self-consciousness the moments of the Whole. That is simply and decisively to say, Truth is for the Idea, and it is through the return from the Idea, elaborated as *method* in the shape of circularity, that the negative inward movement of self-consciousness aims toward Truth. On this account, to explain the Whole is the same as to think the whole shapes of consciousness that led us to the truth of the Whole. It is, therefore, no longer the case that to be finite indicates not being the Absolute; rather, the finitude of Spirit transcends itself to find the Absolute's point of view on its activity.

This is the foundation through which the discussion on freedom is intelligible for the finite Spirit. The freedom that once belonged to the realm of the Absolute, as the embodiment of the externality of Truth to finite Spirit, now becomes the truth of the embodiment of self-consciousness. Thus, freedom for the finite Spirit is the self-consciousness of the transcendence of its own finitude. However, while it knows itself as the finite being, it also finds its actuality as the transcendental being. Through this actuality, it is no longer *what ought to be* that emerges in

the self-determination of self-consciousness; rather, *what it is* is the actuality of its freedom.¹³⁰
This is because *what it is* is Absolute Knowledge for it.

In general, it is the movement from difference to identity, which is the Absolute Idea, that lies at the trajectory Hegel followed in his *Science of Logic*. Yet, at the end, by bringing the discussion of the *method of Logic* into the light, we learn that neither difference nor identity is independently intelligible in Hegel's system. Rather, it is through the return of identity into difference that both identity and difference find meaningful ground in Hegel's speculative philosophy. In fact, it is through this return that the infinite eternal nature of the Idea realizes itself as the temporal finite Spirit. On the other hand, difference must also be realized through identity; otherwise, without such knowledge, it would give rise to the insight that difference declares itself as the Truth of identity. This outcome can even be seen as consistent with Kantian metaphysics and with the existentialist insight, but it is far from Hegel's intention of establishing the speculative system upon the reality of Absolute Knowledge. In Hegel's own words, the return of identity to its inception can be expressed as "every beginning must be made *with the absolute*, just as all advance is merely the exposition of it, in so far as its *in-itself* is the Notion [*Begriff*]." (*SL*. p. 829, Miller. p. 740, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 555). However, this is not the place where we begin in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Now, by returning from the end to the beginning, it is the

¹³⁰. In Kant's philosophy, the Idea as the *thing-in-itself* remains as *what ought to be* rather than *what is*. In fact, we have the form of the ideal of the Idea, which is the postulation for the region of practical reasoning, not its actuality as the reality that acts within the *Verstand*. In general, for both Kant and Hegel, truth as actuality belongs to thought, but what distinguishes Hegel from Kant is that the ideal of the Idea is attainable through the actuality of thought. The metaphysics for Kant in this respect can be regarded as the region upon which we, as finite self-consciousness, act, but this does not indicate that the determination of this action takes place through speculative thought. Rather, for Hegel, in the exposition of the Idea before entering the discussion of the Absolute Idea in the *Logic*, theory and practice are One. That is to say, what we act upon is the same as what belongs to the actualization of speculative thinking. The self-determination of this action in this respect is the true meaning of freedom for self-consciousness, which is attainable through its knowledge of the Idea.

finite Spirit that is identity, as it is the *being* that identifies difference within the identity of itself. That is to say, the finite temporal Spirit is now the *Concept of Being*.

2.2. Freedom and Speculative Identity

In fact, the *Concept of Being*, above all, signifies both the sameness and the oneness of content and form. Put simply, it indicates that conceptual thought embodies *being* as its own determination. As a corollary of this, conceptual thought declares itself as the Whole, which is absolutely concrete. This is the heart of Hegel's well-known assertion: "What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational" (*PR*. p. 6. *Werke* 7: 24), which we reach in the context of the culmination of speculative thought in Hegel's *Logic*, where the circularity of rationality and actuality in speculative sentences turns out to be the *identity of identity and non-identity*.

Through the absorption of the Idea by the finite Spirit, the persistent presentation of identity within difference lies in the concrete embodiment of the wholeness of the finite Spirit. In this respect, the essential being of self-consciousness can no longer be limited to negation and self-differentiation; rather, its essential being is the actualization of its identity within its difference. The whole of this process, as the unity of identity and difference, therefore, takes place through the "self-mediating movement and activity" (*SL*. p. 837, Miller. p. 747, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 565) of self-consciousness. What this unification of identity and difference signifies, in simple terms, is that when seen in the light of the Idea as the Whole, the positive contribution of each moment of self-consciousness itself shapes the Whole. The knowledge of self-consciousness is, in this respect, the knowledge of the Whole. That is to say, self-consciousness does not have simply the abstract knowledge of identity in its mind through the immediacy of the Absolute, but

rather, in the light of the Absolute Idea in which the *theoretical Idea* and the *practical Idea* are the same and one, self-consciousness recognizes its nature not only as being subjected to the external positedness of identity but also as the self-determination of identity. That is to say, self-consciousness recognizes its nature as “equally immediacy and mediation” (Ibid). The first identity for it, which essentially belongs to the nature of the Absolute, stands in opposition to its own nature, which is contradiction. The second identity, however, which belongs to its own essential life, is its own self-determination, which confronts the external positedness of identity within its own difference. The self-determination of self-consciousness, therefore, is the unity it finds in the Absolute’s knowledge of itself and its own negative inwardness. In this respect, self-consciousness itself is the *identity of identity and non-identity*.

However, we must not forget that the Whole is still infinite and eternal. What self-consciousness acquires through its development is to demonstrate itself as the wholeness of the Whole, which is the actualization of the Whole, though not being the Whole itself. The Idea, in this respect, remains the Idea. In confronting self-consciousness, it will not change, be abolished, or be degraded to the consciousness of the Idea. It is, in fact, the *consciousness of the Idea* that transcends in the process of knowing, from the abstraction of the Idea to the embodiment of the concreteness of the Idea within its nature, which is none other than its self-determination. Through this self-determination, it realizes the subject truly as the Concept (*Begriff*). From this standpoint, the self-determination of self-consciousness is the result of the wholeness of the syllogistic movement of the categories of the *Logic*, from *universal abstract Being* to the *universal concrete Concept of Being*, which is none other than the truth of the Subject. In this respect, the Subject “is the conclusion, in which the Notion [*Begriff*] through its negativity is

mediated with itself and thereby posited *for itself* as the universal and the *identity* of its *moments*.” (SL. p. 838, Miller. p. 747, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 566).

