

THE EGO AS WORLD: SPECULATIVE JUSTIFICATION AND THE ROLE OF THE THINKER IN HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY

Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos

ABSTRACT: Prior to engaging in the process of fully realizing the notion of speculative philosophy in Hegel's system, the thinker must arrive at the appropriate reflective standpoint via two preliminary justificatory cycles. This paper examines the phenomenological and logical cycles of justification undertaken respectively in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the Doctrines of Being and Essence of the *Science of Logic* in order to offer an account of the meaning and demands of speculative justification. We argue that as enactments of the self-determination characterizing speculative thinking, these justificatory cycles must be understood in terms of the role and position that the thinker occupies in Science.

KEYWORDS: Hegel; Speculative Justification; Thinker

to conceive the spiritual spiritually (LHP II 9)¹

Aristotle was the first to say that *νοῦς* is the thought of thought. The result is the thought which is at home with itself, and at the same time embraces the universe, and transforms it into an intelligent world (LHP III 546).²

I. INTRODUCTION

For Hegel the practice of speculative thought, or 'Science', involves two cycles of justification that are preliminary to the final act of fully realizing Science's notion, that of knowing absolutely. Whereas the first cycle is associated with the *Phenomenology of Spirit* the second concerns the formulation and development of the logical categories in

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, vol. II Plato and the Platonists, 3 vols., Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1995, p. 9 (henceforth LHP II).

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, vol. III Medieval and Modern Philosophy, 3 vols., Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1995, p. 546 (henceforth LHP III).

the sections of the *Science of Logic* entitled respectively ‘The Doctrine of Being’ (Being) and ‘The Doctrine of Essence’ (Essence).³ Hegel explains the first phenomenological justificatory cycle in the following terms:

[T]he individual has the right to demand that Science should at least provide him with the ladder to this standpoint, should show him this standpoint within himself. His right is based on his absolute independence, which he is conscious of possessing in every phase of his knowledge; for in each one, whether recognized by Science or not, and whatever the content may be, the individual is the absolute form, i.e. he is the immediate certainty of himself (PS ¶ 26).

As to the second justificatory cycle, that consisting of Being and Essence, Hegel observes:

When [...] the notion is called the truth of Being and Essence, we must expect to be asked why we do not begin with the notion? The answer is that, where knowledge by thought is our aim, we cannot begin with the truth, because the truth, when it forms the beginning, must rest on mere assertion. The truth when it is thought must as such verify itself to thought (EL § 159 A).⁴

Whereas the ‘individual’, or ‘consciousness’, requires the phenomenological cycle of justification, it is thought that necessitates the logical cycle. In both instances some sort of verification is sought: in the first Science must verify itself to consciousness whereas in the second it is ‘truth’ that must verify itself to ‘thought’.

Hegel’s remarks on the nature and need for these two cycles of justification raise some fundamental questions. For one thing, why is it that the individual has the ‘right’ to make demands upon Science? Perhaps more importantly, where and how does the individual encounter Science in the first place? One might also ask what it means for truth to verify itself to thought instead of the reverse. In what follows our aim will be to show how the answers to these questions, and indeed the whole issue of justification, are linked to a certain appreciation of the role of the speculative thinker in both the initial appearance and the subsequent development of Science.

The Question of Justification

By way of introductory observations we can note further that Hegel employs similar terms to speak of the importance of the two justificatory cycles. For example, about the activation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* phenomenological process he says:

least of all will it be like the rapturous enthusiasm which, like a shot from a pistol, begins straight away with absolute knowledge, and makes short work of other standpoints by declaring that it takes no notice of them (PS ¶ 27).

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, New York, Oxford, 1977 (henceforth PS). G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1997 (henceforth SL).

4. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic (1830), with the Zusätze: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. Theodore F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1991, § 159 A (henceforth EL).

So too, when the question of the beginning of Science arises in the *Science of Logic* Hegel once again warns against moving ‘like a shot from a pistol’ (SL 67). Moreover, the standpoint of Science is similarly represented in relation to the two justificatory cycles. Just as in the *Phenomenology* Science must take into account consciousness’ antithetical attitude to its object of knowledge, in the *Science of Logic* it must take into account the inter-relations of logical categories that do not fully conform to the speculative demands of the notion.

The abovementioned remarks draw our attention to the unacceptability of resting on ‘mere assertion’ to start the speculative project. So, what is the reason for thinking that Science cannot properly begin by presupposing that absolute knowing is the natural orientation of thinking? One might suggest that in so far as Science is philosophy, and philosophy is radical questioning, Science’s own justifiedness must be open to questioning. But this sort of response fails to take account of the radical ambitions characterizing the speculative orientation. In assuming a rather vague and free-floating sense of ‘philosophy’ it does not allow that Science already takes itself to be philosophy *as such* or radically free thinking. If, as we will argue below, speculative thinking takes itself to be free or self-determining in the space of its own freedom, then a legitimate and philosophical questioning of Science must be part of Science’s self-orientation. In other words, Science’s justificatory processes must be enactments of aspects of the full meaning of the radical freedom that defines speculative thinking. That is, they give rise to Science in so far as they are activated, sustained and completed *by Science from within Science*.

So, the legitimacy of raising the question of the justification of Science must have to do with the facts that the thinker is already situated *in Science* and that his or her insights emerge directly from within its space so to speak. It also follows that in so far as Science relies upon the two justificatory cycles it must do so not because *it cannot* begin from the immediate unfolding of the absoluteness of absolute knowledge ‘like a shot from a pistol’ but, paradoxically, because *it can*. There is nothing from a technical point of view to stop Science from activating its thinking by fully and immediately employing the kind of reflection already incorporated in the already available notion. Indeed, Science could very well have started its project from the section of the *Science of Logic* entitled ‘Subjective Logic, or the Doctrine of the Notion’. In doing so, it would have bypassed both the phenomenological process and the thinking involved in the doctrines of Being and Essence. Our claim is that speculative justification is not about *deriving* absolute knowledge that is supposedly initially either known only as a hypothesis, or, not yet known at all. Nor does it rely on an independently justified process that thereby justifies the results it derives. Rather the process of justification is itself justified by what is an already available field of knowing, namely Science. The sort of justification that the speculative demands is itself speculative. Ultimately this means that from the outset the thinker and, consequently, thinking itself is not free-floating but embedded and committed. That Science and everything related to it become an issue at all depend upon the fact that Science ‘comes on the scene’ (PS ¶ 76) or, in other words, that the thinker

already dwells in the ‘truth’ that the ‘Absolute’ is (PS ¶ 74).

So the need for justification has to do, not with the absence of absolute knowledge, but with its already achieved presence. For reasons to be explored in some detail below, precisely because Science emerges by fully encountering itself as what it is, namely the mutual embracing of knowing and known, justification becomes an issue as an integral part of the absoluteness of this kind of knowledge. Science’s possession of its notion is primordial and irreducible to any kind of original derivation beyond the very problematic that is determined by the appearance of the notion itself. Of course if this reading is correct then the popular hermeneutic idea that the aim of the *Phenomenology* is to lead the unenlightened consciousness to the standpoint of absolute knowledge must be misguided.⁵ In our paper we hope to show that to appreciate the radical meaning of justification is to see the speculative purpose often associated with the *Phenomenology* in a new light.

Justification and the Thinker’s Role and Position in Science

So far we have suggested to appreciate that the logical justification of the notion is the truth of the forms of thinking practiced in Being and Essence, and that the phenomenological justification of Science is the truth of consciousness, we must invoke the idea that, although it could do otherwise, Science refrains from starting immediately from the activation of its already available notion. This refraining on the part of Science becomes Science’s place of dwelling so to speak through which it attempts *justifiably* to appropriate what it already is. Starting from the above observation about the appearing of Science, how should we understand the phenomenological and logical dimensions of Science’s two-stage process of justification? We will be arguing that the two justificatory cycles are best understood in relation to the thinker’s role and position in Science. These must not only be accessible and available from the very beginning, but their very accessibility and availability must themselves be justifiable. To be sure, Hegel attributes a central role to the thinker as is evidenced by the remark in the ‘Preface’ to his *Phenomenology* that the beginning of philosophy presupposes that consciousness should dwell in the element of ‘pure self-recognition’ (PS ¶ 26). Indeed, in a number of places throughout the elaboration and discussion of his system Hegel comments strategically on the position of the thinker. Here is one example from an introduction to the lectures on the history of philosophy presented in 1823 and repeated in 1825 and 1827:

Because the universal is there as objective, I have thought myself in it. I am myself contained in this infinite thing and at the same time have a consciousness of it. Thus at the standpoint of objectivity I remain at the same time at the standpoint of knowing, and I retain this standpoint (ILHP 166).⁶

5. See, for example, Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 16-17.

6. G. W. F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. T. M. Knox and A.V. Miller, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 166 (henceforth ILHP).

Again, in the ‘Preface’ to his *Philosophy of Right* he refers to thinkers as

those in whom there has once arisen an inner voice bidding them to comprehend, not only to dwell in what is substantive while still retaining subjective freedom, but also to possess subjective freedom while standing not in anything particular and accidental but in what exists absolutely (PR § 12).⁷

The position of the thinker remains central irrespective of whether Hegel is referring to the experience of political freedom and the individual’s relationship to the substantiality of his communal being or to the experience of the speculative philosopher. Our argument will be that from ‘the moment when Science comes on the scene’ (PS ¶ 76) the thinker finds himself or herself dwelling, as a matter of fact, in the element that in turn makes this appearance possible through the thinker’s dwelling. Most decisively for the speculative experience, qua speculative dweller the thinker *receives* the absolute commandment ‘Know thyself’ (EPM § 377).⁸ This receiving in turn gives rise to the most primordial emerging of Science, an emerging that is constituted as the vision to think speculatively or purely. Yet it is not enough for the thinker simply to dwell in the necessary element; he or she must also *dwell in this dwelling* in the sense of dwelling freely. Nor is it enough for the thinker merely immediately to receive the command; he or she must also *receive the receiving* as a precondition for actually realizing the command to think speculatively or purely. What is received, as a matter of fact, must also be received freely. These two aspects, dwelling and receiving freely, are necessitated by the fact that the speculative claims consciousness as a self-determining thinker. Whereas the first act of freedom is performed in the *Phenomenology*, the second informs the thinking practiced in ‘The Doctrine of Being’ and ‘The Doctrine of Essence’.

