

**The living system:
Life, ideation and freedom in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit***

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INTRODUCTION

Schmeckt den der Weltraum, in den wir uns lösen, nach uns?
- Rilke, 2nd Elegy, 29-30

At the end of the 18th century, Kant's critical system launched a Copernican revolution in philosophy, shifting its perspective from questions regarding what we can know about the external world to questions about who *we* are such that the world appears to us and is knowable in this way. This reflexive turn shifted not only the object of knowing, but the method by which we determine the validity of our knowledge. From the premise that we always mediate our access to objects, Kant drew a distinction between things as they are in themselves and objects as they appear to us. By denying knowledge of things in themselves, Kant secured a place for valid knowledge of objects in the understanding, deducing those conditions that make our knowledge possible. This is Kant's transcendental method, which locates the conditions of valid knowledge in the *a priori* concepts of our understanding that do not arise from experience but are activated in and give shape to our experience.

While the principles governing understanding make our knowledge possible, however, reason demands more, positing transcendent ideas of freedom, god and other constructs of meaning that both surpass and unify our worldly knowledge. Reason overreaches the bounds of our possible experience, continuing to engage transcendent ideas about the cosmos and our place within it as free, rational beings. This overreaching leads us to make claims that extend beyond what we can know through the understanding, creating antinomies of reason that generate contradictions between two commonly held principles.

The guiding question of this dissertation – can we conceptualize an overlapping space of freedom and determination that allows us to develop as agents within ethical life? – begins in the antinomy between determinism (according to the mechanistic laws of nature) and freedom. In the First *Critique*, Kant resolves this antinomy by locating different causal structures for nature and freedom such that both can exist harmoniously in a human setting that is tied to nature and yet still free from this nature insofar as it is rational. While this bifurcation resolves the antinomy, the disunity it introduces into human life continues to haunt Kant’s system. If both freedom and determinism are true of our ethical life, we are left wondering about the possibility of a unifying framework within which both propositions can be made compatible and comprehensible.

Kant resolves this antinomy by placing each proposition within its proper place in a loosely disunified system. The demand for a philosophical system, then, arises in excess of knowledge generated by the activity of Reason as it strives for, and fails to grasp, the unity of determinism and freedom. The demand for system is not a demand to bring everything into understanding, but rather to connect back up to understanding what has been riven from it. For Kant, the demand of systematicity is a regulative demand that our experience be coherent; systematicity is a demand of reason that guides its approach to objects without engaging these objects directly, epistemically or otherwise. Kant does not believe, however, that this speculative turn to systematicity is impotent. Systematic thinking moves forward our knowledge of objects and their interconnectivity without invalidly asserting knowledge of their actual connection. Kant even goes so far as to assert that systematicity raises ordinary knowledge to the level of science.¹ Still, this contribution to knowledge is curtailed through Kant’s reinforcement of the distinction between constitutive principles of the understanding that create possible knowledge and regulative principles of reason

¹ “Systematic unity is that which first makes ordinary cognition into science” (Kant B860).

that guide but do not constitute knowledge. For Kant, systematicity and its accompanying organization is a regulative ideal, satisfying the demands of reason without overstepping validity's bounds by claiming that these ideas are constitutive of things or their interrelation.

This demand for systematic interconnection continues to drive Kant's philosophy, receiving its full treatment in his *Critique of Judgment*, in which he aims to form a bridge between the systems of theoretical and practical knowledge outlined in his first two *Critiques*. The Third *Critique* again returns to the antinomy of nature and freedom, but this time within a different context from the one articulated in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Specifically, the context of the antinomy in the Third *Critique* is the apprehension of organisms. Biological life in the Third *Critique* is thus the stage on which the issue of systematicity ultimately takes shape for Kant. Through reflective judgment, judgment that does not apply a rule to a given object but rather seeks to find a rule out of experience, we gain insight into a formative process of knowledge that is neither naturally determined nor autonomous of nature. This heautonomous judgment – a judgment legislating neither to nature nor freedom, but only to itself – is activated in our experience of biological life, where we can recognize an organism as being governed by a lawlike structure and yet as not determined by these laws.² The Third *Critique* thus opens onto a space that troubles our rational self-knowledge by interjecting heautonomy – that which can give a law to itself without this law being objectively valid as such, hence that can be experienced as lawful without being validly known to be a law – into the bifurcated system of theoretical and

² In the first introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant writes that the validity of aesthetic judgments (and later extends his presentation to judgments of purposiveness) are autonomous, but not valid objectively. Rather, "It is valid merely subjectively, for the judgment based on [aus] feeling, [a feeling] which, if it can claim universal validity, proves that it originates on the basis of a priori principles. We should actually call this legislation *heautonomy*: for judgment legislates neither to nature nor to freedom, but solely to itself; and it is not a power to produce concepts of objects, but a power only to compare occurring cases with concepts given it from elsewhere, and to state a priori the subjective conditions under which this connection is possible" (Ak. 225').

practical knowledge. Kant's system, I will argue, nonetheless remains divided; while reflective judgment offers a new aspect within Kant's system, it ultimately reaffirms the distinctions on which he grounds all possible knowledge, hence maintains the bifurcated unity of freedom and determinism.

We turn to Hegel's holism in response to these problems generated but unresolved in Kant's system. While Kant's notion of freedom cannot give an adequate account of either our determinations or our autonomy, Hegel views our determination and freedom as pieces of a holistic system that give us insight into the compatibility of our freedoms and determinations. Carving out a space for a dialectical relation between natural determination and agential freedom, Hegel enables us to draw a picture of our epistemic life that gives us both insights and tools for thinking about the interactions and mutual constitution of our epistemic and social life.

In the wake of Kant's three *Critiques*, Hegel carries forward the project of systematic philosophy with an emphasis on unification. Hegel was influenced by both Fichte and Schelling's responses to Kant's treatment of nature, insofar as both take up the concepts developed in Kant's Third *Critique* in order to create unified systems that connect mental and natural life. These German idealists resolve the antinomy of nature and freedom by subsuming everything within ideation – rejecting Kant's thing in itself and extending the all-encompassing reach of mental activity. Hegel is very much a member of this moment in history, but, as I will argue in the dissertation, his idealist turn is not incompatible with a modified naturalism, leading to a more dynamic system that gives account of our rational and natural life within an overarching and dynamic-developmental framework of social and epistemic life.

While Kant firmly maintains the distinction between nature and our moral freedom, Hegel unworks the antinomy between nature and freedom by denying the bifurcated grounds on which it

is based. Hegel dissolves Kant's distinction between natural and rational life in his narrative, tying both to what he calls, simply, Life. While Kant tries and fails to resolve the antinomy of freedom by positing distinct causal structures for determinism and freedom, Hegel's holism makes no such fundamental distinction to begin with. Hegel locates freedom *within* determination, thereby working through Kant's antinomy in a way that respects the strife *and the unity* of natural and rational/autonomous life.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel outlines a developmental trajectory from Life to Spirit, preserving nature and rearticulating its appearance on the path to the actualization of rationality in the world. In so doing, he also forges a path for theorizing an integration of determinism and self-determination that allows us to grasp our own freedom within its worldly limitations. By demonstrating the continuity of natural and mental life, Hegel denies the grounds of the antinomy between nature and freedom. Hegel rejects the premise that the contradiction between reason and nature can only be resolved by separating their spheres of influence, articulating a mediating position that keeps them in tension within a larger context of compatibility, as demonstrated in the freedom that arises from ethical and cultural life.

Where Hegel clears Kant's system of its distinctions, history floods in. This introduction of history destabilizes the conditions of knowing by locating them in a developmental narrative that positions our knowing and normativity within social life.³ Hegel is seeking an anthropological basis for our social norms and their critique. The living development of our situated, ethical self is articulated in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where forms of consciousness that move through situated manifestations of Life undergo vicissitudes in a developmental progression towards Absolute Knowing; throughout, a form of consciousness is simultaneously a form of life. While this shift to incorporate life in an idealist framework opens onto a deeper understanding of the role that

³ My understanding of Hegel's social rationality is deeply influenced by Pinkard (1996).

social structures and norms play in shaping our thought, it also gives rise again to its own version of the antinomy of freedom and determination. From the insight that the very form of our cognition is shaped by external conditions, it follows that we are determined by these conditions and hence cannot be free to express our own agency by reflectively affirming or denying the norms and institutions that govern our society and hence our thought. This dissertation will explore how Hegel's concept of Life and its instantiations provides an angle of insight into Hegel's dialectic and its development in history as encapsulating both the determination and independence contained in our epistemic and ethical life.

From its first instantiation, Life takes on the characteristics of a metaconcept, which cannot be directly defined, but can be recognized in its many instantiations. From its beginning in self-consciousness, Life continues to haunt Hegel's text as a concept that both conforms to and evades definition. Life manifests in ethical life and forms of consciousness as a shifting and pervasive notion. Both its persistence and protean nature make Life a suitable focal point for inquiring into the historical structure of the *Phenomenology* and how it gives us a situated account of our possible freedom. Throughout, we will return to Life as a metaconcept that accompanies the dialectical turns in the *Phenomenology*. I refer to Life as a metaconcept because it is on the frontier of the natural drives and rational instantiations of each historical-conceptual moment in Hegel's text.

Life in context

Self-consciousness arises out of Life, and its beginning connects us to our natural selves as a precondition of our rational selves. Self-conscious life – life made self-aware through an encounter

with another living being – entwines our logical and ethical being.⁴ Hence the concept of Life in Hegel serves as the site of the intertwining of natural and rational life by reframing the interrelation of subject and object in a developmental story that dialectically relates both natural objects and other subjects to an active, historical self. Self-consciousness, as a developmental movement that begins in Life, gives us an entry point for understanding our epistemic life, which transmogrifies through history in forms of life – organized, dynamic systems of interaction in which normative structures are given shape and meaning.

Hegel's narrative uncovers and works through several permutations of both natural and rational life; the developmental story is not exclusively one of natural or rational development but rather of their interaction. It is at the chiasm where philosophical naturalism and idealism share common ground that a space of freedom emerges that is both conditioned by and supersedes the determinations that form its grounds.

Hegel's dialectic and the terms that generate its movement, viz. Life, ideation and freedom, reinterpret the terms of Kant's antinomy. As natural determination, Life stands opposed to the idea of freedom as an expression of rationality that is untouched by natural determination. The movement and interplay of freedom and determination is spurred by ideation, which is both the negating activity of the self and its constructive participation in the world. Ideation thus becomes the middle term of the dialectic that allows a resolution to Kant's antinomy. Ideation generates ideas that mediate between the immediacy of experience and a rational recognition of how our mental life is already formed by external conditions that constitute the conditions of this immediacy. Ideation drives this dialectical development in its specific failures to adequately grasp its object. What is contained in Life

⁴ See Michael Thompson's *Life and Action* for a detailed discussion of life as a localized concept; it is a ground for action and ultimately of robust social practices.

splits into the object in its independence and desire (of self-consciousness) for reunification in a systematic whole in which both subject and object are brought together, each mediating the other. This mediation is the historical development from Life to Absolute Spirit, spurred by these fruitful failures of ideation.

Ideation is not the Hegelian Idea, but rather the process of making ideas that then become concepts in the world – concepts that do work and are worked on in turn. As I shall explore in more detail throughout this dissertation, ideation becomes attached to Hegel’s deployment of the concept of culture (*Bildung*), which represents the process of this externalization and reification of ideas, while holding open space for critical engagement with externalized and reified ideas. Concepts are thus material and generative; by giving a form to an abstract idea, a concept becomes a sort of thing in the world that contains our experiences and informs our actions. This dissertation will follow the emergent concept of freedom in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* as a demonstration of the sort of work that ideation does and how this work is essential to the realization of freedom in society. Without its conceptualization, the alignment of our concepts, actions and social structures of freedom, we cannot truly be free. Hegel’s insight is that conceptualizing freedom is a form of action that participates in shaping the conditions of freedom.

Beginning from the premise that our rationality is social and of a piece with our instinctual drives, how then can we frame our ethical life – our agency, freedom and relation to others – in a way that retains a place for our freedom and our meaningful participation in ethical life? This dissertation aims not only to show how Hegel’s theory of freedom diverges from metaphysical and liberal notions of freedom, but also to demonstrate that this theory of freedom more effectively describes the conditions and experience of freedom. The claim that there is a place for agency and freedom within Hegel’s system does not require the rejections of the interpretation of Hegel’s

system as also deterministic and as denying that critique can arise from outside the parameters of knowledge set by social mores and institutions. Rather, these requirements of intelligibility create a greater ethical imperative for a collective responsibility to shape these institutions, spurred by insights driven by contradiction. When we arrive at a contradiction, we will know our work has begun.

Notes on the structure

The philosophical problems at play in this dissertation began with my asking if and how Hegel's idea of Absolute Knowing could be redeemed from its apparently totalitarian end. The particular form of redemption I focus on centers on the possibility of freedom within Hegel's system and how this freedom is cultivated through critical engagement with the social structures and mores that inform our cognitive and ethical life. Tracing central themes in Hegel's text back to Kant, I have been led to an examination of teleology in the Third *Critique*, out of which the concept of life arises as a heuristic tool for approaching this question. Using the concept of life as the lever to open this set of questions, this dissertation aims to recreate a developmental trajectory from Kant's theoretical system and the Third *Critique* to Hegel's *Phenomenology* as the seminal text where he develops and works through the historical-material conditions of human freedom.

This dissertation traces the development of the concept of Life that emerges as an Hegelian trope that indicates conceptual dynamism and the integrative fabric of development in history. Yet, this is not a dissertation about Life. Rather, it examines the narrative of Life as a tool to open up the relationship between self-consciousness and freedom through the lens of our formative relations to others. I refer to Life as both a trope and a meta-concept – it evades direct definition and is best understood through its instantiations. Life is subject to vicissitudes; its meaning, as with its instantiation, is historically shaped yet it remains coherent as a concept. Beginning in Life puts us on

a developmental trajectory that troubles its own progress. Life begins Hegel's narrative of the development of Spirit in history through forms of consciousness. It is a foundational moment that represents both the common beginning of subject and object and the moment of their necessary diremption.

Chapter 1 examines Kant's treatment of system as that which forms our ability to comprehend and classify organic, contingent life as lawlike. This lawlikeness within contingency is manifest in the concept of biological life, which bridges the normative and heautonomous elements of organisms, thus revealing how our human purpose and pursuits are formed from these two aspects of lawlikeness and non-conformity. In locating normativity as a central component of judgments regarding organisms, Kant paves the way for introducing sociality into biological life. This reading of the normative role of purposiveness in the experience of biological life opens up the shift that inaugurates the Hegelian turn and thus sets up the constitutive place of ideation in our experience of objects. Yet, this continuity between biology and sociality cannot be derived from Kant's treatment of biological life alone. While the ultimate purpose of natural life points towards our cultural lives and even hints at furthering our understanding of our moral selves, Kant firmly maintains the division between nature and morality, and thus of freedom, insofar as it is predicated on the division of nature and reason.

The turn to Hegel in the second chapter begins in Hegel's troubling of Kant's distinctions between our natural and rational selves through the concept of Life. Life launches the reflexive turn of Self-Consciousness in the development of Spirit. The development of Spirit out of this primordial space of undifferentiated subject and object in Life is both the condition for the mediation required for knowledge, but also of the depth of this knowledge in (re)uniting subject and object. Yet, the development of Spirit in Hegel is not merely a story of the progressive recognition of truth, but one of the creation of this truth through work and social interaction. The

integration of Life in recognition renders immanent and social the question of how organisms and organic processes are tied to our human development.

Through explaining Life within Hegel's text, we are given handles for grasping this insight regarding the sociality of rational human development and can begin to see how this sociality is both a result of our work and comes to stand against us as collective norms beyond our direct power to alter. At the end of the second chapter, we will begin to see how Life takes form in ethical life and culture, connecting it more directly to sociality and freedom. As a concept subject to historical vicissitudes, Life informs our understanding of the interactivity and continuity of nature and reason, and hence determinism and freedom, in Hegel.

The relationship between culture and freedom powers the development of this dissertation, coming to a head in the third chapter where it is taken up explicitly in Hegel's section on Spirit. Through Spirit, the focus of Hegel's text shifts from rationality to sociality, turning from epistemological to ethical concerns. Through this development, the notion of Life morphs into the more sophisticated notion of forms of life, bolstered by a progressive Spirit as the achievement of this collective consciousness. A form of life is a developed and socially shared framework, to which culture (*Bildung*) is directly related.

Culture is Spirit's alienation from itself and thus comes to represent both the determination of, and our alienation from, these determinations in a form of life. On the one hand, the recognition of cultural life is not sufficient to achieve freedom; on the other hand, Hegel denies the possibility of grounding this freedom in anything external to the direct relations of concepts and historical conditions constituting a given form of life. Alienation is what allows us to hold both within a larger framework and engage in the actions that are both situated within our form of life, and not fully determined by them.

This work ends by turning to Hegel's account of Absolute Knowing in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, returning to the theme of teleology with which we began. Following Catherine Malabou, I will raise the question of alternative readings of Hegel, looking beyond his own end in Absolute Knowing to a Marxist tradition that holds a more evolutionary than progressive perspective on culture, history and freedom. Hegel's systematic holism gives us a framework for engaging our determinations, but ultimately is limited by his own historical/philosophical perspective. While we make our history – a central notion in our capacity to achieve freedom – it is perhaps more appropriate to say that we make our history, but it is made behind our backs. In taking up Hegel's philosophical lessons regarding our own self-determination within our historical determination, we can both look beyond Hegel's historical context and utilize his tools for peering into our own. To engage this work, we must move beyond Hegel, both preserving and overcoming his philosophical system as a form of epistemic life that is still relevant for thinking about our own form of consciousness and its freedoms. This dissertation aims to lay the groundwork for this larger project.

Editorial notes

Throughout the text, I have retained the capitalization of words in Hegel's text that function as technical terms, notably Life and Spirit. When modified, such as in biological life or epistemic life, I use the word life in its more everyday sense.

Nature is often used broadly to refer to both animal and human life, with its impulses and needs that have causal effect on our interactions and forms of knowing. Nature in this broad sense is used as an opposite term to freedom. In Kant, nature is deployed more narrowly in a way that reflects Kant's understanding of its role. In Hegel, this term takes on a broader sense as a basic and enduring force in sociality and rationality. The more accurate word to capture this dynamic concept

in Hegel is Life, but this concept cannot be analogized to nature as standing in opposition to freedom.

CHAPTER 1

KANT AND THE LIFE OF THE MIND

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant gave birth to critical philosophy by locating the source of validity of our knowledge claims not in their correspondence to some object, but in the necessary conditions of discursive knowing. He begins his critical project with a deduction of the conditions of possible knowing, uncovering space, time and the categories of understanding as the *a priori* conditions of valid knowledge. And yet, Kant himself seeks a more comprehensive scope to knowledge claims than that demarcated in understanding. The *Critique of Pure Reason* addresses the drive to create meaning beyond what is derived in understanding, distinguishing between the constitutive knowledge of the understanding and those ideas of reason that give meaning to our experience and allow for our faith, but do not constitute valid knowledge. In this chapter, I aim to show how the conditions and coherence of knowing *systematically* form the bridge between theoretical and practical knowing but also that, given Kant's articulation of biological life in the *Critique of Judgment*, this bridge fails to cross the gap between experience and knowing.

In the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant writes that a critique of pure reason that merely outlines the conditions for the possibility of rational cognition through concepts is not itself a part of this cognition.⁵ In other words, though Kant's theoretical philosophy locates the conditions prior to experience that make experience possible, it is unable to give an account of the content of experience because this content is necessarily determined by the empirical and hence

⁵ "If philosophy is the *system* of rational [*Vernunft*-] cognition through concepts, this [characterization] already suffices to distinguish it from a critique of pure reason [*Vernunft*]. For though a critique of pure reason contains a philosophical inquiry into the possibility of such cognition, it does not belong to a system of philosophy as a part of it, but outlines and examines the very idea of such a system in the first place" (Ak. 195').

goes beyond the foreclosure of *a priori* certainty. Our ability to make valid judgments regarding our experience – to allow our judgment to inform and be informed by our experiences – is at the heart of the problematic of the *Critique of Judgment*.

In the Appendix to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant introduces the principle of systematicity as a tool for philosophically engaging with the content of our experience and not merely the *a priori* conditions that make it possible. The objective validity of our experience is derived from the presupposition of systematic unity but is immanently justified, Kant claims in the *Critique of Judgment*, through the coherence of our experience in aesthetic and biological judgments. What remains to be explored is the validity of Kant’s move from the presupposition to the proof, the understanding of which is contingent upon how we interpret the necessity and corresponding validity of knowledge derived from experience presented in the *Critique of Judgment*. Understanding can merely assert that there is a principle of systematicity, but cannot know what this principle is and cannot make valid claims regarding its application. Judgment fills this gap by making experience possible *as an empirical system*. The faculty of judgment appears at the completion of Kant’s system because, in order for our particular experiences to be considered objectively valid, they must be systematically unified.⁶

Systematicity and purposiveness thus arise as principles that contribute to our immanent, empirical knowledge by giving shape and meaning to experiences. Empirical concepts and laws

⁶ “We saw in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that nature as a whole, as the sum total of all objects of experience, constitutes a system in terms of transcendental laws, those that the understanding itself gives a priori (to appearances insofar as, connected in one consciousness, they are to constitute experience). That is why experience too, considered objectively, i.e., in the way experience as such is possible (ideally), must constitute a system of possible empirical cognitions, and it must do so in terms of both universal and particular laws: for the unity of nature [which is implicit in the concept of nature as spelled out by those transcendental laws] requires [that intrinsically experience form] such [a system, one] in terms of a principle of the thorough connection of everything contained in that sum total of all appearances. To this extent, then, experience as such must be regarded, according to transcendental laws of the understanding, as a system and not as a mere aggregate” (Ak. 208’-209’). Also see the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where Kant writes that “For the law of reason to seek unity is necessary, since without it we would have no reason, and without that, no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth; thus in regard to the latter we simply have to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary” (A651/B679).

arise *through* our experience, generating a demand for a rule that has not been given *a priori*. Kant undertakes the unification of his system at the level of biological life by seeking lawlikeness within the contingency of the natural, a lawlikeness he argues we experience in organisms. The unity of Kant's system hinges on our ability to ground normative judgments in both organic and moral life, thus connecting the validity carved out for theoretical and practical reason with an otherwise (for us) unruly life. By giving an account of our experience of organisms normatively governed but not normatively determined, Kant completes his system in a way that both resolves and raises questions about the ability of this system to account for our lived experiences and our ability to relate to others in ethical life.

