

SPECULATIVE IDENTITY AS ABSOLUTE SELF MEDIATION: A FEW APPRAISALS OF THE HEGELIAN LOGIC

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Abstract

Hegelian speculative thought structures its movement through immediately reflected change of opposites. This exchange within elements isn't merely shifting heterogeneous objects as it doesn't concern objects' ontological condition either. The speculative is the opening where the internal constitution and effectiveness of any element is questioned and revealed as simultaneous and immediate overcome of subject and object since the horizon of this opening concerns the absolute conditions of **content** and **form** and where the **method** self-reflected within premises is questioned too. For the true Concept of philosophy, Hegel shows, immediate beginning of knowledge is immediate beginning of Being; and advancement from pure indeterminateness to determinate being's development supposes self-mediation of the same absolute immediacy, since ineluctably the speculative can't admit suppositions' arbitrariness. But such radical endeavor is accomplishable if the ultimate truth of Being (*Wesen*) is absolutely mediated immediacy — namely Actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) is the expression of absolutely self-mediated absolute immediate Identity. This fundamental principle is mirrored in the Trinitarian ground of the Hegelian speculative philosophy which is the main doctrinal postulate that permeates the entire metaphysical endeavor of the German thinker.

In this, Hegel was singular, although the initiative of rebuilding philosophy without any prior supposition is not exclusively Hegelian. We can think about the Husserlian *epoché* as a project of redefining the limits of apodictic philosophy and the eidetic variation as the grounds for his fundamental *insight* (*Einsicht*). However, we have found that Husserlian phenomenology is yet deriving its entire structure within the realm of determinacy where the principle of determinate, and thus of formal identity, dominates. Hegelian identity is established precisely by an absolute rupture from formal relations and is an eminent case of a speculative opening towards the premises of a transcendent thinking whose eminence would ground the ultimate sight of genuine identity of appearance and essence, of thought and being.

Keywords: Hegel, Husserl, Maldiney, speculative logic, absolute identity, immediacy, mediation, phenomenology.

1 INTRODUCTION

Being illuminates all phenomenal manifestation and thus all phenomenal manifestation supposes something prior to it. As philosophy in general and speculative logic especially endeavors to account for the ground of phenomenality, the appropriate next step is to question the difference between phenomenality and its ground.

Hegel's logical answer (Hegel, 2010 [1832]) was, at a first glance, in accordance with that of the old

metaphysics: the primordial difference between the two is that the ground is *immediate* as it is unbegun origin, whereas phenomenality is *mediated* and a result since it has a beginning — thus, any consistent philosophical enquiry cannot proceed but through the presuppositionless immediacy: Being revealed in itself as the ontological pure and abstract unbegun beginning. In fact, Hegel is quick to specify

...that *there is* nothing in heaven or nature or spirit or anywhere else that does not contain just as much immediacy as mediation, so that both these determinations prove to be *unseparated* and *inseparable* and the opposition between them nothing real. (Hegel, 2010 [1832], p. 46)

Hegel's phenomenological answer,¹ on the other hand, though resting on the same solution, has a different methodology (Hegel, 2018 [1807]) for expressing it. Instead of beginning with the reduction of every instance of mediation to immediacy and of immediately finding that immediacy posits itself as mediation and mediation as immediacy, Hegel's *Phenomenology*... opens up and unfolds as a speculative propaedeutics which teaches the subject how to overcome the one-sided suppositions of formal and natural thought.

In both instances, the logical and the phenomenological, the speculative reveals a fundamental departure from every method of philosophical exposition that has been formulated up to author's times — as a concrete prerequisite of the absolute difference towards any presupposition. As it has been shown before (Biard, et al., 1981, pp. 9-13; Opiela, 1983, pp. 18-25; Soual, 2000, pp. 13-16), the speculative turn of thought implies that the classical distinction between form and content of knowledge, as well as the distinction of the methodology from content and form employed in natural discourse can no longer be taken as a given. If there is something which is naturally given for the formal thought, it is precisely the regime of thought of *representation*. This is the reason for which the speculative thought is not making the same reduction of determined or phenomenal realities as Cartesian or Husserlian phenomenology does.

2 REDUCTION: BEING AND IMMEDIACY

As it is well known, Husserl's own phenomenology departed from the same premise of absolute beginning as radical grounding of all philosophical endeavors, thus, by rejecting any prior supposition (Husserl, 1982 [1931], pp. 4-9).