II. THE APPEARANCE OF SCIENCE AND SPIRIT AS MANIFESTATION

When Science first emerges, it emerges in the world as a radical break from the world’s already given orientation. It is therefore a disturbance that takes place unexpectedly. The speculative moment appears and announces itself as this kind of break and it does so by claiming its thinker unconditionally and, from the standpoint of the latter, unexpectedly. The announcement is made *to the thinker* but it also comes *through the thinker* via a process that violently disassociates the thinker from the world in which he or she is otherwise absorbed in order to re-situate him or her in (the world through) absolute knowing.

Here, the thinker is exposed to the challenge of *becoming* a thinker in so far as Science unconditionally permeates and claims his or her being. But as well as belonging to Science in this way, the thinker must also belong to this belonging freely. When in the position of the thinker, one is exposed to a calling that one hears with one’s whole being,

7. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, Oxford, 1980, § 12 (henceforth PR).

8. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830), Together with the Zusätze*, trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller, Oxford, Oxford, 1971, § 377 (henceforth EPM).

to an eruptive event whose radical transformative power demands a response. It follows that, rather than being claimed as a thinker for the reason that one already is a thinker independently of the claiming, one is a thinker-to-become in so far as one responds appropriately to having been claimed as a thinker. Ultimately, what matters is the resolve to stay with Science. This is why we can never arrive at the speculative standpoint with the aid of some detached reasoning process or by impartially choosing from amongst a range of alternatives.⁹

Now, the break that the appearance of Science marks between itself and the world also harbours a radical continuity that eventually makes possible the speculative engagement of Science with the world. Because the world and Science are both moments of Spirit their relating is determined by this co-belonging. According to Hegel, the (formal) definition of Spirit (or mind) is that it is manifestation and everything to do with Spirit is manifested within such manifestation. More specifically, Spirit is absolute manifestation since it is ultimately a pure, unqualified, revealing that reveals itself to itself:

The manifestation of itself to itself is [...] itself the content of mind and not, as it were, only a form externally added to the content; consequently mind, by its manifestation, does not manifest a content different from its form, but manifests its form which expresses the entire content of mind, namely, its self-manifestation (EPM § 383 A).

In the full expression of Spirit as manifestation Spirit's being incorporates thinking that reveals the very notion of manifestation. It thus allows this manifesting being to reveal itself to itself. As this unconditional and self-sustaining revealing, Spirit is apprehended speculatively as a double embracing: being embraces thinking and embraced thinking embraces being. Being and thinking are thus two aspects of this embracing/embraced inter-relation that belong equally to Spirit understood as manifestation in the above radical sense.

This inter-relationship is at the heart of Hegel's account of Reason in terms of the mutual 'encompassing' of the ego and its object:

The essential and actual truth which reason is, lies in the simple identity of the subjectivity of the notion with its objectivity and universality. The universality of reason, therefore, whilst it signifies that the object, which was only given to consciousness qua consciousness, is now itself universal, permeating and encompassing the ego, also signifies that the pure ego is the pure form which overlaps the object and encompasses it (EPM § 438).

For Hegel then Spirit is the mutual informing of two seemingly antithetical movements. On the one hand, the 'object' is the infinite power (substance) that absolutely embraces the 'ego' that is unable to resist this embracing. On the other, rather than drowning in its absolute passivity, the 'ego' is at once the power (subject) freely to embrace the 'object' that is in turn not in a position to prevent this kind of freedom from realizing itself. The passivity in question is absolute since it can accommodate a freedom whose infinity

9. See Donald P. Verene, *Hegel's Absolute: An Introduction to Reading the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 44.

rests with its power to be informed by passivity without eliminating or being eliminated by it. Both subject and object are expressions of absolute manifestation given that each incorporates the other.

Still, the full expression of Spirit as Reason results from a process that is mediated by the division in Spirit between the object or being and the thinking ego or, in other words, between world and Science. It is as this division that the two moments of Spirit inform or embrace each other, albeit only in principle, that is, only the realm of pure thinking. Disassociated from the world, the thinker thinks the world as thinkable in the absence of the corresponding reflective embracing of this thinking by the world's being.

How should we understand the beginning of philosophy in the light of this fundamental idea of Spirit as (the principle of) Reason and the abovementioned understanding of the position of the thinker in relation to (the principle of) Reason? To answer this question is to offer an interpretation of one of Hegel's more enigmatic observations that in our view is also most fundamental. We are referring to the observation that the 'beginning of philosophy presupposes or requires that consciousness should dwell in this element' of '[p]ure self-recognition in absolute otherness, this Aether as such, [which] is the ground and soil of Science or knowledge in general' (PS ¶ 26). What we want to argue here is that, as the precondition for philosophy, or Science, the abovementioned dwelling of the thinker involves the encompassing (permeating) of consciousness (ego) by the universality of 'pure self-recognition in absolute otherness' (the thinkable object), but also consciousness's potential for encompassing (thinking) pure self-recognition's universality. As we have noted, this principle takes place in the division between thinking and being or, in other words, in the realm of absolute otherness. Moreover, in its capacity as dwelling in the universal, consciousness relates to itself as a universal, that is, as the thinker for whom thinking (philosophy) is an aim to be realized and hence that which must encompass the already encompassing pure self-recognition. Leaving aside for the moment Hegel's reference to 'absolute otherness', we will proceed next to consider how Spirit's self-manifestation incorporates both the moment of pure self-recognition as such and the element of consciousness' dwelling.

The Meaning of Pure Self-recognition

The abovementioned reference to 'Aether' is meant to convey the sense that in the case of pure self-recognition we are dealing with the utter simplicity of recognition as such. If we understand 'self-recognition' through this guiding metaphor, we can appreciate that the recognition in question does not happen as the contribution of an external agent. Instead, it is pure or *as such* in that it takes place *within itself* so to speak and does not refer to anything that does not already belong to it qua recognition.

This immanence renders it *immediately* as manifestation. According to Hegel, self-recognition is 'pure spirituality as the universal that has the form of simple immediacy' (PS ¶ 26). Hegel also refers to it as 'this immediacy of Spirit' that is 'the very substance of Spirit' (PS ¶ 26). As immediate manifestation that is not qualified by any specific form,

Spirit encounters itself in its purity all at once without having to traverse a distance that might mark some sort of gap to be filled.

Still, given that as self-recognition this universal is living, some difference or otherness must be involved within its already given field of unimpeded operation. Moreover, the difference in question must be related to the particular as such as determined by the specificity of its infinite singularity. This specificity marks an absolute limit within pure self-recognition whose limiting activity intensifies the limitlessness of the latter's immediate self-realization. It is limitless precisely because the substantive universality of pure self-recognition permeates the singularity of the singular qua already permeated. The universal perpetually remains itself whilst simultaneously intensifying and deepening itself through the particular. The particular is not given in terms of an agency that might activate a reflective distance and determination of aims to be realized. In its other Spirit does not detect a loss of itself or some resistance that it must overcome. Rather, it finds itself as always already there. As the substance of Spirit pure self-recognition is a universal, all encompassing and objective condition that is irresistible, infinite life. Hegel also refers to it as the 'free power' that 'could also be called free love and boundless blessedness' since 'it is itself and takes its other within its embrace, but without *doing violence* to it; on the contrary, the universal is, in its other, in peaceful communion with itself' (SL 603).

So, this objective embracing and permeating universal is the truth of the particular. We can say further that the truth of the particular is that it is already gathered with other particulars qua gathered in the already achieved permeating and embracing that the universal is as the 'free power' of gathering as such.¹⁰ This plurality of particulars is necessary in order for the universal not to exhaust itself in the single particular and thereby compromise its universality. At the same time such gathering is not to be understood in terms of some instrumental value or strategic relation between particulars. As the power to gather particulars qua already gathered, the substantive universal is immediate communal being populated by communal singularities. The universal has its being in and as this communality. The substantive communality of this kind of being lays in the fact that it has already claimed particulars, beyond all their concrete specificities, as belonging to it unconditionally. From the standpoint of this radical communality particulars are unconditionally claimed by the communally embracing and permeating universal. Moreover, it is only within the being of each particular qua the purely claimed that specificities, such as personal biographies, become meaningful. Let us proceed to re-conceptualize the idea of pure self-recognition in these more concrete existential terms.

Pure Self-recognition, Communal Being and the Source of Speculative Thinking

Invoking what he calls a 'community of minds' (PS ¶ 69), Hegel is the thinker of

10. On the significance of gathering for Hegel's absolute see George Vassilacopoulos, 'Gathering and Dispersing: The Absolute Spirit in Hegel's Philosophy', this collection.

communality as such in the dual sense of thinking *about* communality whilst also being the thinking *of* communality. Here, communality is understood as the immanently thinkable and, hence, the absolute object. Hegel is, therefore, the situated and committed thinker in and of the thinkable. This explains his preoccupation with manifestation and the associated mutual informing of form and content that manifestation implies. From Hegel's perspective, only the historical emergence of such an immediate and purely self-referential communal spirit—a spirit that at once is liberated from specific forms of manifestation, like faith, custom and so on and is the source of the transformative experience associated with the individual's unconditional immersion in it—is capable of supplying the 'ground and soil of Science or knowledge in general' (RH 92).¹¹ To put the same point differently, only the immediacy and simplicity of communal being's self-referentiality can function as the 'soil' for the growth of knowledge as such. For, if knowledge is the thinking of universals, the 'soil' of this thinking must itself be the universal that in its utter simplicity or state of immediacy is substantive or objective communal being in the abovementioned sense.

This said, how is that such a radical reflective standpoint—one directed to the fact of dwelling in the being of pure universality as something that belongs to the thinker's own standpoint of reflection—can be dependent upon a universal characterized by *immediacy*, albeit pure manifestation? In other words, how might this unqualified immediacy immanently transform itself into an absolute object that incorporates reflectiveness? Such a task obviously relies upon there being immanently to the communal immediacy some differentiation that implies a distance or an outside of some sort. Building on Hegel's metaphor we could suggest that there must be a seed of some sort operating in the ground and soil of pure self-recognition. If we think of the question of the activation of speculative thinking in terms of the conditions for the growth of the seed that is to be found in the soil of pure self-recognition, then to understand the source of speculative thinking is to gain a radical appreciation of the role and character of this seed. Let us move on then to identify this seed in the light of our analysis so far.