1.1 Kant's architectonic and the special case of systematicity

Kant's architectonic is built on distinctions that establish the proper activity and domain of understanding and reason, enabling him to account for the validity of our claims regarding both how things are and how they ought to be. Our ability to make these distinctions and claims hinges on our ability to unite and order our different domains of knowledge and experience. Yet, for Kant, this ordering occurs in a distinct manner from that of our basic apprehension of objects and their simple relations. While the activity of understanding *constitutes* these objects of our apprehension, the activity of reason plays a regulative role in *ordering* these objects and experiences. The distinction between the constitutive and the regulative, which corresponds to Kant's distinction between understanding and reason, lays out the basis of validity of our claims about purposiveness and the coherence of our experience.

At the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the distinction between understanding and reason generates a demand that our experiences ordered by these two modes of knowing hang together in a coherent system. The principle of systematicity appears as the necessary condition of scientific

knowledge and, more generally, as the principle of coherence of our experience. Kant claims that systematicity grounds the unity of the understanding and guides its particular uses;⁷ it also guides inquiry into nature and grounds the identification of species and genera.⁸ In doing so, “Reason thus prepares the field for understanding.”⁹ Yet, in preparing the field for understanding, reason does not ground understanding itself; rather, reason guides understanding in its empirical use. Kant further writes that without systematicity there would be no “coherent use of the understanding” or “sufficient mark of empirical truth.”¹⁰ These statements suggest that subsuming the manifold of intuition in understanding requires systematicity to achieve connection among our experiences and hence to produce coherent experience. In other words, systematicity makes our experience intelligible by locating a single experience in a larger constellation of past experiences. Moreover, systematicity arises in response to a question regarding validity in the empirical sciences – i.e. our ability to make valid judgments and classifications of natural objects. These problematics of coherence in our understanding and validity of empirical concepts encircle a central theme regarding our lived experience and our need to validate its meaning for us.

The demand for systematicity introduces complexity into the structure of validity presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason* by connecting understanding to experience. Systematicity, Kant argues, is necessary to give broader meaning to our knowledge about the world; it is the

⁷ “Systematic unity (as mere idea) is only a projected unity, which one must regard not as given in itself, but only as a problem; this unity, however, helps to find a principle for the manifold and particular uses of the understanding, thereby guiding it even in those cases that are not given and making it coherently connected” (A647/B675).

⁸ “That all manifoldness of individual things does not exclude the identity of species; that the several species must be treated only as various determinations of fewer genera, and the latter of still higher families, etc.; that therefore a certain systematic unity of all possible empirical concepts must be sought insofar as they can be derived from higher and more general ones: this is a scholastic rule of logical principle, without which there could be no use of reason, because we can infer from the universal to the particular only on the ground of the universal properties of things under which the particular properties stand” (A651-652/B679 – B680).

⁹ A657/B685. Following this claim, Kant enumerates the specific way in which reason and its presuppositions ground inquiry into nature and thus guide the understanding: “1. By a principle of sameness of kind in the manifold under higher genera, 2. By a principle of the variety of what is same in kind under lower species; and in order to complete the systematic unity it adds 3. Still another law of the affinity of all concepts, which offers a continuous transition from every species to every other through a graduated increase of varieties” (A657-8/B685-6).

¹⁰ A651/B679

connective principle of our various knowledge claims, thus giving coherency to our knowledge of experienced objects. Kant devotes the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic to reason's ability to guide the understanding systematically and further the use of understanding. Although he denies systematicity constitutive status, throughout he accords it an 'indispensable necessity.' We are therefore left wondering what the status of this systematic coherence is for Kant and how its special place within the architectonic can further knowledge without itself *being* knowledge.

Kant states that systematic unity is merely regulative and to be viewed as a problematic rather than a real unity.¹¹ As a merely projected rather than actual unity, it remains unclear how systematicity can further inquiry through understanding (i.e. push the boundaries of what we can legitimately know and experience). This limitation of the role of systematicity for the understanding risks rendering systematicity an ineffective and overly general principle that is fruitless for furthering our ability to make claims about relations among objects and therefore impotent to expand the understanding and guide scientific inquiry. In other words, there doesn't seem to be a principle to distinguish valid from invalid claims of systematicity. Kant too recognizes this problem, writing that the principle does not "function merely as a problem for hypothetical use, but pretends to [*vorgebe*] objective reality."¹² In other words, when we inquire into the systematic unity of nature, we presuppose or simulate (*vorgeben*) systematicity as through it were objectively valid.¹³ Yet, in making this claim regarding systematic unity, has Kant not violated the proscription on constitutive ideas? If he has not, then how has he not begged the question, thus undermining the validity he seeks to establish?

¹¹ "The hypothetical use of reason, on the basis of ideas as problematic concepts, is not properly constitutive, that is, not such that if one judges in all strictness the truth of the universal rule assumed as a hypothesis thereby follows; for how is one to know all possible consequences, which would prove the universality of the assumed principle if they followed from it? Rather, this use of reason is only regulative, bringing unity into particular cognitions as far as possible and thereby approximating the rule to universality" (A647/B676).

¹² A650/B678

¹³ A651/B679, *Op. cit.* fn. 6

This issue of experience's coherence is central to understanding the peculiar place of systematicity in Kant's system. As Fred Rush writes in 'Reason and Regulation in Kant,' the possibility of science (systematicity) does not constitute nor is it necessary for cognitive agency.¹⁴ The principle of systematicity may be required for coherent use of the understanding, but not for its use *tout court*.¹⁵ Systematicity conditions our experience, separating it from mere sentient consciousness, which is sufficient for cognitive agency. Notably, this question of the coherence of experience is joined in Kant's discussion with that of the possibility of grounding empirical science. Thus, however we are to understand systematicity, we must keep in mind this connection between the coherence of experience and the validation of empirical concepts and laws that could ground such a science. Though the distinction between regulative and constitutive principles grounds the validity of our claims regarding systematic interconnection and purpose, their distinction is also complicated through this introduction of systematicity and purposiveness.

At stake in the validity of systematic interconnection is our ability to make causal claims that connect our past to our future experience. In "Projecting the Order of Nature," Philip Kitcher locates Kant's proposed necessity of systematicity in the incompleteness of the Second Analogy. The Second Analogy shows that causality must be assumed in the apprehension of empirical facts, but it does not give a justification of the general applicability of this causality or address the problem of induction through which we can claim that a causal chain in the past will be repeated in the future. Thus the doctrine of the Appendix completes the project of the Second Analogy by proving that there is objective necessity in causal statements¹⁶ and by giving the justification for distinguishing between accidental regularities and those that are "endowed with counterfactual-

¹⁴ Rush (2000) 844

¹⁵ Rush (2000) 858

¹⁶ Kitcher 215

sustaining force.”¹⁷The concepts of the understanding, thought necessary for experience, are nonetheless not sufficient to justify our claims regarding the regularity of experience. This indeterminacy in concepts of understanding means they are insufficient to provide us with knowledge of empirical regularities.

In *Kant’s Concept of Teleology*, J.D. McFarland also notes this insufficiency of concepts of the understanding to yield coherent experience. He writes that the causal principle of the Second Analogy does not constitute a reason that explains an event, but justifies our assumption that there is a reason for it: “The importance of the causal principle lies in the fact that unless it is valid, natural science is impossible; but, on the other hand, it does not follow from its validity that natural science is possible.”¹⁸ For Kant, systematicity is what raises ‘ordinary knowledge’ to the rank of science.¹⁹ Thus, in order to actually explain events, more is required than the causal principle.

The legitimacy of this demand for systematic interconnection of our experiences depends in large part on our recognition of the limits of reason. Reason stands in immediate relation to the understanding alone and has empirical employment only through the understanding.²⁰ Consequently, reason does not directly contribute to knowledge, but proves nonetheless indispensable in orienting the understanding in its pursuit of knowledge. Reason’s sole aim is to afford the understanding its greatest application through a “self-subsisting systematic whole.”²¹ This orientation thus allows for the expansion of our empirical cognition by orienting us toward the goal of systematicity:

¹⁷ Kitcher 221

¹⁸ McFarland 9

¹⁹ “By an architectonic I understand the art of systems. Since systematic unity is that which first makes ordinary cognition into science, i.e., makes a system out of a mere aggregate of it, architectonic is the doctrine of that which is scientific in our cognition in general, and therefore necessarily belongs to the doctrine of method” (A832/B860).

²⁰ “Reason never relates directly to an object, but solely to the understanding and by means of it to reason’s own empirical use, hence it does not create any concepts (of objects) but only orders them and gives them that unity which they can have in their greatest possible extension” (A643/B671).

²¹ A797/B825

...even if no object can be determined through [the transcendental concepts of reason], they can still, in a fundamental and unnoticed way, serve the understanding as a canon for its extended and self-consistent use, through which it cognizes no more objects than it would cognize through its concepts, yet in this cognition it will be guided better and further.²²

The understanding alone can give an object to experience, functioning at the ‘backend’ of experience to shape experience and objects that are given in it; reason arises as a critical companion within experience and propels the understanding to seek new objects. This is reason, not in its practical function, but as acting regulatively on our experience and giving that experience a particular shape.

The key to uncovering the importance of the regulative status of systematicity lies in examining the point where the distinction seems most tenuous: the marking out of systematicity as transcendently necessary. Transcendental necessity is defined in the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason* as “all cognition . . . that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*.”²³ This *a priori* relation to objects hinges on the conditions that are necessary for their possibility. The paradigm case of this is the categories, which form the basic conditions under which our experience of objects is possible. However, though Kant begins the Appendix by restating the distinction between regulative and constitutive principles, in his treatment of systematicity, which dominates the discussion of the Appendix, Kant’s distinction begins to become unclear. His characterization of regulative principles begins to use language elsewhere reserved for constitutive principles. Early in his discussion, Kant cautions the reader to remember the interest of reason in order to avoid rendering systematicity a

²² A329/B385

²³ A11/B25

transcendental principle that is objectively necessary.²⁴ Our orientation to systematicity should be the same as with any ideas of reason, which exceed the bounds of possible experience and hence do not pertain to the ‘land of the truth.’ However, Kant’s persistent claim that systematicity is necessary for the coherence of experience, and hence experience’s intelligibility, troubles our ability to place systematicity alongside other regulative ideas of reason, urging us to give it place as a condition of experience.

This limitation of reason as regulative does not render reason impotent in its speculation. The pursuit of systematic unity requires that it be in conformity with nature, otherwise “reason would proceed directly contrary to its vocation, since it would set as its goal an idea that entirely contradicts the arrangement of nature,”²⁵ without allowing that nature is ordered such that we can conceptualize the nature of things in their identity. The principle of systematicity provides the needed assurance that the world is systematically and rationally ordered, which in turn motivates us to discover uniformities and classifications. Yet, Kant makes the seemingly opposing claim that the systematic unity of nature is “objectively valid and necessary,” rather than possessing the mere subjective validity that he pointed to earlier when calling systematicity a pretense [*vorgebe*].²⁶ This suggests that we can know the order of nature as a real object and not just as a regulative ideal. In order for systematicity to function as a logical principle and thus validly, Kant writes, it must first be presupposed as a transcendental principle that pertains to the object itself.²⁷ In order to bring

²⁴ To do so would violate the proscription against the constitutive use of reason. “But whether the constitution of objects or the nature of the understanding that cognizes them as such are in themselves determined to systematic unity, and whether one could in a certain measure postulate this *a priori* without taking into account such an interest of reason, and therefore say that all possible cognitions of the understanding (including empirical ones) have the unity of reason, and stand under common principles from which they could be derived despite their variety: that would be a transcendental principle of reason, which would make systematic unity not merely something subjectively and logically necessary, as method, but objectively necessary” (A648/B676).

²⁵ A651/B679

²⁶ A651/B679

²⁷ “In fact it cannot even be seen how there could be a logical principle of rational unity among rules unless a transcendental principle is presupposed, through which such a systematic unity, as pertaining to the object itself, is assumed *a priori* as necessary” (A650-651/B678-679).

together the antithetical claims of regulation and validity, in what follows, we get a glimpse of a new sort of transcendental principle.

The issue of systematicity's transcendental necessity is what Kant identifies as the province of philosophy. This transcendental necessity of the principle of systematicity occupies a central place in Kant's system for its ability to ascribe lawlikeness to the empirical, allowing for the satisfaction of reason in its demand for unifying order while maintaining the prohibition against making claims regarding what is not an object of possible experience. Consequently, understanding the role this guidance plays in grounding scientific inquiry requires an understanding of the proof to which it is susceptible, i.e. its philosophical deduction. Though the principle of systematicity does not admit of a transcendental deduction of the sort provided for the categories, Kant speaks of systematicity as a transcendental principle that is "necessarily presupposed" because "without it no empirical concepts and hence no experience would be possible."²⁸

As a transcendental idea, systematicity goes beyond the empirical, but, in order to avoid turning over into delusion, it must not be taken as real outside of the empirical (i.e. as absolute). Therefore systematicity, insofar as it grounds the formation and validity of empirical concepts, is a necessity that is bound up with contingency (as opposed to the *a priori*, which precedes and makes possible empirical contingency). Kant gives this issue its strangest articulation when he writes:

What is strange about these principles, and what alone concerns us, is this: that they seem to be transcendental, even though they contain mere ideas to be followed in the empirical use of reason, which reason can follow only asymptotically, as it were, i.e., merely by approximation, without ever reaching them, yet these principles, as synthetic propositions *a priori*, nevertheless have objective but indeterminate validity, and serve as a rule of possible experience, and can even be used with good success, as heuristic principles, in actually elaborating it; and yet one cannot bring about a transcendental deduction of them, which, as has been proved above, is always impossible in regard to ideas.²⁹

²⁸ A654/B682

²⁹ A663/B691

Yet Kant goes on to say that a deduction is possible and necessary;³⁰ the necessity of the principle gives rise to the necessity of its deduction. But, as noted, the deduction needed is not a transcendental one, but rather one that is connected to the empirical. If it can be shown that, even though there is no object corresponding to these ideas, the presupposition of such an object leads to systematic unity, extending the ‘cognition of experience’ without going beyond that experience, “then it is a necessary maxim of reason to proceed in accordance with such ideas” and the deduction of the ideas of speculative reason as speculative principles is proved.³¹

Kant thus undertakes a deduction, the key to which is the identification of systematicity as a heuristic, rather than ostensive, concept.³² This heuristic allows for our presupposition of systematicity under the principle that the object is *as if* designed, i.e. systematically ordered and purposive. The heuristic “shows not how an object is constituted but how, under the guidance of that concept, we ought to seek after the constitution and connection of objects of experience in general.”³³ This characterization clearly avoids the danger of claiming to constitute objects, yet runs the risk of being ‘merely methodological’ and thus not satisfying the demand that the transcendental principle be necessary.³⁴ Ultimately, it is as a presupposition that systematicity is transcendently necessary. Systematicity is not applied to objects of inquiry after they are given, nor is it a hypothesis that could be verified or falsified on the basis of empirical evidence; it is a presupposition that guides our research into these objects. In other words: though the

³⁰ “One cannot avail oneself of a concept *a priori* unless one has brought about a transcendental deduction of it. The idea of reason, of course, do not permit any deduction of the same kind as the categories; but if they are to have the least objective validity, even if it is only an indeterminate one, and are not to represent merely empty thought-entities (*entia rationis ratiocinantis*), then a deduction of them must definitely be possible, granted that it must also diverge quite far from the deduction one can carry out in the case of the categories” (A669-670/B697-698).

³¹ A671/B699

³² “Then it is said, e.g., that the things in the world must be considered as if they had gotten their existence from a highest intelligence. In such a way the idea is only a heuristic and not an ostensive concept” (A671/B699).

³³ A671/B699

³⁴ Rush (2000) points out that no transcendental principle, whether regulative or constitutive, can be merely heuristic or methodological (140). I understand this reading of the ‘merely heuristic’ to indicate a contingent mode of inquiry rather than a necessary one, hence failing to satisfy the requirements of a transcendental deduction.

transcendental necessity of systematicity is located in its being a necessary condition of coherent experience, its deduction does not directly concern its conditions, but looks instead to its achievements.

Following this deduction, we are now better able to understand Kant's earlier claim that the principles of pure reason have 'objective reality in regard to this object,' i.e. the unity of the understanding, "yet not so as to determine something in it, but only to indicate the procedure in accordance with which the empirical and determinate use of the understanding in experience can be brought into thoroughgoing agreement with itself" by unifying it to the greatest extent possible.³⁵ This unification of understanding in its immanent use requires systematicity as a transcendent idea of reason. Thus Kant concludes the deduction:

And this is the transcendental deduction of all the ideas of speculative reason, not as constitutive principles for the extension of our cognition to more objects than experience can give, but as regulative principles for the systematic unity of the manifold of empirical cognition in general, through which this cognition, within its proper boundaries, is cultivated and corrected more than could happen without such ideas, through the mere use of the principles of the understanding.³⁶

Here we begin to see the regulative role that systematicity plays for Kant in its transcendent use as necessary to the development of our cognition as a system. It does not directly give us insight into objects or itself further knowledge, but rather motivates the understanding in its inquiry, cultivating and correcting our knowledge in its valid use.

In these passages, Kant uses language indicative of constitution to refer to the principle of systematicity. The limits of the understanding to adequately ground scientific claims leads us back to the necessity of systematicity for unifying (and rendering coherent) our experience. The satisfactory nature (or truth) of an explanation is not judged by a correspondence between representations and independent reality, but is "obtained in the ideal limit of inquiry," which is

³⁵ A665-6/B693-4

³⁶ A671/B699

made comprehensible through the pursuit of certain goals, such as systematicity.³⁷ Thus concepts are legitimated when they are employed in the systematization of experience by total science.³⁸ This entails that the full criterion for the legitimacy of concepts requires the Dialectic of Pure Reason in conjunction with the Analytic or, more simply, the full legitimacy of concepts requires reason. Thus muddying the distinction between regulative and constitutive principles, Kant ultimately upholds the regulative role of systematicity by affording it a special status, one that he will only fully account for in the *Critique of Judgment*.³⁹

1.2 The *Critique of Judgment*, or mind the gap

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant reengages the themes that are introduced in his treatment of systematicity in the Appendix to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, furthering his exploration of the problematic of grounding scientific knowledge that is based in experience. Kant states the aim of the *Critique of Judgment* is transcendental insofar as judgment is part of the system of cognition: judgment fills in the gaps of the system of our cognitive powers, promising its completion.⁴⁰ Thus, though there are only two parts to the system – theoretical and practical – judgment serves as the transition that connects these two parts to one another and to a broader account of our experience and determinations of meaning therein.

The introduction of judgment into the system of cognition rests on judgment's transcendental principle that “proceeds in terms of the idea of a system for dividing nature” – i.e.

³⁷ Kitcher 214

³⁸ Kitcher 215

³⁹ For a full account of the possible collapse of the distinction between regulative and constitutive principles in the Appendix and Third *Critique*, see Rush (2000). See also Zuckert's *Kant on Beauty and Biology*.

⁴⁰ Kant here states that the aesthetic and teleological abilities of judgment rest on the same principle, with both belonging to reflective rather than determinative powers of judgment. As such, “Critique of taste, in other [contexts], is used only to improve or solidify taste itself. But if the treatment of it has a transcendental aim, then this critique fills a gap in the system of our cognitive powers, and hence opens up a striking and – I think – most promising prospect [for] a complete system of all the mental powers” (Ak. 244’).

categorizing nature – “so as to make experience possible as an empirical system.”⁴¹ Yet, if judgment, as the ability to subsume under given concepts, is governed by the empirical in its connection with reason, these judgments will never acquire objective validity, but will remain a mere aggregate of experience without the guiding coherence of their systematic interconnection.⁴² This set of issues forms the background for the introduction of empirical lawlikeness, or the attribution of natural laws within experience without claiming their *a priori* necessity. Empirical lawlikeness pays homage to our experience of nature as being governed by laws (e.g. causality), while deferring to the distinction between constitutive and regulative principles and their proper spheres. Judgment straddles these two realms with one foot firmly grounded in experience and the other in systematic interconnection and (lawlike) rules that give these experiences meaning and furthers our knowledge in general by placing these experiences within a broader context and applicability.

The *Critique of Judgment* aims to elucidate: 1) the difference between the causality of technic or art and mechanism, 2) the ability to give an account of the type of necessity that governs organisms, and 3) the ability to ascertain and establish empirical laws. It is through judgment that we begin to see the deep connection between the regulative idea of systematicity as it appears in the Appendix to the Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the principle of purposiveness that dominates the discussion in the *Critique of Judgment*. In the *Critique of Judgment*, this discussion is oriented by the distinction between determinate and reflective judgment. While determinate

⁴¹ Ak. 243’

⁴² This thought, articulated from different angles, appears in many forms throughout the Appendix to the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the First Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*. It receives one of its clearest articulations at Ak. 212’, where Kant writes: “The principle by which we reflect on given objects of nature is this: that for all natural things *concepts* can be found that are determined empirically. This means that we can always presuppose nature’s products to have a form that is possible in terms of universal laws which we can cognize. For if we were not allowed to presuppose this, and did not base our treatment of empirical presentations on this principle, then all our reflection would be performed merely haphazardly and blindly, and hence without our having a basis for expecting that this [reflection] is in agreement with nature.”

judgment consists in the application of a given concept to an object by subsuming a particular under a given universal, reflective judgment must find the universal for a given particular when no such concept is already given. In order to validly arrive at this concept from the empirical, reflective judgment requires a principle for its employment.