On the other hand, our experience is still finite and temporal,¹³¹ but through the knowledge of the Idea, the confrontation of subjectivity with its experience is not finite. Indeed, it is the *infinite circle of the self-knowing Whole* that confronts every moment of experience in order to fulfill its own subjectivity. In this manner, there is nothing beyond experience that determines the reality of the finite Spirit.¹³² That is to say, experience determines its own reality¹³³. In fact, there is no object at the apex of the *Logic* except the *method* itself, which signifies the recognition of the whole process. All the earlier stages of self-consciousness, as we return to the development of both objective and subjective categories, vanish through the negative presence of subjectivity, which appears through the category of *becoming* on both the objective and subjective sides of Hegel’s *Logic*. Meanwhile, the only object that remains is the subjectivity of the subject. That is

¹³¹. It is in Fichte’s philosophy that, while the experience of the Ego is finite, it tends toward being the Absolute Ego through the Absolute Judgment I = I, and through this judgment knows itself as the infinite experience of the finite being. The experience, in this respect, constitutes a *linear* development of consciousness that finally becomes one and the same with the Absolute. On the other hand, reaching the Absolute Idea for Hegel does not mean establishing a ground to transcend experience from its finite reality to infinity. Rather, the *circularity* of the wholeness of thought legitimates finite experience and does not exclude particularity and individuality from its nature.

¹³². In fact, the nothingness of any further reality beyond the circularity of metaphysical thought is the place where the discussion of Nature occurs in the second book of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, where the Idea, which has already recognized itself as the unity of content and form, intuits itself as Nature. The transition to Nature in this regard seems to break the circular movement of thought through the supposition of the Absolute Idea as the concrete reality of Being, which is Nature. This is the same Being with which we begin the first part of the system in its abstract form, but it now, as the concreteness of Being, realizes itself as Nature. However, the *system* is not complete, because the freedom that Nature achieves is the abstract freedom “without the moment of subjectivity.” (SL. p. 843, Miller. p. 753, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 573). The actualization of freedom occurs within the transition from Nature to Spirit, where the self-determination of the Idea is finally constituted through the finite Spirit. By reaching this stage as the highest point of the exoteric dimension of human knowledge, that is *science*, the concreteness of human freedom emerges as the wholeness of the process of its self-embodiment from subject to substance. Yet, after the subject completes this journey, it finds the “self-comprehending pure Notion” (SL. p. 844, Miller. p. 753, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 573) as the absolute freedom of its being, which belongs to its speculative exposition within the *Science of Logic*.

¹³³. However, at first glance, this claim may appear to be the outcome of Kant’s philosophy. But Hegel approaches experience from an ontological standpoint rather than an epistemological perspective.

to say, it is the category of *becoming* that still strives to announce its existence as “the positive resulting from sublation of the negative” (*SL*. p. 837, Miller. p. 747, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 565) through the discussion of the *method* at the end of Hegel’s *Logic*. On this account, the presence of subjectivity, while not yet renouncing its negative nature, unifies this negativity, as its own essential life, with the positedness of subjectivity, which is the truth of its relation to itself. In fact, the knowledge of this unification belongs to the knowledge of wholeness, and not to a particular moment of the experience of consciousness. In this respect, it is now subjectivity that pronounces its self-grounded being as the *final word* of the wholeness of the Whole.

The most important implication of such a perspective on subjectivity as the *final word* of wholeness in Hegel’s *Logic* is that metaphysics is unfolded by Logic, and it is not the case that the subjectivity of the subject has dogmatically constructed or developed a systematic metaphysics by placing its subjectivity at the center. That is to say, it is Logic that embraces both ontology and metaphysics in Hegel’s system. The self-determination of thought, in this respect, demonstrates itself as the truth of external relation, or, to put it in speculative language, *to be is to be thought*.

The thought that we are considering in Hegel’s *Logic* is not merely a subjective possession but equally constitutes the objective relation. To put it briefly, Logic is ontology, or thought is *Being*. In this regard, there is not a particular set of mechanical categories that belongs to Nature and another set of organic categories that belongs to Spirit. Rather, both the objective and the subjective dimensions of Hegel’s *Logic* are subordinated to *becoming*, as the presence of the wholeness of the subjectivity of the subject. In this respect, the form of subjectivity reveals more than the fact that the categories of thought are shaped in each of their particular moments. This is the reason Hegel tends to move past the accounts of truth offered in its different shapes in history

and to place them in the form of Absolute Spirit as Art, Religion, and above all Philosophy, because these are the inclusive domains that truly address the wholeness of the Whole.

In this respect, it seems reasonable to claim that Hegel does not delineate regulative normative bounds for the Idea. Rather, through subjective representation, Hegel opens an infinite horizon before the Idea, and in this way the Idea moves beyond its regulative bounds toward the concrete embodiment of the wholeness of the Whole in its particular moments of being. That is to say, the Idea can pass through cognition (*Erkennen*) without being confined by it. From this perspective, the progression of the categories from pure Being to the Concept (*Begriff*) must not be seen simply as the formal development of the categories of thought to reach their formal reality, which is the Absolute Idea. “The advance consists rather in the universal determining itself and being *for itself* the universal, that is, equally an individual and a subject.” (SL. p. 829, Miller. p. 740, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 555-556).

Having the Idea, therefore, indicates a different approach to subjectivity in Hegel’s philosophy. In fact, to see *Being* as infinitely purposive, which is the foundation of the well-known Hegelian attitude toward history that *Reason governs the world*, necessitates that *Being* be essentially subjective. In this respect, it is the *purposive actuality of subjectivity* that transcends the Aristotelian definition of humanity as the *rational animal* toward the *eternal Idea of Knowledge*. On this account, man is Reason itself, as the *eternal purposive actuality of thought*. In fact, by employing the Idea, all restrictions on the cognition of humanity, whether Kantian, Humean, Lockean, or, more generally, every epistemological attempt to impose limits on human cognition in modernity after Descartes, are overcome in Hegel’s philosophy. This is because for unrestricted cognition it is no longer the case that “the fear of error reveals itself

rather as fear of the truth.” (PS. §74. *Werke* 3: 70).¹³⁴ Instead, what designates the truth of knowing (*Erkennen*) in the *system* is the *consciousness* that “is explicitly the *Notion* of itself. Hence, it is something that goes beyond limits, and since these limits are its own, it is something that goes beyond itself.” (PS. §80. *Werke* 3: 74).