We can begin by noting that the growth of the seed of pure self-recognition would amount to the transformation of this immediate universal manifestation of communality as a whole into a reflective engagement with its immanent thinking. Moreover, this latter would consist in the dual aim of articulating the notion of manifestation and ultimately achieving manifesting manifestation in this way. In other words, the growth of the seed in question would amount to the activation of the form of communal being that transforms the purely substantive and immediate manifestation of its being into the place of dwelling of the thinker and thereby acting as the embrace of thinking ultimately posits itself as that which thinking is to embrace. Accordingly, we should ask what it would mean for the immediate and universal embracing of communal being to become the absolute object of an immanently posited thinking. Because the universal as

11. On these specific forms of manifestation see G. W. F. Hegel, *Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Hartman Robert S., New York, Liberal Arts Press, 1953, p. 92 (henceforth RH).

such can only be embraced by its notion, in so far as it is possible to supply this notion it would need to be supplied by what belongs to the universal unconditionally and yet is also differentiated from it. The universal would therefore have to differentiate itself from itself by treating its being as self-absence as well. It is manifestation that has yet to manifest itself and so is absent in its manifesting. Moreover, in so far as this self-presence is affirmed as already *immediately* realized in the universal's encounter of itself in the particular—in that it already permeates the particular—the particular must also be capable of functioning as the *topos* of the universal's absence. The universal thus emerges and retreats in the particular since it is in the particular that the universal being is affirmed whilst its notion, or the thinking of its being, is yet to be activated.

It follows from the above that as the *topos* of absencing, the particular must reflectively embrace the universal. So it is the particular qua communal singularity that combines the experience of the infinite antithesis of pure presence—being—that is also absence—*notion*—and pure absence that is also presence. What is unconditionally present in the particular incorporates into itself the positing of itself as the project of explicit self-appropriation through the particular. What is already unconditionally present yet immediately pure owes its presence to its pure power to be. Moreover, thanks to its purity this power must be retrieved and exercised reflectively through the particular simply because it is there. Communal being must retrieve its power to be what it already is or, in other words, it must retrieve itself as a project. In this inter-relation of the universal and the particular we can discern a certain movement. The universality of immediate communality releases the particular from itself as that which belongs to it unconditionally and it re-claims it by calling upon it to affirm that its unconditional belonging also belongs to its own particular being. In other words it calls upon the particular to become a thinker in order to think the universal.

Without destroying itself then the universal must release the particular and it does so by releasing the particular qua ego since this is the infinitely singular and hence the other of the universal. As the pure thinking of the pure universal the particular ego infinitely expands itself in order to embrace the universality of communal being with the result that manifestation thereby manifests itself. Precisely because what is purely singular is also permeated by the purely universal such permeation releases singularity to be the infinite power of an infinite expansion capable of embracing and dwelling in what initially permeates it thereby acting as the universal's *topos* of dwelling. Infinite passivity thus proves itself to be infinite freedom as well. Here we have the speculative mystery of the infinitely expanding and infinitely contracting communal ego. The truth of the ego is that it is living, that is, pulsating. Such releasing of the free ego transforms passive immersion in substantial communality into the active and visionary dwelling of a thinker.

For Hegel then in providing the thinking that the immediate universality of the pure manifestation of communal being requires, consciousness is 'the universal which has as its content likewise the universal', since the being of consciousness is 'to be as a universal within the universal'. To put the same point in more dramatic terms, as a result of dwelling in the universal before the individual activates his thinking, 'in his particularity [he]

has the vision of himself as universal' (ILHP 164, 172). Here Hegel's Spinozism informs the fundamental precondition of his philosophy:

when man begins to philosophize, the soul must commence by bathing in this ether of the one Substance, in which all that man has held as true has disappeared; this negation of all that is particular, to which every philosopher must have come, is the liberation of the mind and its absolute foundation (LHP III 257-258).

So on our reading when Hegel makes the point that the beginning of philosophy presupposes that consciousness should dwell in the element of the 'Aether as such' of pure self-recognition, he is invoking this link between the immediacy of the pure manifestation of communal being and the demand to think it in the above sense. As the thinking of the universal, philosophy presupposes the dwelling of the thinker in the universal. Still, since thinking is initially encountered as a project, as we noted above, the substantive universal qua what-is-to-be-thought must be encountered as an absence that permeates the being of the thinker. Pure self-recognition is precisely this absence of the universal as manifesting manifestation that both belongs to the universal and is manifested in what is objectively embraced and permeated by the substantive universal, namely the being of the particular. This is manifested manifestation as a project to be realized. The dwelling of consciousness in the absence of the universal that unconditionally fills consciousness' being is thus the precondition of speculative philosophy that is itself understood as the thinking of the universal or manifestation as such. We can conclude that it is the dwelling of consciousness in the terms indicated by the above analysis that supplies the seed for the growth of Science.

III. MODERNITY AND SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY

Let us now consider in some detail the precise way in which the activation and completion of speculative philosophy depend upon the situating of consciousness in the substantive oneness of pure self-recognition that we mentioned in the previous section. To this end we will sketch the outlines of a speculative theory of modernity since Hegel attributes the experience of unqualified, pure communality to western modernity.

The New World Order of Atomic Individuality

Hegel famously relates his own era to the 'sunburst which, in one flash, illuminates the features of the new world' (PS ¶ 11). In what is likely to be an allusion to the French Revolution, this reference to an eruption of sorts announces the arrival in the existing world order of something radically new. In the fullness of its radicality this announcement indicates liberation. The emerging new world, the new form of Spirit, is both liberated, in so far as it emerges from the given order, and the process of liberation from the given order, in so far as it engages in 'dissolving bit by bit the structure of its previous world' (PS ¶ 11).

How might we understand the relationship between speculative philosophy and this

complex process of generating historical novelty? To begin with, if we follow Hegel's insistence that Spirit is communal manifestation we can read the old world in terms of a communal being that is determined by specific forms of communal gathering, such as faith, tradition and so on, that Hegel refers to as 'immediate (simple and unreflective) existence'. Now let us suppose that within this world a newly oriented spiritual manifestation emerges and effectively challenges the old by putting into question the very principle of this form of unreflective communal gathering. The emerging of the new must be integrally linked with the collapsing of the old. If unreflective communal being is the power to gather individuals qua already gathered into specific forms of gathering, its collapsing amounts to their release.

Moreover, in their new capacity of having been released from hitherto forms of unreflective communal being the individuals in question are constituted as having turned against the old world. What might such 'liberated individuals' be like? Thinking in purely negative terms we can understand this individuality in its opposition to the gathering of unreflective communal beings. Here is the rather bleak picture that Hegel draws:

Therewith appears the isolation of the individuals from each other and the whole, their aggressive selfishness and vanity, their seeking of advantage and satisfaction at the expense of the whole. For the inward principle of such isolation (not only produces the content but) the form of subjectivity—selfishness and corruption in the unbound passions and egotistic interests of men (RH 92).

So the liberated individuals experience their being as atomic whereas their collectivity presents in the terms of dispersal. They immerse themselves in their singularity that in turn releases their 'unbound passions and egotistic interests' given that it is unable to expand and become the *topos* of dwelling of communality. Individuals thus lose the power to experience their communal being so much so that the norm is to inter-relate instrumentally. The dispersal of their collective being implicates their atomic individuality in a way that renders the latter seemingly primordial and irreducible. So for Hegel atomic individuality results from the 'violent diremption of mind or spirit into different selves which are [...] in and for themselves and for one another, are independent, absolutely impenetrable, resistant' (EPM § 436 A). Moreover, Hegel links this 'impenetrable, atomic individuality' with the being of 'the person' that he takes to be 'the practical, objective notion, in and for itself' (SL 824).

Accordingly, the dispersal of immediate communal being into the form of personality informs and determines the re-groupings that can proceed as an outcome of the interaction of self-interested subjects. Hobbes is perhaps the first thinker to attempt to make sense of this historically novel situation. He is optimistic because he thinks that, despite their unbound dispersion, the dwellers in the state of nature can come to master their lives when they institute the political state—when they create artificial form out of the formlessness of their situation of total war—purely on the basis of enlightened self-interest. Yet for Hegel, the speculative significance of personality lies in the connection between this impenetrable atomic individuality and its 'real' or concrete expression, namely property ownership (PR § 34-40). Let us consider this connection for a mo-

ment.

From the discussion so far it follows that once liberated from the manifestation of specific forms of communal being, the locus of manifestation becomes the individual himself or herself. Consequently, personality, the form of atomic individuality, determines this manifestation. Because manifestation involves the agency of personality that refers to the singularity of the ego, and this singularity in turn presents as *exclusively* atomic individuality, the person's freedom is not infinite despite being the bearer of manifestation. Although self-relating and thus manifesting (free) to this extent, the person cannot also expand infinitely qua thinking being (in the sense analyzed in the previous section) in order thereby to activate the notion of manifestation. In this case manifestation is to some extent contained and determined by singularity. We might say that the person *sinks into himself* and, rather than dwelling in the expansive way we analyzed earlier, the person is instead posited as free-floating. Accordingly, despite being the site of the notion, the atomic individual does not engage his or her speculative subjectivity in so far as he or she does not act as thinking.

This said, the immediate manifestation of personality does not drown itself so to speak in its immediacy; it is not immobile but is already a kind of movement that incorporates otherness precisely because it is atomic. In being atomic, personality is not oriented to the thinking of being but to an immediate unity whose being is devoid of thinking. Consequently, the only available option here is to direct itself to a non-resistant entity whose being is penetrable. In this case, the subject immediately occupies the being in question and thereby appropriates it as its own essence by emerging through it. Here, of course, we are invoking the Hegelian 'thing' that mediates the person's relation to property (PR § 41-71). This is the relation through which the subject's will acquires its being immediately qua occupier of the being of the thing or property owner and thus manifests as immediate atomic individuality. It follows from this association of personality with the property-owning relation that the abovementioned dispersal of atomic individuals refers to the dispersal of individuals qua property-owning beings.

So far we have suggested, firstly, that atomic individuality negates the old world of unreflective communal being and the specific forms of communality that determine it; and, secondly, that this negating is activated by the historical emerging of the atomic individual qua property owner. Now from a speculative standpoint, the negating of the world of unreflective communal being cannot be restricted to the forms of communality being destroyed; it must also implicate the very principle of communality as such. Rather than simply opposing itself to one form of communality that fails to recognize the reflective element of individuality, the negating activity of property-owning atomic individuality is due to its power to appropriate individuality as *exclusively* atomic. Even though historically it arises out of the destruction of traditional forms of communal being, atomic individuality liberates itself by turning against the individuality manifested in terms other than those exclusively dictated by its property-owning being. In other words atomic individuality radicalizes its atomic being by negating communal individuality as such.