As such, experience could never offer this principle, “because only by presupposing this principle can we engage in experiences in a systematic way.”⁴³ Thus the systematicity that completes the system of philosophy, in order to achieve the transcendental status Kant accords it, must be given by judgment itself:

So if there is to be a concept or rule that rises originally from the power of judgment, it would have to be a concept of things of *nature insofar as nature conforms to our power of judgment*, and hence a concept of a [special] character of nature: the only concept we could form of this character is that [nature’s] arrangement conforms to the ability we have to subsume the particular laws, which are given, under more universal laws, even though these are not given. In other words, the concept would have to be that of a purposiveness of nature for the sake of our ability to cognize nature, insofar as this ability requires that we be able to judge the particular as contained under the universal and to subsume it under the concept of a nature.⁴⁴

This concept is “the concept of experience *as a system in terms of empirical laws*.”⁴⁵ While determinate judgment proceeds schematically according to the laws of another power, reflective judgment attaches to and is connected with “nothing but the reflection and its form.”⁴⁶ Reflective judgment is catalyzed by experience and governed by its own internal laws; it opens onto a novel engagement with our own experience, one that admits of our furthering knowledge within experience. When judgment *determines*, it merely subsumes and hence is not autonomous; when judgment *reflects*, it must find the law where there is no objective law. Since there is no principle, reflective judgment must use itself as a principle that is merely subjective and that governs the purposive use of our

⁴³ Ak. 211’

⁴⁴ Ak. 202’-203’

⁴⁵ Ak. 203’

⁴⁶ Ak. 249’

cognitive powers. The question looming over our reading of teleological judgment in particular is of the nature of these empirical laws and the source of their validity.

Reflective judgment alters both the overall Kantian architectonic and the role that experience plays therein by allowing for the generation of knowledge and the attribution of meaning to particularity, which can only be achieved in experience. Through experience, new concepts are forged and our knowledge is furthered. As such, reflective judgment both fits within and disrupts the architectonic through the introduction of empirical (or contingent) laws. Kant gives us our first clue as to the form of validity particular to judgment when he categorizes reflective judgment as providing its own *a priori* principles,⁴⁷ which allows us to think about purposiveness in nature as not only possible but also necessary.⁴⁸ This necessity refers to both the ability of purposiveness to satisfy reason in its demand for unity and to the motivating condition of scientific inquiry. Kant suggests that our inquiry into nature requires that we think of nature as being created by a most perfect being and as itself a systematic and purposive unity. Kant gives us another clue when he writes that, for a thing to be an end, its parts must be possible only in relation to the whole.⁴⁹ This sense of possibility is subjective (though nonetheless universal) rather than objective: the idea of the whole is what Kant calls a ‘cognitive ground’ [*Erkenntnisgrund*]. The heuristic of judgment thus furthers our inquiry, extending the validity of our knowledge into experience.

Reflective judgment uses maxims that allow us to cognize natural laws in experience; it states within itself its own conditions under which it must be enunciated. Reflective judgment thus

⁴⁷ “It is not determinative judgment, but merely reflective judgment, that has a priori principles of its own” (Ak. 248’).

⁴⁸ “Judgment first makes it possible, indeed necessary, for us to think of nature as having not only a mechanical necessity but also a purposiveness; if we did not presuppose this purposiveness, there could not be systematic unity in the thorough classification of particular forms in terms of empirical laws” (Ak. 219’).

⁴⁹ In §65, ‘Things [Considered] as Natural Purposes Are Organized Beings,’ Kant writes: “In order for a thing to be a natural purpose... the possibility of its parts (as concerns both their existence and their form) must depend on their relation to the whole. For since the thing itself is a purpose, it is covered [*befafßt*] by a concept or idea that must determine a priori everything that the thing is to contain” (Ak. 373).

possesses a sort of autonomy because it is able to find the rule rather than having the rule determined for it, as it is in determinate judgment. Still, though the legislation of judgment is autonomous, it is not valid objectively (as it is in theoretical laws of nature or practical laws of freedom). Hence Kant names it 'heautonomy' because it legislates neither to nature nor freedom but only to itself.⁵⁰

In the *Critique of Judgment*, judgment becomes central to the formation of empirical laws, i.e. to a lawfulness that is objectively contingent but subjectively necessary. And yet, if the empirical law is to be at all lawlike, this objective *contingency* must not preclude objective *validity*. A critique of reflective judgment forms the connection between objective contingency and subjective necessity. This function of judgment is nowhere more evident than in claims to purposiveness, through which a merely reflective judgment "acquires a claim to universal validity and necessity."⁵¹

Given Kant's treatment of law in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the concept of a law that is based in contingency seems very strange indeed. This again brings to the fore the problem of the distinction between regulative and constitutive principles. Purposiveness is part of an organism's possibility qua living, ordered thing, but not of its possibility *tout court*. Thus the contradiction between objective necessity and lawlike organic contingency is resolved when order is viewed regulatively. Huneman writes: "The difference between system (= necessary order) and technique (= contingent order) has been replaced by the difference between *nature* (lawlike) and *order of nature* (constituted by the transcendental presuppositions of reason)... the order of nature is necessitated by a kind of necessity other than that of nature itself with its laws."⁵²

⁵⁰ Ak. 225' *Op. cit.* fn. 2

⁵¹ Ak. 243'

⁵² Huneman (2007) 78

As self-grounding, judgment can validly presuppose the systematicity of nature, but this does not – indeed must not – entail that it can therefore locate systematicity and purposiveness in nature itself: “Judgment presupposes it only in relation to this power itself, even though this purposiveness does also carry with it the concept of a *possible* objective purposiveness, i.e., of a lawfulness of things of nature as natural purposes.”⁵³ And yet its regulative constriction nonetheless allows for a lawlikeness, even in the absence of possible empirical verification of the presupposition itself. This is possible because Kant is concerned with our experience of lawlikeness – an experience that takes place in excess of nature insofar as this lawlikeness attributes regularity and purpose to natural objects. This experience leads to the antinomy of reflective judgment. The antinomy of judgment arises when we demand both a mechanistic and teleological causal explanation for organisms. Our understanding of organisms as organized beings with purposive functioning entails that we regard organisms as both purposes (as caused by a concept) and as products of nature (as produced by a process that does not involve a concept, i.e. mechanistically).⁵⁴ By distinguishing between those determinative judgments regarding mechanistic causation in organisms and the reflective judgments of teleology, Kant is able to mark out a place for the order of nature without undermining its causal determination.

If reflective judgment provides the conditions for empirical laws, then the key to resolving the antinomy of judgment is to distinguish between empirical laws, theoretical laws, and norms. In describing the antinomy of judgment, Kant writes that to treat the maxims of purposiveness constitutively is to treat them as determinate judgments. This would result, not in an antinomy of judgment, but in a conflict within the legislation of reason. Keeping the tension in play while

⁵³ Ak. 248’

⁵⁴ Kant gives a full treatment of this topic in §64 ‘On the Character Peculiar to Things [Considered] as Natural Purposes,’ which he begins: “To say that a thing is possible only as a purpose is to say that the causality that gave rise to it must be sought, not in the mechanism of nature, but in a cause whose ability to act is determined by concepts” (Ak. 369).

resolving the conflict between our judgment regarding organisms and determinate judgments, Kant does not here deny the possibility of empirical law demonstrating all the regularity of law. He does deny that an empirical law is of the same type as that of determinate judgment, in which the necessity of subsumption under concepts cannot be other than it is. What, then, is the necessity of empirical law such that it is clearly distinguished from the legislation of reason? Considered as part of reflective judgment, there is no conflict between the two maxims because reflective judgment makes a claim about how I *ought* to judge rather than about the possibility of the thing itself. While this distinction assuages the conflict, our persistent experience of the normative rule keeps alive the tension between these laws as true of an organism or true merely of our apprehension of organisms.

Kant's resolution of the antinomy asserts that purposiveness does not stand opposed to mechanism (as does freedom in the Third Antinomy of Reason), but that it is meant to explain something within our experience of *organisms in particular*. This also helps account for Kant's comment in the First Introduction, where he writes that we should pursue mechanical explanation as far as possible because this is the basis of true physical explanation of nature.⁵⁵ The type of explanation given in mechanical explanation qualitatively differs from that of purposive explanation without conflicting with it. In "Kant on Understanding Organisms as Natural Purposes," Hannah Ginsborg points out that the mechanical inexplicability of organisms is not merely a matter of their origin.⁵⁶ Presumably, there are other things in nature that mechanistic explanation cannot fully account for, such as geographic formations, yet we do not require purposive explanations of the inorganic in the same way we seek an explanation regarding the unity of purposive functioning in an organism. Thus the sort of explanation *we* seek differs in the case of organisms: organisms do not

⁵⁵ "In our empirical investigation of nature in its causal connection, we can and should endeavor to [proceed] in terms of nature's merely mechanical laws as far as we can, for in these laws lie the true physical bases for [an] explanation [of nature, the bases] which [in their] coherence constitute what scientific knowledge of nature we have through reason" (Ak. 235').

⁵⁶ Ginsborg (2001) 243

merely require an explanation of how they came to be, but of how they possess coherence and consistency of behavior.⁵⁷

Put differently, the concept of the whole does not cause the unity of the organism, but is nonetheless responsible for our ability to grasp the organism as unified and in a unified way. It is not a hypothesis about the cause of an organism, but about the grounds for cognizing it, guiding our research, not only into causes, but also into the structure and working of an organism.⁵⁸ In organisms, then, this relation between the idea of the whole and the combination of its parts determines the object, not as cause, “but as the basis on which someone judging this whole cognizes the systematic unity in the form and combination of all the manifold contained in the given matter.”⁵⁹ This claim that the unity of the organism determines its parts is located within judgment itself, both in its source and its validity: nature’s purposiveness, “whether it is merely *formal* or *real*, is only a relation of things to our power of judgment.”⁶⁰ Hence purposiveness is merely regulative because it does not posit anything about the object, but only about our relation to the object: “We say that we put final causes into things, rather than, as it were, lifting them out of our perception of things.”⁶¹

The key to understanding the validity of a reflective judgment thus lies in its being a subjective rather than an objective judgment. Considered with regard to taste, this judgment does not determine something in the object, but in us. The free (rather than determinate) relation between the understanding and imagination that marks aesthetic judgment gives it, however, both its subjective character and its universality. Kant writes: “So it is actually only in taste, and in taste concerning objects of nature [rather than art], that judgment reveals itself as a power that has its

⁵⁷ Ginsborg (2001) 245

⁵⁸ Ginsborg (2001) 235

⁵⁹ Ak. 373

⁶⁰ Ak. 221'

⁶¹ Ak. 220', fn. 27

own principle and hence is justified – which in the case of this power might come as a surprise – in claiming a place in the general critique of the higher cognitive powers.”⁶² Yet judgment’s role is more complicated with regard to the science of life – biology – and its claims on our experience of organisms as internally coherent unities (i.e. as purposive). Kant claims to maintain his distinction between constitutive and regulative principles by allowing for our grasping of an organism as purposive and as if designed, while cordoning off this apprehension in the regulative realm of reason. This creates a tension between the claims that (a) systematicity and purposiveness do not constitute objects or contribute directly to knowledge, but (b) are nonetheless necessary for scientific inquiry and the rendering coherent of the diversity of both nature and our experience. Through the principle of purposiveness, design and mechanism come together to form a subjective yet universally valid judgment that, though not determinate, is nonetheless grounded in the cognitive faculties of judgment. But while it is subjective and formal in the aesthetic realm, purposiveness in the biological realm is nonetheless real.

In order to begin to parse out both the content of a purposive claim and its ability to *acquire* universal validity and necessity, we must first understand such a claim’s peculiar place within Kant’s system. While purposiveness is denied the legislative authority reserved for the moral law, it is nonetheless accorded lawlikeness. The key to understanding this lies in Kant’s claim that judgment is not an independent cognitive power.⁶³ Though judgment has its own principle that confers its validity, it can only “consider the relation, prior to any concept, in which two powers – imagination and understanding – are in a presentation, and thereby perceive, as the object is apprehended (by imagination), the object’s subjective purposiveness for the cognitive powers.”⁶⁴

⁶² Ak. 244’

⁶³ “Yet judgment is a very special power, not at all independent: it gives us neither concepts nor ideas of any object whatever, whereas understanding does give us such concepts, and reason such ideas” (Ak. 202’).

⁶⁴ Ak. 233’

Judgment thus provides the transition that connects the two parts of theoretical and practical reason: “This transition is from the *sensible* substrate of theoretical philosophy to the *intelligible* substrate of practical philosophy.”⁶⁵ Reflective judgment does not give rise to cognition or contribute to its doctrine – i.e. it is not constitutive – but, from the basis of subjective principles, it is able to “refer sensible intuitions to an idea of nature in which [nature’s] lawfulness is beyond [our] understanding unless [we] relate nature to a supersensible substrate, thus uniting reason in its theoretical and practical use in a scientific system.”⁶⁶

Purposiveness, as the idea of a whole that precedes and renders coherent the organism’s parts, is a special case of systematicity that connects understanding as constitutive and reason as legislating to empirical phenomena, in particular to organisms. Though teleological judgments are merely reflective and follow the principles of reason, “we can make these judgments only by connecting reason with empirical concepts.”⁶⁷ The place of purposiveness within Kant’s system is articulated in his distinction between spontaneous and intentional final causes in nature. The first belongs to reflective judgment, the second to determinate judgment. “For the first concept too we need reason, but here we need it only in order to engage in experience in terms of principles (hence this is reason in its *immanent* use); but for the second concept reason would have to stray into what is excessive [for it] (hence this would be reason in its transcendent use).”⁶⁸ Whether purposiveness is intentional or unintentional must be left indeterminate. Purposiveness is a transcendent concept of reason made immanently useful for judgment, i.e. useful in experience.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Ak. 246’

⁶⁶ Ak. 246’-247’

⁶⁷ Ak. 243’

⁶⁸ Ak. 235’

⁶⁹ “Hence the concept of natural purposes is a concept solely of reflective judgment, a concept [it must use] solely for its own sake in pursuing the causal connection in objects of experience. In [using] a teleological principle for explaining the inner possibility of certain natural forms, we leave undetermined whether their purposiveness is *intentional* or *unintentional*. If a judgment asserted either of these alternatives, it would no longer be merely reflective but would be determinative; and the concept of a natural purpose would also no longer be a mere *concept of the power of judgment*, for

Systematicity, as it pertains to purposiveness, thus allows for the mutual maintenance of the seemingly contradictory claims of mechanism and teleology in nature. In *Understanding Purpose*, Huneman locates the difference between mechanism and purpose in their divergent causal roles. The idea of the whole is not a cause, “hence it is only a *principle of knowledge*. So the *real* causes of the arrangement of parts must be the parts themselves, which thereby produce one another and their relations *according – for us – to the idea of the whole*.”⁷⁰ The causal claim in these two cases must be different: because mechanism is in tension with purpose, the legitimate use of the principle of systematicity depends on its not conflicting with the constitutive principles of understanding.

Though it is perceived in experience, purposiveness is not derived from experience. Purposiveness enters as an explanatory principle when mechanistic explanation falls short, for example when considering the construction of a bird that is so geared for flight that it seems it could not have come about by mere mechanism. Yet, that organisms cannot be fully explained mechanistically does not account for why the concept of purpose is needed to guide our investigation into their structure and workings. Moreover, purposiveness is not meant to function as a scientific explanation of organisms because its judgment “does not deal with them mechanically, as it were, like an instrument, guided by the understanding and the senses; it deals with them *artistically*, in terms of a principle that is universal but also indeterminate.”⁷¹

Reflective judgment is thus capable of distinguishing between what Kant terms the mechanical and the technical. Determinate judgment regards only the possibility of things themselves and hence reduces explanation to mechanical causation,⁷² while reflective judgment

immanent use (i.e., use in experience), but would be connected with a *concept of reason*: the concept of a cause that we posit beyond nature and that acts intentionally, a concept that is transcendent, whether we are in this case judging affirmatively or negatively” (Ak. 236’-237’).

⁷⁰ Huneman (2007) 87

⁷¹ Ak. 214’

⁷² “The distinction between these two ways of judging natural beings [i.e. the mechanical and technical] is made merely by *reflective* judgment. [Making this distinction is] something that *determinative* judgment did not (under principles of

proceeds according to laws of its own, which operate technically: “this technical procedure is based on the technic of nature, and hence on the concept of a purposiveness, a purposiveness we must presuppose a priori in nature.”⁷³ Yet, Kant is quick to note, the technic of nature is distinct from the mechanism of nature, and hence so are their respective *a priori* principles: “there is no inconsistency whatever between a *mechanical explanation* of an appearance, which is a task that reason performs in terms of objective principles, [and] a *technical rule for judging* that same object in terms of subjective principles of reflection on [such an] object.”⁷⁴ This is because “insofar as nature’s products are aggregates, nature proceeds *mechanically, as mere nature*; but insofar as its products are systems... nature proceeds *technically*” as art.⁷⁵

Through Kant’s critique of judgment, we thus begin to see a distinct conception of a law of nature that is neither determinate nor autonomous, yet is nonetheless validly experienced as a law. As Kant repeatedly points out in the First Introduction, the necessary lawfulness of nature is based in contingency: “purposiveness is a lawfulness that [something] contingent [may] have [insofar] as [it] is contingent.”⁷⁶ This distinction allows us to understand how an object can fail to be as it is supposed to be – the element of contingency underlying reflective judgment – but is nonetheless experientially determined by a judgment about how it ought to be. Kant compels us to ask what it means to perceive this purposiveness in such a way that it does not determine something about the object. Reflective judgment is neither theoretical nor practical because it determines nothing about the object or its production: “rather, in them we judge nature itself, though merely by analogy with an art, in its subjective relation to our cognitive power, rather than in its objective relation to

reason) allow it [to do], as regards the possibility of things themselves, wishing perhaps to have everything reduced to a mechanical kind of explanation. [But] reflective judgment certainly can, and perhaps must, permit [*geschehen lassen*] this distinction” (Ak. 218’).

⁷³ Ak. 248’

⁷⁴ Ak. 218’

⁷⁵ Ak. 217’

⁷⁶ Ak. 217’

objects.”⁷⁷ Occupying both necessary (mechanical) and technical (teleological) spheres, we must ask what it means for an organism to be lawlike and necessary as a purposive system, given that an organism can fail to be as it is supposed to be. We must ask, in other words, about what it means for an organism to fail to live up to its own standard.

1.3 Nature and norms: the purpose of purposiveness (without purpose)

Purposiveness, as a case of systematicity in which the idea of the whole informs its parts, completes Kant’s critical system by pointing beyond theoretical and practical reason to their unified functioning in human cognition. The aim of this examination is to make clear the specific regulative role of systematicity within Kant’s system, in particular regarding its claims to bridge the gap between the theoretical and practical. Yet, the conclusion of this inquiry does not achieve a full unification of the sciences of logic, psychology and nature, which remain distinct as a result of Kant’s commitment to the regulative.⁷⁸ Systematicity grounds the idea of unity of the sciences, but also proscribes this unity by denying this principle constitutive status.

The ‘ought’ of the *Critique of Judgment* is thus different from that of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The *Critique of Judgment* is meant to answer the question of legitimacy of our normative judgments within experience. But the deeper need for this justification lies in the indeterminacy of a coherent system uniting laws of the understanding. The key to understanding this appears in the Appendix to the Dialectic and the principle of systematicity. Though the unity of nature is merely projected, it nonetheless furnishes a *criterion* for the rules of the understanding.⁷⁹ Thus, Kant writes,

⁷⁷ Ak. 201

⁷⁸ This leads Hegel to drive the principle of systematicity further by rendering it constitutive, uniting these different modes through a history of consciousness.

⁷⁹ A647/B675 *Op. cit.* fn. 7 and 11

we have no option but to propose the systematic unity of nature if we are to secure a criterion for empirical truth [*Merkmal empirischer Wahrheit*].⁸⁰

Considered as mere mechanism, the design of nature seems arbitrary. This seeming arbitrariness of nature dissatisfies our reason, thus driving us beyond nature to find its purposiveness⁸¹. When Kant cites the example of a bird, he suggests that mechanism cannot explain the unity of the organism because mechanical nature is aimless: “nature, considered as mere mechanism, could have structured itself differently in a thousand ways without hitting on precisely the unity in terms of a principle of purposes.”⁸² The worry Kant here expresses is not that mechanism is without law, but that its lawfulness is not adequate to explain why an organism is this way rather than another – i.e. why it *should* be this way.

The antinomy of teleological judgment aims to establish the compatibility of these two modes of knowing (experiencing) an organism. The first maxim regarding mechanical causality is given *a priori*, while judgment adopts its determination of purposiveness by “special experiences, experiences that bring reason into play so that we may judge corporeal nature and its laws in terms of a special principle.”⁸³ This ‘special principle’ aims to account for why we think of an organism as *supposed* to be this way rather than some other. In laws of inorganic nature we experience an

⁸⁰ A651/B679 *Op. cit.* p.17

⁸¹ Kant opens the Critique of Teleological Judgment with this thought, expressed in §61 ‘On Objective Purposiveness of Nature,’ where he writes: “For when we point, for example, to the structure of birds regarding how their bones are hollow, how their wings are positioned to produce motion and their tails to permit steering, and so on, we are saying that all of this is utterly contingent if we go by the mere *nexus effectivus* in nature and do not yet resort to a special kind of causality, viz., the causality of purposes (the *nexus finalis*); in other words, we are saying that nature, considered as mere mechanism, could have structured itself differently in a thousand ways without hitting on precisely the unity in terms of principles or purposes, and so we cannot hope to find a priori the slightest basis for that unity unless we seek it beyond the concept of nature rather than in it” (Ak. 360). In this section, Kant clearly expresses both the need for and requirement of creating a special place (within our cognitive functioning rather than in nature) of causality pertaining to purposiveness and our experience of nature as causally ordered and yet not mechanistically determined. The need for such an explanation both arises from and satisfies our reason.

⁸² Ak. 360

⁸³ Ak. 386

inadequacy to account for the organism's design, which causes us to look for another ground of its possibility – something that determines how the organism is supposed to be.

What we seek in an explanation of organisms is not a causal account of their coming to be – i.e. a better mechanistic explanation – but an account of how they conform to our conception of how they ought to be. Thus purpose and purposiveness are essentially tied to normativity and only incidentally to production by design insofar as explanation by design gives an account of how an organism *ought* to be.⁸⁴ To regard something as an end is to regard it as conforming to normative rules or constraints. Hence something can be an end without the attribution of design because it can still be regarded as governed by normative constraints. This distinguishes 'end' from a causal history: "All that is essential is that it be governed by normative constraints, and that it is compatible with its being the product of natural processes rather than design."⁸⁵ Kant's treatment is thus an attempt to bridge the gap between understanding things as they are and as they *ought* to be.

