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Introduction

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SYMPOSIUM:
HEGEL'S LOGIC OF THE CONCEPT

INTRODUCTION

David Gray Carlson*

The *Science of Logic* stands at the very center of Hegel’s philosophy. Upon this work depends the rest of Hegel’s prodigious work on nature, politics, aesthetics, and psychology. In Hegel’s own words, the *Science of Logic* is nothing short of “the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind.”

“[S]trong stuff from a relatively unknown writer who was at the time still only a Gymnasium professor with unfulfilled aspirations for university employment.”

After a century of neglect, there is a great upsurge in interest in Hegel’s Logic. Whereas the English speaking world produced only two comprehensive studies in the first three-fourths of the twentieth century, it has produced dozens since then. Without question, we are in the midst of a Hegelian renaissance.

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2 SL, supra note 1, at 50; 1 WL, supra note 1, at 31.

3 TERRY PINKARD, HEGEL: A BIOGRAPHY 342 (2000). Kaufmann comments that the *Science of Logic* “is not as mad as these words may seem; in any case, it is still the labor of an utterly lonely genius.” WALTER KAUFMANN, HEGEL: A REINTERPRETATION 174 (Univ. Notre Dame Press 1978) (1965).

4 See generally J.M.E. MC Taggart, A COMMENTARY ON HEGEL’S LOGIC (1910); G.R.G. Mure, A STUDY OF HEGEL’S LOGIC (1950).

Anyone familiar with this literature will have the correct impression that by far the greatest amount of work concerns the opening chapters of the *Science of Logic*. By the time the Logic reaches Essence, the amount of scholarship begins to wane. And by the time the last third of the Logic appears on the scene—the Subjective Logic—scholarly comment is rare indeed.

This symposium is our attempt to even out the balance. A dozen scholars have been invited to write essays on Hegel’s subjective logic. These essays have been arranged according to Hegel’s progression in the *Science of Logic*. The first three essays concern themselves with the transition from essence to concept. The next four concern themselves with the concept proper—the unity of the universal, particular, and individual. Thereafter, essays consider judgment, syllogism, objectivity, cognition, and idea.

Before I say more specifically what will be found in these essays, let me try to set the scene. Hegel’s *Science of Logic* is, of course, an ontology—a theory of being. It is therefore radically not what Logic is for analytic philosophy—an exercise for clarifying mathematical or linguistic inferences. These are, Hegel says, the “dead bones of logic” that can be “quickened by spirit.”

What makes Hegelian philosophy so fundamentally different from analytic philosophy is Hegel’s notion that no thing is self-identical. Before the dead bones of logic can be quickened by spirit, Hegel maintains that the following “quite simple insight” must be grasped:

> the negative is just as much positive, or that what is self-contradictory does not resolve itself into a nullity . . . but essentially only into the negation of its particular content . . . Because the result, the negation, is a specific negation it has a content. It is a fresh Notion but higher and richer than its predecessor; for it is richer by the negation . . . of the latter, therefore contains it, but also something more, and is the unity of itself and its opposite. It is in this way that the system of

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6 SL, *supra* note 1, at 53; 1 WL, *supra* note 1, at 34.

7 SL, *supra* note 1, at 54; 1 WL, *supra* note 1, at 35.
Notions as such has to be formed—and has to complete itself in a purely continuous course in which nothing extraneous is introduced.\(^8\)

Everything is constituted by negativity, and every concept is finite. This means that every concept ought to become its opposite, and out of the wreckage new concepts, logically derived, must emerge. Destruction is creative for Hegel. What passes away is preserved and becomes the stuff of new forms.

Method is key to (and the result of) Hegel’s Logic. Method is why the *Science of Logic* can properly be called a logic. The “simple rhythm”\(^9\) of Hegel’s method works as follows. First, the understanding makes a proposition about the universe and what it is. But its propositions are one-sided. They always leave something out. Dialectic reason recalls what the understanding has left out and opposes the proposition with its negation. Yet, dialectical reason is equally guilty of making propositions about what propositional understanding has left out. Its product is just as finite as the understanding’s product. It is left for speculative reason to point out what the understanding and dialectical reasons have in common: their propositions are contradictory and cannot endure. The sequence of proposition, dialectic criticism, and reconciliation continues right through to the end of the *Science of Logic*.