2.3. Freedom and Truth

Hegel’s *Logic* leads us toward the principle of self-determination as the *final word* for consciousness. That is to say, the self-determination of thought is the truth of thinking. In fact, the fulfillment of the subjectivity of thought is the point at which the conception of freedom, in its absolute sense, is embodied within Hegel’s system. Both *Bildung* and *method*, in this respect, aim to comprehend the whole speculative activity of thinking as self-determination rather than as something subordinated to an alien truth. However, when seen from the Kantian perspective, although such a truth may rest on a justifiable presupposition, Reason does not allow it to move

¹³⁴. *Fear of error* lies at the foundation of beginning to philosophize on epistemological grounds in modernity, by philosophers who mostly placed limits on cognition for the sake of avoiding error. On the other hand, Hegel’s project grounds itself in directing the attention of modern philosophy from cognition toward Reason. In this respect, the development of human cognition from logical and ontological perspectives, by proving the self-certainty of cognition through the imposition of certain epistemological rules, is not the subject matter at the initiation of Hegel’s works. In contrast, rather than imposing presuppositions and setting boundaries for human consciousness, Hegel begins his speculative philosophy with the *widest indeterminate infinite* reality for consciousness, which is *pure Being*. As a consequence of this insight, unlike the majority of his contemporaries, the discussion of *method* does not take place in the opening pages of his works, because Hegel does not attempt to define and justify the *method* before employing it. That is to say, it is only in the maturity of cognition that the discussion of both *education* and *method* occurs. This is because cognition, in its maturity, can narrate itself. The narration of matured consciousness does not take place through the imposition of boundaries on its nature. Rather, it is through the *freedom of consciousness* that cognition narrates itself.

beyond the boundaries defined by *Verstand* in order to attain genuine knowledge of what this Truth is in its essence.¹³⁵

For Hegel, on the other hand, Truth must illuminate its own actuality. In fact, this is the destiny of philosophy for him. That is to say, it is not merely the recognition of the possibility of such a truth, which is justifiable as the necessary foundation of human knowledge, that satisfies Hegel's system. Rather, Truth must actualize itself, and this actualization takes place through the infinite presence of itself. This infinite presence is *Vernunft*, which concretizes itself through the self-determination of subjectivity in the course of history. In this respect, Truth is no longer a matter of belief or contingency, as if it were an infinite necessary reality beyond the boundaries of human knowledge. Rather, through the *infinite circular return* of thought to itself, it is Truth itself that subjectifies its absoluteness in the form of the *absolute now* for the finite Spirit.

On this account, to read Hegel's *Logic* as merely another work of logic in the history of modern philosophy is to misread Hegel's philosophy. This is because, for Hegel, the exposition of the *Logic* takes place through the infinite representation of subjectivity. The common perspective in modernity, on the other hand, in approaching speculative thought, even in the absence of a conception such as the Absolute, is to take thinking as something beyond the

¹³⁵. In fact, *Verstand* kills the *infinity* of the self-determination of subjectivity. This is because, from the standpoint of *Verstand*, any particular determination imposes a limit on the infinite representation of thought. By imposing such a limit, even if we justify the necessity of presenting such a conception as freedom for the subject, the outcome is *negative freedom*. However, through *negative freedom*, the subject, in *the process of recognition (Erkennen)*, abstracts and isolates itself from the Whole. That is to say, the negative determination of freedom through *Verstand* results in the termination of freedom. The process of recognition grounded in *Verstand*, therefore, produces nothing other than the pure passivity of speculative thought, in which the conception of freedom is crucified within the *system*. Hegel himself illuminates this fact in the *Philosophy of Right*:

The Understanding [*Verstand*] goes no further than the purely implicit character of a thing and consequently calls the freedom which accords with this implicit character a 'potency,' because if freedom is only implicit it is indeed mere potentiality. But the Understanding looks upon this implicit character as absolute and perennial; and it takes the relation of freedom to what it wills, or in general to the object in which it is realized, as merely a matter of its application to a given material, not belonging to the essence of freedom itself. Thus it has to do with the abstract only, not with its Idea and its truth. (*PR*. p. 15. *Werke* 7: 61-62).

subject. In this respect, the subject must obey the rules of thinking and must accept all the limitations imposed by normative rules of thought as the truth of knowledge in relation to concepts such as nation, state, family, education, and so forth. In this perspective, it is the Concept (*Begriff*) that imposes its truth upon subjectivity. That is to say, the outcome of speculative thought in modernity is to regard the subject as an instrument, or simply as a brain or a mind that is mediated through rules imposed upon it. In this sense, cognition or the mind exhibits itself as separated from subjectivity.¹³⁶ We may also look at it from the opposite side: because subjectivity is restricted, epistemological rules are required to justify its restriction. The outwardness of limitation in this realization becomes the inwardness of truth as cognition (*Erkennen*). As a result, thought is unconsciously separated from subjectivity.

Further, in such an interpretation, the conception of freedom, from the standpoint of cognition, might be taken as humanity's authority and autonomy to legislate its own boundaries in social, political, and even ethical life by imposing normative constraints on its own cognition. In this sense, freedom consists in being bound by the theoretical and practical norms that govern what the subject *ought to be* and *ought to do*. Freedom, however, has an essentially ontological character in Hegel's philosophy. That is to say, *Being* in its wholeness, from its *purity* to its *ideality* in the *Logic*, has the form of self-determination. When such essentiality of self-determination is taken into account, dwelling in metaphysics is none other than dwelling in Nature for the subject. In other words, freedom is the concrete embodiment of the form of

¹³⁶. For Hegel, the highest manifestation of this separation emerges in the separation between faith and knowledge. To define *Verstand* as the reality of human cognition (*Erkennen*), in fact, indicates the domination of the alienated Spirit, and Hegel's entire philosophy can be understood as an attempt to overcome this alienation.

thought that is never alien to Nature but is at home in it, and it represents itself as the *absolute concreteness* of the self-determination of the subject.

In fact, the aim of Hegel's exposition of the *system* is to demonstrate that thought is consciously the One and the Same with subjectivity. The subject dwells in metaphysics, and residing in this region not only does not restrict its freedom but also makes the truth of its freedom intelligible. This is because the true knowledge of subjectivity belongs to metaphysical thought. That is to say, it is dwelling within the internal conflicts of thought and advancing with them that makes possible the knowledge of the Idea, which is the reconciliation between Concept (*Begriff*) and Reality. However, there is no anticipation or expectation in advance of what this knowledge will look like. Rather, it is through the return of the end to its beginning that the truth of knowledge, which is none other than the truth of subjectivity, displays itself to speculative thought.¹³⁷ In this respect, speculative thought grounds itself in subjectivity.