Both aesthetic and teleological judgments conform to a law without an antecedent case that specifies this law:

What is common to organic beings and objects of aesthetic appreciation, then, is that they both call for recognition of a normative dimension: in the one case, to the way they are, and in the other, to their relation to our mental faculties. They both require us to go beyond the factual claim that this is how something is, to the normative claim that this is how it ought to be.⁸⁶

We judge that a natural object conforms to a norm through a judgment that a thing is (or fails to be) as it ought to be. Further, this normative claim regarding organisms cannot be derived from experience because experience only teaches us what things are, not what they ought to be. Moreover, this normative component is not contained in every judgment we make. We ascribe normative lawlikeness to organic beings, but not to the inorganic world. As Kant notes, I can use a

⁸⁴ Ginsborg (2006) 464

⁸⁵ Ginsborg (2006) 464

⁸⁶ Ginsborg (1997) 351

thing (such as a stone) a certain way, but this does not entail that this is its purpose. Only of an organism (such as an eye) do I say that it ought to be such and such a way.⁸⁷ Hence the organic can appear as defective, while the inorganic is merely unsuitable for our purposes. In the case of organic beings, we go beyond experience to make this claim, and, as noted throughout Kant's three *Critiques*, only in going beyond experience can this claim confer the necessity of lawlikeness.

The contingency of organisms accounts for why there can be irregularities in them without requiring us to abandon all claims regarding regularity in organisms and order in nature. When we view these irregularities as malfunctions or aberrations, we are not claiming that things *cannot* happen this way for an organism, but that they *should* not.⁸⁸ In order to study biological phenomena, we must regard them as rule-governed; because they are contingent with regard to the laws of matter, the only way that they are rule-governed is normatively. Thus, Kant tells us that “the concept of connections and natural forms in terms of purposes does at least serve us as *one more principle* for bringing nature's appearances under rules in those cases where the causal laws of nature's mere mechanism are not sufficient to allow us to do so.”⁸⁹ Hence we need a concept of purpose that is separate from that of origin. This separate ground of explanation allows that the organism's purposiveness does not conflict with its contingency vis-à-vis mechanical laws. Instead, contingency is the condition for the sort of rule an organism follows.

⁸⁷ “That our eyes allow us to see, this we experience directly, and we also experience directly their outer structure and their inner structure, which contain the conditions that make it possible to use them in this way, and so we experience directly the causality [our eyes involve] in terms of mechanical laws. Now if I use a stone to smash something on it, or to build [something] on it, etc., I can [regard] these effects too as purposes [and] refer them to their causes; but that does not entitle me to say that the stone was [meant] to serve for building. Only about the eye do I make the judgment that it *was [meant] to be suitable for sight*...I think a necessity in this form and structure of the eye: [the] necessity of being built a certain way, namely, in terms of a concept which precedes [the action of] the causes that build this organ, and without which (unlike in the case of that stone) no mechanical law of nature will allow me to grasp the possibility of that natural product” (Ak. 240’).

⁸⁸ Ginsborg (2001) 252

⁸⁹ Ak. 360

Yet it is not merely the resolution of the antinomy between mechanism and purpose that leads Kant to relegate purposiveness to the regulative. The conceptual problem Kant faces is how various genera and species can legitimately be brought together in a unified system within which the empirical sciences can make valid claims about the order of nature.⁹⁰ Further, though reason orders classificatory concepts of nature and not nature itself, this ordering cannot be arbitrary, but must, its subjectivity notwithstanding, accurately (i.e. objectively) classify its objects in their nature.

Contrary to a reading of purposiveness as applying differently to art and organisms, this subjective aspect of judgment unites the two halves of the *Critique of Judgment*. Insofar as the judgment in both cases is not about what is merely there in the object, but about how we are *supposed* to judge this object, judgment is a singular activity. In both cases, judgment in terms of purposiveness is guided by normative considerations rather than merely factual observation of objects. In speaking of aesthetic judgments, Kant writes:

[Judgments in terms of purposes] claim necessity; they do not say that everyone judges like that – in which case the task of explaining them would fall to empirical psychology – but say that we *ought* to judge like that, which amounts to saying that they have for themselves an a priori principle. If these judgments, in claiming necessity, did not contain a reference to such a principle, we would have to assume it legitimate to assert that the judgment ought to hold universally because observation proves that it actually holds universally, and to assert, conversely, that from the fact that everyone judges a certain way it follows that he also *ought* to judge that way. But that is obviously absurd.⁹¹

⁹⁰ A651/B679 *Op. cit.* fn. 6 and 7. At A654-655/B682-683, Kant further elaborates: “The logical principle of genera therefore presupposes a transcendental one if it is to be applied to nature (by which I here understand only objects that are given to us). According to that principle, sameness of kind is necessarily presupposed in the manifold of a possible experience (even though we cannot determine its degree *a priori*), because without it no empirical concepts and hence no experience would be possible./To the logical principle of genera which postulates identity there is opposed another, namely that of species, which needs manifoldness and variety in things despite their agreement under the same genus, and prescribes to the understanding that it be no less attentive to variety than to agreement. This principle (of discrimination, or of the faculty of distinguishing) severely limits the rashness of the first principle (of wit); and here reason shows two interests that conflict with each other: on the one side, an interest in the domain (universality) in regard to genera, on the other an interest in content (determinacy) in respect of the manifoldness of species; for in the first case the understanding thinks much under its concepts, while in the second it thinks all the more in them.”

⁹¹ Ak. 239’

Kant unites the subjectivity of reflective judgments with their universality through the principle of sociality, which links the subjectivity of our judgments, giving them their universal scope.

Objectivity in judgment is not a claim on the object, but rather a claim about our sociality. The validity of our judgments is based on our agreement as humans sharing a rational framework. This theory of validity in judgment resonates with Kant's demarcation of transcendental ideas as emanating from reason alone. Yet, if this is the case, the question then becomes one similar to that of our ability to know the inner nature of things, namely, if these constraints issue from reason alone, how can we be assured that they ground our claims regarding nature rather than being merely regulative?

The key to understanding how aesthetic and teleological judgments are normative claims based in sociality lies in Kant's above claim that purposive judging does not make an empirical claim about how an object is or what a work means, but a normative claim about how an organism or a work of art ought to be. For Kant, this judgment is transcendental and hence necessary precisely because it does not emanate from the empirical. In fact, Kant finds it absurd to think that we could derive such a normative claim from an empirical observance that others also judge an object in this way. Moreover, normative judgment does not assert that one *will* judge a work this way, or even that an organism will be this way: the necessity involved in an aesthetic or teleological judgment is not logical and is not derived from a determinate principle. Nonetheless, teleological judgments make *reference* to – and indeed are impossible without – an *a priori* principle of our sociality, not as an actual connection with others, but as a shared cognitive framework.⁹²

⁹² Reflective judgments “do not say that everyone judges like that – in which case the task of explaining them would fall to empirical psychology – but say that we *ought* to judge like that, which amounts to saying that they have for themselves an *a priori* principle. If these judgments, in claiming necessity, did not contain a reference to such a principle, we would have to assume it legitimate to assert that the judgment ought to hold universally because observation proves that it actually holds universally, and to assert, conversely, that from the fact that everyone judges a certain way it follows that he also *ought* to judge that way. But that is obviously absurd” (Ak. 239’).

Kant locates normativity as a central component of our judgment of organisms. He accepts the basis of scientific explanation in mechanistic causality that was widely accepted in the biological sciences of his time, but is deeply ambivalent about its ability to adequately account for our real experience of purposiveness. Thus, while Kant notes the limits of mechanistic explanation with respect to organisms, the real limit of mechanistic accounts has to do with our own nature: mechanism is inadequate to explain *our* experience of organisms and the role our cognition plays therein. Kant's particular – and peculiar – presentation of ideas contributes to a rational, non-mechanistic theory of causality that is not that of the autonomy of practical reason, but that of a normativity deeply connected to theoretical cognition.

Kant thus locates teleological judgment centrally within the triad of critical questions concerning what I can know, should do, and can hope for. Yet, we are compelled to ask what it is about theoretical and practical reason that leads Kant to place judgment within their critique. We get a glimpse at an answer towards the end of the 'Critique of Teleological Judgment,' where Kant begins to carve out the place of purposiveness as necessary for our *human judgment*.⁹³ Both theoretical and practical reason truck in universal laws, but particulars cannot be determined in their contingency (i.e. their particularity) through the universal. Judgment fills in this gap by giving content to the underdetermined universal and allows us to grasp the lawlikeness of particulars. This opens onto a deeper understanding of our ethical being through a propaedeutic of sociality that is simultaneously universal and sympathetic/communicative.⁹⁴

⁹³ "Hence the concept of purposiveness that nature displays in its products must be one that, while not pertaining to the determination of objects themselves, is nevertheless a subjective principle that reason has for our judgment, since this principle is necessary for human judgment in dealing with nature. The principle is regulative (not constitutive), but it holds just as necessarily for our *human judgment* as it would if it were an objective principle" (Ak. 404).

⁹⁴ In the final section before the Critique of Teleological Judgment, 'On the Methodology Concerning Taste,' Kant introduces the principle of sociality in reflective judgments: "The propaedeutic [of taste in art] does not consist in [following] precepts but in cultivating our mental powers by exposing ourselves beforehand to what we call *humaniora*; they are called that presumably because *humanity* [*Humanität*] means both the universal *feeling of sympathy*, and the ability to engage universally in very intimate *communication*. When these two qualities are combined, they

1.4 The ends of purposiveness

Normative phenomena, in the *Critique of Judgment*, make claims on others (in aesthetic judgment) or about organic life (in teleological judgment). Both are based in the subject's judgment, yet are conferred universal validity as self-grounding in judgment. This validity serves to justify our scientific inquiry as well as to legitimate its findings, while remaining within the bounds of a regulative or heuristic principle. In the 'Critique of Teleological Judgment,' Kant is dealing, not with the peculiarities of the organism, but with the peculiarities of our explanations of organisms. Reason's idea of systematicity unites our experience, despite the fact that unity runs aground at the limits of our possible experience. The failure of this unity is nowhere more dissatisfying than in the gap between our experience of the development of organisms and that of our own human development in history. As we have seen, given the limits Kant sets for possible experience and the criterion that reason be autonomous, the demand for unity cannot be satisfied directly. Nonetheless, there is a way that this demand for unity is satisfied in Kant's treatment of culture, which presents itself as humankind's proper domain.

At the end of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant returns us to ourselves by identifying culture (*Kultur*) as the ultimate purpose of nature as a teleological system.⁹⁵ Through our encounter with organisms, we learn about our own purpose: the achievement of culture. At the end of the *Critique of Judgment*, the fundamental dualisms of Kant's system stand in persistent tension with the demand

constitute the sociability that befits [our] humanity [*Menschheit*] and distinguishes it from the limitation [characteristic] of animals" (Ak. 355).

⁹⁵ Kant lays out his argument for culture as the ultimate purpose of nature as a teleological system in §83 'On the Ultimate Purpose That Nature Has as a Teleological System' (Ak. 429-434), where he writes: "Hence among all the purposes in nature there remains only this [one], as that which nature can accomplish with a view to the final purpose outside of nature, and this [one] and subjective condition, namely, man's aptitude in general for setting himself purposes, and for using nature (independently of [the element of] nature in man's determination of purposes) as a means [for achieving them] in conformity with the maxims of his free purposes generally. Producing in a rational being an aptitude for purposes generally (hence [in a way that leaves] that being free) is *culture*. Hence only culture can be the ultimate purpose that we have cause to attribute to nature with respect to the human species" (Ak. 431).

for systematic unity, serving to both unite and cleave what Karl Ameriks calls Kant's 'modest system.' Though the *Critique of Judgment* is meant to form the bridge between theoretical and practical judgments, the way in which Kant engages empirical concepts simultaneously reinforces the distinction between the practical and theoretical, thus describing a unified system that contains insurmountable divisions: the pieces of the system hang together, but do not substantively interact. Judgments of purposiveness appear as a bridge between mechanistic nature and purpose by design by validating the lawlikeness of contingency, reflectively locating the ultimate purpose of nature in the pursuit of culture. Culture consequently secures our place as lord of nature through reference to a purpose that can be independent of nature.⁹⁶

By recasting the third antinomy of freedom as the antinomy of judgment between mechanism and purposiveness, Kant allows for a resolution to the antinomy in experience by affirming validity of both mechanistic determinations and rational freedoms. What remains to be explored is what this antinomy and its resolution (and the introduction of heautonomy) may mean for our experience of freedom.

Though Kant's critical system resolves the antinomy of determinism and freedom and delivers a nuanced account of how we unite our experiences in meaningful relation to one another through systematicity, he nonetheless reaffirms his distinction between constitutive and regulative principles and thereby denies our experiences and the ideas they generate a formative role in our cultural development. Hegel takes up Kant's problematic themes of nature and teleology in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, recasting them in Life and the dialectical development of forms of life that concatenate natural, rational and social life. In making this turn, Hegel unites the divisions in Kant's

⁹⁶ "Man is indeed the only being on earth that has understanding and hence an ability to set himself purposes of his own choice, and in this respect he holds the title of lord of nature; and if we regard nature as a teleological system, then it is man's vocation to be the ultimate purpose of nature, but always subject to a condition: he must have the understanding and the will to give both nature and himself reference to a purpose that can be independent of nature, self-sufficient, and a final purpose. The final purpose, however, we must not seek within nature at all" (Ak. 431).

system, but in so doing, renders problematic the place of freedom that is secured through Kant's proposition of its distinct causality. In the remaining chapters, we will turn to Hegel's system, teasing out his deployment of Life and its relation to the constitutive role of ideas in the dialectical development of forms of life.

CHAPTER 2

HEGEL AND MINDFUL LIFE

Seen through Kant's critical framework, our experience of organisms reveals a form of judgment that is neither practical nor theoretical, but rather forms a bridge between the two. Reflective judgment, as Kant understands it, makes the validity of our experience and understanding of organized life possible. At the same time, it also delimits our experience of living organisms (and ourselves) and thereby limits our connection with natural life. In the *Critique of Judgment's* treatment of purposiveness, the distinctions between reason and nature that are deployed in determining the laws of theoretical and practical reason become troubled in the face of their empirical application. Ultimately, however, they are reinforced by Kant's determination that our judgments regarding organisms reveal something about our cognition rather than about organic life. Kant's engagement with life remains an engagement with thinking that, as such, reaffirms the distinction between nature and knowledge and forecloses the ability of objects themselves to generate knowledge.

This chapter will turn to Hegel's dialectical holism as developed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in particular his dialectically holist treatment of Life, as addressing the gaps identified in Kant's system that presuppose, and thus confirm, a schism between natural and rational life. The critique of this segregation forms the grounds of Hegel's criticism of Kant and, I will argue, Hegel primarily casts this limitation as epistemological rather than metaphysical. As Hegel underscores throughout the development of forms of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, by distinguishing between regulative and constitutive principles in order to make space for empirical concepts that can extend but not generate knowledge, Kant forecloses a deeper understanding of the role that

history and institutions play in the formation of our ethical selves and our possibilities for achieving freedom within these determinations. Still, Hegel does not abandon the project of a scientific system of inquiry that generates valid claims. He takes up Kant's challenge laid out in the Appendix to the *Critique of Pure Reason* to pursue a coherency of experience that goes beyond the limitations of the understanding. In so doing, Hegel ushers in a new form of idealism that is also, at its core, a reworked naturalism.

In both Kant and Hegel, life appears on the occasion of examining experience's coherence. Kant distinguishes between the *validity* of a judgment arising from experience through the function of understanding, and the *coherency* of experience made possible (though not valid) through the regulative principle of systematic interconnection. Hegel eschews Kant's distinction, furthering his assertion that judgments about experience can only be valid or true in coherent (i.e. systematic) connection to other judgments or truth-claims. In the Preface to the *Phenomenology* Hegel equates science with 'knowledge' or 'knowledge in general.'⁹⁷ In Hegel's systematic exposition of knowledge, one cannot know truths disaggregated from the whole. He thereby rejects Kant's distinction between the *validity* and *coherency* of experience and, by extension, repudiates the associated distinctions between Understanding and Reason and their constitutive and regulative principles. More importantly, Hegel's reworking of experience's coherency undermines Kant's fundamental distinction between things in themselves and objects of possible experience. Hegel's holist demand requires that things in themselves not be left behind. As we will see, Hegel engages the object in its independence without subsuming it within reason or leaving us only its naturalistic determination.

⁹⁷ "Pure self-recognition in absolute otherness, this Aether *as such*, is the ground and soil of Science or *knowledge in general*" (*Phen* 14, ¶26) and "It is this coming-to-be of *Science as such* or of *knowledge*, that is described in this *Phenomenology of Spirit*" (*Phen* 15, ¶27).

By juxtaposing his living system with Kant's lifeless determinations, Hegel is juxtaposing Kant's method, in which the subject constitutes the object to be what it is *for us*, to his own method in which the subject recognizes the object in its self-motion (self-determination). Life is thus fundamental to Hegel's project and his post-critical (i.e. post-Kantian) system, not for its substantial meaning or even heuristic function, but for what it represents, viz. the distinction between determination and *self*-determination of the other.

This chapter will defend the thesis that Hegel successfully bridges the gap between reason and nature through casting Life as the object's self-determination; this is a necessary moment in the dialectical development of self-consciousness and hence points to a primordial state of unity between nature and reason that does not revert to a pre-critical monism but rather requires a dialectical holism to be made intelligible. Where Kant's system both presupposes and discovers a gap between rational and natural life, Hegel pushes beyond (or before) this dualism by recasting his distinction between rational and natural life as two aspects of an integrated whole, arising from a united beginning in Life. Continuing to explore the theme of the (dis)continuity of human and biological life through the epistemological-normative lens of purposiveness, we will see how Hegel denies the grounds of Kant's distinction between the theoretical and practical and hence between regulative and constitutive principles. Ultimately, Hegel undoes Kant's distinction between understanding and reason, bringing both in to congress with experience and into his philosophical system in a way that allows experience to contribute to, rather than detract from, knowledge. By collapsing Kant's distinction between regulative and constitutive ideas, Hegel's holism drives beyond Kant's system and allows for a more comprehensive accounting of human knowing. In so doing, Hegel reconnects natural and epistemic life through a post-critical stance that brings to light forms of consciousness as forms of life. In so doing, Hegel delivers us into a space for thinking together our determination and freedom by setting cultural life and the independence of the object

in a dialectical relation. But to start, we must turn to the first appearance of Life, where Hegel integrates the independent object in his system, thus moving beyond Kant's lifeless determinations.

2.1 Engendering life

Hegel's early writings are marked by a preoccupation with the natural sciences. In his dissertation on the orbital rotation of the planets and in *The Spirit of Christianity*, Hegel already begins to explore a nuanced interconnection of reason and nature. These early writings focus on the movement of natural things, shifting from a physics to a geometry of motion and causality. This rethinking of the relation among natural things and of the positivity imposed on them by understanding lays the groundwork for a new articulation of system and the concordant philosophy of reconciliation between nature and reason as articulated in Hegel's first full work, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, where life first comes to play a central role in Hegel's thought.⁹⁸

Hegel's *Difference* essay takes up the development of Kant's thought in the systems of Fichte and Schelling, both of whom attempted to create a system unified in the Absolute that brings together all that remains disparate in Kant's system. For a majority of his examination of the Absolute in Schelling and Fichte, Hegel dwells on art and nature as key concepts for unlocking the unity that Kant points to in the *Critique of Judgment*. While Hegel argues that Kant provides the tools to achieve this unity through his treatment of art and nature, Hegel nonetheless criticizes Kant's system as incomplete insofar as he maintains a distinction between intellect [understanding] and Reason. For Hegel, this belies an imperfect form of thought that has not yet reached proper reconciliation within Reason. Hegel takes up Kant's critical project to create a unified philosophical system, laying the groundwork for this system's development in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

⁹⁸ This analysis of Hegel's early writing pulls heavily from Olivier Depré's examination of life in Hegel's early works in his essay "Le rôle du concept de vie de Francfort à Iéna" in *Hegel et La Vie*, Ed. Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron.

In “The Art of Nature,” Allan Hance explores Hegel’s connection to the *Critique of Judgment* through his philosophy of nature and life. Hance notes a similarity between Kantian reflective judgment and Hegelian dialectic: “The structural similarity between reflective judgment and dialectical reason is that both attempt to adduce the whole that enables one to contextualize and so make sense of an isolated part (or set of parts) whose significance is unclear.”⁹⁹ As we have seen, for Kant, this connection remains regulative rather than constitutive. Kant’s bridge between theoretical and practical judgments ultimately reaffirms their separation by remaining consistently faithful to the limits of what we can validly know. By contrast, Hegel’s holism denies these distinctions that ground Kantian knowledge. In so doing, Hegel reworks the definition of knowledge by giving constitutive weight to the interconnection of all parts within his holist system.

In *Contradiction in Motion*, Susan Songsuk Hahn draws a close parallel between the function of natural life in Kant and Hegel: “Nature in its beauty... discloses to us the idea of life and by doing so gives us a clue into the workings of our own living nature.”¹⁰⁰ For both Kant and Hegel, the beauty and order of nature serve a heuristic function in our own self-awareness and knowledge. As heuristics, organisms and artworks teach us something about the structure of our cognition, but only indirectly, in our judgment regarding their beauty. For Kant, this is a mere disclosure that ultimately reaffirms the separation between ourselves and natural beauty and purposiveness. In response to this separation, Hegel’s *Difference* essay reworks the unification of nature and beauty within speculative philosophy. In so doing, Hegel reworks the heuristic of biological life as ultimately elucidating our own judgment. Nature’s teleology comes to function as a trope within Hegel’s writing that connects us to, rather than distinguishes us from, the flux of life.