Another thing should be said about Hegel’s method. It begins with the understanding making stupid one-sided statements. But as the Logic progresses, the understanding gets smarter. By the time it reaches essence, the understanding makes oppositional propositions. That is to say, the understanding *becomes* dialectical reason. By the time it reaches the subjective logic, the understanding makes notional (or triune) propositions. In other words, the understanding *becomes* speculative reason. The Logic is very much a *Bildungsroman* in which the understanding comes to know itself as method and idea.

The first third of the *Science of Logic* concerns itself with being. Being is constituted by negativity; it is finite and so it must waft away. When it does, reality passes over to ideality, which can best be thought of as the memory of what once was but now is not.

Being is the realm of one-sided immediacy, and when it passes away (as it must), it points to the realm of essence. Essence is the negation of being, which is to say that essence is thinly defined as “not be-

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\(^8\) SL, *supra* note 1, at 54; 1 WL, *supra* note 1, at 35-36.

\(^9\) SL, *supra* note 1, at 54; 1 WL, *supra* note 1, at 35.
ing"—nothing more than this. Negation being a correlative term—you must negate something—essence is correlative. Everything essential comes in pairs—ground and grounded, form and content, whole and parts, cause and effect, etc.

Essence must appear. That is, the understanding must make a proposition of what essence is. And when it does so, essence traverses from the negative world of essence to the world of appearance. Since appearances must disappear—they are beings—this means that essence is for itself (or actual) when it disappears. As with being, essence disappears. The leftovers, after objectivity has disappeared, are what Hegel calls subjectivity.

Hegel's subjectivity is not exactly the same thing as human subjectivity. Humans are limited in time and space, but Hegel's logic of the subject concerns God's subjectivity—God here to be understood as the universe, as the absolute, as that beyond which there is nothing.

Hegel's logic of the subject is therefore quite different from the ordinary human experience. For instance, we humans are pretty sure that there is something beyond our thought; just because we think something does not make it so. We do not have what Kant called intellectual intuitions. But God does. What God thinks is; for Him thought and deed are one. The subject of the Science of Logic is godly subjectivity, not limited by time and space.

Yet, having said this, it is also true that human subjects participate in the divine subjectivity; they are instances of the concrete spirit. All finite things are part of the infinite thing. Indeed, Stanley Rosen has promised that the study of Hegel's subjective logic "provides man with practical satisfaction by reconciling him to his earthly dwelling, and the mode of reconciliation is the theoretical resolution of alienation." This prediction was made good in the summer of 2004 when the jour-

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10 According to Charles Taylor:
Hegel reproaches Kant for not having cleaved to the notion of an intellectual intuition, which he himself invented. This would be an understanding, which unlike ours did not have to depend on external reception, on being affected from outside, for its contents, but created them with its thought. This archetypical intellect Kant attributed to God; it was quite beyond us. But God's intellect is ultimately revealed to us for Hegel, it only lives in our thought. Hence we can participate in an intellectual intuition. God's thought is ours.

Taylor, supra note 5, at 301.

11 An intellectual intuition therefore amounts to "the direct apprehension of things as they are..." Rosen, supra note 5, at 267.

12 Id. at 238.
nalist Micah Garen was taken hostage in Baghdad. Upon his unexpected release, Garen reported that Hegelian philosophy had consoled him during his dangerous captivity.¹³

I have said that Hegel’s subject is the leftover from the collapse of being and essence. External reality was not viable. What the subject must do is to reestablish a reality for itself. To quote from one of our forthcoming essays, “free subjectivity [involves] the absolutization of the subject, where the absolute subject produces objective reality from out of itself, and knows and is at one with itself therein.”¹⁴

Across the pages of the Subjective Logic, the subject discovers and builds from its own resources a reality in which it can recognize itself. At first, the subject divides itself into subject and predicate (judgment). Why must the subject subdivide? I try to answer this question in one of the forthcoming essays: there is an alien disturbance within the subject, which constitutes the remains of the realm of being which has erased itself, yet preserved itself on its own logic.¹⁵ (Lacanian theorists will recognize this as ex-timacy.)¹⁶ The subject encounters its alien predicate and gradually comes to recognize itself in it. It gains proof and self-certainty (syllogism) and therefore enters into a subject/object relation.