Speculative Being as the Universality of Property-Owning Atomic Individuality

Next we want to argue that this radical negating accords with a more expansive understanding of individuality. Let us begin by noting that Hegel's abovementioned references to atomic individuality also refer to a further dimension, namely the universal. For Hegel, individuals are in the contradictory relation of being 'impenetrable' and 'at the same time identical with one another, hence not independent, not impenetrable, but, as it were, fused with another' (EPM § 436 A). Similarly, the person is 'none the less, [...] not exclusive individuality, but explicitly universality and cognition, and in its other has its own objectivity for its object' (SL 824). It is this relation between the atomic individual and the universal that Hegel characterizes as 'thoroughly speculative' (EPM § 436 A) and giving rise to Spirit that is Reason or the mutual embracing of subject and object as the ultimate act of manifesting manifestation. In other words, the truth of the atomic individuality of personality is to be thinking and qua thinking the individual must have the universal for his or her object.

Now if it is true that fully conceptualized the person is a speculative being in so far as personality, firstly, is atomic or singular individuality that thinks and, secondly, qua thinking expands itself to embrace the universality of communal being as its object then, according to our analysis, it also follows that in so far as he or she experiences the speculative, the person is already embraced by this object as the universal that incorporates within itself the power to be thought. As we argued in the previous section, in permeating and embracing the person, communal being also calls upon or commands him or her to think it. To think communal being is to reconstruct the immediate gathering of communal being as such in a manner that incorporates the mediating element of reflection. In this mutual informing of knowing and known what takes place is the speculative appropriation of both the unreflective communal gathering of the old world and the dispersal of atomic individuals that negates this communality. In this way communal being is liberated from the limitations of *particular forms* of communal manifestation in order to reappear as pure universality—communal being as such—whereas atomic individuality is expanded to serve as the *universality of thinking*.

In the light of the above analysis of speculative or communal personality, how can we make concrete sense of the emergence of communal personality in the new world of atomic individuality and its relationship to the negation that radicalizes the later? In creating its world, atomic individuality repeatedly releases instances of speculative communality whose cumulative effect is absolutely to undermine them as realizable enactments of an alternative world. Each instance of actual negation affirms the radical negating power of atomic individuality. A number of important observations follow from this. First, to recall our analysis so far, speculative communality is manifesting manifestation since, by incorporating reflective or thinking individuality it incorporates the very idea of manifestation. Conversely, in so far as it excludes communal individuality atomic individuality excludes the very idea of manifestation. Yet despite depending on the mediation of the thing, atomic individuality is still manifestation. It follows that atomic individuality is manifestation that excludes the very idea of manifestation. In

fact the immediacy that the atomic self-relation exhibits in the property-owning identity is mediated by this act of emptying the speculative out of itself. This act of emptying out is already and, in principle, incorporated in the property owner's appropriation of individuality as exclusively atomic. Hegel refers to this as the 'pure formalism' that characterizes the subjectivity of the modern world.¹²

Second, what exactly is the speculative significance of the radicalization of atomic individuality that, as we argued above, is achieved through the negation of speculative or communal personality? Why not think the reverse, namely that in order to produce the radical result of pure manifesting manifestation it is communal personality that must negate individuality qua exclusively atomic? Here is a possible speculative response. If Spirit, being the unconditional manifesting manifestation of communality, fully and explicitly engages with itself when, for historical reasons, its notion becomes available through the reflective agency of communal personality, then as this inaugural engagement it both announces itself as a vision to be realized and, precisely because it is visionary, it also announces its retreat in its vision as the not-yet. Being visionary as pure manifestation, Spirit's mode of being is pure negation, the 'not' as such. In the absence of Spirit's explicit engagement with its 'not' Spirit would be determined by its self-relation understood in the purely positive terms of a given. Now Spirit's retreat as visionary and its corresponding release as its own negation is nothing short of the release of atomic individuality. The radicalization of atomic individuality through the negation of communal personality is the negation, and hence the radicalization in the abovementioned sense, that Spirit itself is qua visionary.

The Vision of Communal Personality and the Retreat of Spirit

It follows from the above that the vision of communal personality is itself the negation of atomic individuality. If Spirit is self-negating because it is visionary then it also negates its negation for the same reason. In doing so it transforms the latter into the process leading to the realization of the vision. We can now appreciate Hegel's reference to the 'sunburst which, in one flash, illuminates the features of the new world.' In its totality the 'new world' is the vision that announces both the ideal of communal being as an ideal to be realized and its corresponding retreat.

Historically, this dual act of negating is rendered explicit through the mutual informing of political revolution and speculative philosophy. The revolution offers a visionary announcement of the project of communal being (or freedom in solidarity) pointing beyond the world of property-owning atomic individuality. The retreat or failure of the revolution expresses the first instance of Spirit's self-negation. Yet this retreat proves to

12. LHP I p. 152. Hegel incorporates the unreflective communal bond as superseded and hence *preserves it as superseded* in his account of civil society, the sphere of atomic individuality, by presenting the immediate loving unity of the family as an individual property-owning unit. So too the reflective bond of solidarity that determines the ethical life of the 'corporations' is preserved as superseded in so far as it is confined to a limited social space rather than acting as a world-determining principle and this expresses the emptying out of speculative individuality that we discussed above.

be unconditional. Ultimately, Spirit retreats in its retreat, thus transforming the space that the retreat is into the *topos* of a more radical encounter with itself. At the same time, in retreating unconditionally Spirit emerges as an absolute arrival, the arriving as such. With the first retreat by emptying itself out of the mutual informing of notion and being that revolutionary communal being takes for granted Spirit prepares the ground for addressing itself on a more fundamental level. With the second by positing itself as the source of the whole speculative problematic concerning the inter-relation of thinking and being it liberates itself from the effects of the first retreat.

Consequently, the vision that is negated as a political project becomes the absolute vision—in the sense of visionary vision or the vision of vision—that, unlike the oppositional posture of revolution, incorporates the totality of the world of atomic individuality that negates it with the effect of negating the negation. Here, failure is speculatively transformed into a new and far more radical announcement of Spirit's arrival by comparison with its political arrival. This arrival of Spirit is absolute precisely because it emerges out of retreat. After all, the retreat of political revolution is not co-extensive with the defeat of the vision of communal being. In this case the critical question does not merely concern *the realization* of the vision but its very meaning and, by extension, the very meaning of the world as the agent that re-produces itself in a visionary manner. In the present context, there is a sense in which vision becomes more significant than reality itself.

Spirit's Retreat into the Infinitely Expanding Ego

Now the question remains as to the nature and locus of Spirit's unconditional retreat. If by retreating from the concrete world of property-owning atomic individuality Spirit's communal being lands not in some foreign place but in its own *topos* then it lands at the site of its encounter with its pure notion, the very idea of Spirit, as an infinite possibility. This point is crucial for understanding the depth of Spirit's dwelling if it is to encounter itself in a way that gives rise to speculative philosophy. Note, firstly, that Spirit does not encounter its notion as a given. Its *topos* of dwelling does not act as a mirror that immediately reflects an image of itself from which to begin the process of its development. As we have suggested, Spirit already finds itself beyond the limits of the revolution. At the same time, however, it is only by encountering its notion that Spirit encounters itself. How might these two demands that Spirit's radicality poses be simultaneously satisfied? Since Spirit retreats in its retreat without losing itself, it encounters itself as that out of which even its very notion, that of manifesting manifestation, must become an issue. So, in retreating in its retreat Spirit has the vision of its notion as what must become in the dual sense of becoming both the vision that it is and that to which the vision gives expression. As a vision that renders the very meaning of vision—and hence the very meaning of emerging and realizing—an issue, Spirit is not-yet in this radical sense. This is the form that Spirit's second retreat takes through which it deals with the vision qua vision. Basically this means that Spirit deals with itself as the movement from self-

givenness to free self-appropriation at the fundamental level of its inaugural encounter with itself. More specifically, because Spirit is 'not' it is absolutely passive with respect to itself and thereby encounters itself thanks to already being infinitely permeated by its notion. Yet it is also the power freely to embrace its visionary notion as a precondition for the notion's realization.

Now, if it is true that by retreating in its retreat Spirit encounters its notion, then Spirit must associate itself with that aspect of its being that concerns the supply of its notion. According to our earlier analysis, the locus of this reflective moment is the communal person's dwelling in Spirit's communal being. As immediately and unconditionally embracing and permeating communal singularities, Spirit encounters itself in visionary terms as a project to be realized. The site of this encounter is communal singularity in its capacity as the power to think and consequently as the bearer of the notion of the universality of communal being. Precisely for this reason whereas the political retreat of communal being is a collective affair, Spirit's retreat in its retreat can, and need, only take place in a single individual. The political retreat empties the singular communal person of the substantive universal communal being's immediate permeating. That is, communal singularity loses sight of its historical mission as a visionary participant in the visionary gathering in communal being as a visionary world-making force. But since it is the communal person qua gathered that provides the gathering with its very notion—and hence with the *topos* of its gathering *as gathering*—the already realized retreat of the gathering from the world takes place *as retreat* in the agent capable of supplying the notion to begin with, that is, in the singularity of the infinitely expanding ego.

The ego thus dwells in the retreat of the retreat that occurs within its own field of awareness as this awareness. That which permeates and embraces the ego retreats unconditionally as this permeating. In doing so, it *posits* the ego as the already permeated. Like the original permeation of communal being, this retreat is no less substantive, objective and universal. In other words the ego cannot resist the universal's emptiness within itself that the retreating communal 'we' activates. Through the retreat because it is already the *topos* of dwelling of the gathering qua gathered, the ego is posited as this *topos* as such. In other words, the ego is posited as immediate pure manifestation or what Hegel calls 'pure self-recognition'—this infinite emptiness that the ego is substantively—made explicit by the retreating 'we'. This is the substantive universal as such within the ego in whose infinite emptiness the ego finds itself dwelling.