⁹⁹ Hance 40

¹⁰⁰ Hahn 81

Kant's relegation of experience's coherence to a regulative principle arises from his basic distinction between objects as they are for us and things as they are in themselves. Because we cannot know the thing in itself, we also cannot make substantive claims about its causal connections. Thus the limitations imposed on knowledge as a precondition of its validity are the same conditions that delimit any knowledge of the interaction of subjects with objects. Hegel nowhere more poetically states this limitation in Kant than in the *Phenomenology* where, at the moment of self-consciousness' self-certainty derived in opposition to some other, he writes:

Certain of the nothingness of this other, [the self] explicitly affirms that this nothingness is *for it* the truth of the other; it destroys the independent object and thereby gives itself the certainty of itself as a *true* certainty, a certainty which has become explicit for self-consciousness itself *in an objective manner*.¹⁰¹

In contrast to the reflexive turns in Kant, in which our knowledge of an object is the site for uncovering knowledge of our own cognition, Hegel describes a different object that is neither the object of experience nor the thing in itself – an object that is *independent*. As the subject returns to itself from an encounter with an object, there remains a gap between knowing and the object that cannot be bridged within knowing.¹⁰² Kant's systematic proscription on objects that are both intelligible and independent of our cognition does not mind this gap, but reverts to the primacy of knowing. In contrast, by admitting the object to appear in its independence, Hegel bridges this gap within knowing, constituting both the subject and the object through their interconnection and making them intelligible within a systematic whole. This self-determination of the object radically

¹⁰¹ *Phen* 109, ¶174

¹⁰² "Opposed to an other, the 'I' is its own self, and at the same time it overarches this other which, for the 'I,' is equally only the 'I' itself./ With self-consciousness, then, we have therefore entered the native realm of truth. We have now to see how the shape of self-consciousness first makes its appearance. If we consider this new shape of knowing, the knowing of itself, in relation to that which preceded it, viz. the knowing of an other, then we see that though this other has indeed vanished, its moments have at the same time no less been preserved, and the loss consists in this, that here they are present as they are in themselves... Thus it seems that only the principle moment itself has been lost, viz. the *simple self-subsistent existence* for consciousness. But in point of fact self-consciousness is the reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and is essentially the return from *otherness*" (*Phen* 104-105, ¶166-167).

reworks the role our experience plays in generating both the form and content of our cognition, and ultimately of our self-determination in freedom. Life activates the limits of our knowledge, not because it is beyond experience, but because it is opaque within our experience. Life in the other is recognized, but only understood as analogous to my own. How, then, do we place Life in a system of knowledge?

The *Difference Essay* begins Hegel's *apologia* for speculative philosophy, the philosophy of the identity of subject and object¹⁰³ or holist systematicity. Contra Kant, Hegel argues that systematic philosophy cannot both delimit its bounds and achieve the validity of its claims. Reason, Hegel writes, achieves the Absolute only when it leaves behind the 'manifold of parts': "The more stable and splendid the edifice of the intellect is, the more restless becomes the striving of the life that is caught up in it as a part to get out of it, and raise itself to freedom."¹⁰⁴ Here Life is presented as a substrate connected to desire that engenders movement against the 'edifice' of intellect (understanding). This striving of Life is a call of the object and an internal demand for a unified system that fully accounts for the object's life.

In the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel critiques past systems of philosophy for falling prey to transcendental methodologies: these systems appear to grasp the unity of things within the absolute Idea, "but a closer inspection shows that this expansion [of the content of knowledge] has not come about through one and the same principle having spontaneously assumed different shapes, but rather through the shapeless repetition of one and the same formula, only externally applied to diverse materials."¹⁰⁵ By undergoing the experience of the development of Spirit in its historical unfolding, Hegel leads himself and his reader through its internal unfolding to deliver us to an achieved truth of systematic principles developed out of this unfolding rather than imposed upon it.

¹⁰³ "The principle of speculation is the identity of subject and object" (DS 80).

¹⁰⁴ DS 90

¹⁰⁵ *Phen* 8, ¶15

In the 'Preface,' Hegel uses the metaphor of the bud and the blossom, carrying forward the trope of organic life as a tool for elucidating epistemic life. The interplay of organic and epistemic life forms the movements of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, creating both the unification and tension that drives the developmental narrative towards Absolute Knowing.

2.2 The meaning of life

Life appears as a leitmotif throughout Hegel's writings; where Life opens the narrative of Self-Consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, it closes the systematic exposition of the *Science of Logic* in the third book on the Idea. It is the primordial position that is both subject and object – a fundamental unity that must be posited in order to reunite the diremption of nature and freedom. Yet Life is not presented in a straightforward manner, demarcated and explored, as are, for instance, the Notion and the Absolute. Rather, Hegel uses Life as a lever against his primary targets of inquiry. To understand the meaning of Life in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, we must pay attention to the words that surround Life and its appearances through the *Phenomenology's* narrative.

In both the *Difference* Essay and the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel places a premium on the dynamism of concepts engendered by their immanent dialectical motion, juxtaposing the living concept to Kant's lifeless understanding. Hegel writes in the *Difference* essay that Kant can only conceive of phenomena mathematically, not dynamically.¹⁰⁶ In the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel further criticizes Kant for rendering the triadic form that Hegel also leverages "lifeless and uncomprehended" through his schema.¹⁰⁷ Hegel continuously uses the adjective 'lifeless' attached to descriptions of the sort of formal philosophy that Kant brings to its ultimate

¹⁰⁶ "[Kant] conceives matter simply as the objective, as that which is opposed to the Ego. For him, attractive and repulsive forces are not merely superfluous; they are either purely ideal, in which case they are not forces, or else they are transcendent. The only construction of phenomena that he can allow is mathematical, not dynamical" (*DS* 164).

¹⁰⁷ *Phen* 29, ¶50

form. The Preface is rife with metaphors of nature and dynamic adjectives, but the word ‘Life’ dominates the text, appearing throughout the Preface in various contexts. When Life appears in the text, it appears as a substantive noun, but Life is not juxtaposed to death. The word ‘lifeless, which is the pertinent grammatical contrary, is translated from several variations, including *unlebendige* (§3), *leblosen* (§51-52) and *toter* (§51), but it never appears as a substantive, standalone noun. Rather, Life is pitted philosophically against understanding and determinations that are described as ‘lifeless’ when taken up in a certain way,¹⁰⁸ as when Hegel refers to the ‘lifeless determinations’ and ‘lifeless Understanding.’¹⁰⁹ Still, it is not immediately clear why Hegel places this premium on living motion in systematic philosophy or how the movement of thought is connected to Life in Hegel’s text.

Hegel applies characteristics of biological life (self-preservation and reproduction) to concepts. Life as dialectical motion in cognition is described in the *Science of Logic*, where Life appears in the Notion in General at the junction of nature and spirit: “Life, or organic nature, is the stage of nature at which the Notion emerges, but as blind, as unaware of itself and unthinking; the Notion that is self-conscious and thinks pertains solely to spirit.”¹¹⁰ Later in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel defines Life in a tripartite relation of sensibility, irritability and reproduction.¹¹¹ The three

¹⁰⁸ “Even when the specific determinateness... is in itself concrete or real, the Understanding degrades it into something lifeless, merely predicating it of another existent thing, rather than cognizing it as the immanent life of the thing, or cognizing its native and unique way of generating and expressing itself in that thing” (*Phen* 32, §53).

¹⁰⁹ “This monochromatic character of the schema and its lifeless determinations, this absolute identity, and the transition from one to the other, are all equally products of the lifeless Understanding and external cognition” (*Phen* 31, §51).

¹¹⁰ *SL* 586

¹¹¹ “Thus [Life] is in the first place *universality*, the purely internal vibration of vitality, or *sensibility*... Sensibility may therefore be regarded as the determinate being of the inwardly existent soul, since it receives all externality into itself, while reducing it to the perfect simplicity of self-similar universality. / The second determination of the Notion is *particularity*, the moment of the *posited* difference, the opening up of the negativity that is locked up in simple self-feeling, or is an ideal, not yet a real, determinateness in it, that is, *irritability*... The precise determination of this reflection-into-self is such that in irritability, the living being is its own externality to itself, to the objectivity which it possesses immediately as its means and instrument, and which is externally determinable. The reflection-into-self sublates this immediacy – on the side as a theoretical reflection, that is, in so far as the negativity is present as the simple moment of sensibility that was considered in the latter and which constitutes *feeling* – on the other side as real

moments relate to one another, first through self-unity, then diremption and ultimately as reconciliation of its fundamental unity.¹¹² Self-consciousness too has three moments: 1) 'I' taken as immediate object; 2) the diremption of this immediacy in Desire, in which the I realizes it is already mediated by the other; 3) the unity of self and other in which self-consciousness becomes 'living self-consciousness.'¹¹³ This dialectic of unification and diremption in Life is essential to the development of Absolute Knowing, uniting subject and substance. Moreover, Hegel writes, the Concept is a stage of nature as well as of Spirit,¹¹⁴ indicating a full and primordial integration of rational and organic life.

In Hegel, Life is a concept used to refer not only to nature but also to the origination and movement of consciousness as it folds back onto itself in recognition that is informed by an other. Life contains not only the movement of thought but also the dialectical structure of its development. Life first appears on the scene as a call from something external to the intellect. This introduction of Life also introduces several key themes that will receive articulation in the developmental story of Spirit and its accompanying truth: struggle, desire, independence of the

reflection, in that the unity of the Notion posits itself *in its external objectivity* as negative unity; this is *reproduction*. The first two moments, sensibility and irritability, are abstract determinations; in reproduction life is *concrete* and is vitality... Reproduction is the negativity as simple moment of sensibility, and irritability is only a living power of resistance, so that the relationship to the external is reproduction and individual identity with self" (SL 768-769).

¹¹² For a full account of the life-process, see SL 770-772, which Hegel concludes: "In this coming together of the individual and its objectivity, that at first was presupposed as indifferent to it, the individual, which on one side has constituted itself an actual unity, has none the less *sublated its particularity* and raised itself to *universality*. Its particularity consisted in the diremption by which life posited as its species the individual life and the objectivity external to it. Through the external life process it has thus posited itself as real universal life, that is, as *genus*" (SL 772).

¹¹³ "The notion of self-consciousness is only completed in these three moments: (a) the pure undifferentiated 'I' is its first immediate object. (b) But this immediacy is itself an absolute mediation, it is only as a supersession of the independent object, in other words, it is Desire. The satisfaction of Desire is, it is true, the reflection of self-consciousness into itself, or the certainty that has become truth. (c) But the truth of this certainty is really a double reflection, the duplication of self-consciousness. Consciousness has for its object one which, of its own self, posits its otherness or difference as a nothingness, and in so doing is independent. The differentiated, merely *living*, shape does indeed also supersede its independence in the process of Life, but it ceases with its distinctive difference to be what it is. The object of self-consciousness, however, is equally independent in this negativity of itself; and thus it is *for itself* a genus, a universal fluid element in the peculiarity of its own separate being; it is a living self-consciousness" (Phen 110, ¶176).

¹¹⁴ "The Notion is to be regarded not as the act of the self-conscious understanding, not as the *subjective understanding*, but as the Notion in its own absolute character which constitutes a *stage of nature* as well as of *spirit*" (SL 586).

object and the movement inherent to truth as opposed to the incomplete and false appearance of the intellect, which can merely grasp at truth without realizing it.

The aspectual nature of conceptual thinking, by which we make distinctions and demarcations in order to grasp as concept what is part of a larger whole, and its unification in Absolute Knowing are made possible from this fundamental position of interconnection in Life. Biological life is intimately connected to the categorization that marks conceptual thinking. Genus and species are concepts that arise from biological life, yet, for Hegel, these concepts are frustrating to Life, understood as primordial dynamism: “the process of Life... is just as much an imparting of shape as a supersession of it.”¹¹⁵ The categorization of Life and living things fails as we try to grasp them; it is in both this attempt and its failure that Life is dialectical movement and, as such, is conceptualization.

In the first few passages on Life, Hegel most clearly takes on Kant’s language in the *Critique of Judgment*: “It is the simple genus which, in the movement of Life itself, does not *exist for itself qua* this *simple* determination; on the contrary, in this *result* [universal unity], Life points to something other than itself, viz. to consciousness, for which Life exists as this unity, or as genus.”¹¹⁶ Life points to consciousness precisely because the unity and classification of Life reveals to us our own consciousness rather than something determinate about the object. We don’t merely perceive the object as in Consciousness but, through our recognition, it becomes living. For Hegel, this is the Kantian thought that must be overcome.

In the *Phenomenology*, Life first makes its appearance as the object. Just as self-consciousness comes from consciousness’ reflection into itself, so too does Life come from the object’s reflection into itself on the other side of this relation. Hegel’s turn to Self-Consciousness in the narrative of

¹¹⁵ *Phen* 108, ¶171

¹¹⁶ *Phen* 108-109, ¶ 172

the *Phenomenology* opens with a story of Life as the primordial unity out of which the dualities of subject and object arise. Life first appears in the third paragraph of Self-Consciousness as a reflective moment in the transition from Consciousness to its self-awareness: “But, *for us*, or *in itself*, the object which for self-consciousness is the negative element has, on its side, returned into itself, just as on the other side consciousness has done. Through this reflection into itself the object has become Life.”¹¹⁷ This is merely the first moment of the experience of Life, however, insofar as self-consciousness and Life stand in opposition.

Though Life is presented as the fundamental position out of which the distinction between self and other arise, as well as the unity to which these dualities return, Life itself is an achieved notion in the development of self-consciousness, beginning in the experience of the object in its independence: the “determination of Life... has issued from the Notion.”¹¹⁸ We see this thought developed in the *Phenomenology*, where the independence contained in the object and manifest as Life becomes essential to our own self-conscious development. For Hegel, as Hance writes, “not only mind or the subject but also nature or the object is something (implicitly) self-determining... in life the subject and the object subsist as an as yet undifferentiated unity... The organism is rather the object that is on the way to becoming a subject: it is the Concept as it is in itself but not yet in and for itself.”¹¹⁹

Hegel’s articulation of Life adds something essential to Kant’s reflexive turn to self knowledge: the object as living returns us to ourselves, mediated by the independence of the object. For Hegel, the moment of supersession of the other is just the beginning of the dialectic. The narrative of the *Phenomenology* is driven by the failed capacity of a proposition to provide the satisfaction it promises because the independence of the object continues to assert itself, unseating

¹¹⁷ *Phen* 106, ¶168

¹¹⁸ *Phen* 106, ¶169

¹¹⁹ Hance 52

the solidity of any single proposition. Conceptual thinking is contained within Life and arises into consciousness and ultimately, upon achieving its own independence through an encounter with the independence of the object, becomes self-conscious.

For Hegel, Life becomes a central concept for revealing demands specific to self-conscious knowing. It arises in response to a question regarding our ability to know objects external to ourselves (and ultimately ourselves) *in their self-motion*. Negativity and the independence of the object drive a wedge into Kant's self-enclosed account in which our knowing the other returns us to knowledge of ourselves. In the sphere of Life, negation is present in an other as something determinate in relation to some indifferent form, or "as the organic universal nature of Life."¹²⁰ The object appears as the negative element for self-consciousness, and returns to itself just as self-consciousness does: "Through this reflection into itself, the object has become Life."¹²¹ In this notion, the unity of consciousness and of the object, each on its own side, is also repulsion, creating an antithesis of self-consciousness and life in which the object is *in itself* and self-consciousness is *for itself*.¹²² Our experience of the object as independent not only bifurcates self from other, but also sparks their reunification through awareness. This in turn leads to self-consciousness through the coming to awareness of self in relation to an other: "Since the object is in its own self negation, and in being so is at the same time independent, it is consciousness."¹²³ Consciousness is first the movement of immersion in the object, with the reflexive pulling back into the self the first moment of self-consciousness. Both alone are incomplete moments of the dialectic, but as a whole they take on new meaning in Life.

¹²⁰ *Phen* 100, ¶175

¹²¹ *Phen* 106, ¶168

¹²² "But this unity is, as we have seen, just as much its repulsion from itself; and this Notion sunders itself into the antithesis of self-consciousness and life: the former is the unity *for which* the infinite unity of the differences is; the latter, however, is only this unity itself, so that it is not at the same time *for itself*" (*Phen* 106, ¶168).

¹²³ *Phen* 109-110, ¶ 175

Life arises at the limits of grasping the object in Consciousness: “the object of immediate desire is a *living being*” that in consciousness is grasped as independent only implicitly.¹²⁴ Self-consciousness renders the independence of the object explicit through the experience of its independence. What we are led to ask from Hegel’s text is why, at the juncture in which the independence of the object becomes an object of our experience, does Life appear? The Concept emerges in the failure to fully grasp objects conceptually; this failure is where we are thrown back towards Life as the liminal space in which the other expresses its independence.

Throughout Self-Consciousness, Hegel outlines the process of diremption and reconciliation between the self and other that are one in Life. Though it engenders this movement, Life itself fluctuates between a static and dynamic concept, with the dynamic flow of life and our apprehension of this dynamism an achievement in the development of self-conscious Spirit. Hegel breaks out the moments of Life in the dialectical movement towards self-consciousness:

... we have, as the first moment, the subsistence of the independent shapes, or the suppression of what diremption is in itself, viz. that the shapes have no being in themselves, no enduring existence. The second moment, however is the subjection of that existence to the infinity of the difference. In the first moment there is the existent shape; as being *for itself*, or being in its determinateness infinite substance, it comes forward in antithesis to the *universal* substance, disowns this fluent continuity with it and asserts that it is not dissolved in this universal element, but on the contrary preserves itself by separating itself from this its inorganic nature, and by consuming it. Life in the universal fluid medium, a *passive* separating-out of the shapes becomes, just by so doing, a movement of those shapes or being Life as a *process*. The simple universal fluid medium is the *in-itself*, and the difference of the shapes is the *other*. But this fluid medium itself becomes the *other* through this difference; for now it is *for the difference* which exists in and for itself, and consequently is the ceaseless movement by which this passive medium is consumed: Life as a *living thing*.¹²⁵

Life is process, driven by both dynamism and diremption. Life is the creation, destruction and preservation of both dependence and independence of the object. The whole activity of both the

¹²⁴ *Phen* 106, ¶168

¹²⁵ *Phen* 107, ¶171

immediate and mediated experience of objects is contained within Life. Life is not one moment in the dialectic, but “consists rather in being the self-developing whole which dissolves its development and in this movement simply preserves itself.”¹²⁶ Otherwise stated, Life is the substratum of the development of Spirit.

If Life is the substratum of the development of Spirit, the flow of Life achieves a concrete expression in the dialectic of master and slave. In his treatment of the master/slave dialectic, Hegel addresses the correlation between Life, the object in its immediacy and the development of self-consciousness. In the contexts of struggle and work between two self-conscious beings, but also between a self-conscious being and nature, individuality reappears in its connection to Life. Self-consciousness begins in simple being-for-self;¹²⁷ this original being-for-self is obtained through a negative relation in which the self separates itself from all other things. When two self-conscious beings first meet in the mythic space of their primordial encounter, they are as two self-submerged objects, immersed in their own immediacy. Appearing thus, they are “individuals submerged in the being [or immediacy] of *Life* – for the object in its immediacy is here determined as Life.”¹²⁸ The struggle to the death that arises in the encounter between two being-for-selves is a result of the detachment from Life that arises from the perception of our own independence.¹²⁹ In the first moment of the dialectical movement, the self seeks the death of the other, only to return to herself, realizing that to affect the death of the other she must stake her own life. The desire for self-

¹²⁶ *Phen* 108, ¶171

¹²⁷ “Self-consciousness is, to begin with, simple being-for-self, self-equal through the exclusion from itself of everything else” (*Phen* 113, ¶186).

¹²⁸ *Phen* 113, ¶186

¹²⁹ “The presentation of itself, however, as the pure abstraction of self-consciousness consists in showing itself as the pure negation of its objective mode, or in showing that it is not attached to any specific *existence*, not to the individuality common to existence as such, that it is not attached to life. This presentation is a twofold action: action on the part of the other, and action on its own part. In so far as it is the action of the *other*, each seek the death of the other. But in doing so, the second kind of action, action on its own part, is also involved; for the former involves the staking of its own life” (*Phen* 113, ¶187).

preservation brings awareness of one self in relation to another to the fore, thus spurring the dialectical development towards self-consciousness in its fullness.

Contained in the dialectical development of self-consciousness is not only Life, but also the desire that informs its movements. Where diremption drives the development of self-consciousness in struggle, desire unifies. Both moments are contained in Life. The sphere of Life both fosters and is the object of Desire.

2.3 Desiring life

In Self-Consciousness, Life becomes synonymous with desire. Hegel's Life is a social network of anthropogenic demands and satisfactions established through intersubjective interaction. Viewed through this lens, the *Phenomenology* is a demonstration of the development of consciousness that has become aware of itself in the context of its accompanying human agency. The individual agent is an achievement of struggle and historical development that takes shape through encounters with other living agents. As such, the character and demands of desire are conditioned by appearances and their experience. Hence Hegel's notion of desire is subject to vicissitudes through the ongoing development of forms of consciousness made visible through an understanding of the systematic interconnection of disparate objects.

In *Hegel on Self-Consciousness*, Robert Pippin locates desire as the link between the concerns of Consciousness and the apperceptive turn that marks self-conscious knowledge: "When Hegel says that self-consciousness is 'desire *überhaupt*' he means that to be relevant to the question of the apperceptive nature of consciousness itself; and that *thereby* he provides the basis for the claim that self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness."¹³⁰ Pippin here locates a

¹³⁰ Pippin (2011) 14

direct continuity between our knowledge of others and the desirousness of our consciousness and its reflexive turns.

Desire manifests itself in this process and is given shape in the context of (and later the self-conscious encounter with) Life, but its origins are opaque to us. Hegel's deployment of desire in the development of self-conscious agency and freedom is transcendental insofar as it is prior to and conditions our experience and knowledge. When Hegel writes that "Self-consciousness is Desire in general [Begierde überhaupt or 'desire itself'],"¹³¹ he is setting his concept of desire against Kant's distinction between demand and desire. Within Kant's system, demands that contribute to our knowing are manifestations of reason; desire is primarily biological and, as such, does not find its source in reason and detracts from our autonomy. In fact, Kant terms rational desires 'demands' to distinguish them from natural desires; the source of demand in Kant's account is external to the natural world and our lived experience, even though it is manifest and understood through this experience. Hegel makes no such claim to the transcendence of desire's source. Instead, desire unfolds from the felt disunification and drive for unification of self with the object. By collapsing the distinction between rational and natural desires into desire *in general*, Hegel thereby reengages experience in the generation of knowledge.

Nonetheless, desire's first appearance in the *Phenomenology* is antithetical to Life. Arising out of consciousness, desire first appears in the context of a supersession of the other and the accompanying satisfaction (certainty) of this overcoming. Yet this quest for satisfaction is always thwarted: satisfaction in certainty is unseated by experience, which makes us aware of the object's independence: "Desire and the self-certainty obtained in its gratification, are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superseding this other: in order that this supersession can take

¹³¹ *Phen* 105, ¶ 166

place, there must be this other.”¹³² The experience of thwarted desire is the experience of the other and is therefore the condition for the development of the conscious self.