Yet Hegel was especially keen to show that there is a unifying substance underwriting subject and object. This is the Hegelian idea. Just as being and essence erased themselves, so subject and object must erase themselves in favor of a higher unity. The Science of Logic ends when this unity is described as the very method that constitutes logic in the first place. This is what Hegel calls absolute idea.

The fifteen essays in this collection cover all aspects of the development of the subject into idea.


¹⁴ William Maker, Hegel’s Logic of Freedom, 3 CARDOZO PUB. L. POL’Y & ETHICS J. 11 (2005). Relevant here is the comment from the Phenomenology: “But self-consciousness is all reality, not merely for itself but also in itself; only through becoming this reality, or rather through demonstrating itself to be such.” G.W.F. HEGEL, PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT § 233 (Arnold V. Miller trans., 1977).


¹⁶ Ex-timacy is a Lacanian neologism, representing that which is foreign but within us. It reflects the proposition that what we feel is most ourselves is in some way outside of ourselves as well. Jeanne L. Schroeder, The Four Discourses of Law: A Lacanian Analysis of Legal Practice and Scholarship, 79 TEXAS L. REV. 15, 32-33 (2000).
In Hegel's Logic of Freedom, William Maker argues that the Science of Logic is about freedom in four different ways: It presupposes liberation from an unfree way of thinking;\(^{17}\) logic precedes method (even as logic and method coincide); it defines freedom; and it establishes freedom as the basis of articulating truth. These are propositions that Hegelians are well prepared to accept. More controversially, Maker strongly claims that logic is not about nature:

To erroneously anticipate, as is commonly done, that this logic is also already at the same time about something else, namely the reality of nature and spirit, is to vitiate the autonomy of the logic, violate its scientific character, and unavoidably lapse into the foundationalist gamut Hegel has rejected, by projecting logic as disclosing the “essence of reality.”\(^{18}\)

This argument will surprise some who think, for example, that the first chapter of measure is about physics, the second about chemistry, etc., or that the objectivity chapters late in the Science of Logic are some sort of preview of the Philosophy of Nature. Maker’s claim is motivated by showing logic to be radically autonomous from nature, yet, simultaneously in nature.\(^{19}\) This is a thought provoking claim.

Stephen Houlgate's Why Hegel's Concept Is Not the Essence of Things, attacks the notion that the Logic is prior to nature.\(^{20}\) This notion is an essential claim whereby that which appears points to something prior. The logic of the concept, however, precludes any such positing. According to Professor Houlgate:

The concept, by contrast, does not stand in any “relation” to its differences through which it might dominate or govern them. It does not impose its identity on those differences or violate them in any way. (In this sense, Nietzsche and Levinas could not be more wrong.) Rather, the concept lets its differences emerge from its own identity. Indeed, it enjoys its identity only in letting those differences emerge as

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\(^{17}\) Work that the Phenomenology accomplishes. Hegel views the Phenomenology as the presupposition of the Science of Logic. SL, supra note 1, at 49 (“The Notion of pure science and its deduction is therefore presupposed in the present work in so far as the Phenomenology of Spirit is nothing other than the deduction of it.”); 1 WL, supra note 1, at 30.


\(^{19}\) Id.

genuine differences and so letting itself become differentiated. The concept, however, is not indifferent to particularity and individuality. Rather, it continues itself in that particularity and individuality and so “is, in its other, in peaceful communion with itself.” As John Burbidge aptly puts it, the universal overreaches its other, “not by force, but by quietly being present in it.” As such, Hegel writes, the concept can be called “free love and boundless blessedness.”