From this perspective, anticipating the *end of metaphysics* or the *end of history* seems to be an unrealistic approach to Hegel's philosophy. In fact, putting an end to history or metaphysics not only restricts any further advance of speculative thought but also prevents the return of subjectivity to narrate speculative thought. The outcome of such restriction is not simply the imposition of limits on cognition; rather, restriction above all is destined to define Cognition (*Erkennen*) itself. In other words, it is not merely the case that limitation arises inwardly from cognition. Instead, it is the imposition of an external limit on cognition that defines the very nature of Cognition as *Verstand*, in contrast to the inclusive universality of *Vernunft*.

¹³⁷. This corresponds to Hegel's well-known assertion in the *Philosophy of Right*:

The teaching of the concept, which is also history's inescapable lesson, is that it is only when actuality is mature that the ideal first appears over against the real and that the ideal apprehends this same real world in its substance and builds it up for itself into the shape of an intellectual realm. (*PR*, p. 7. *Werke* 7: 28)

For Hegel, by contrast, it is the *freedom of consciousness* that is the measure of true thinking. Put it briefly, for Hegel, without Truth there is no cognition, and as a consequence of this, there would not be such a thing as the consciousness of Truth. At the same time, it is the consciousness of Truth that constitutes the conception of Truth. In this respect, consciousness of Truth without the *freedom of consciousness* is unintelligible. Therefore, it is the *freedom of consciousness*, as the concrete actualization of *Vernunft*, that grounds the true meaning of cognition (*Erkennen*) for Hegel. In fact, in the light of the *freedom of consciousness* as the very essentiality of Truth, it is *Vernunft* that appears as the truth of cognition, not *Verstand*. In this respect, the *freedom of consciousness* grounds itself in *Vernunft* as the *purposive activity of thought*.

By legitimating freedom as a metaphysical concept, all the implications of the meaning of cognition (*Erkennen*) can be replaced with *rational agency*. This is because the norms that govern thought are now self-legislated by thought itself. The system must no longer begin or end with the definition of cognition as the determination of what forms thought or the world must take in order to be intelligible to the subject. Rather, it is subjectivity that determines its own reality as the reality of being. In this respect, what counts as freedom must not be understood as the intrinsic power of the *rational agent* given in advance by presupposing the subject as the *rational animal*.¹³⁸ Nor is freedom a useless achievement of the subject's historical endeavor to reach the end of metaphysical thought in order to announce the end of its authority and freedom.

¹³⁸. The conception of freedom, in this respect, emerges from a transcendental ground, which makes it first of all a metaphysical concern in Hegel's philosophy. While modern social and political theories of freedom, such as those provided by Hobbes (1946), Rousseau (1913), and Locke (1988), advocate establishing the *state* on the basis of individual freedom as an essential right, the essentiality of the conception of freedom in Hegel's philosophy is tied to the essentiality of the self-representation of the Absolute, followed by the actualization of the knowledge of such an Absolute through the subjectivity of temporal finite self-consciousness. In this respect, the embodiment of the consciousness of such freedom takes place through the *state* and not through the prioritizing of the individual over the *state*. Rather, when Hegel's conception of freedom is grounded in its metaphysical foundation, it is the reality of the *state* that is prioritized over the reality of the individual.

Rather, the Absolute Idea demonstrates the *freedom of consciousness* to be the *absolute now* in every moment of its being.

Thus, by putting an end to metaphysical thought, freedom remains an idea without any relevance to the concrete embodiment of subjectivity. For the sake of its actualization, it must return to its beginning, where thought thinks itself. The whole of the *Logic*, in this sense, is freedom, not as a demand that the subject become free, but as the demonstration that subjectivity itself is the reality of logical thought. Subjective self-determination, however, does not fall into the *bad infinity* of *vicious circular repetition* of moments that repeat themselves endlessly in an infinite circle. Rather, the presentation of *education* and *method* in Hegel's system guarantees the recognition of the wholeness of the Whole as the reality of the Absolute. To realize this reality is to delineate a *system* in which Truth can be made intelligible to finite thought only through its own presentation. At the same time, the intelligibility of the *system* is possible only through the *freedom of consciousness* for finite temporal cognition. On this account, the *freedom of consciousness* belongs to the very being of the *system*.

This is precisely what the *system* means in practice, since things cannot be understood individually outside their context; rather, the realization of each part depends on its relation to the other parts of the *system*. Thus, a true characterization of the Whole is necessary in order to have knowledge of any one of its parts. That is to say, Truth does not consist in the collective knowledge of independent particularities but always represents the *systematic Whole*. Freedom, in a similar sense, is not primarily the character of the individual subject but has its truth in the characterization of the *system*, wherein subjectivity is substance and substance is subjectivity.

2.4. *Erkennen* and Method

To recapitulate the ideas presented in this chapter, philosophy itself is the method, and the demonstration of philosophy as the truth of the method lies at the foundation of true philosophizing. The discussion on method is not concerned with discovering or employing a scientific method through which the philosopher constructs a system of knowledge upon it, rather it concerns the actualization of the knowledge of Spirit in modernity, which gives rise to the method. In simple terms, it is Spirit that actualizes its knowledge in order to know itself as the method. The discussion on method, therefore, is not grounded in the search for an appropriate way of philosophizing for Hegel, nor can it be reduced to the outcome of his philosophy, rather the method attains the same status as metaphysics in Hegel's system, where *being* determines itself through the absolute self-consciousness of itself as method. The self-determination of *being*, in this respect, takes place through the representation of *being* as the immediacy of pure indeterminateness in Hegel's *Logic*, and through the presentation of the naive immediate infinite certainty of *consciousness* at the beginning of Hegel's *Phenomenology*.

From the standpoint of method, therefore, as explained in the first chapter, the Here (*Hier*) and Now (*Jetzt*) find themselves as the *absolute now* for subjectivity. It is, in fact, the consciousness of the wholeness of the whole that ascribes its essentiality to every moment of the consciousness of the finite temporal Spirit. On this account, from the perspective of the Absolute, the absoluteness of subjectivity belongs to the very nature of its absolute self-consciousness as method. This means that it is in the light of the method that the Absolute Idea as the truth knows itself to be the truth. In the same way, the *self-conscious Idea* that knows itself as the truth recognizes its absolute nature to be the absolute substance of all reality.

On the other hand, approaching the Absolute through a phenomenological viewpoint, from the perspective of Spirit, the absoluteness of subjectivity belongs to the very nature of *Bildung*. In fact, Education cannot be reduced to the transition that takes place from the naturalistic and non-mature characteristics of humanity to its spiritual and mature states of being. Rather, the conception of Education comes to light in the maturation of Spirit in modernity. At the same time, *Erkennen* cannot be recognized as indebted in its ontological and epistemological essence to the socialization process of humanity through which human beings become rational in and through their relationship with others. Rather, the very essence of knowing belongs to the self-representation of the Absolute in Hegel's system. This means that without the definite and decisive reality of knowledge there is no knowing. In other words, it is the self-consciousness of the Absolute that is the same and one with the absolute self-consciousness of the finite temporal subject, and this *oneness of the consciousness of wholeness* constitutes the being of *Erkennen* for temporal finite subjectivity.