Self ('I') first appears out of the encounter with Life as a 'shaped' other. It recognizes its independence and hence becomes self-consciousness only in reaction to the attempted supercession of this other. It is at this juncture that Hegel asserts: “self-consciousness is Desire.”¹³³ Here desire becomes a direct correlate for the attempt to grasp (or know) the other, which is accompanied by a satisfaction of self-certainty that is itself only to be frustrated by the independence of the object. Moreover, this satisfaction is not only frustrated, but also conditioned by the object, because it is only through the encounter with the object and the attempt to overcome it that satisfaction is (temporarily) derived.¹³⁴ Negativity is thus an essential moment in desire; it is responsible for both the satisfaction and continuation of desire that characterizes self-consciousness and infuses Life into knowing. This is perhaps what Hegel means when he writes that the “sphere of Life” is the “object of Desire.”¹³⁵

In Hegel's narrative, desire is distinguished from the independence of the object, with a focus on the subjective experience of striving in the subject's need to consume the other. Yet the more interesting element of Hegel's narrative that cannot be separated from the story of desire and Life is that of the object's independence that drives the movement of desirous inquiry by frustrating consciousness' attempt to incorporate the object. Hegel writes: “Self-consciousness, by its negative

¹³² *Phen* 109, ¶175

¹³³ *Phen* 109, ¶174

¹³⁴ “Certain of the nothingness of this other, [self-consciousness] explicitly affirms that this nothingness is *for it* the truth of the other; it destroys the independent object and thereby gives itself the certainty of itself as a *true* certainty, a certainty which has become explicit for self-consciousness itself *in an objective manner*. / In this satisfaction, however, experience makes it aware that the object has its own independence. Desire and the self-certainty obtained in its gratification, are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superseding this other: in order that this supercession can take place, there must be this other” (*Phen* 109 ¶174-175)

¹³⁵ *Phen* 110, ¶175

relation to the object, is unable to supersede it.”¹³⁶ Furthermore, “In this satisfaction, however, experience makes it aware that the object has its own independence.”¹³⁷ Thus the essence of Desire lies outside the subject, with the cycle of satisfaction and frustration driven by the object in its independence, which is made fruitful through our experience.

These pages on Life that open the section on ‘Self-Consciousness’ give us the key to understanding how Life informs subject/object relations throughout the *Phenomenology*. Our relation to objects is possible because both subject and object begin in Life. The object’s independence – and its frustration of our desire’s satisfaction in incorporating the object – drives the dialectical interrelation of self and other that forms the grounds of Absolute Knowing; Hegel’s account of self-knowledge allows for this knowledge to pervade both self and other through their interaction.

Hegel locates self-consciousness’s teleological development in three distinct moments: the first is the ‘pure undifferentiated I,’ or something like Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception in which the subject distinguishes itself from the object; the second is the self’s apprehension of itself through an independent object, or the realization of the primacy of human cognitive activity in the apprehension and categorization of organic life. This second moment also mirrors Kant’s account. But it is the third moment – self-consciousness – in which Hegel goes beyond Kant’s dualism:

But the truth of this certainty [of the unity of self-consciousness] is really a double reflection... Consciousness has for its object one which, of its own self, posits its otherness or difference as a nothingness, and in so doing is independent. The differentiated, merely *living*, shape does indeed also supersede its independence in the process of Life, but it ceases with its distinctive difference to be what it is. The object of self-consciousness, however, is equally independent in this negativity of itself; and thus it is *for itself* a genus, a

¹³⁶ *Phen* 109, ¶175

¹³⁷ *Phen* 109, ¶175

universal fluid element in the peculiarity of its own separate being; it is a living self-consciousness.¹³⁸

The fullness of self-consciousness that recognizes both difference from and unity with the object begins in this initial feeling of independence of self, formed out of separation from the object and its felt loss driven by the object in its independence. This relation of self and other, while initially presented by Hegel in abstract terms, takes concrete, and complete, shape in recognition of another self-consciousness.

We begin in an immediate relation of unity with the object in perception, only to be torn asunder from this unification by experience, through which we are returned to ourselves and the independence of both our selves and the other arises.¹³⁹ Once this diremption has taken place, self cannot be put back together with its object in mere thought. Self-consciousness always intercedes in this relation – with desire driving us to grasp the object and in which we are thrown back on ourselves. This general structure of the relating of self with other is given its progressive nature through work, ultimately leading to a complex notion of mutual constitution through which we are able to relate not only to others, but also to nature. This identification of subject and object welds nature and ideation by positing the unity of mind and matter in Life. This unity is both a beginning and an achieved end: the unity of mind and matter must split itself apart and work through this separation in order to achieve self-conscious recognition of its unification, not in a simple identity, but in an integrated whole that both *is* and *is aware* of its unity.

¹³⁸ *Phen* 110, ¶176

¹³⁹ “The Notion of the object is superseded in the actual object, or the first, immediate presentation of the object is superseded in experience... If we give the name of *Notion* to the movement of knowing, and the name of *object* to knowing as a passive unity, or as the ‘I,’ then we see that not only for us, but for knowing itself, the object corresponds to the Notion. Or alternatively, if we call Notion what the object is *in itself*, but call the object what it is *qua* object or *for an other*, then it is clear that being-*in-itself* and being-*for-an-other* are one and the same. For the *in-itself* is consciousness; but equally it is that *for which* an other (the *in-itself*) is; and it is *for* consciousness that the in-itself of the object, and the being of the object for an other, are one and the same; the ‘I’ is the *content* of the connection and the connecting itself. Opposed to an other, the ‘I’ is its own self, and at the same time it overarches this other which, for the ‘I,’ is equally only the ‘I’ itself” (*Phen* 104, ¶166).

Self-consciousness first appears as a one-sided, abstract notion. The abstract presentation of self-consciousness, “in showing that it is not attached to any specific *existence*, not to the individuality common to existence as such, [shows] that it is not attached to life.”¹⁴⁰ The object itself is Life, but we must learn through experience, through the activity of undergoing with the object and returning to ourselves in work, to recognize this Life and our participation therein if we are to achieve self-consciousness. Yet, in this recognition, death also makes its first appearance: each individual, in its activity, seeks the death of the other and risks its own. This activity is two-fold. What Hegel refers to as ‘action of the other’ (i.e. other-directed motivation for action) seeks death. At the same time, this self-directed action (what Hegel refers to as ‘action on its own part’) involves staking its own life (i.e. to seek the death of the other in a reciprocal recognition is also to stake one’s own life). “It is only through staking one’s life that freedom is won”¹⁴¹ because the certainty of being-for-self is thus tested against its truth. This moment contains the seeds of mutual recognition in which only another, equal self-consciousness can serve as a test of self-certain truth – i.e. only a free and equal other who can also seek my death can affirm self-certain truths. Hence, Hegel writes, “Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.”¹⁴²

Through the dialectic encounter with another self-consciousness, self-consciousness becomes living – we take the other into account when giving an adequate account of ourselves. The moment at which one consciousness chooses survival, that is, mere life, thereby withdrawing from desire and becoming a bondsman, is the critical moment in introducing the mediation that will ultimately pave the way for a robust, historically grounded and social self-consciousness. Desire reappears at the junction where the bondsman achieves independence through work. “Work...is desire held in

¹⁴⁰ *Phen* 113, ¶187

¹⁴¹ *Phen* 114, ¶187

¹⁴² *Phen* 110, ¶175

check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing.”¹⁴³ Through work, life takes on a distinctively human form, bringing subjectivity together with the object. Work simultaneously recognizes and supercedes the independence of the object by giving the object the shape of desire. This allows the worker to see his own independence reflected in the object. The introduction of work in the dialectic of Spirit brings together Life and self-consciousness in a way that injects history into their form. We here see Hegel begin to develop a robust account of the self in relation to others and as both a subject and agent of knowledge in its connection to nature. We are thus able to move beyond the fixed subject/object relation of the Kantian theater and usher in an anthropological and developmental account of their individual space in mutual constitution.

2.4 Life and labor

The inequality between lord and bondsman is quickly destabilized as nature reasserts itself into their relationship. If desire is self-consciousness, then the lord is stunted in his development:

What desire failed to achieve, [the lord] succeeds in doing, viz. to have done with the thing altogether, and to achieve satisfaction in the enjoyment of it. Desire failed to do this because of the thing’s independence; but the lord, who has interposed the bondsman between it and himself, takes to himself only the dependent aspect of the thing and has the pure enjoyment of it. The aspect of its independence he leaves to the bondsman, who works on it.¹⁴⁴

The lord’s satisfaction is a mark of the limitation of his self-conscious activity, not of its coming to fruition. The lord only has a mediated relation to things insofar as they come to him through the bondsman. The bondsman also has a mediated relation to things, of course, but he does not completely annihilate them through consumption – he *works* on them.¹⁴⁵ The bondsman, in his

¹⁴³ *Phen* 118, ¶195

¹⁴⁴ *Phen* 116, ¶190

¹⁴⁵ “The bondsman, *qua* self-consciousness in general, also relates himself negatively to the thing, and takes away its independence; but at the same time the thing is independent *vis-à-vis* the bondsman, whose negating of it, therefore, cannot go the length of being altogether done with it to the point of annihilation; in other words, he only *works* on it” (*Phen* 116, ¶190).

subjugation, is thus revealed to be in a more self-aware position relative to the true nature of the relation to the object. While the lord can only consume and hence has a primarily negative relation to things, the bondsman, on the other hand, cultivates a determinate, positive relation to things through work. The independent object cannot be superseded,¹⁴⁶ but it can be worked on and modified. Work thus represents, not an unmediated relation to objects, but a mediated knowing that incorporates (without superseding) the independence of the object. It is this recognition and interaction with objects that will ultimately give us the key to reconciling the antinomy of determination and freedom that plays out on the body of Life.

For Kant, the relationship between nature and freedom is an external one. By contrast, Hegel unseats the distinction between laws of nature and laws of freedom, denying Kant's implicit postulate that nature is not receptive to our freedom and actions. Life is what points beyond (or forms the bridge between) the antinomy of nature and freedom. Hance writes: "In asserting that the Concept underlies both nature and spirit Hegel rejects metaphysical dualism and indicates his intention to defend a version of metaphysical monism which refuses to recognize any absolute break between mind/spirit and nature."¹⁴⁷ The account of 'Lord and Bondsman' shows that this interrelation of freedom and nature is not merely abstract, but comes to fruition through history marked by work that brings subject together with object.

Hegel's subject *is* negating negativity or annihilating activity. This negating activity is precisely what situates the subject in the world insofar as this activity (which, as productive, has a product) *appears*. The subject comes to self-consciousness (and hence comes into subjectivity through reflexive recognition) through recognizing its products as the result of its own

¹⁴⁶ "Experience makes [self-consciousness] aware that the object has its own independence. Desire and the self-certainty obtained in its gratification, are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superseding this other: in order that this supersession can take place, there must be this other. Thus self-consciousness, by its negative relation to the object, is unable to supersede it" (*Phen* 109, ¶175).

¹⁴⁷ Hance 49

activity/production. The subject thereby comes to see itself in its products and to develop a sense of self as the negative entity that produces and is mirrored in objects, i.e. it comes to establish itself as a subject over against worldly goods.

The failure of desire to achieve its final satisfaction in consuming the object is not the failure of desire; in fact, it is necessary to the continuation of desire and hence a mark of both cognition and life. This reflexive turn of the bondsman back to nature inaugurates a deeper integration of nature and history in the development of Spirit. Work is what forms the bond between self and nature, as well as ushering in an intersubjective relation among selves. Ultimately, this seed of intersubjectivity is what drives a more robust account of ourselves in the world because, for Hegel, a recognition of one's self only comes through recognition of one's dependent relation to others. The individual self is initially abstracted from this mutual, constitutive recognition and must be returned to it with the added element of awareness. At each stage in the *Phenomenology's* development, we move closer to an intersubjective relation with objects by working over the world.

Through work, the connection with nature becomes a pre-condition of freedom. Hance writes:

Living things are free (in pre-practical and pre-theoretical terms) insofar as they are not simply determined from without by external forces but have (preconsciously) organized themselves as self-sustaining wholes and in self-posed relations to an external environment. Spirit is practically free insofar as it has made a home for itself within the field of nature from which it has arisen and on the basis of which it realizes its purposes. Spirit is theoretically free insofar as it has comprehended itself not as an abstract subject set over and against hostile substance, but... as substance that is just as much subject.¹⁴⁸

The living thing's self-determination in Life is the *Ur*-moment in the development of freedom, but this freedom is only given shape in actuality through work. Work mediates between our needs and

¹⁴⁸ Hance 57

their satisfactions, first directly with the slave's working over nature to feed the master, and later with the active engagement with our institutions and civil society. As the *Phenomenology* turns towards Reason in the development of Spirit, the discussion of work and freedom is infused with this Spirit, and the dialectical structure is recast as action and culture. The *Phenomenology's* narrative development from Life to Spirit moves from a socially mediated relation with natural objects to a world of relations increasingly worked over by social mediation and in which objects are recognizable as social objects (e.g. institutions). Where Life is the immediate unity of subject and object, Spirit is "an achieved form of individual and collective mindedness, and institutionally embodied cognitive relations."¹⁴⁹ The process and reification of human activity in institution building is what Hegel means by 'culture'.

Hegel speaks of culture as a 'living whole,'¹⁵⁰ that develops in "laborious emergence from the immediacy of substantial life."¹⁵¹ Hegel speaks of emergence here as *Anfang* rather than *Ursprung* – a beginning rather than a metaphysical origin or ground. Life is a "rich and concrete abundance" that becomes subject through culture to classification and ultimately judgment.¹⁵² Hegel writes that culture, by leaving room for the "earnestness of life in its concrete richness... leads the way to an experience of the real issue" (though he never defines what the 'real issue' is).¹⁵³ This is not dissimilar from Kant's trajectory of life pointing to culture and beyond to the feeling of our moral

¹⁴⁹ Pippin (2008) 39

¹⁵⁰ "As culture grows and spreads, and the development of those outward expressions of life into which dichotomy can entwine itself becomes more manifold... Such few attempts as there have been on behalf of the cultural whole against more recent culture, like the more significant beautiful embodiments of far away or long ago, have only been able to arouse that modicum of attention which remains possible when the more profound, serious connection of living art [to culture as a living whole] can no longer be understood" (*DS* 92).

¹⁵¹ *Phen* 3, ¶4

¹⁵² *Phen* 3, ¶4

¹⁵³ *Phen* 3, ¶4

sentiment. As Kant concludes in the *Critique of Judgment* on the ultimate purpose of nature as a teleological system, so too does Hegel indicate that life aims towards culture.¹⁵⁴

Through their ideas of culture, both Kant and Hegel are grappling with the meaning of a particular life in the context of historical development. By uniting nature with Spirit, Hegel welds together an account of particularity in the context of a whole with the larger narrative of the teleological development of Spirit. In the next chapter, I will delve into this relation between culture, teleology and self-consciousness as a lens through which to understand Hegel's unique intertwining of reason and history.

¹⁵⁴ For Kant, this ultimate purpose points beyond culture towards the good, though he falls short of this assertion because the derivation of the good from an empirical concept is proscribed within his system. In contrast, Hegel's ethical life integrates culture and the good because he does not admit of a beyond (*viz.* the good) to which culture or ethics could strive.

CHAPTER 3

ALIENATING LIFE AND FREEDOM

At the end of Hegel's discussion of self-consciousness, the *Phenomenology* takes a decidedly historical turn that will continue through the remainder of the text's narrative until we arrive at Absolute Knowing. In this chapter, I will explore how and why, when history enters the scene, so too does freedom. In the previous chapter, I wrote that Life points beyond the gap between nature and freedom. Work is the fundamental moment that forms the bridge between Life and nature in self-consciousness, as well as initiates the historical turn in 'Unhappy Consciousness,' where self-consciousness becomes attached to the possibility of freedom. A robust potential for freedom is inseminated in Hegel's Life and brought to fruition through ethical life and culture. The interconnection of history and Life that opens on to a space for thinking 'forms of consciousness' contains the kernel for actualizing freedom by recognizing the role of determination as freedom's condition of possibility. By teasing out the themes of recognition and mutual constitution that flow through Hegel's text, this chapter will trace the trajectory from recognition (as it appears in the chapter 'Self-Consciousness') to work as unleashing both freedom and history in the development of Spirit.

The themes of recognition, work, freedom and history converge in Hegel's discussion of ethical life, a central moment in Hegel's philosophy that takes into account both how our collective consciousness authorizes our normative precepts and how these norms and forms of consciousness change over time. In Hegel, the order of things contained in systematic philosophy is made social. Thus, where Kant reinforces the gap between rational and natural determinations, Hegel unworks this distinction through the very presentation and structure of the *Phenomenology* in which Life is

picked up and transformed through work into mediated relations of mutual constitution. Hegel's account of ethical life is grounded in the social practices of a community and requires "the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labour of the negative."¹⁵⁵ In our working over the object in its independence, both we and the object are altered and thus brought closer together as mediated, rational beings. As such, our ethical development in Spirit constitutes our rationality in the developmental trajectory of natural and historical life. Starting with the foundation of Kant's treatment of normative recognition in biological life, Hegel goes on to expand Life to form a unified account of human practices in a Life that is simultaneously biological and rational.

From the first reflexive moment in self-consciousness, an independent object is the catalyst for the reflexive turn and thus forms the basis out of which our consciousness takes shape. As Robert Pippin argues in *Hegel on Self-Consciousness*, the continuity between consciousness, self-consciousness and ethical life indicates that human interaction – that is, our answerability to others – is analogous to our interaction and answerability to objects.¹⁵⁶ Through the concept of Life, Hegel locates the connection between our relation to natural objects and other subjects as beginning in the same encounter with Life and developing into a robust ethical relation that shapes not only our relation to external reality, but also the character of our desire and (self) conscious selves.¹⁵⁷

Looked at through the lens of a world worked over – i.e. a world in which our activities alter the very objects that form the conditions of our consciousness – forms of consciousness are

¹⁵⁵ *Phen* 10, ¶19

¹⁵⁶ Pippin (2011) 64

¹⁵⁷ Pippin (2011) writes of this development in terms of the transition from following our desires (conscious rather than self-conscious desire) to leading a life through action: "One discriminates between food and non-food, potential mate or not and so forth. But in this sort of a picture one is simply *subject to* one's desire and subject to the fixed requirements of one's species-life, subject to what Hegel starts referring to as life itself... It is another thing altogether to be considered the *subject of a life*, actually to lead a life... Having conceded that without sensory interchange with the world, there is no possible knowledge about the world, [Hegel] goes on to argue that such a perceptual interchange alone, or the mere matter of fact modification of our sensibility, cannot amount to a world we could experience" (66-71). Rather, through congress with other similarly self-conscious beings, we begin to engage in actions based on reasons (i.e. we being subjects *of* rather than *to* our desires) and giving meaning in social-historical context.

constitutive insofar as they shape institutions and our modes of interaction and articulation of objects, which in turn face the subject as external (social) realities. In ethical life, we are confronted with external determinations in relation to which we achieve autonomy by recognizing them as social structures we (or subjects like us) have created. As such, culture (*Bildung*) connects nature with history and, I will argue, is a key concept in understanding Hegel's theory of freedom and the critical potential for giving a reflexive account of ourselves in history.

Yet, lurking within the emancipatory potential of Hegel's holism is the danger of its turning over into either a pre-critical idealism in which reality is a product of mind, or a quietistic justification for prevailing social conditions. This danger presents itself as Kant's *transcendental* idea is transformed into Hegel's *absolute* Idea, a move that threatens to turn Kantian conditions of possibility into an all-encompassing, constitutive totality. To defend an emancipatory reading of Hegel's system as fostering conditions of freedom by expressing the conditions of our determination, one must justify the move to holist systematicity as a more robust account of (human) freedom and the validity of our judgments regarding freedom. This defense must also give an account of how Hegel's teleological reading of historical-political life fosters dynamic systematic engagement with both our own freedom and freedom of others rather than sealing itself off within a determinative identity without difference.

3.1 Recognition and the world worked over

Recognition first arises in Hegel's text as a failed moment of empirical knowledge. The experience of epistemic certainty comes from superseding the other (i.e. grasping it in thought). However, when the knowing subject recognizes that this other is the precondition for this supersession, the subject's primacy is overturned and it is once again uncertain of its knowledge. The subject is forced to recognize the other in coming up against the limits of her own knowledge (of the object)

and self-knowledge (of the condition of her own knowing).¹⁵⁸ As we delve into self-consciousness as a springboard for understanding the development of ethical life, two themes – recognition and work – rise to the fore as primary concepts. Whereas biological life in Kant serves as a heuristic for understanding judgments of purposiveness and their validity within Kant’s system, Hegel’s presentation of Life gives rise to a logic of recognition rather than of validity.

In other words: Hegel’s account of validity within a given social-historical arrangement is simultaneously a social account of how people behave in relation to these norms. Part of Hegel’s account of a custom’s validity is that social agents deem it valid and follow it as authoritative. In short: recognizing the validity of our laws becomes synonymous with their actualization. Yet, as Hegel’s treatment of the *Antigone* and its conflict between human and divine law reveals, this social recognition of a law’s authority is not sufficient to prevent a contradiction in laws. Therefore we require a more robust account of this recognition, and the possible resolution of contradictory norms and laws, in such a way that this recognition validates the rightness of our actions.

The problem of the experience of certainty, which appears in the guise of the problem of the contradiction of social norms, is a recurring theme in the development of Hegel’s text. By intertwining historical development and work with a sense of certainty and its overcoming in developments spurred by contradiction, Hegel is delimiting an immanent justification for discursive, articulated, mediated knowledge as distinct from the experience of certainty. This distinction cannot be made within experience alone, but must be bolstered by a recognition achieved through the systematic interconnection of experience’s constitutive parts. Through his repeated invocation of certainty, Hegel is both playing on and working through the religious and philosophical history of transcendental justifications, i.e. the self-assurance of being right that is an expression of an incomplete understanding of the whole. Put differently, Hegel’s commitment to

¹⁵⁸ *Phen* 109, ¶175 *Op. cit.* fn. 134 and 146

the internal dialectical unfolding of knowledge cannot be sufficient to justify what we collectively take to be true or good but, as I will explore later in this chapter, it is a necessary condition for the development of our agency (and subsequently freedom) in terms that can be both recognized and actualized in our lifeworld.