Still, precisely because it dwells in the universal in this radical sense, the ego cannot but encounter in its own self the universal that demands that it be thought. In other words, the pure universal already claims the ego as a thinker and, accordingly, the thinker already provides the universal with the vision of its notion that is at once the very notion of the vision. Dwelling in this manner, the thinker is already open to the manifestation of this immediate universality that is encountered as the command to think. Pure self-recognition is activated as a command by this reception of the thinker's dwelling, whereas, as this receiving, the thinker is posited as capable of speculative thinking. Even so, because pure self-recognition and the dwelling of consciousness are

both moments of Spirit, in their mutual inter-relation Spirit emerges as the absolute creator of the mutual informing of notion and being. Spirit is both the absolute command and its reception. As such it is the agent that posits the vision of the speculative notion as the originating act of conceptuality. It is in this sense the *topos* from which pure conceptuality is to be activated. This is the primordial freedom of Spirit, or the ‘god who impels to self-knowledge’ by activating both the absolute commandment ‘Know thyself’ and its very reception (EPM § 377, A).

Now if Spirit’s command is manifested in so far as the thinker receives it, what is the primordial manifestation of the thinker as this receiving and, relatedly, what is the primordial manifestation of the command itself? As this receiving, the infinite singularity of the ego is transformed into an infinite expanding that, as we have already noted, must embrace the empty or pure universality activated by the retreating communal being that embraces it. Indeed, in its most elementary and radically empty expression, the ego takes the form of the thinker qua singular ‘I’ who utters the ‘we.’ Hegel’s entire philosophy can be understood as an exploration of the very idea of the ‘I-we’, the thinker’s vision of being a universal. From the outset then the thinker emerges as this uttering in whose emptiness all ‘that man has held true has disappeared’ and out of which emptiness must spring the speculative idea of the world as thinkable (LHP III 258). It follows that one cannot philosophize speculatively in the absence of saying ‘we’ both prior to the activation of the project and throughout its realization.

We turn next to argue that in keeping with the demands of a presuppositionless Science the idea of the world as thinkable must be available to Science as an indispensable aspect of the very emerging of visionary Science. Indeed on our reading the idea of the world’s thinkability and consequent openness to speculative thinking is the precondition of Science in that it defines the ‘absolute otherness’ that is no less an integral part of Spirit’s retreat into pure conceptuality. (Recall that for Hegel the precondition of Science is consciousness’ dwelling in the element of ‘pure self-recognition in absolute otherness’.)

IV. ABSOLUTE OTHERNESS AND THE IDEAS OF HISTORY AND NATURE

In the previous section we argued that Spirit’s self-negation takes place in the world of property-owning atomic individuality. The formal subject that ‘has made itself to be empty’ of the speculative inter-relation of thinking and being is none other than property-owning subjectivity. Spirit’s moment of ‘absolute otherness’ is constituted as the world of property owners, this emptying out of the very notion of the speculative. The emptying out in question is absolute since it incorporates being and thinking as forms of the emptying/emptied out inter-relation. In other words, in one and the same act it is being that empties itself of the notion and as this emptying out it is also being that is emptied from the notion since what it empties is its own notion. Accordingly, the site of otherness is not being as the other of the notion but being itself. Here, the notion is transformed into the notion of otherness and being is transformed into the being of

otherness. In their mutual informing the notion and being of otherness constitute the realm of 'absolute otherness' that is the 'othering' in otherness itself.

More specifically, on the one hand, in emptying itself from being the notion empties itself as notion and thereby transforms itself into its other, or rather, into the very idea of otherness. Here, it is the *notionless* notion. Consequently, it empties itself from the speculative element of reflection that in the previous sections we associated with the power of the ego to expand infinitely. As this emptying the notion remains implicit and the self is posited as atomic. At the same time, the implicitness of the notion is expressed only in that which is already external to itself—the thing—and, hence, unable immanently to accommodate the element of thinking. In being other to itself in this case, being is the being of otherness. It is beingless and therefore also notionless being. It follows that the immediate unity of the notion of otherness, constituted as the atomic self, and the being of otherness, constituted as the thing, give rise to the property-owning relation in terms of the absolute otherness of the speculative as speculative otherness.

Now, in accordance with our line of argument, the concrete world of absolute otherness mediates the vision of the pure notion of Science that relates to the thinker's receiving of the command to think through the thinker's dwelling in pure self-recognition. Although pure self-recognition is the very idea of Spirit in its immediacy, its purity results from the speculative emptying out that constitutes atomic individuality. This added dimension raises the question of the connection between the thinker's visionary being and his or her concrete participation in the world of property-owning atomic individuality. To put the same question differently, what is the significance for the property-owning world of the fact that the vision of the infinite expansion and embracing of speculative thinking also claims the atomic being of the particular person? These questions turn our attention to the relationship between the vision of speculative thinking that we have been elaborating and the possibility of speculatively thinking the world.

The Absolute Otherness of the Property-Owning World and History as its Thinkability

We can begin to address this issue by noting that the very emergence of the vision of Science treats the thinkability of the world as its essence and the world as excluding Science qua the idea of the thinkable—pure self-recognition—and the idea of the thinking of the thinkable. Precisely because, as absolute otherness the property-owning world actively empties itself out of the speculative moment, to the emptied out speculative notion it reveals itself to be the power of the notion's release. It also renders explicit that its act of emptying out is the *topos* in and out of which the vision of the notion emerges. In other words, the notion of pure thinking that is in a sense exiled from the world is the worlds' own notion and hence its *topos* of exile is the world itself as a whole. It is in this sense that Hegel invokes 'pure self-recognition in absolute otherness'.

Now precisely because the world acts in this radically immanent manner in releasing the very notion of thinking the thinkable, the world also releases its power to be the being of thinkability. Consequently, the self-mediation of the world that releases its

notion qua notion of the thinkable and its thinking posits the world as the in-itself thinkable. The world is the in-itself-for-the-notion. Speculatively speaking everything in the whole of the property-owning world is gathered in this, and as this, all-inclusive emptying out that explicitly and reflectively happens as what is already the case in the purely conceptual emergence of the notion that belongs to it exclusively, albeit negatively.

Accordingly, Science is the retreating world *as* this retreating, that is, it is the very idea of thinkability emerging in the thinkable world that is empty of its idea. Mediated by the infinite separation of being and thinking the release of the philosophical moment marks the retreat of being into the darkness of its own amnesia, the amnesia of the thinkable. The remembering of the notion that the vision of Science is takes place in the realm of its division from being that the forgetting of the world of absolute otherness is. Speculative philosophy is thus the form of emerging of Spirit as this (di)vision.

To be sure, the implicitness of the world's thinkability directly relates to the absolute-ness of Spirit. If the world is unconditionally thinkable then even its own thinkability must be activated out of itself. The world must be the power to know what it is, not by encountering its essence as a given, but by retreating in its essence in order to make knowledge of it a goal to be realized and by surviving this retreat. That is why at the end of the speculative project of thinking the world—Hegel's system—the notion reveals that the forgetting of the world is history understood as the urge and the power of the thinkable actually and explicitly to become thinkable in-and-for-itself. The vision of the notion as the unconditionally thinkable is already the unconscious vision of the world.

But if the above reading is correct, then in having the vision of the notion as the notion of the purely thinkable the thinker must also have the vision of the idea of history. In other words, the thinker must be in a position to acknowledge the mediating role of absolute otherness in terms of the idea of the world being the urge towards becoming thinkable. It follows that from the very beginning the vision of the notion of pure thinkability must also be accompanied by the vision of history as such, or Spirit's release of itself in time through its retreat. If this is the case, then the world of absolute otherness, the global gathering of property-owning persons, is constituted as nothing other than history itself. Here we are not referring to some historical stage to be followed by an other, but to the 'not yet' of the implicit thinkability. This vision of the idea of history renders the world of absolute otherness as one aspect of Spirit's being from the first moment of the emergence of Science.

Ultimately this truth of the world must be revealed with the activation of speculative thinking. Being the idea of the thinkable itself (the absolute object), Science qua vision expresses the idea of Spirit as a whole (manifesting manifestation), that is, the idea of the thinkable-thinking-thought that is fully worked out in the *Science of Logic*. When this comprehensive standpoint of the notion is extended to the thinkable world, the world of absolute otherness emerges as only one moment in the full landscape of the world Spirit. Indeed, it is revealed to be the teleological drive from which being emerges as actually (in and for itself) thinkable, that is, as explicitly releasing the mutual explicit embracing of being and notion (realized Reason). In Hegel's system, this being-notion relation is

concretely articulated as the idea of the ethical state. On our analysis, this state refers to the (yet to be) realized Spirit that is perpetually produced by the global gathering of ethical agents who respond to the command to *be as a world absolutely*, a command that is itself activated by the (yet to be) ‘achieved community of minds’.¹³

Absolute Otherness as the Dwelling of Visionary Spirit in Nature

We have been arguing that the idea of history must be part of Science’s primordial vision but when Hegel discusses absolute knowing at the end of the *Phenomenology* and before the activation of the speculative project he also appeals to nature. Like the idea of history, the idea of nature is an integral part of the original vision. Whereas the idea of history invokes Spirit’s realization as thinkable, the idea of nature invokes the very emergence of Spirit as purely and perpetually visionary.

The notion’s vision of the mutual informing of subject and object—in terms of the commanding (thinkable), receiving (thinking) and realizing (thought) mentioned earlier—also gives rise to the idea of the perpetual vision *as such*. In other words, the execu-

13. PS ¶ 69. From the above analysis it follows that the received interpretations of the ethical state in terms of the division between civil society and the political state do not take account of the speculative requirements operating in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. See, for example, Klaus Hartmann, ‘Towards and New Systematic Reading of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right’, in Z.A. Pelczynski (ed.), *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel’s Political Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 114-136; K-H Iltting, ‘The Dialectic of Civil Society’, in Z.A. Pelczynski (ed.), *The State and Civil Society*, pp. 211-226. On the contrary, the concept of society is one aspect of the realm of absolute otherness whereas that of the ethical state is the speculative vision of communal being that will be released—as the vision that explicitly incorporates the power for its realization—out of the collapse of the global world of absolute otherness. The sovereign political state is another aspect of absolute otherness within which the institutions of civil society can be said to gather. Accordingly, modern liberal institutions, like those that Hegel elaborates in his discussion on civil society, express part of the form of absolute otherness created out of the gathering of property owners. These institutions are in principle global given the formality characterizing the being of personality. Yet, they ultimately emerge within the limited framework of the *particular* political state since the gathering of persons also constitutes the negation of the very idea of the global communality to come, a communality that comprehensively expresses the very idea of world Spirit from the speculative standpoint. (This negation, as we have already argued, results from the emptying out of the speculative moment constituted as the property-owning world.) On this analysis, today’s global gathering of property owners perpetuates itself through the negation of its own future. That is, in so far as it takes its own being to be global the gathering of property owners negates the notion and being of communal globality. As this negation the property-owning world is also posited as the dispersal of particulars that results from the denial of the future understood in terms of the speculative universal of communally integrated being in which every form of the particular is also a form of embracing the universal. So the current drive to create global institutions is compromised by the equally decisive drive to negate the very idea of the global in the future. As a result the current reality is that of the dispersal of self-grounding or sovereign particular political states constituted as the international community. The inability of the particulars in question to be informed by the universal is reflected in an ultimately unenforceable international law. So, whereas civil society’s economic and legal institutions result from the affirmation of the present of property owners, the sovereign political state results from the denial of the future. Still, since that which is denied belongs to that which acts as the power of denying, the world of absolute otherness denies itself through the mediation of what it denies and thus denies itself as denying. If we understand history as the end result of this infinite or absolute denying, history must be the release of what it already is and, as we have argued, it is the thinkable.