Erkennen, therefore, neither belongs exclusively to the self-representation of the Idea or the Absolute in Hegel's system, nor can it be reduced to the historical subjectivity of the rational agent; rather, its very meaning belongs to the absolute return that takes place through the discussion of method in Hegel's *Logic* and through *Bildung* in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Through this return, the self-determination of the *consciousness of wholeness* occurs by the self-realization of self-consciousness as the identity of identity and difference. That is to say, ascribing absolute self-determination to subjectivity, through both its speculative return in the *Logic* and its phenomenological return in the *Phenomenology*, elevates the thinking-acting characteristics of finite temporal consciousness to realize its essence as absolute identity.

On this account, it is in fact *Erkennen* that conceptualizes itself within this metaphysical setting. This metaphysical setting is not simply a theoretical setting in Hegel's philosophy, rather it is the process through which knowing actualizes itself within its concrete historical determination. In this respect, it is *Erkennen* as *self-determination in overcoming otherness*¹³⁹ that underlies the freedom of consciousness. This is because it is the actualization of knowing that transcends the consciousness of knowing to the freedom of consciousness in Hegel's philosophy. The freedom of consciousness, in this respect, relies on the very nature of knowing.

It is, therefore, through the *freedom of consciousness* that consciousness liberates itself from being reduced to the consciousness of knowing, and through such a liberation consciousness realizes itself as the truth of knowing. That is to say, through the representation of *Erkennen*, the *freedom of consciousness* transcends the consciousness of knowing to the self-consciousness of the actuality of knowing. Consequently, with the emergence of the *freedom of consciousness*, any heterogeneity and distinction between consciousness and *Erkennen* is set aside. From this perspective, it is the conception of freedom that emerges as the reality of *Erkennen* through the absolute return of knowledge to consciousness in Hegel's philosophy.

¹³⁹. This definition is based on the second Addition to the Remark 24 in Hegel's *Encyclopaedia Logic* (*EL*. §24. *Werke* 8: 84). For Hegel, self-determination, by its very nature, entails overcoming otherness, which relates not only to self-knowledge but also to the self-knowledge of the Absolute. This connection arises from the fact that otherness represents the negation of the self within Hegel's philosophy. Overcoming this negation can also be portrayed as a double negation, or the negation of the negation of the self, which evokes the wholeness, reflecting the whole dialectical activity of the self in the process of knowing its knowledge. This is where the implicit concept of the Absolute within the definition of freedom becomes explicit as self-determination in absolute knowledge. In this sense, if knowledge is to serve as the foundation for constructing Science, it must be rooted in the self-knowledge of the Absolute. This self-knowledge, in its essence, is nothing other than freedom, for it is through the activity of overcoming otherness and achieving unity with itself that the Absolute comes to know itself. Thus, freedom is not merely a condition or aspect of knowledge but constitutes its very foundation and reality. The absoluteness of knowledge is, therefore, inseparable from the realization of freedom as its essential ground.

There are two fundamental corollaries to such a perspective. First, all the non-metaphysical perspectives that seek to construct their interpretations on the *consciousness of knowing* build their interpretations on an unsound foundation. This is because the *consciousness of knowing* does not signify the truth of knowing in Hegel's philosophy. In fact, such an understanding is a relatively thin abstraction in comparison to what Hegel means by *Erkennen*. For Hegel, *Erkennen* takes place in its full actuality, and it entails more than the process of *mutual other-relating* attitudes shared by rational individuals.

Second, although it is consciousness that experiences the historical process, it is *Erkennen* that truly ascribes its being to what lies behind its activity as the *freedom of consciousness*. That is to say, consciousness does not have any power to make itself free. In fact, consciousness lives entirely in passivity from the perspective of knowledge. *Erkennen*, in this respect, is the *ideality of the idea of the freedom of consciousness*, and through the actualization of its nature it sees every moment of the development of consciousness as the self-expression of its experience of freedom. On this account, what we truly confront is the *freedom of consciousness* and not the *consciousness of freedom*.

This conclusion is very critical in Hegel's practical philosophy, where social and political interpreters often base their interpretations on the idea of the *consciousness of freedom* that subjectivity acquires through its historical self-determination. In other words, through the *consciousness of freedom*, most interpreters in the social and political sphere, among both left and right wing Hegelians, usually attempt, through their ideological perspectives on what they regard as a satisfied or happy consciousness, to explicate and delineate the conception of

freedom in a way tied to such a happy consciousness.¹⁴⁰ By taking these interpretive efforts into account, this *self-consciousness of freedom* typically shapes how Hegel's philosophy is characterized, most often through readings of the first four chapters of the *Phenomenology*.

On the contrary, what the *freedom of consciousness* signifies appears specifically in the reading of the last two chapters of the *Phenomenology*. In these chapters, it is no longer the finite human consciousness that seeks its final historical destiny in the endless actuality of its self-determination; rather, it is consciousness itself that must be liberated from its infinite and futile self-determinacy and elevated to the definite and decisive sense of knowledge in order to realize and explicate itself as knowing. On this basis, as explained in the first chapter, the transition of consciousness to *Erkennen* within Religion and Absolute Knowledge, and in effect the self-representation of infinite eternal truth, is what liberates finite temporal consciousness from endlessly striving for its actuality without ever reaching a definite and decisive ground for that actuality. Through this liberation, finite temporal consciousness is able to ground its nature in *Erkennen* as the reality of its own actuality.

The liberation of consciousness, therefore, reveals the reality of *Erkennen* as truth in and for itself. *Erkennen* in this respect can be equated with the meaning of philosophy itself. This is the domain in which the universality of the Idea is identical with the subjective self-knowing of the Concept (*Begriff*). More precisely, the universal identity of the Idea, as the self-knowledge of the

¹⁴⁰ For much of the twentieth century, the majority of Hegel's interpreters relied on such a perspective. During this century, discussions concerning the application of freedom in the spheres of sociology, politics, and psychology were widespread among scholars. While Popper (1945) portrayed Hegel as an enemy of the open society, and Russell (1946) regarded Hegel's idea of freedom as far from acknowledging or defending any form of liberal individualism, which without such mediation moves toward the self-realization of the individual within rational institutions, scholars such as Taylor (2007), Merold Westphal (1979), Jon Stewart (1998), Solomon (1983), and most Marxist and neo-Marxist interpreters such as Kojève (1969), Lukács (1976), and Marcuse (1954) held that Hegel's entire project aims to demonstrate the social history of transcendental subjectivity through overcoming unhappy consciousness and elevating it to the *consciousness of freedom*.