As we have seen through our reading of the Self-Consciousness chapter of the *Phenomenology*, communion with others forms the conditions of possibility for self-relation and knowledge. And yet, this relation to others is not a mere reaching out to or joining with others, but a reflexive and mediated relationship that allows us to know both ourselves and others. In the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel lambasts ‘common sense’ and ‘philosophizing by the light of nature.’ Common sense appeals only to individual feeling, and thus falls short of humanity, “for it is the nature of humanity to press onward to agreement with others; human nature only really exists in an achieved community of minds.”¹⁵⁹ He continues: “True thoughts and scientific insight are only to be won through the labour of the Notion.”¹⁶⁰ In other words, our presuppositions about the world must undergo reflection and mediation before they become insights. Common sense – as an immediate rather than achieved community of minds – fails to effect insight insofar as it lacks the labor of the negative (or self-alienation and reunification) gained through the encounter(s) with objects in their independence. This is no less true of our nature, which comes into existence in a rational world worked over – i.e. in an achieved ‘community of minds.’ This dialectical structure in which unmediated apprehension breaks into an antithesis and is reconciled in an achieved understanding is repeated throughout the *Phenomenology*. It undergirds the structure of recognition that is a necessary condition of self-consciousness.

¹⁵⁹ *Phen* 43, ¶69

¹⁶⁰ *Phen* 43, ¶70

Yet recognition is not a sufficient condition for self-conscious knowledge if it remains recognition in the abstract. Through the development of self-consciousness, we move from Life to living: living for self-conscious beings means both living with others (sociality) and living for something (a purpose or aim). As we see in the struggle to the death that opens the narrative of recognition in Self-Consciousness, the individual is, for Hegel, a result of, rather than a starting point for, social interaction. This is contrary to a contractarian account of struggle that begins from the atomistic individual and leads to the relinquishing of rights in order to join with others in society. In distinction, Hegel writes that subjectivity is a negative moment within this social congress and thus is not simply active, but rather interactive. The path of coming to self-consciousness is ultimately shaped through interaction with objects – by the slave cultivating the land and realizing independence through this symbiotic relationship – as well as in the direct struggle for recognition between two self-conscious beings. This development indicates that nature is central to self-development as both of and in the world. Natural life is not merely preliminary to the interaction with other rational beings but fundamental to its possibility.

The progressive history of the phenomenological development of Spirit towards its end in Absolute Knowing is a development of the intertwining of self with other. Consciousness moves through stages of engagement and reflection; with each progressive reaching out and return, consciousness returns to self-consciousness with added knowledge of both its interconnection with and alienation from the world around it. As the world of objects is made progressively more rational through our working it over, we see Hegel shift to language of a rational rather than natural world as the starting place of the self-conscious encounter. “Reason is Spirit when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to truth, and it is conscious of itself as its own world, and of the

world as itself.”¹⁶¹ This recognition of the entwinement of self and world is predicated on a world worked over through self-conscious activity.

The conceptual developments of the *Phenomenology* are instigated by work, broadly conceived as modifying activity. The slave’s activity works over nature – the impenetrable given – without annihilating it, thereby transforming it into something that is now a product of subjective activity and thus knowable or accessible to knowledge.¹⁶² This movement begins in the slave’s working over nature, which spawns the recognition of his empowerment through producing the conditions for satisfaction of the master’s desire, and hence his superior position as one who produces but does not consume. Work initiates change in the object, but, for the slave who does not consume, also reveals the object’s permanence/substance through what remains unchanged in it. Just as the subject appears as the negative, annihilating moment in knowing the object, so too does the object reveal a moment of negativity or remainder as that which has not been subsumed in knowing or worked over in activity. Through work, the subject participates in the object, thus gaining a more robust sense of both her own and the object’s (or other’s) freedom. Hegel places emphasis on the participation of the object in observing reason – the movement of knowing is not perception’s one-sided approach of the subject towards the object, but also involves the movement of the object towards the subject. This working over that marks the move from nature to Spirit occurs, by contrast, at a visceral, lived level and not merely in thought. Only when borne out in history, developed through diremption and unification, do nature and Spirit (mind) have meaning and actuality.

¹⁶¹ *Phen* 263, ¶438

¹⁶² This is opposed to the activity of the master, which annihilates the object, consuming it as it is given and hence is without relation (which is the condition of knowability) to it. For this reading of the role of activity in the development of the relation between master and slave, see Kojève, chapters 1 and 2.

By revisiting our active experience of objects in light of the slave's development of self-consciousness as a product of his work, Hegel is demonstrating that experience, despite first appearances, is not a singular event of encountering an object, but is a layered event that grasps the object within a constellation of social and historical life. Hegel's turn to self-consciousness thus sets the stage for his emerging claim that ethical life socially and historically situates our consciousness, thus completing the bridge Kant fails to fully make given his commitment to an ahistorical reason that grounds our practical/moral life. The turn to self-consciousness marks a shift from the question "How do we represent the world?" to "What must *we* be like, in our historically developing social practices, in order to make such a claim about the world as it appears to us?"¹⁶³

In his essay "Hegel's Practical Philosophy," Pippin writes that, as the development of social relations out of a natural state reaches a tipping point of complexity, nature (natural laws) ceases to be an appropriate explanatory tool and Spirit takes hold as a self-instituted norm.¹⁶⁴ Spirit is thus in a continuum with nature in the developmental trajectory of freedom. As our world becomes increasingly worked over, "self-consciousness is Reason, its hitherto negative relation to otherness turns round into a positive relation."¹⁶⁵ Thus we see a shift from the individual as demanding freedom *from* the world, to a developmental story of cultivating individual freedom *within* the world and in relation to others. This simultaneously marks Hegel's transition from recognitive relations to ethics and, as such marks a developmental transition away from an interrelation of independent objects to intersubjectivity. The rest of this chapter will explore the character of intersubjectivity in Hegel's ethical life, ultimately aligning its deployment with Hegel's notion of our freedom as constituted within our determinations.

¹⁶³ Pinkard (1996) 44

¹⁶⁴ Pippin (2000) p189-90

¹⁶⁵ *Phen* 139, ¶232

3.2 Ethical life: the collective actualization of Spirit

Ethical life intimately connects conceptual and social life. A form of consciousness cannot be separated from its customs and institutions as our institutions and our relationship to one another cannot be separated from our practical activities in these spheres. Our shared normativity is part of what shapes and constitutes the world as intelligible, orienting our interest and providing the conditions from which we make determinations and pursue actions. Where practical reason in the Kantian sense is a mere tester of laws, incapable of generating moral content, Spirit gives shape and meaning to this ethically informed world. As Hegel focuses his narrative on Spirit, we begin to see a shift from a language of recognition towards a speculative language of actuality. Hegel writes: “[the law] is and is *validated*; it is the universal ‘I’ of the category, the ‘I’ which is immediately a reality, and the world is only this reality.”¹⁶⁶ This shift from validity to actuality is coeval with a shift from a deduction of truth that is accessed in experience to an historical development of truth through experiential interaction with others. Obedience to this law is not that of a slave to the arbitrary will of a master, but is recognizable as belonging to each subject’s own absolute consciousness.¹⁶⁷ For Hegel, the *source* of normativity presented through these social activities and elements is intersubjective insofar as it is achieved through iterative interaction with others.

A deeper reading of this engagement with others is not limited to interaction with natural objects and self-conscious beings, but also extends to that which comes to stand against us as objects in our lifeworld, viz. institutions. Institutions arise in civil society as a result of our collective activity, but soon become separated from their beginnings and assume an objectivity. Ethical life is characterized by both this entwinement of self and other in civil society, as well as our alienation

¹⁶⁶ *Phen* 260-261, ¶436

¹⁶⁷ “But since this existent law is valid unconditionally, the obedience of self-consciousness is not the serving of a master whose commands were arbitrary, and in which it would not recognize itself. On the contrary, laws are the thoughts of its own absolute consciousness, thoughts which are immediately its *own*” (*Phen* 261, ¶436).

from these objects (now norms and institutions) whose constitution we reenact through our recognition.

Hegel's concept of community begins to merge self and other in ethical life, moving them towards their full development in culture. In the perspective of ethical life, community is a concept that spurs the actualization and justification of norms. Whereas before Hegel spoke disparagingly of the 'common sense' or feeling, now he speaks of community: "In this determination, therefore, the ethical substance is *actual* substance, absolute Spirit realized in the plurality of existent consciousnesses; this spirit is the community which... has emerged *on its own account* in its truth as conscious ethical essence, and as essence *for* the consciousness which here is our object."¹⁶⁸ Spirit is preserved in its reflection in individuals, and also preserves these individuals within it. "As *actual substance*, it is a nation, as *actual consciousness*, it is the citizens of that nation."¹⁶⁹ Hegel writes that the community is the superior law whose validity is apparent;¹⁷⁰ it is manifest in government. This unity of the collective in which individuals acknowledge their place in the whole without being subsumed within it is a continuation of the unification and diremption of self-consciousness. As such, Spirit is "the power of the whole, which brings these parts [of family and state] together again into a negative unity, giving them the feeling of their lack of independence, and keeping them aware that they have their life only in the whole."¹⁷¹ Spirit represents the collective as conditioning our subjectivity through actions formed in community and solidified in institutions that come to stand against us as independent and are recognized as authoritative.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ *Phen* 267, ¶447

¹⁶⁹ *Phen* 267, ¶447

¹⁷⁰ "The *community*, the superior law whose validity is openly apparent, has its real vitality in the government as that in which it has an individual form. Government is the reality of Spirit that is reflected into itself, the simple *self* of the entire ethical substance" (*Phen* 272, ¶455).

¹⁷¹ *Phen* 272, ¶455

¹⁷² This reading is held by both Terry Pinkard and Robert Pippin in their various texts on Hegel, most notably argued in Pinkard's *Sociality of Reason*.

Hegel's treatment of ethical life and its sociality entails that there is no non-question-begging justification for authority – authority is what is recognized to have authority.¹⁷³ The question that remains live through the rest of Hegel's account of Spirit is the extent of this determination of social authority. If authority is not, and cannot be, recognized as grounded in something that supersedes social relations (viz. religion), what is the nature of an individual's interaction with these structures and the ability to critique or comprehend them?

The collective activity of the sociality of consciousness enters onto Hegel's historical scene in ethical life, both enabling and delimiting the realm in which conceptual and historical work can be performed. "Consciousness, which thus far finds in the object only *universality*, or the abstract '*it is mine*', must take upon itself the movement proper to the object and, since it is not yet the understanding of the object, must at least be the remembrance of it, which expresses in a universal way what in actuality is present only as a single item."¹⁷⁴ The remembrance of universality in the object is analogous to a collective, historical knowledge that has not yet risen to personal understanding. The real *critical* insight comes, not merely in apprehending our common beginning and continued entwinement with nature (or the object), but in achieved awareness of the coeval development of both subject and object and that space in between in which the two entities cannot be distinguished. As Hegel writes, in pure insight, consciousness not only recognizes itself in its object of insight, but "is aware of itself as being also the *mediating* movement, aware of itself as being the activity of producing the object."¹⁷⁵ Mediating and discerning through our activity, judgment surface as a core practice for historical actors. In both the development of self-consciousness and the later treatment of ethical life, Hegel's inquiry remains about judgment and the validity of judgments situated in a historical world and limited by the perspective of an era's

¹⁷³ Both Pippin (2011) 75 and Pinkard (1996) substantiate this claim

¹⁷⁴ *Phen* 147, ¶245

¹⁷⁵ *Phen* 334-335, ¶549

form of consciousness. As such, Hegel rejects Kant's demarcation of the practical and theoretical as a fixed, ahistorical boundary in favor of a dynamic holism in which rational human life constantly renegotiates this boundary.

The structure of the development of Spirit is key in unlocking the emancipatory and critical potential of Hegel's system. The movement repeated at each turn in Spirit's development is that the immediate is broken open through its own internal unfolding and inherent contradictions in order to achieve its higher, more complete form. Dialectical critique reveals what seemed to be immediate content to be mere form and we are left, at whatever stage in the development of Spirit it finds itself, without the tools needed to discern contingent ethical content from content that should be preserved in order to create the conditions for human freedom in community. As Hegel writes earlier, ethical spirit divides itself into human and divine law, "but their antithesis is rather the authentication of one through the other, and where they come into direct contact with each other as real opposites, their middle term and common element is their immediate interpenetration."¹⁷⁶ It is the moment of interconnection – the chiasm or intersection of content and contradiction – that reveals their inner (and higher) truth, or gives the path to developing a more robust notion that accounts for what is true in both opposites.

At the end of the development of the Ethical Order, Hegel repeats the dialectical division and reunion that spurs all major transitions in the *Phenomenology*. Consciousness is again driven back into itself (*zurückgetrieben*) to confront what is inessential in it, but now with a more actualized (i.e. developed or cultured) view of its own one-sidedness, achieved through the mediation of work and solidified in its legal standing. The actualization of the self, which was covered over in the universalizing tendencies of the ethical order, is now won by a return back to personhood. This return to self causes the rending of the self's unity with the ethical order, hence "what in the former

¹⁷⁶ *Phen* 278, ¶463

was harmoniously one now emerges in a developed form, but as alienated from itself,” i.e. as culture.¹⁷⁷

3.3 Culture, or educated life

Spirit, the actuality of ethical substance,¹⁷⁸ develops from the Ethical Order to Culture, but remains alienated from itself in culture. As I will argue in the remainder of this chapter, this moment of self-alienation is essential to freedom. In Culture, the individual simultaneously participates in (is determined by) and stands outside of (is alienated from) ethical life. The key to balancing determination with alienation is found in individual activities that instantiate the substance of Spirit in the collective:

Spirit, being the *substance* and the universal, self-identical, and abiding essence, is the unmoved solid *ground* and *starting-point* for the action of all, and it is their purpose and goal, the in-itself of every self-consciousness expressed in thought. This substance is equally the universal *work* produced by the action of all and each as their unity and identity, for it is the *being-for-self*, the self, action. As *substance*, Spirit is unshaken righteous self-identity; but as *being-for-self* it is a fragmented being, self-sacrificing and benevolent, in which each accomplishes his own work, rends asunder the universal being, and takes from it his own share. This resolving of the essence into individuals is precisely the *moment* of the action and the self of all; it is the movement and soul of substance and the resultant universal being. Just because it is a being that is resolved in the self, it is not a dead essence, but is *actual* and *alive*.¹⁷⁹

Without this participation in particularity, Hegel writes, ethical actions remain disunified from their substance and hence are either arbitrarily constructed or taken to be merely given from some transcendental source.¹⁸⁰ It is only through our activity of repetition with difference and the

¹⁷⁷ *Phen* 294, ¶483

¹⁷⁸ “Spiritual *essence* has already been designated as ethical *substance*; but Spirit is the *actuality* of that substance” (*Phen* 263, ¶439).

¹⁷⁹ *Phen* 264, ¶439

¹⁸⁰ At the start of the section on Spirit, Hegel summarizes his preceding argument at ¶432-437 regarding ethical determinations as ‘matter in hand’: “This still *abstract* determination which constitutes the ‘matter in hand’ itself is at first only spiritual essence, and its consciousness [only] a formal knowing of it, which busies itself with all kinds of content of the essence. This consciousness, as a particular individual, is still in fact distinct from substance, and either

mediation of reflecting on our actions in light of their universal applicability that we begin to see Spirit unify with itself. As such, Spirit is the actuality of ethical substance¹⁸¹ or, put differently, it is both essential and aware of itself in the socially constituted world.

This actuality comes to fruition in culture. Culture is the means by which what is implicit in Substance acquires an ‘acknowledged, real existence.’¹⁸² In the Preface, Hegel hints at this transition out of the immediacy of life and towards the historical development of freedom (in the context of Spirit): “Culture and its laborious emergence from the immediacy of substantial life [*Der Anfang der Bildung und des Herausarbeitens aus der Unmittelbarkeit des substantiellen Lebens*] must always begin by getting acquainted with *general* principles and points of view . . . From its very beginning, culture must leave room for the earnestness of life in its concrete richness; this leads the way to an experience of the real issue.”¹⁸³ While Hegel never defines what the ‘real issue’ is, we can perhaps draw some conclusions based on his invocation of the ‘earnestness of life in its concrete richness.’ If we understand this appearance of Life in culture as a rearticulation of the object in its independence, we begin to see the continuation of the dialectical turns through diremption and unification as indicative both of the development and continuing enacting of self-consciousness.

Throughout his treatment of culture, Hegel grapples with the determinate content of formal judgments of norms such as good and bad. These norms present themselves as immediate or given in a particular context, only to dissolve or turn into their opposite upon closer inspection. Neither sense-certainty nor mediated knowing is the truth of judgment, but rather a third term – a developed or cultured position – that can see both and is swayed by neither. Culture self-actualizes

makes arbitrary laws or fancies that in simply knowing laws it possesses them in their own absolute nature. Or, looked at from the side of substance, this is spiritual essence that is in and for itself, but which is not yet *consciousness* of itself” (*Phen* 623, ¶438).

¹⁸¹ *Phen* ¶439 *Op. cit.* fn. 178

¹⁸² “Culture is the simple soul of the substance by means of which, what is *implicit* in the substance, acquires an *acknowledged, real existence.*” (*Phen* 299, ¶490).

¹⁸³ *Phen* 3, ¶4

in the uniting of these opposites and the recognition of this union: both being for self and its opposite are unified in the self, but “itself as an ‘other’; not as if this had a different content, for the content is the same self in the form of an absolute antithesis and a completely indifferent existence of its own. Here, then, we have the Spirit of this real world of culture, Spirit that is *conscious* of itself in its truth and in its Notion.”¹⁸⁴ Hegel is describing the process of actualizing abstract norms that, in their actualization, are capable of being grasped in their fitness (or not) to our ever-shifting world. This process of normalization – of actualizing our universal norms in our concrete lifeworld – is simultaneously a process of describing our individual fitness to this lifeworld as subjects both created by and constituting this lifeworld through our actions.

Culture represents a grappling with the place of an individual life in the context of historical development (or progress) that is governed by universal norms and given meaning in a situated lifeworld. Through his account of the Ethical Order and Culture, Hegel articulates a dynamic theory of community and the shared socio-political structures that are formed out of and inform this community. In history, this relationship to others becomes a relation to our institutions and norms. Through the concept of culture, Hegel begins to redefine the chiasmatic relationship between self and other as a kind of development: “The process in which the individuality moulds itself by culture is, therefore, at the same time the development of it as the universal, objective essence, i.e. the development of the actual world.”¹⁸⁵ This gives context to Hegel’s statement that it is “through culture that the individual acquires standing and actuality.”¹⁸⁶ This self-actualization requires the splitting off and reconciliation of the individual with ethical life.

¹⁸⁴ *Phen* 316, ¶520

¹⁸⁵ *Phen* 299, ¶490

¹⁸⁶ *Phen* 298, ¶489

Thus culture arises in the context of self-alienation. If ethical life is a totality,¹⁸⁷ then culture is the rending of this totality into its internal divisions of selves and customs that are seen as external by these selves. As we have seen at each turn, this alienation opens up a space for reworking relations (between self and other, self and self, and now self and reified institutions and customs). For the second time in Hegel's text, this transition sparks a *Verkehrung*¹⁸⁸ – a turning back on itself with difference:¹⁸⁹ “This truth consists in the fact that this *universally acknowledged authority* of self-consciousness is the reality from which it is alienated. This acknowledgement of its authority is the universal actuality of the self; but this actuality is directly the perversion (*Verkehrung*) of the self as well; it is the loss of its essence.”¹⁹⁰

The crux of the role of culture in the development of Spirit comes when Hegel unites culture with a process of inversion, driven by alienation, that continues to move the narrative of the *Phenomenology* forward: “It is this absolute and universal inversion (*Verkehrung*) and alienation of the actual world and of thought; it is *pure culture*.”¹⁹¹ All the moments of determination in opposition (self/other, good/bad, noble/ignoble) become inverted, changing into one another; the completeness of this turn Hegel calls ‘pure culture.’ Yet by ‘pure culture,’ Hegel can only mean a movement of division and reunification, enacted in the context of institutions that concretize norms within our social structure.

In what follows, inversion starts to take priority as a central moment, not only of freedom, but also of justice – a new concept in Hegel's developmental narrative. Hegel here traces the

¹⁸⁷ See Theunissen's essay “The Repressed Intersubjectivity in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*”

¹⁸⁸ The contemporary German use of *Verkehrung* primarily refers to traffic. This correlation is interesting insofar as the secondary meaning of *Verkehrung* as referring to sexual perversion can be viewed in light of a common thread of the drive or direction of desire

¹⁸⁹ For a deeper reading of the use of *Verkehrung* in ‘The Inverted World,’ see “Hegel's Inverted World” in Gadamer, Hans-Georg *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*.

¹⁹⁰ *Phen* 293-294, ¶483

¹⁹¹ *Phen* 316, ¶521. “Er ist diese absolute und allgemeine Verkehrung und Entfremdung der Wirklichkeit und des Gedankens; die *reine Bildung*”

movement of a self that is not the truth of what it is for itself, but is something other than what it wants to be: “being-for-self is rather the loss of itself, and its self-alienation rather the preservation of itself.”¹⁹² The inverse thus becomes the primary moment of the self in self-alienation, a rendering strange of what is familiar. “What we have here, then, is that all the moments execute a universal justice on one another” through this inversion.¹⁹³ One of the most striking elements of this truly fascinating passage is the dislocation of agency. It is not the self that creates justice (nor could it), but the totality of the moments that ‘execute a universal justice on one another.’ Spirit is the unity of all these disparate moments and achieves its “free actuality” – its concrete existence – as their middle (i.e. uniting) term.

The determinate relation between culture and freedom, as predicated on the self’s alienation from institutions and customs and the working over these customs to appropriate them in its freedom, forms not only the conditions for a determinate freedom within ethical life, but also the grounds of an emancipatory critique that both participates in and maintains critical distance from these norms.

3.4 The development of agency: sociality as collective activity

The achievement of self-consciousness as agency requires intersubjective recognition among self-consciousnesses, a recognition predicated on work enacted in the wake of a frustrated relation to others (viz. the master), first enacted on the natural world and eventually in the world of institutional structures. Agency begins in self-consciousness and is developed in ethical life, marking a shift from work to action and forming the basis of freedom as self-determination. Where work describes our activity in relation to nature, action is situated within ethical life. Rather than as a

¹⁹² *Phen* 317, ¶521

¹⁹³ *Phen* 317, ¶521

philosophy of work, Hegel's corpus is better described as an 'action-theoretical framework.'¹⁹⁴ It is through action that we instantiate and test the normative structure of our lifeworld. Action brings us into self-conscious congress with the objective (or natural) world and sets the scene for the terms of this interrelation.