tion of the command does not mean that the command and its reception are forgotten. Precisely because what is commanded by the command (the realization of the thinkable as thinkable) is immanently realized, in this capacity it perpetually retrieves the command as its own, thus perpetually positing itself as realizable and hence as visionary. This is because Spirit is both the source of the command and its reception, something that Science qua vision must render explicit in its very emerging pursuant to the mutual informing of its beginning and end. If this is correct then in its notion Spirit's perpetual visionary state is revealed as realized and consequently it is also retrieved as realizable. The movement in question is akin to perpetually encountering oneself for the first time in order to realize oneself and the effect is an intensification of what has already been realized. The being of fully realized Spirit is perpetually teleological in this sense.

How is this primordial and perpetual release of the visionary Spirit, a release that belongs to Spirit itself, possible? It must be the case that the principle of Spirit's self-relating—Spirit's infinite immersion in, and emergence from, itself—emerges from Spirit's infinite outsideness. This latter is the realm of nature that Hegel calls 'indifferent subsistence'.¹⁴ Spirit's freedom is infinitely and perpetually visionary in so far as its self-awareness is mediated by its emerging from and dwelling in nature or the realm of 'externality'. It follows that in so far as the primordial emergence of Science relies upon the idea of Spirit as visionary this emerging is possible only if Spirit is informed not only by the idea of history but also by the idea of nature.

So at the end of history—the moment when Spirit's perpetual visionary character and its power perpetually to realize its vision become explicit—Spirit's relation to nature must take centre stage. History and historical being presuppose Spirit's primordial relation to nature in this way and it is this relation that is explicitly released with the collapse of history. In this way Spirit moves beyond the limits of historical being to spiritual being. We must say that as spiritual beings our primary relation is not with history but with nature. The primordial emergence of the gathering of the visionary egos who are in a position infinitely to expand with the saying 'we' becomes exclusively a matter between the 'community of minds' and nature. Under these conditions it also becomes possible collectively to retrieve the experience historically introduced by the Greek thinkers who 'presupposed nothing but the heaven above and the earth around.' In Hegel's words, this 'feeling that we are all our own is characterized of free thought—of that voyage into the open, where nothing is below us or above us, and we stand in solitude with ourselves alone' (EL § 31 A).

From the above analysis it follows not only that Science is the vision of the pure idea of thinking but that it is also the mission to think the world in terms of its self-realization qua thinkable (as history) through the awareness of Spirit's speculative relation to nature. This expanded vision makes it possible for Science to encounter itself in its primordial emerging as this vision and mission and thereby to activate its thinking, to undertake each particular stage in its development and immediately move on to the

14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature: Being Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, 1830*, trans. M. J. Petry, 3 vols., London, George Allen & Unwin, 1970, § 248.

next. Indeed each stage (and each stage within each stage) is from the outset situated in, and mediated by, this panoramic vision. In the light of Science's expanded vision the articulation of the idea of the thinkable—the absolute object—is the first task to be realized. Moreover, once the purely logical process has been undertaken and situated in Science's expanded vision this process leads immediately to a consideration of nature as that from which the visionary power of visionary Science emerges. Moreover, once thinking nature has similarly been elaborated and situated in the expanded vision of Science, thinking leads to the realm of Spirit. So too the realm of Spirit must be thought in a way that reveals the world as the thinkable whose idea has already been worked out in the *Science of Logic*. Thus the (development of the) categories of the *Logic* is the thinker's only guide for conceptualizing Spirit in a way that remains true to the primordial speculative vision.¹⁵

To summarize, the whole vision and unfolding of the drama of speculative philosophy proceeds as the singularity of the thinker expands to become the universality of thinking the notion of thinking, and consequently of thinking the world of Spirit as the purely thinkable. Philosophy is the encountering in one's singularity of the absolute strangeness of the transformation that makes it possible for the 'I' to think (or say) 'we' and hence to function as the house of the 'we'. Still, precisely because thinking happens here via its exile from being all that is needed for it to occur is a single individual whose infinite philosophical embracing of the 'we' remains unpopulated. The happening of speculative philosophy is therefore not a collective affair; it always involves the strangeness of the expansion of the 'I' and the terror associated with the anxiety of the infinite absence of the 'we' that appears as a shadow in the shadowy realm of the vision that the thinker is. This is why throughout the development of the speculative project the voice of the thinker is the 'I' that repeatedly says 'we'.¹⁶

Having completed our account of the thinker's dwelling in pure self-recognition in absolute otherness, we will proceed to explore the implications of our reading for an understanding of role of the phenomenological and logical cycles of justification in the activation of speculative philosophy.

15. See Toulia Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos, *Hegel and the Logical Structure of Love: An Essay on Sexualities Family and the Law*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1999.

16. A fuller articulation of this last point would also tell us something about the origin and the speculative significance of language. The very idea of language is activated by the universality of the infinitely expanding (thinking) ego that utters the 'I-we'. The word as such ('we') emerges as the *topos* of dwelling of the 'community of minds' as a project to be realized. Hegel describes this *topos* as an 'external community'; it is a gathering that is yet to be realized. From this standpoint we can make sense of the poet Yannis Ritsos's appeal that: 'Every word is an outing/to a gathering, one often cancelled/and this is when a word is true: when it insists on the gathering', our translation from Ρίτσος, Γ., 'Το νόημα της απλότητας', *Γιάννης Ρίτσος Ποιήματα*, 1941-1958, *Τόμος Β*, Αθήνα, Κέδρος, 1979, σ. 453 (Y. Ritsos, 'The Meaning of Simplicity', *Yiannis Ritsos Poems 1941-1958 Volume B*, Athens, Kedros, 1979, p. 453). Indeed the uttering of the 'we' is also the transformation of the material naturalness of the sign into the *topos* of emerging of the spiritual as vision.

V. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL CYCLE OF JUSTIFICATION

We have argued above that consciousness' dwelling in pure self-recognition is characterized by the element of infinite passivity. In this capacity the thinker finds himself or herself already situated in this dwelling; he or she is permeated by the objective or substantive power of the retreat of immediate communal being. The thinker already experiences the singularity of his or her atomic ego as the possibility of infinite expansion (thinking) so that the passivity that determines the finitude of the thinker's singularity is also claimed as infinite freedom. Recall that, according to Hegel, when immersed in pure self-recognition the thinker is posited and preserves himself or herself as 'absolute form' or 'the immediate certainty of oneself' (PS ¶ 26). Qua absolute form the thinker is the exclusive bearer of the vision of speculative thinking. Ultimately it is in and as this infinite and perpetual preserving of the ego as the vision of its universality that the immediate universality of communal being is transformed into the command to know or to think. Moreover, as we have argued, the thinker is transformed into the receiving of the command and thus into the *topos* of the command. This is absolutely elementary for the emergence of Science since 'Science [...] requires 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).

But, of course, there is the other side to this story, that which calls upon Science to supply the individual qua absolute form with 'the ladder to this standpoint, should show him this standpoint within himself' in conformity with the individual's rightful expectation (PS ¶ 26). In so far as Science claims or embraces the thinker as absolute form—and precisely because one is absolute form—the thinker must be in a position to exercise one's freedom by claiming Science's claim upon one as one's own. When one encounters oneself dwelling in pure self-recognition one can authenticate oneself as the thinker that one is claimed to be by actively dwelling in one's dwelling or by freely embracing what embraces one in one's capacity as free and in this way freely embracing one's own freedom. Now, if, as we have argued, the universality of pure self-recognition embraces the thinker, it acts as absolute object since the thinking it demands does not derive from the outside. Yet such thinking is itself absolute because its own object does not derive from the outside. Accordingly, having already been claimed by absolute content, the thinker in his or her capacity as absolute form must actively and freely affirm the absoluteness of the absolute content of pure self-recognition. Paradoxically this means that the thinker must demand from Science a point of access from which freely to make his or her entry so to speak into the *topos* that makes Science possible, that is, the *topos* in which he or she already dwells as a matter of fact.

This said, satisfaction of the thinker's demand in the light of his or her absolute form presupposes that he or she has access to some content or object other than that which Science offers (hereafter 'the thinker's second object of reflection'). For in the absence of the availability of another object the thinker would not be in a position *freely* to claim his or her freedom. What sort of object must this be? To answer this question it is worth noting, firstly, that despite dwelling passively and hence immediately in pure

self-recognition, taken as a whole the thinker's position is constituted as a *mediated* immediacy. This mediation concerns the thinker's dwelling in Spirit's retreat from the world as well as *in* the world from which Spirit has retreated. Before the retreating Spirit claims the thinker as free, the latter already dwells in the world in which he or she is to be re-introduced reflectively, precisely because he or she is claimed by Science's promise of speculative thinking. The thinker's dwelling in pure self-recognition is not only mediated by the thinker's retreat from his or her world; such dwelling itself mediates the thinker's dwelling in the world, a dwelling that is now experienced as the result of retreating from Science's speculative reflective standpoint. This reappropriation is an act of violence against both Science and consciousness' dwelling in it. Whereas Science is the vision of conceptualizing the world speculatively, the world presents itself to Science as already containing the speculative within it in so far as it accommodates consciousness as free or the individual in his or her capacity as absolute form. To put it differently, even though the thinker has the vision of the freedom of thinking in Science, the world presents itself as the actual *topos* of the freedom of the thinker, his or her natural place of dwelling as a thinker.