Absolute which is the form and content of everything real, is the same and one with the self-knowing of the Concept as the self-determining ground and soul of all objectivity. In this way, the oneness of the self-manifestation of the Idea finds its reality in the self-determination of conceptual thought. That is to say, the objective totality of all determinations of being constitutes itself in the form of self-knowing Spirit.

Self-knowing Spirit, in this respect, constitutes the beginning of philosophy for Hegel as the “immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply *is*” (*PS*. §90. *Werke* 3: 82) in the *Phenomenology*, and as the indeterminate immediacy of Pure Being at the beginning of his *Logic*. It is the beginning of *Geisteswissenschaften*, where finite self-knowing Spirit begins with its own eternal and infinite self-knowledge of the Absolute. This self-knowledge of the Absolute is the knowledge of identity that is acquired through the absolute return of knowledge to consciousness. Pure thinking, in this respect, is self-contradictory without the self-knowledge of identity as its object. That is to say, the self-positing of identity corresponds to the philosophical concept of knowing (*Erkennen*).

On this basis, self-positing identity necessitates its *otherness* through the representation of *pure being* at the beginning of Hegel’s speculative philosophy, and through the representation of *consciousness* at the beginning of the *Phenomenology*. The representation of *otherness*, on the other hand, as explained in the second chapter, necessitates the self-knowledge of *identity* within the system. Pure thinking, as the persistent self-representation of *identity*, in this respect, owes its truth to the representation of *consciousness* and *pure being* as the *absolute otherness* to its own nature. It is the very being of this contradiction at the beginning that allows the finite subject to begin to think within the negative subjective movement of its historical consciousness. From the standpoint of Hegel’s *method*, as he presents it in the last pages of the *Science of Logic*:

The method of truth, too, knows the beginning to be incomplete, because it is a beginning; but at the same time it knows this incompleteness to be a necessity, because truth only comes to be itself through the negativity of immediacy. (*SL*. p. 841, Miller. p. 751, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 571)

All the edifice of Hegel's system is built on the representation of this speculative and necessary contradiction, which is intelligible only through the self-positing of self-knowing Spirit as absolute identity within the system. In this way, a speculative and persistent link can be postulated between the eternal and infinite self-thinking Concept and the self-negating historical consciousness throughout Hegel's works. The essentiality of this link represents the very being of *Erkennen* within the system as the power that, while positing itself as *other*, remains absolutely *self-identical*. In this sense, *Erkennen* is the conceptual thought that thinks its form as the content of all reality and incorporates all content into its *self-identity*. This self-determination of difference into identity constitutes the nature of *Wissenschaft* in Hegel's philosophy, in which the Absolute knows itself through the process of self-knowing subjectivity. On this account, the definition of the Absolute cannot be reduced to a reality that is complete in itself prior to thought. Rather, it is self-knowing subjectivity that determines reality as its own self-positing content of thought. The speculative thought of the Absolute is now itself absolute, and the representation of the Here and Now can no longer be reduced to finite temporal experience; instead, through the mediation of *Erkennen*, the experience of finite Spirit becomes a moment of the *absolute now*.

Conclusion

In ending with the discussion on the absolute return to *consciousness* and *being* through the mediation of *Bildung* and method, we can now draw the conclusion regarding the two central questions that have been at the heart of this study on the relation between freedom and knowing in Hegel's philosophy. The first concerns the problem that the Absolute cannot withstand knowledge and must reveal itself to speculative thought as it is in itself.¹⁴¹ The idea of the self-representation of the Absolute within the system can be seen as the core of Hegel's ontology, which runs through all his works, yet it is the point most often ignored or denied, especially among contemporary commentators of Hegel's philosophy. This occurs because the self-manifestation of the Absolute as the single adequate object of philosophical thought fails to be convincing within a culture that no longer represents such a presupposition and, in effect, takes its revenge on this presupposition by deabsolutizing human cognition and grounding cognition in the reality of consciousness as a temporal and contingent being, which becomes the subject of study in various branches of the social and political sciences and in cognitive science alongside philosophy. This signifies in practice the end of metaphysics that emerges as the culmination of the final metaphysical effort to revive the conception of the Absolute. In this respect, interpreting Hegel while being reluctant to contemplate the Absolute dimension of his philosophy constitutes the most prevalent tendency among commentators who aim to present Hegel as a social-political theorist rather than as a metaphysician.

¹⁴¹. From the same standpoint, the second problem can be expressed in the sense that finite temporal consciousness cannot withstand the recognition of such knowledge and must render this knowledge to speculative thought as it is for itself.

In contrast to the dominant view of Hegel's philosophy, the reality of the oneness and wholeness of the Absolute has constituted the principal Hegelian philosophical dilemma within this study. Although from the perspective of most contemporary commentators the discussion of *Erkennen* is grounded in the Hegelian notion of *otherness*, in the sense that without the representation of an *other* for the self, the self would be insufficient for any conception of knowledge, in this interpretation it is not the negative inward movement of self-consciousness that determines the reality of *Erkennen*. Rather, it is the self-representation of the Absolute in Hegel's system that posits the reality of *Erkennen* for finite temporal consciousness.

The oneness and wholeness of reality is what at the same time brings to light the objective legitimacy and necessity of philosophy itself. The self-representation of this truth was presented in the discussion on identity in the first chapter. By grounding the nature of the Absolute in identity, the self-thinking Absolute has only itself to think, and through this self-reflective activity it recognizes its self-relation as its object of thought, which is the Concept (*Begriff*) of its Idea. The Concept, which necessarily knows itself as the truth and as the absolute substance of all reality, correspondingly necessitates self-thinking subjectivity as its own reality.

From the standpoint of temporal finite subjectivity, however, the ontological identity between its own categorical contents and the pure form of the self-knowledge of the Absolute constitutes the reality of its own self-determination. In fact, this is the consummation of Hegel's idealism, which he designates as the Absolute Idea. As he states in the final section of the *Encyclopedia Logic*:

As unity of the subjective and the objective Idea, the Idea is the Concept of the Idea, for which the Idea as such is the ob-ject, and for which the object is itself _an object in which

all determinations have come together. This unity, therefore, is the *absolute truth and all truth*, it is the idea that thinks itself, and at this stage, moreover, it is [present] as thinking, i.e, as *logical Idea*. (EL. §236. *Werke* 8: 388).