In *Hegel on Self-Consciousness*, Robert Pippin writes that to be the subject of a life (to lead a life) requires that our desires be viewed holistically.¹⁹⁵ I have argued that a broader notion of epistemic life that encompasses desire, recognition and our modifying activity better serves as a central concept for Hegel's dynamic systematicity than desire alone. Hegel joins epistemic and practical norms through actions based on best knowledge. This means that we are authoritative in our understanding; this self-authoring is not merely the taking of one given object or another in a reactive and hence determined mode, but rather an *interaction*. To return to Pippin, if one were take a given object for our satisfaction "one would just *express* such orectic attitudes, whereas what we want is a subject *of* desire, a subject determining which desire is to be pursued and why, for reasons."¹⁹⁶ To become a fully authoritative ethical being, we must work over our desires through an interaction that remains, at its core, an exchange of self-conscious life, but in such a way that admits of inputs that can redirect and reshape its channels and objects. This development from being subject *to* our natural selves to being a subject *of* our self-conscious selves in informed activity comes in ethical life and arises along with the inauguration of agency as a robust concept that entails that one is able to undertake actions based on reason. Agency begins in Self-Consciousness and is developed in ethical life, marking a shift from work to action and forming the basis of freedom as self-determination.

¹⁹⁴ See Honneth 32-33 and *Hegel's Philosophy of Action* Ed. Stepelevich and Lamb.

¹⁹⁵ Pippin (2011) 67

¹⁹⁶ Pippin (2011) 73

If we, with Hegel, admit of our social determination as the condition of our individual agency, then we begin to see a modified notion of agency emerge through culture. As Pinkard describes: “For Hegel, agency itself is a kind of norm, something that is socially and historically instituted, not some metaphysical or natural fact. Our independence from nature, that is, is a normative historical and social *achievement*, not a fact (metaphysical and natural) about ourselves that we have only recently discovered.”¹⁹⁷ As a primary condition of freedom, agency is an achievement within given socio-historical structures.

Hegel’s invocation of community and the multiple instantiations of intersubjectivity that are undergirded by his interactive (and iterative) theory of freedom bespeak a mutuality in recognition: “Just as everything is useful to man, so man is useful too, and his vocation is to make himself a member of the group, of use for the common good and serviceable to all. . . . But wherever he finds himself, there he is in his right place; he makes use of others and is himself made use of.”¹⁹⁸ There are two possible and, I would argue, not incompatible readings of this passage. The first is the quietistic reading, in which individuality is subsumed in the whole and can be deemed just only insofar as it is justified within the whole. The other reading is emancipatory insofar as it argues that we find ourselves in a particular situation that we cannot escape, but that forms the grounds for engagement.

What we will continue to explore is the extent to which this delimitation of agency as something made possible only by a socio-historical context threatens to foreclose our agency or, by contrast, provides the conditions for a robust and situated (i.e. worldly, living) freedom. The question that haunts my attempt to defend Hegel’s system is whether this sociality of ethical life entails its arbitrariness when not interpreted through the teleological framework of progress

¹⁹⁷ Pinkard (2005) 22

¹⁹⁸ *Phen* 342-343, ¶560

towards Absolute Knowing; if arbitrary, this would entail that the role for freedom within Hegel's system is only guaranteed by the ahistorical condition of Absolute Knowing. It is clear that Hegel does not believe that ethical life is necessarily arbitrary because it is ungrounded, but he must rely heavily on contradiction in its negative function of revealing inconsistencies and hence instigating renewed thought and movement, as well as on teleology for determining the end towards which these socio-normative structures develop.

Only in Absolute Knowing will the universality and particularity of our collective being come together in knowing, an achievement that is predicated on the end of history. History is not present or future, but only past. As such, for Hegel this conceptual and historical work can only be performed after the fact. Consequently, because we cannot simultaneously engage in historical-critical work and be historical beings, the conditions of freedom *for us* are given rather than achieved.¹⁹⁹ Turning to Absolute Knowing as the reconciliation of determination and freedom, we must question the extent to which Hegel's theory of freedom can serve as a continuing tool for freedom's realization. Put differently, culture is an intermediate aim in Spirit's development that can be deployed through action to address limitations of historical (situated) knowledge and its determinations. As such, Hegel enacts a development from *work* as a central concept and force in this development to *action*, a situated concept that embeds both history and agency in work. Action achieves meaning only within a socio-historical context that recognizes its meaning. These actions both arise from and constitutively interact with (i.e. shape) our collective context. The remainder of this chapter will examine how this notion of action connects up to freedom by engaging in the realization of its conditions.

¹⁹⁹ This is in contrast to Spirit's developmental achievement, that form the chief narrative of the *Phenomenology*.

3.5 Freedom and determination in ethical life

Freedom is an activity deeply tied to our practical engagement with the world. It is an experience not merely of how things are, but of how things *should* be. In this sense, we can analogize Hegel's positive freedom to Kant's reflective judgment where, in the encounter with biological life, we can experience both how things are and make judgments about how they should be. The telos of Hegel's system reveals an ambivalence between what is foreclosed by the social and political context and what is unlocked through individual inquiry and attunement with (and work on) these conditions. Yet, the story that Hegel tells is not merely one of determination, but also of the development of determinacy. The movement of Hegel's narrative unlocks an emancipatory potential in ethical life that is greater than his articulation of freedom insofar as it outlines a structure for critical engagement that is neither free from its conditions nor strictly determined by them. By returning to its beginning in Life rather than its end in Absolute Knowing and the State, we can understand Hegel's theory of freedom as self-determination in its developmental fullness, driven by the independence of the object.

The possibility of defending a positive notion of freedom in determination in Hegel's system entails that these conditions of freedom are born from our conditions of determination. Recognizing this constitutive relationship better equips us with the tools to determine and realize freedom in our lifeworld through social institutions and norms than would a negative notion of freedom that lacks a developmental account of agency. This defense must also give account of how Hegel's teleological reading of historical-political life fosters dynamic and systematic engagement with our own freedom and its concrete social conditions rather than sealing itself off within a determinative identity without difference.

Freedom first appears in self-consciousness because the determinate freedom that Hegel has in view is fundamentally intertwined with agency. As part of her development towards freedom, a self-conscious natural being (the human organism) develops agency as the ability to interact with, rather than merely react to, her lifeworld. This story of agential development in a natural state progresses to civil society and community, where a socio-political context forms the conditions for the appearance of an individual and the conditions of her freedom. The first appearance of freedom is, however, negative: freedom is the withdrawal from Life. Elsewhere, Hegel calls this negative freedom a ‘freedom of the understanding.’²⁰⁰ He writes: “The freedom of self-consciousness is *indifferent* to natural existence... Freedom in thought has only *pure thought* as its truth, a truth lacking the fullness of life. Hence freedom in thought, too, is only the Notion of freedom, not the living reality of freedom itself.”²⁰¹ The freedom of the Stoic and Skeptic is a freedom born of the isolation of the individual in which “the in-itself is the beyond of itself.”²⁰²

Agency, understood as the capacity for action, begins in thought as a formal freedom, but in its beginning lacks the content that would allow freedom to shape and inform our worldly actions. For thinking to come alive with the content of the independence of things – for it to be agential - the particularity of its content must be present in thought from the beginning.²⁰³ Thus, positive freedom first appears where the subject returns to itself and lets the other go free.²⁰⁴ The

²⁰⁰ “Only *one aspect* of the will is defined here – namely this *absolute possibility of abstracting* from every determination in which I find myself or which I have posited in myself, the flight from every content as a limitation. If the will determines itself in this way, or if representational thought [*die Vorstellung*] considers this aspect in itself [*für sich*] as freedom and holds fast to it, this is *negative freedom* or the freedom of the understanding” (PR 38, §5).

²⁰¹ *Phen* 122, ¶200

²⁰² *Phen* 139, ¶231

²⁰³ “Freedom of self-consciousness is *indifferent* to natural existence and has therefore *let this equally go free*: the reflection is a *twofold one*. Freedom in thought has only *pure thought* as its truth, a truth lacking the fullness of life. Hence freedom in thought, too, is only the Notion of freedom, but the living reality of freedom itself. For the essence of that freedom is at first only thinking in general, the form as such [of thought], which has turned away from the independence of things and returned into itself. But since individuality in its activity should show itself to be alive, or in its thinking should grasp the living world as a system of thought, there would have to be present in *thought itself* a content for that individuality” (*Phen* 122, ¶200).

²⁰⁴ *Phen* 111, ¶181

beginning moment of freedom lies in recognizing the independence of an other. In the development of freedom, it is not the return to self, but the independence of the object that haunts subjective freedom, thus denying the possibility of freedom merely negatively conceived.

To better understand Hegel's theory of positive freedom as developed in the *Phenomenology*, we can turn to its more compact treatment in the *Philosophy of Right*. Here Hegel speaks more directly of the will as free insofar as it is limited by a determinate content: "A will which... wills only the abstract universal, wills *nothing* and is therefore not a will at all. The particular [thing] which the will wills is a limitation, for the will, in order to be a will, must in some way limit itself."²⁰⁵ As Hegel continues, this limitation of the will forms the grounds of meaningful freedom. "Freedom is to will something determinate, yet to be with oneself [*bei sich*] in this determinacy and to return once more to the universal."²⁰⁶ Freedom is something that is cultivated in the person through determinate actions that provide the necessary content for this development in relation to others.²⁰⁷

In *The Pathologies of Freedom*, Alex Honneth's *apologia* for Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, he examines the definition and role of freedom of the will as presented in the Introduction to that text. Honneth, following Theunissen's theory of communicative freedom, defines free will as 'being with oneself in the other.'²⁰⁸ We are with ourselves in the other when both we and the other exist and interact in our independence, coming together as a process of opposition, recognition and reconciliation. As we progress through the development of Spirit, both we and the other increase in mediation and complexity, becoming institutionalized and encultured. According to Honneth, Hegel's notion of freedom is predicated on a set of social or institutional conditions that are

²⁰⁵ *PR*, 40, §6

²⁰⁶ *PR* 42, §7

²⁰⁷ *PR* §10

²⁰⁸ Honneth 14

external to the self and upon which the freedom of the will realizes itself through communicative relationships.²⁰⁹ Freedom is thus iterative, modifying through repetitions that take on different formulations through their interactions with a prevailing lifeworld.

“Ethical life is accordingly the *concept of freedom which has become the existing world and the nature of self-consciousness*.”²¹⁰ Moreover, “the determination of ethics constitute the concept of freedom.”²¹¹ Yet it is only in culture that this freedom is given content. Culture represents the pivotal moment in the path towards self-realization in freedom insofar as it provides the self-conscious conditions for recognizing culture’s involvement in the creation and sustaining of these institutions. At the beginning of Spirit’s alienation from itself in culture, Hegel writes: “Although this world has come into being through individuality, it is for self-consciousness immediately an alienated world which has the form of a fixed and solid reality over against it. But at the same time, certain that this world is its substance, it sets about making it its own.”²¹² Culture is the means by which the self works through the institutions that stand over and against it, containing both alienation from and participation in culture through action.

Culture is the educational development of freedom in a concrete, historical context. This development of freedom in culture through iteration is not only reserved for social constructs, but also acts on our deeper desire and a cultivation of our ‘second nature.’²¹³ Enacting an intertwining and working over of nature in culture gives context to Hegel’s infamous statement: “What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational.”²¹⁴ Through culture, we break open the given of the natural and subject it to rational engagement and thus to a possibility for actualization of our ideas.

²⁰⁹ Honneth 15

²¹⁰ *PR* §142

²¹¹ *PR* §145

²¹² *Phen* 299, ¶490

²¹³ *PR* 12-14, Preface

²¹⁴ *PR* 20, Preface

Freedom unifies its conditions with its aims. For Hegel, this unification can only occur for an individual if historical/political conditions allow for freedom. This limitation – or positivity – of the conditions of freedom is at once both a foreclosure and developmental positivity for emancipation of the individual. Honneth refers to this conjunction of determinations as the ‘lifeworld’ in which freedom realizes itself:

Thus the insight that the modern lifeworld contains a whole spectrum of interactional patterns guaranteeing freedom, which should jointly be called ‘ethical life,’ is connected in a precise sense with a therapeutic function: the moment readers accept the offer of an interpretation of their lifeworld as an instance of ‘ethical life,’ they should liberate themselves from the deceptive attitudes that have so far prevented them from realizing their freedom.²¹⁵

Honneth’s insight notwithstanding, the worry persists that Hegel’s is a quietistic reading of freedom as alignment with our determinations in which we can recognize but do not generate our conditions of life; i.e., in which we simply submit to the real. Ultimately, there is no resolution to the tension between emancipation and quietism in Hegel’s positive notion of freedom. More strongly, this tension itself is necessary to a defensible theory of positive freedom that holds together the interaction of determination and freedom such that we can both recognize and modify these determinations towards the end of creating the conditions of freedom in our lifeworld.

The development of tools for exercising freedom involves a capacity for informed action rather than merely following a set of social rules conducive to freedom. Hegel’s account of the development of agency in the *Phenomenology* gives us insight into how this interconnection between an account of oneself and communal socio-normative conditions is not only a site of determination, but also of liberation insofar as recognizing this determination introduces mediation and hence critical distance into determinism. By tracing Hegel’s steps in the development of Spirit, we can

²¹⁵ Honneth 46

uncover the seeds of a robust theory of freedom that cannot be separated from these determinations.

CONCLUSION: THE AFTER LIFE

“Human beings make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please”

- Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*

Through our exploration of the concept of Life, we have seen it develop dialectically from a static, ahistorical notion of biological life in Kant to a dynamic concept that serves as the nexus for subject/object interrelation in Hegel. In Life, we find the beginnings of an experientially driven epistemology that grounds the developmental narrative of self-consciousness. Through its encounters with otherness, the self comes to know both the other and itself – a dialectical development made possible by our common beginning in Life.

Life serves as a point of beginning and return for understanding the role that experience plays in the formation of our judgments. In Kant, our engagement with biological life forms the site for theorizing our normative judgments within experience, but these judgments are ultimately unable to give an account of life itself, returning instead to a theory of our apprehension of life in its first appearance. Hegel radicalizes this insight, rejecting Kant’s division between nature and reason and merging his practical and theoretical philosophy within ethical life. As such, Hegel is able to progress beyond life as a direct manifestation of nature and take an integrated view of our mental, social and ethical life as continuous with biological life. Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is the story of the unfolding of this Life that moves from an engagement with nature and our natural selves to the embodiment of our individual and collective selves in social institutions and norms. Hegel’s radical rethinking of the interconnection of natural and rational being necessitates a corresponding change in the concept of freedom.

For Hegel, our agency is formed in a world that we did not create. Yet, in our activity of coming to self-consciousness through interaction with independent objects, we also shape this world and, in so doing, come to see our evolving selves reflected therein. We are in a dialectical, rather than a causal, relation to the objects around us and, as such, can be both bound and free, subject *to* and *of* this world.

By rejecting the premise of the antimony of nature and freedom, Hegel opens up a space for rethinking our human freedom in concert with our natural and social determinations. As Spirit's historical development progresses through the forms of life that cohere in institutions and governing paradigms of thought, Life develops from a naturalistic to a cultural concept. These developmental turns are driven by the independence of the object, destabilizing our determinations by introducing sociality into our iterative, dialectical developmental story.

Hegel's narrative is not about the subsumption of nature in Spirit, but rather its sublation in Spirit, in which it is integrated, preserved and transformed. As Marcuse writes in *Reason and Revolution*: "Subject and object are not undered by an impassable gulf, because the object is in itself a kind of subject and because all types of being culminate in the free 'comprehensive' subject who is able to realize reason. Nature thus becomes a medium for the development of freedom."²¹⁶ That nature is a medium for developing freedom is not only an historical claim, but one that remains present in the enactment of freedom in Life.

Throughout this work, I have argued that understanding our rational selves as integrated with nature in Life is necessary to developing a robust theory of freedom as self-determination. Hegel's theory of freedom recognizes our ontological dependence as social subjects of our historical context. He articulates this dependence that preserves and perpetuates the subject within Spirit

²¹⁶ Marcuse 9-10

when he writes: “Spirit is the knowledge of oneself in the externalization of oneself.”²¹⁷ While this statement seems to prioritize the subject, this image of Spirit’s reflection in externalization is one piece of the complex of interactions that forms our lifeworld and the reflective recognition of our place therein. Nature and mind come together in united form in Spirit. Perhaps it is more appropriate to state that nature, as well as mind, is sublated and reemerges as a new form of life.

Freedom at the end of history

And still, throughout the developmental narrative of the *Phenomenology*, there is a demarcated subject who develops as a free agent and engages with her lifeworld through actions. Only when historical conditions become fully aligned with the notion of freedom can we determine ourselves in this freedom.

Freedom is the power not merely to determine ourselves, but in this determination to be aligned with the possibilities available to us in our lived world. As such, the notion of freedom itself is historical, developing to encompass a world consistent with a dominant social determination of freedom, but also, in Hegel’s narrative, progressively modifying itself to incorporate its contradictions. As Hegel understands it, the possibilities of my freedom are conditioned by the necessities of my reality. We can only realize our freedom fully when our lifeworld is consistent with our self-determinations such that I can actualize my freedom in the context of a free lifeworld that supports the development of our human agency in its freedom. Without the external conditions of freedom, individual acts of freedom are partial and thus lack meaning in our broader community (e.g. as in Stoicism). By tracing the manifestations of freedom as incomplete acts that are dissonant in a lifeworld that has not yet achieved its final form, Hegel leaves open room for acts

²¹⁷ *Phen* ¶759

of freedom that are not fully determined by their *current* historical conditions, while admitting of the social limitations of our personal freedom as predicated on the freedom of our social context.

And yet, the achieved ideal of our self-actualization in Absolute Knowing is also our dissolution into this whole. In other words, the actualization of freedom ceases to be recognizable as freedom. At Hegel's end in Absolute Knowing, the differences generated in time and through encounters with otherness are sublated as Spirit becomes fully integrated with itself. I have argued that Hegel's system delineates the conditions of an action-based theory of freedom that is born from a beginning in Life; this freedom develops from the dialectic of self and other that allows for an engagement with otherness and its ultimate reunification in mediated immediacy of its experience. What remains, therefore, essentially unclear at the end of history in Absolute Knowing is the continuing story of individual development within this end. Hegel's metanarrative of the developmental conditions for individual agency as historical conditions holds an implicit place for individual development within a lifeworld. It seems as though Absolute Knowing does not fit within this conceptual framework of a lifeworld insofar as it is not in history, but is actualized universal Reason and hence is complete and unchangeable. The reading of Life proposed in this dissertation plays against these quietist and totalitarian tendencies of Absolute Knowing and Hegel's systematic project. To reframe Hegel's insistence on dialectic, it is the interplay, rather than the resolution, of this tension between the whole and its parts that redeems Hegel's systematic approach.

Redeeming life

In *The Future of Hegel*, Catherine Malabou defines the foundation of Hegel's dialectical process as "the movement of self-determination."²¹⁸ Malabou connects Hegel's dialectic to notions of plasticity and temporality teased out from Hegel's texts. For her, three elements combine to generate a sense of the future as critical insight: "The dialectical composition of such concepts as 'the future', 'plasticity', and 'temporality' forms the *anticipatory structure* operating within subjectivity itself as Hegel conceived it. To distinguish this structure from the future as it is ordinarily understood, we will name this structure 'to see (what is) coming' (*le 'voir venir'*), obeying Hegel's injunction to philosophize in one's own idiom."²¹⁹ She describes her notion of *voir venir* in terms of the interplay at work in Hegel's philosophy between teleology and surprise.²²⁰ Malabou applies the very terms of Hegel's dialectic to argue that, if we understand and take seriously Hegel's claims about the process of *Aufhebung* and its historicity, then we must admit of an evolving reading of Absolute Knowing.²²¹ Hegel's system retains its relevance for us because it requires an undergoing – we experience the *Phenomenology* and its concepts as in flux in their development.

When I speak of the continued relevance of Hegel's theory of freedom for contemporary social thought, I speak not of a static notion of achieved freedom, but rather of emancipatory activity, or the activity of working on our lifeworld in a way that recognizes that we are determined by this world, but are also the makers of it. In a different context, Malabou writes of the "cooperative play of habit and alienation."²²² This interplay of habit and alienation – of the internal drives of habits formed through the internalization of external structures and the external forces

²¹⁸ Malabou 12

²¹⁹ Malabou 13

²²⁰ Malabou 13

²²¹ Malabou 145

²²² Malabou 146. In Malabou's text, she writes that this cooperative play is the precondition of the "simplifying speculative *telos*."

that we experience as alienating – points to the complexity in Hegel’s dialectic. The potential for social critique and the cultivation of positive freedom within these deterministic social structures does not come from outside this dialectical relating, but is generated in its very complexity. This dual recognition of determinism and freedom connected to activity forms the backbone of activist thought that both recognized its conditions and seeks to change them. The alternative is idealistic, in the political sense of a fanciful and ineffective thought that does not recognize its worldly, limiting conditions.

Bringing together naturalism and idealism in epistemic life connects us to our own self-understanding in a way that recognizes the continuity between our desires and our reasoning, while also comprehending the productive strife in these aspects of our mental life. Hegel historicizes this coming-to-self-knowledge through forms of consciousness in a way that accounts for not only the personal, but also the social in this self-realization. If we accept the claim that our rational self is of a piece with both our social and natural selves, then any concept of personal freedom must acknowledge its dependence on a self that is contingent upon and developed out of these external conditions.

The continued relevance of Hegel’s system for informing a positive theory of freedom, that acknowledges both the role of our determinations and activity in its realization, must give us the tools not only for comprehending the role of institutions and customs in developing our agency but also for theorizing dialectical conditions for resistance to and transformation of those norms and institutions that undermine our agency. The ability to identify contradictions and seek their resolution requires a systematic tool for critical engagement. As such, there is an important heuristic function in Absolute Knowing that is consistent with the developmental story of the *Phenomenology* as the progressive working over of nature into human institutions that increasingly

reflect our achieved and yet-to-be-achieved freedom. Ultimately, within Hegel's own system, it is Life, rather than Absolute Knowing, that drives a dynamic totality that does justice to its parts.

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