Secondly, in both cases the source of thinking is the thinker's own independence or absolute form. Here we have the activation of a movement from one reflective standpoint to the other through which each claims to be the truth of the other and each takes the truth of the other to have collapsed in its own truth. To emphasize again, what makes this possible is that both reflective standpoints—those of Science and the world—present themselves as the appropriate *topos* of the free thinker. In embracing the thinker as thinker both standpoints call upon the thinker to embrace them. In doing so they each claim the form of the speculative as their own. So, the need for the availability of a second object relates to the thinker's resolve to stay where he or she already is, namely in the speculative, rather than to the desirability of choice.

Finally, considering whether there is a *topos* in which the thinker dwells and from which he or she must enter Science as an affirmation of his or her absolute independence in Science we can say with Hegel that this *topos* must be the antithesis of Science. This is the 'standpoint of consciousness which knows objects in their antithesis to itself, and itself in antithesis to them' (PS ¶ 26). So outside of Science, the thinker's second object of reflection is the world defined in terms of consciousness' dichotomous relation(s) to its objects (hereafter 'the subject-object dichotomy'). For Hegel, not only does consciousness dwell in this dichotomy as absolute form but also the subject-object dichotomy appears to be the only antithesis that can be posited to Science. Why should this be the case? Bearing in mind that it is the thinker's dwelling in Science that activates the whole speculative problematic, we can formulate an answer to this question by supposing that in so far as Science claims the thinker, Science must also release him or her into *its own antithesis* as the precondition for freely embracing the resolve to stay with it. So, it seems that qua absolute form the thinker has only two places to dwell in and determining which of the two is the genuine home of his or her speculative freedom is the thinker's first act of freedom.

In the light of our discussion so far two further questions remain regarding our account of the rationale underpinning a phenomenological justificatory cycle. One question relates to the claim that the subject-object dichotomy accommodates consciousness in its capacity as *absolute form*. How is this possible when this latter condition calls for an object whose being is informed by, rather than antithetical to, consciousness' knowing? A second question concerns the link between our discussion of the subject-object dichotomy and that of property-owning atomic individuality that on our earlier analysis constitutes the absolute otherness of pure self-recognition. We will address these two questions in reverse order.

We have argued that the vision of the speculative occurs in the absolute otherness that is constituted by the property-owning world of atomic individuality. In so far as atomic individuality empties itself out of speculative reflection, that is, of the mutual informing of subject and object, it is also posited as this emptying. So from the property-owner's standpoint reflection offers a form of knowing that consciousness' absolute form incorporates whilst remaining external to the object known. Here the source of the subject-object dichotomy presupposes that the object *as such* is the property item whereas the subject *as such* manifests immediately as the property-owning atomic individual.

Yet consciousness remains unaware of the mediating role played by the property-owning atomic individual's release. Consequently it takes itself to be the exclusive source of the awareness that determines its relation to the object. Ultimately this means that consciousness takes the relation of property ownership to be an aspect of the world of the subject-object dichotomy. Consciousness can do so because the role we have attributed here to the property-owning subject is accessible only from the standpoint of Science that is immanently linked to its absolute other. Accordingly, we might say that whereas Science's rivalry with its absolute other—property-owning atomic individuality—mediates the competing claims of Science and the dichotomously related consciousness, the dichotomously related consciousness nevertheless remains unaware of this mediation. For this reason both Science and its absolute other claim awareness (consciousness) for themselves and they both claim it in its capacity as absolute form.

Now from the standpoint of property-owning atomic individuality the challenge is to show that although consciousness is dichotomously related to its object of knowledge it is not also dichotomously related to the manifestation of the subject-object dichotomy itself. Rather, this latter functions as a speculative realm of manifestation that is determined by the external relation of knower and known in which consciousness dwells as absolute form in so far as it supplies the very idea of the dichotomy. In other words consciousness treats the dichotomy itself as its absolute content. It is in this sense that the individual is characterized by 'absolute independence, which he is conscious of possessing in every phase of his knowledge' (PS ¶ 26). We are now also in a position to see why Hegel suggests that 'it makes no difference whether we think of Science as the appearance because it comes on the scene alongside another form of knowledge, or whether we call that other untrue knowledge its manifestation' (PS ¶ 76). Since Science is initially only an appearing, it has yet to incorporate the self-certainty that character-

izes consciousness in its capacity as absolute form:

Science must [...] unite this element of self-certainty with itself, or rather show that and how this element belongs to it. So long as Science lacks this actual dimension, it is only the content as the in-itself, the purpose that is as yet still something inward, not yet Spirit, but only spiritual Substance. This in-itself has to express itself outwardly and become for itself, and this means simply that it has to posit self-consciousness as one with itself (PS ¶ 26).

So, when Science is not yet ‘in and for itself’ (PS ¶ 76) how is the indispensable positing of self-consciousness’ unity to be realized? What is the process by which Science can move from merely being the absolute object that embraces the subject to also being the corresponding embracing of the subject as absolute form? In other words, how is Science supposed to ‘turn against’ and ‘liberate’ itself from the other form of knowing that likewise claims the speculative standpoint in so far as it claims consciousness as its own (PS ¶ 76)? In the light of our earlier analysis we can argue that the required process must involve the retreat of what has already retreated. Let us explain. Recall that on our analysis Science emerges as Spirit’s retreat from the world as a result of the thinker’s dwelling in this retreat. At the same time, in so far as he or she dwells in Spirit’s retreat the thinker has already retreated from his or her world. Now in claiming the thinker as free Science presupposes that the thinker’s retreat is itself an act of freedom in the light of the failure of the thinker’s world to accommodate his or her free agency. Because it initially appears as mere assertion this claim must be justified. If it is true that the thinker whom the absolute object claims as absolute form must embrace the absolute object himself or herself, to activate this embracing the thinker must begin from the recognition that this embracing is otherwise absent. It follows that to activate the embracing in question the thinker must rely upon his or her reflective state of *not embracing*. Now the thinker’s non-embracing relation to the object is expressed in terms of the dichotomous inter-relation of the thinker to the object. In this dichotomous relation the thinker has already embraced his or her being as one of neither embracing nor being embraced by the object. Conversely, the thinker embraces and is embraced by the dichotomy and to this extent he or she is free or manifests absolute form.

It follows from the above that to ‘posit self-consciousness as one with itself’ is to have Science retrieve the thinker from the world *immanently* to the thinker rather than as a simple given. More specifically, since the thinker must freely embrace his or her condition of *already* dwelling in Science, the retrieval in question functions as a process of recollecting. The thinker is in a position to recollect the fact of his or her retreat from the world into Science once the world is shown already to have been unable to accommodate the speculative truth of the thinker’s absolute form.

This sums up the significance of the phenomenological process whereby consciousness purifies itself as Science ‘liberates’ itself (PS ¶ 76). This is a fully speculative process through which the purely negative gives rise to a positive result. It is constituted by consciousness’ multiple failed attempts to dwell in the subject-object dichotomy speculatively by thinking this relation. With every failure and collapse of the form of the

dichotomy being thought the thinker retreats further into Science in order to reactivate consciousness' dwelling in the dichotomy in ever more radical terms. With this process of determinate negation the aim of consciousness qua absolute form is to collapse the collapsing itself or to complete consciousness' purificatory process that simultaneously amounts to consciousness' ultimate and free retreat into the freedom of Science. The retreat in question can be characterized as free since consciousness has only its *purified* absolute form to retreat into following its phenomenological failure to claim its absolute form for the world. In other words this failure explicitly posits consciousness as what has freely failed. Indeed, consciousness does not itself collapse with the collapse of the dichotomy only because it carries in itself the principle of its freedom—the very idea of absolute form. Its retreat into its own principle permits it to know the collapse as the powerlessness of the dichotomy to accommodate consciousness' freedom.

With the completion of the phenomenological process in the terms just explained—with consciousness' liberation from the element of externality—consciousness retreats into its absolute form teleologically. Being absolute form its aim is to realize its absolute form by producing absolute content as its *topos* of dwelling. Yet the free embracing of this aim affirms that consciousness already dwells in the absolute object that, for reasons already explained, is pure self-recognition in absolute otherness. Having already been initially embraced by the absolute content of communal being, consciousness embraces this embracing—by undergoing the long purificatory phenomenological process—and thereby posits itself as the absolute subject. The realization of this second embracing releases Science as Science 'in and for itself' and thereby makes it possible *justifiably* to begin what was always already open to Science, namely actively to engage the thinker with the command to know.

VI. THE LOGICAL CYCLE OF JUSTIFICATION

According to our analysis so far, Science fully emerges 'in and for itself' with the completion of the phenomenological process that marks the satisfaction of thinker's demand that Science justify the thinker's dwelling in pure self-recognition and thereby renders possible the thinker's free embracing of this position. In the light of this free embracing the thinker is shown to be the vision of himself or herself as a speculative thinker—qua absolute form, consciousness' particularity emerges as the vision of itself as a universal. So, within the realm of dwelling in pure conceptuality, and as this dwelling, the thinker is the vision of thinking the notion of thinking and, hence, the vision of embracing pure conceptuality as the absolute object that commands pure thinking. In purely conceptual terms this vision is comprised of the pure awareness of the absolute object—the moment of universality—that posits out of itself the command to be embraced—thought—and its reception—the moment of particularity—along with the actual embracing—the moment of individuality. But of course this is the vision of Science itself or Science as vision in relation to whose notion the thinker is the bearer. Now when we turn to the *Science of Logic* we are confronted with the question: 'with what

must the Science begin?’ (SL 67). In the light of our earlier analysis one might expect the beginning of Science to elaborate the process by which the thinker turns from the *vision* of the notion to the *activation and realization* of the idea of thinking that informs this vision. So what is it that activates the thinking incorporated in the thinker’s vision of the notion and, relatedly, of the thinker’s vision of himself or herself as a thinker? Here is what Hegel has to say.

Now starting from this determination of pure knowledge, all that is needed to ensure that the beginning remains immanent in its scientific development is to consider, or rather, ridding oneself of all other reflections and opinions whatever, simply to take up, what is there before us (SL 69).

When the thinker has the vision of pure thinking and has reached the reflective stage of receiving the command to think purely the decision so to speak to begin has already been taken and what remains is to work out the precise starting point. Here is one way of reading Hegel’s advice. If the determination of pure knowledge is nothing short of the notion, and if it is the notion that is ‘there before us’ then, presumably, we must start by simply thinking the thinking that the notion is. A move like this would direct the task of thinking to the realization of the vision of the notion of pure thinking that calls for the activation of the third part of the *Science of Logic*, ‘The Doctrine of the Notion’. Yet, according to Hegel, from a speculative standpoint, this is a premature step:

When [...] the notion is called the truth of Being and Essence, we must expect to be asked why we do not begin with the notion? The answer is that, where knowledge by thought is our aim, we cannot begin with the truth, because the truth, when it forms the beginning, must rest on mere assertion. The truth when it is thought must as such verify itself to thought (EL § 159 A).