What *identity* implies in this context is that for something to be what it is, it must be in-and-for-itself as a being that is *different* from everything else. This being in-and-for-itself, on the other hand, within Hegel's system, is by its very nature *everything*. This means that identity is inclusive of difference, and it exists within the very nature of difference. In this respect, in Hegel's metaphysics what is ideal is identity, which in different contexts can be signified as the Idea, the Absolute, or God. On the other hand, what makes the differentiation of identity and difference intelligible is the consciousness of such an identity. This is because the distinctive characteristic of consciousness, through which it recognizes identity, is difference. Consciousness, in this respect, confronts and views its nature in contradiction to the Idea, yet at the same time tends toward the self-knowledge of the Idea.

In fact, grounding *Erkennen* in the knowledge of *otherness* is the same as ascribing all thought determinations to the self-determination of self-consciousness. *Erkennen*, in this respect, can be defined as the knowledge of *being* that can be known or posited by *consciousness*. That is to say, the subject matter of *Erkennen* is the study of the way *being* has to be known by *consciousness*. By contrast, when the very nature of *Erkennen* is grounded in the absolute dimension of knowledge, it is consciousness itself, as finite temporal being, that is released from its finite temporal reality in order to rise to the level of a thinking subject determined and constituted by *reason* as the fundamental ground of its reality. In this account, it is *being* as *reason* that reveals itself to thought, and the subject matter of *Erkennen*, in this respect, would be the study of what it means *to be* and the way *being* determines its own reality through finite

temporal subjectivity. In this respect, as Reid puts it, “the Idea not only posits itself *into* natural otherness but posits itself *as* natural otherness itself. As such, the Idea occurs as the revealed Other against which human reason endlessly strives, in its infinite progress of self-knowing self-liberation.” (Reid, 2025a, p. 5).

On the other hand, the Idea, as the absolute dimension of knowledge, is not the final form of *consciousness* or the self-determination of thought that appears at the culmination of the *Phenomenology* and the *Science of Logic*. In other words, absolute knowledge is not a form of consciousness that continues to relate to the reality of something other than its own thought form. It is in this sense that the Absolute is regarded as *identity* within this study. By contrast, the very nature of consciousness is tied to the conception of *otherness*, an *other* that can be recognized only by an I that retains an *identity* of its own into which it can take the *otherness* of the *other* for itself. *Erkennen* must therefore be regarded as the thread that weaves together the Absolute’s self-revelatory dimension of knowledge and self-consciousness.

In this respect, the recognition of *Erkennen* within Hegel’s system becomes apparent when *consciousness* liberates itself from the idea that it must always stand in relation to something *other* than itself in order to be determined as self-consciousness; rather, it must find the self-determination of truth within itself. It is only then that consciousness knows itself to be self-determined, not through the representation of *otherness*, but by grounding its reality in the nature of *identity*, which enables it to find the reality of knowledge within its own finite temporal being. That is to say, when the nature of consciousness is known absolutely, its activity is also known as identical with the reality of Substance, Idea, Being, or the Absolute. It is, therefore, through the self-representation of the Absolute in the system that the self-identifying activity of identity determines the reality of consciousness.

This outlook on consciousness brings us to the second principal problem presented in this study, which concerns the manner in which finite temporal consciousness can attain the Absolute realm of knowledge. In other words, how can we, as finite temporal rational beings, ever reach the foundation upon which we recognize our speculative thought as identical with the self-knowledge of the Absolute? Stated simply, if truth exists, then how can finite spirit attain the knowledge of truth? It is, in fact, the possibility of such knowledge that sheds light on all the key Hegelian concepts such as *Aufhebung*, *Begriff*, *Bildung*, and method. Without this possibility, all such concepts would be superfluous and spurious within Hegel's writings.

However, in practice, the possibility of such knowledge arises for self-consciousness as its desire and drive toward knowledge, which results in its remaining suspended in the infinite effort of what *ought to be* actual without, in effect, *being* actual. It is, therefore, in contrast to the nature of the Absolute that insufficiency and inadequacy in relation to knowledge arise for self-consciousness. This inadequacy constitutes the negativity of consciousness as its principal drive toward knowledge. This negative characteristic of consciousness forms the foundation through which the discussion on freedom and *Erkennen* finds an intelligible ground for finite temporal consciousness within Hegel's philosophy, although in their negative senses.

It is, therefore, two domains of reality that confront each other: the eternal infinite dimension of reality as the *Absolute*, which designates truth in its most necessary sense, and the finite temporal dimension of reality as *consciousness*. One is located at the culmination of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, where it represents the conception of *identity*, and the other is presented at its initiation, where it signifies *difference*.

On the other hand, as has been explained repeatedly in this study, truth is *one* and *whole* within Hegel's philosophy, and it is the task of finite temporal consciousness to determine the *oneness* of truth within its own reality. The self-determination of finite temporal consciousness as the identity of the Absolute's identity and its own nature as difference is therefore the teleological speculative destiny that must be accomplished by the finite Spirit. This is because if reality is to enter into an absolute relation with the self-thinking Concept (*Begriff*), it must do so as a temporal finite subject and not through the determination of the eternal infinite nature of the Absolute, but as a spiritual temporal subject that thinks and knows the content of its knowledge as its own thought-content. The Absolute, in this regard, achieves its own self-relating knowledge when reality begins to think of itself as a subject capable of thinking in and with the Concept. This occurs when finite Spirit, freed from its temporal negative nature, transcends itself to the realm of speculative thought.

The problems outlined above can be united within a single dilemma, which, as presented in this study, represents the most fundamental dilemma concerning knowledge in Hegel's philosophy. It concerns the question of how finite temporal consciousness identifies the essence of reality with its own identity. By approaching Hegel's philosophy through this dilemma, the idealistic premises of his entire system, which ground the true sense of knowledge in the identity of identity and difference, come to light. To resolve the problem of knowledge, Hegel's entire system must be understood as an ontological relation of identity and difference. From this perspective, it is *Erkennen* that emerges as the identity of identity and difference. This conception, which carries within its nature the self-knowledge of the Absolute as the truest and most decisive sense of knowledge, aims to actualize such knowledge through the representation

of the subjectivity of finite temporal consciousness, which forms the most notorious metaphysical element of Hegel's philosophy, that is, history.