George di Giovanni’s contribution, Hegel’s Anti-Spinozism: The Transition to Subjective Logic and the End of Classical Metaphysics, compares the way in which Hegel and Fichte overcome Spinozistic substance. For both, thought takes priority over being in the sense that being acquires intelligibility only as conceptualized. Fichte, however, still retains the existential priority of Spinoza’s substance over thought. The net result is that the concept reveals being only by hiding it, i.e., only by way of intimation. For Hegel, on the contrary, the Absolute (i.e., the equivalent of Spinoza’s substance) is the Idea itself, or the concept of the concept. In its medium, therefore, being acquires its full intelligibility. Hegel thus overcomes the standpoint of classical metaphysics.

In The One and the Concept: On Hegel’s Reading of Plato’s “Parmenides,” Allegra de Laurentiis focuses on a text that is key for Hegel in the Science of Logic: Plato’s dialogue Parmenides (not to be confused with the historic Parmenides, who preached the doctrine of the unchangeable One). Plato’s Parmenides shows young Socrates that the One must be dynamic and multiple. Professor de Laurentiis shows that the dynamic one of Parmenides has the structure of Hegel’s Notion in the Subjective Logic.

In History, Concepts, and Normativity in Hegel, Dario Perinetti emphasizes the immanent nature of conceptual development, compared to those causal sciences that begin with given material. According to Perinetti:

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21 Id. at 40 (citing Burbidge, supra note 5, at 113; citing SL, supra note 1, at 603; 2 WL, supra note 1, at 242-43).
22 Johann Gottlieb Fichte was an important entrepôt between Kant and Hegel. In 1817, Hegel succeeded Fichte as the professor of philosophy in Berlin.
24 See Murray Greene, Hegel and the Problems of Atomism, 11 INT’L STUD. PHIL. 123, 129 (1979) ("The dramatic Parmenides proceeds to show that if the one is not a many then it can have no parts, can be neither in motion nor at rest, indeed cannot even be or be selfsame." (citation omitted)).
Hegelian concepts are “treated intentionally as bearers of semantic properties or marks…” Hegel aims at making sense, not at “preserving the truth of representation.” This does not make Hegel an opponent of the causal sciences. Rather, for Hegel, logic and causal sciences have the responsibility to know the limits and borders of each.

Iain Macdonald emphasizes, in *The Concept and Its Double: Power and Powerlessness in Hegel’s Subjective Logic*, a point that I think is key to understanding Hegel’s Logic and, indeed, any given part of Hegel’s philosophy: failure is part of the system. Professor Macdonald gathers together the many instances in which Hegel emphasizes the impotence (Ohnmacht) of the concept as this is developed across the *Science of Logic*.

Robert Berman’s essay, *Ways of Being Singular: The Logic of Individuality*, identifies four common usages for the word “individuality” and develops some models based on philosophical usage. These models are then tested against Hegel’s famous definition of individuality as the unity of universality and particularity. Professor Berman’s conclusion is that individuality must account for class or set membership if it is to capture both Hegel’s meaning and the common usage of the term.

Richard Dien Winfield reviews the progress of Hegel’s critique of judgment in *The Types of Universals and the Forms of Judgment*. In his analysis, Winfield portrays the universal as progressing from an abstract universal (quality and class), to a universal with the particular, and finally to the concrete universal—universal with itself, the particular and individuality. Judgment comes to closure when it is shown that subject and predicate each fully have the structure of judgment, which is the relation of subject and predicate. Or, as I like to say, notion is itself, its other, and the unity of itself and other. Judgment, therefore, concludes when both the subject and the predicate are thoroughly notional.

In the first of my contributions to this symposium, *Why Are There Four Hegelian Judgments?*, I try to explain the largely unexplained abandonment of the usual trinity by which the Logic proceeds. Notoriously, there are four (not three) judgments, which corresponds to Kant’s Table of the Function of Judgments. Picking up on a suggestion of Žižek, I try to show that there is always a silent fourth operating throughout the

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Science of Logic, which erupts in judgment. In addition, I try to show that this fourth judgment is swallowed whole in the following chapter—Syllogism—so that trinitarianism is once again restored.