So for Hegel the claim that we should not begin with the notion does not rest on the observation that we do not yet know it and, consequently, could not immediately begin to think the thinking it involves. Contrary to first impressions, the concern with Being and Essence proceeds against the background that the notion is already available to the thinker. Accordingly, if the thinker does indeed already dwell in the realm of pure conceptuality as we have argued, the process of thinking the forms of thought involved in Being and Essence must somehow nevertheless result from this engagement with the notion.

This said, we might ask, is there some discrepancy between Hegel’s claim and what might seem to follow from our earlier analysis, namely that the thinker should begin the logical process by engaging directly with the already available notion? Can our account of the visionary thinker who freely receives the command to think also explain the necessity to think the forms of thinking involved in Being and Essence as a precondition for moving justifiably to the thinking whose task it is to realize the notion? Indeed we shall argue next that in order to address the command and the vision of the notion as the primordial form of the notion’s emerging the thinker must become aware of the necessary role that Being and Essence play in the logical process.¹⁷

17. A more extensive defence of this interpretive claim would also elaborate on some interesting implica-

We have argued that in being the vision of thinking the very notion of thinking, the thinker already engages with the notion's emerging in a visionary way. Moreover, the vision of the notion qua vision renders explicit the freedom of the thinker's absolute form as well as the absoluteness of the command to think purely. The commanding of the command to think purely whilst dwelling in the realm of pure conceptuality—something that already permeates the thinker's being—must also be freely received as the command and this can be achieved in so far as the thinker retains the visionary awareness of the notion. Now to make sense of the freedom that the thinker must exercise in this process of receiving the command we must have regard to the idea that both the command and its reception are absolute in that they mutually inform each other and belong to each other in this way. So, the commanding of the command and the receiving of its reception are made explicit through their inter-relation. We want to argue next that this mutual informing is rendered explicit through the thinker's visionary encounter with the notion.

Now, if the command is indeed absolute then it should permeate the thinker, at least substantively or immediately, to begin with. In being immediately commanded the thinker already finds himself or herself in the mode of executing what the command commands. He or she is already in the mode of thinking purely. Yet, if we were to remain exclusively at the level of the command's immediate and, hence, unreflective reception, the command could not be said to command *absolutely* since the commanding *as such* that renders it a command in the first place would remain implicit. More specifically, if the thinker were directly to execute the command he or she would fail to show that the commanding of the command implies that the realization of the notion of thinking has yet to be identified and activated. Between the command and its execution there is still the gap of the command's reception. This gap of reception constitutes the freedom through which the thinker affirms what the command commands as a project to be realized.

In the absence of this refrain from an immediate execution of the command, the command would lack force as such—the thinker's thinking would depend upon his or her contingent will. In the light of the absoluteness of the command whose commanding already permeates the thinker, the will to think cannot be contingent. Not only is the thinker permeated by the command; he or she also opens himself to the command that already permeates him, by explicitly receiving it *as* command. Accordingly, the command is commanded and rendered an explicit command as a result of the thinker's free receiving. The command cannot fail to command given that its free receiving expresses the very idea of commanding.

If our analysis is sound, the thinker's receiving as receiving makes explicit the not-yet of the project of thinking the notion that is already incorporated in the command in so far as it commands. Moreover, since explicit reception of the command renders the idea of commanding explicit, to acknowledge this very receiving—to receive the

tions of our analysis for the way we should understand the logical beginning with the concepts of being, nothing and becoming.

receiving—is to manifest the absoluteness of the command. Now, if the command is indeed absolute in the above speculative sense, then it can only be received by its own idea of commanding in the form of otherness. Otherness is important here, because, as we noted above, the receiving of the command as receiving points to the postponement of the command's demand that it be executed. So there is a sense in which the command must be disobeyed or at least suspended before it can be freely obeyed.

At the same time, the command's absoluteness implies, firstly, that the command incorporates the idea of commanding and, secondly, that the thinker's freedom is no less absolute. If the command emerges qua command in the receiving of the thinker and this receiving provides the command's idea, then as this emerging the command receives its idea and thereby receives the thinker's receiving. In other words the command itself must incorporate the idea of the not-yet of its call to be executed and thus the idea of being received that the thinker's receiving manifests. Conversely, in his or her capacity as receiving the command, the thinker is an absolute receiving since, as we have just suggested, the command incorporates the idea of its own other, namely the receiving. It follows from this inter-relation that the possibility of disobedience—in the sense of suspension of the command's execution—rests on the thinker's prior embrace of his or her obedience to what the command commands in so far as the thinker already fully encounters the notion of pure thinking.

The speculative paradox or mystery here is that the absoluteness of both the command and the thinker's freedom are no less manifested through their own other, disobedience and obedience respectively. The command commands—really happens *as* command—in the open field of its reception, a field whose openness presupposes that the command has not been obeyed. So too, the reception of the command really happens as a receiving in so far as the thinker has already opened himself to *thinking as such* and obeyed the command in this way. So rather than demonstrating that the command is without force and instead of negating the thinker's freedom, disobedience and obedience respectively demonstrate that this inter-relation between the command and its reception is indeed characterized by the absolute power of free love that we mentioned at the outset.

In the light of the above analysis we will attempt now to specify more precisely the link between the idea that the thinker is commanded *immediately* and hence already has access to the notion with the idea that the free reception of the command mediates between the command and its execution. We have noted that the thinker must at once obey and disobey the command to think. He or she must fully encounter the thinking involved in the notion as the precondition for executing this thinking yet without also moving immediately to think the notion. This can be achieved only when by dwelling in pure conceptuality the thinker has the vision of the notion *as* a vision. In so far as the thinker fully encounters the notion in this vision, the command fully permeates the thinker and immediately readies him or her to move on and think the notion. Still, in so far as *the form* of the vision also determines this encounter, the notion is encountered as the not-yet and, whilst obeying the command, the thinker must nevertheless also be

preoccupied with its *free* reception.

Now to disobey the command in order to receive it freely is to *refrain* from activating the already available notion that immediately permeates the thinker's thinking. At the same time to refrain from activating the notion is not to preclude the notion's activation. Instead this refraining signals the thinker's readiness to think the notion that is itself the yet to be activated in its capacity as the vision of the notion. It follows that the notion's own readiness to be thought is the truth of the non-activated notion as well as of the notion in the visionary state of the not-yet-activated. It is this truth in the sense that the two ideas of the non-activated notion and of the notion as the not-yet-activated are both integral moments in the thinker's awareness of the notion as ready to be thought. The notion can indeed be activated because it is presupposed as this truth.

Moreover, since the visionary thinker is ready to realize the vision thanks to his or her visionary being—he or she is at once already in the state of the not-yet as well as pointing beyond this state in so far as he or she knows it as the not-yet—the thinker has already prereflectively moved beyond these two moments. That is, he or she is already beyond the forms of thinking that they incorporate in so far as they are incorporated into the thinking of the yet-to-be-activated notion. It follows from this that in order fully to appreciate himself or herself as a free thinker who is ready to think the notion, the thinker must *recollect* the mediating role that he or she must have played to this point. In other words the thinker must now also freely embrace the freedom manifested in receiving the command's receiving by freely recollecting this thinking as the truth of his or her thinking.

Now the truth of thinking with which thinking is already preoccupied must nevertheless spring out of thinking itself. Or in other words the truth of pure conceptuality must be shown to result from pure conceptuality itself. In so far as the notion incorporates other forms of thinking as moments in its thinking, these other forms must be capable of being thought in the abovementioned sense of being recollected in ways that immanently lead to their notion. Basically this means that the thinker must manifest the truth of thinking in the forms of thinking involved in thinking the notion in the two moments in question. These are the moments of Being and Essence in relation to which the notion is the truth. To disobey or suspend the command is initially to disregard what the command commands—the command to think the notion—as well as to disregard that this disregarding belongs to the vision of the notion—the receiving of the command. Here, the thinker must disengage himself or herself from the thinking of the notion whether in the form of actually thinking it or in the form of the vision and the notion thus becomes invisible. With this disengagement 'the Notion is implicit and in germ' in its non-activation (EL § 83). Not only is the *notion* implicit but also the *thinker's thinking* is implicit since it does not manifest the notion's implicitness in the terms of a vision to be realized. In the *Science of Logic* this sort of radical disengagement is worked out in 'The Doctrine of Being' wherein 'pure knowing [...] ceases itself to be knowledge' (SL 69) and thought is thereby revealed as being 'thought [...] in its immediacy' (EL § 83).

Now the activation of the form of thinking that springs from disobeying the com-

mand in the abovementioned radical sense ultimately shows that such thinking is not self-sufficient. The exercise of this form of thought demonstrates that disobedience is part of the larger picture of receiving the command to think purely and hence of recognizing the need to obey the command. In rendering explicit the notion's implicitness this process manifests the notion as yet to be realized. In this way the implicitness of the notion is reflectively mediated. Still since this process is the notion's very implicitness, the reflection in question is not yet absolute but remains external.

At the completion of 'The Doctrine of Being' we have 'thought [...] in its reflecting and mediation' that corresponds to 'the being-for-self and show of the Notion' (EL § 83). This is the form of thinking that is practiced in 'The Doctrine of Essence' wherein the 'actual unity of the notion is not realized, but only postulated by reflection' (EL § 112). Now the process of activating and carrying through the forms of thought that are informed by the implicitness of the implicit notion ultimately manifests that which makes possible this reflective practice in the first instance, namely the power actually to think the notion as such. Accordingly, at the completion of 'The Doctrine of Essence' the process by which the thinker recollects his or her becoming a thinker manifests the thinker's being as what he or she already is—the free receiving of the command to think and the infinite power to think the thinking of the notion.

The singularity of the thinker's ego is thus readied for the journey constituting its infinite expansion. This is the point at which 'the I is the pure Notion itself which, as Notion, has come into existence'. The task of thinking the notion's unity may therefore begin *freely* and, hence, justifiably (SL 583).

Toula Nicolacopoulos
and
George Vassilacopoulos
Philosophy Program
LaTrobe University
Melbourne, Australia