The accomplishment of this necessity grounds the very meaning of the idea of freedom in Hegel's philosophy. In fact, the idea of freedom comes into play in the system when self-consciousness, relying on its temporal and finite nature, is by its very nature inadequate to know the truth of such a consciousness and simply falls into the infinite approximation of knowledge through its endless effort toward actualization. Here it is the negativity of the idea of freedom that arises, which has been designated as the *consciousness of freedom* acquired through the slave's work in determining the world according to its self-consciousness. The reality of such self-consciousness, however, is attainable only through the freedom of that consciousness. In this account, it is the burden of absolute identity that Hegel places on the temporal knowledge of the finite subject to become Absolute Knowledge. This is the necessity that must be fulfilled in Hegel's philosophy, and the most fundamental requirement of this necessity is the *freedom of consciousness*. The identity of identity and non-identity, in this respect, flows through every moment of the experience of consciousness.

Although at first glance this viewpoint might remind us of the standpoint from which Schelling grounds his philosophy in Absolute Identity, it must be noted that for Schelling it is the *identity of identity* that serves as the philosophical presupposition, while for Hegel the *identity of identity and non-identity* is not a presupposition but is grounded in the actuality of Spirit, which experiences every moment of its temporal being as the experience of the *oneness* and *wholeness* of reality. In fact, it is the Absolute that becomes humanized through this way of philosophizing. That is to say, it is the actualization of absolute idealism that lies at the foundation of Hegel's speculative philosophy. This actualization owes its actuality to Hegel's perspective on self-

consciousness, where it is the opposition of 'I' to 'I', and not the equality of 'I' and 'I', that arises as the true nature of the 'I'. In fact, the identity of 'I' and 'I' is the *ideality of the Idea* for Hegel, the Idea that he strives throughout all his philosophy to make *real*, not in the sense of *Sollen* in which the Idea *ought to be* real, but in order to demonstrate that the Idea *is* real. *To be* real belongs to the wholeness of the historical development of consciousness. The reality of the Idea in this sense is not excluded from the actuality of consciousness. This is the peculiar aspect of Hegel's philosophy that his contemporaries failed to address.

Put differently, for Hegel, knowledge in its truest sense and highest form exists, and he designates it as Absolute Knowledge. The consciousness of such knowledge, whether taken as the presupposition or the consummation of his philosophy, is accomplished through the agency of the finite temporal subject. From the perspective of subjectivity, it is the *self-conscious drive to determine the objective world according to its own form* that arises as the reality of its very being to know such knowledge. This drive has been designated in this study as the truth of *Erkennen*. *Erkennen*, in this respect, *ought to be* Knowledge. This is not a contingent or arbitrary necessity for Hegel; rather, through the self-representation of Absolute Knowledge in the form of the Idea within the system, the necessity of *what ought to be* must be demonstrated as *what is* through the recognition of finite temporal consciousness. That is to say, the necessity of *what ought to be*, without the actuality of such a necessity, does not represent the truth of knowledge.

The necessity of the actuality of knowledge, as *Wissenschaft* in modernity, is the place where the conception of freedom in its ideal sense arises, a conception that aims toward the *positive positedness* of the Absolute within the system. This ideal sense, represented in this study as the *freedom of consciousness*, is the drive through which consciousness realizes its infinite and enduring truth within its finite and transitory being, as well as the recognition of its finite and

transitory truth within its own infinity. On the other hand, contrary to the dominant interpreters of Hegel's philosophy, the *consciousness of freedom* as the negative inward movement of self-consciousness toward actuality does not represent the truth of freedom. Rather, it is the failure of freedom that arises as the reality of the inward movement of self-consciousness toward actuality.

This is because self-consciousness by its nature is insufficient for the conception of knowledge, and through its inward negative movement it has no other destiny than the failure of freedom. On this account, when we consider the idea of freedom on the foundation of self-consciousness, this idea may at first appear intelligible, but its outcome is the unhappy consciousness as the failure of freedom. It is through Reason that this unhappy consciousness finds a ground for its self-satisfaction by determining itself in the form of Spirit as the actuality of its satisfaction acquired through *Sittlichkeit* in the state. However, even at this stage the agent is not truly free, because by grounding its self-determination in Reason, it in practice faces the never-ending actuality of knowing that arises for Spirit without the actualization of the idea of knowledge. In fact, the highest form of freedom for Hegel, which is the truth of the idea of freedom, belongs to the actualization of knowing in the form of Absolute Knowledge.

By employing the conceptions of *Bildung* and method as the consummation of the last two chapters of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and the culmination of Hegel's *Subjective Logic*, I have sought to show that the *freedom of consciousness* is intelligible only through the self-representation of the Absolute in Hegel's philosophy. In this respect, *Erkennen*, through the *absolute return* of knowledge to *consciousness* that takes place in the discussion of Education in the *Phenomenology* and in the *absolute return* of method to *being* in Hegel's *Logic*, above all indicates the determination of the *form of self-determination* as something actual. From the standpoint of finite temporal consciousness, what lies at the foundation of the actuality of this

form is the *self-conscious drive to determine the objective world according to its own form*. The *freedom of consciousness*, in turn, has its ground in this same drive. In fact, this drive is the very drive to determine objective reality according to the *universal form of Erkennen*.

In this light, any boundaries between freedom and knowing vanish. What lies at the very meaning of both *Erkennen* and freedom is the drive of the subjective Concept (*Begriff*), which in its very actuality is human temporal consciousness, to actualize itself as objective truth, which is what is at stake both in the *Subjective Logic* and in the last two chapters of the *Phenomenology*. In simple terms, what all these remarks indicate is that in order to know the truth, finite human consciousness *ought to be* knowledge, and *to be* knowledge is intelligible for it only through the *freedom of consciousness*. This agreement between *ought to be* and *to be* is the “genuine position of the rational cognition [*vernünftigen Erkennens*]” (*EL*. §234. *Werke* 8: 387). This “reconciliation consists in the will’s returning _in its result_ to the presupposition of cognition ... The will knows the purpose as what is its own, and the intelligence interprets the world as the Concept of its actuality.” (Ibid).

The self-representation of the Absolute in Hegel’s system is therefore intelligible through the *freedom of consciousness*, and as the result of such freedom it is *Erkennen* that arises as the reality of finite temporal consciousness. Method, in this respect, is a return to being, not in its immediate form, but as a return that contains within itself the highest form of knowledge. *Erkennen*, in this account, is “not only the highest *force*, or rather the *sole and absolute force* of reason, but also its supreme and sole urge [*Trieb*] to find and cognize *itself by means of itself in everything*.” (*SL*. p. 826, Miller. p. 737, di Giovanni. *Werke* 6: 552). *Erkennen*, as the universal form of the self-conscious actualization of freedom in *finding itself in everything*, in fact constitutes the reconciliation that takes place between identity and difference within Hegel’s

system. This is the foundation through which finite temporal consciousness is sublated into the realm of metaphysics, where every moment of its experience indicates the absoluteness of its *being*.

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