Robert Wallace, in Hegel’s Refutation of Rational Egoism, in True Infinity and the Idea, argues that while Hegel’s systematic response to the challenge of rational egoism culminates in his famous account of master and bondsman and mutual recognition, in the Encyclopedia’s Philosophy of Spirit and the Phenomenology of Spirit, the cogency of this account depends entirely on his treatments of Finite and Infinite, Identity and Diversity, and Objectivity, Life, and Cognition, in the Science of Logic.

In Hegel’s Science of Logic in an Analytic Mode, Clark Butler restates Hegelian logic in Fregeian terms, translating identity in difference linguistically as identity under different descriptions. The aim is to clarify Hegel within the very analytic tradition that revolted against him. The question, as Butler recognizes, is whether the logical “content” is left unaffected by its regimentation in symbolic logic. Professor Butler believes this is possible, and that Hegel’s famous praise of German ambiguity is no impediment to this project.27

John Burbidge, in Cognition and Finite Spirit, shows how the method that unfolds in Hegel’s Cognition chapter equally unfolds in philosophy of the real—i.e., nature and finite psychology. In cognition, thought tries to conform itself to the object—the true. Then it tries to conform the object to thought—the good. It turns out the true and the good need each other if thought and object are to coincide in absolute idea. This same sequence of proposition, dialectic opposite, and synthesis can also be identified throughout Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind.

Angelica Nuzzo’s essay, The End of Hegel’s Logic: Absolute Idea as Absolute Method, takes as its text Hegel’s claim that Absolute Idea “is the sole subject matter and content of philosophy,” and, “All else is error, confusion, opinion, endeavour, caprice and transitoriness . . . .”28 Initially, this all else seems at war with the claim that Absolute Idea is all there is. How can there be error in contrast to Absolute Idea if Absolute Idea is the whole thing? Professor Nuzzo suggests that there is a radical break between Absolute Idea (i.e., method) and all the earlier stages of the logic, which comprise the erroneous all else. Method is what rescues

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27 See SL, supra note 1, at 107 (“It is a delight to speculative thought to find in the language words which have in themselves a speculative meaning; the German language has a number of such.”); 1 WL, supra note 1, at 94.

28 SL, supra note 1, at 824; 2 WL, supra note 1, at 484.
the all else, which is still prey for external reflection. When method is shown to have been present in all the sequence of faulty definition of the absolute, only then can logic come to an end.

Last scene of all to this strange eventful history is a return to Hegel’s beginning, a “mere oblivion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.” In The Antepenultimacy of the Beginning in Hegel’s Science of Logic, I try to refine the usual view that the last step of the Logic is also the first. I will claim that it is the antepenultimate step (i.e., third from last) that is the first step of the Logic. The antepenultimate step of the Logic is abstraction as such—the affirmative proposition of the Understanding. This is what pure being turns out to be. And this is why pure being is indeterminate and pure nothing. So instead of pure being changing into pure nothing, I suggest that the Logic begins with Absolute Knowing (the ultimate step of the Logic) failing to begin. That is, Absolute Knowing descends from its ultimate status to the status of the Understanding. Hegel’s beginning is therefore a failure, which Hegel properly treats as that around which the entire logical process turns.

The papers published here were presented at a conference held at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law in New York City on March 28-29, 2004. The conference was held in connection with the seminar on Hegel’s logic that I have conducted for the past seven years at the law school. The conference occurred under the auspices of the Jacob Burns Institute for Advanced Legal Studies, which generously funded the conference. The conference could not have occurred without the energetic support of many members of the law school administration, but special thanks are due to Ilene Mates, Amy Gaudet, and Paulette Crowther. Thanks are due to the four excellent panel leaders who stimulated and contained audience discussion during the conference: John Hoffmeyer, Roger Berkowitz, Michael Baur, and Arthur Jacobson.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Rhett Rountree, my research assistant whose energy and passion were absolutely vital to the creation of this conference. Tragically, Rhett was killed in an accident in July 2004. He never got to see the final product. I am very pleased to dedicate this volume to his memory. The world needs more (not fewer) philosophers and Rhett was definitely a fine one. He will be missed.

29 William Shakespeare, As You Like It act 2, sc. 7.