Despite the entire Husserlian demarche of *epoché* and eidetic reduction which devised the demise of naïve philosophy through the first act of fundamental skepticism (Smith, 2003, p. 6) and the overtaking of contingent knowledge through the eidetic variation, not only the two movements were not ultimately coupled, but they presumed that the primary act of phenomenal apprehension could be purified of any fundamental intentionality (or symbolic structures, to use the Lacanian terminology) through *insight* (*Einsicht*) (Sokolowski, 1999, pp. 177-184; Smith, 2003, p. 6) in order to acquire immediate access to the originary encounter between intuition and object — by having the impression that once the syntax of language removed, the content would reveal itself in all its essential phenomenality (Sokolowski, 1999, pp. 168-169).

Thus, in Husserlian phenomenology *representation* is not speculatively overcome, to speak in Hegelian terms, since the entire process of Husserlian (and Cartesian) phenomenological reduction does not retrospectively affect the contemplative or analytical endeavor as the results obtained through the phenomenological reduction are investigated by the same fundamentally natural procedures of thought which have been used before the reduction since *evidence* (*Evidenz*) is postulated by Husserl as beyond logic itself at the very moment where Husserl supposes precisely the logical in order to make this postulate itself and, thus, *evidence* apprehendable:

We must not say at this point: "Why bother with such investigations and ascertainments? They obviously belong to the general theory of science, to logic, which must of course be applied both now and later." On the contrary, we must guard ourselves against just this matter-of-course opinion. Let us emphasize what we said against Descartes: Like every other already-given science, logic is deprived of acceptance by the universal overthrow. Everything that makes a philosophical beginning possible we must first acquire by ourselves. Whether, later on, a genuine science similar to traditional logic will accrue to us is an eventuality about which we can at present know nothing.

By this / preliminary work, here roughly indicated rather than done explicitly, we have gained a measure of clarity sufficient to let us fix, for our whole further procedure, a *first methodological*

¹We understand phenomenology in the sense of the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, not in that of the Husserlian tradition.

principle. It is plain that I, as someone beginning philosophically, since I am striving toward the presumptive end, genuine science, must neither make nor go on accepting any judgment as scientific *that I have not derived from evidence*, from “experiences” in which the affairs and affair-complexes in question are present to me as “*they themselves*”. (Husserl, 1982 [1931], p. 13)

The only aspect of knowledge which changes is that of new determinations which are obtained and, then, inscribed in a transcendental structure of knowing and of being. But this structure, although ontologically differentiated from the natural ones, is presented and articulated through the same fundamentally natural discourse in which identity and difference are not sublated, but understood as being the same. (Hegel, 2018 [1807], p. 27)

As Henri Maldiney puts it (Maldiney, 1973, pp. 256-262), the mediation that Hegel finds as already present within the very immediacy of the *This* (Hegel, 2018 [1807], pp. 61-62) is fundamentally derived from the priority of the immediacy itself as pre-given by relation to every mediation. Although, in the first instance of thought Maldiney's position is correct, the French philosopher fails to perceive that this position is immediately turned in itself as its own opposite. With the speculative turn, we have as immediately given the self-division of immediacy:

Now, as a result the stable being of existence is self-equality or the pure abstraction, is the abstraction of itself from itself, or it is itself its own inequality with itself and its own dissolution-its own inwardness and withdrawal into itself – its coming-to-be. (Hegel, 2018 [1807], p. 34)

And this self-division is reflected in itself as the very essence of immediacy itself. Therefore, the only problem that needs to be investigated here is the problem of mediation: how is mediation to be understood, fundamentally, in Hegelian terms? Is mediation the immediate advent of determinacy within the indeterminate essence of immediacy? Or Hegel is inclined to also admit an undeterminate absolute mediation?

Maldiney speaks of the suppression of the Real as the institution of the Symbolic takes place as universal negation of the *This* (*Ceci*). This negation is treated as a refuse of immediacy.

However, Maldiney does not seem to apprehend that Absolute and Pure Immediacy self-differentiates itself in and by its own self immediate undifferentiation. As Hegel expresses it:

The immediate existence of spirit, *consciousness*, has two moments, namely, knowing and the objectivity which is negative to knowing. While spirit develops itself in this element and explicates its moments therein, still this opposition corresponds to these moments, and they all come on the scene as shapes of consciousness. The science of this path is the science of the *experience* consciousness goes through. Substance is considered in the way that it and its movement are the objects of consciousness. Consciousness knows and comprehends nothing but what is in its experience, for what is in experience is just spiritual substance, namely, as the *object* of its own self. However, spirit becomes the object, for it is this movement of becoming an *other* to *itself*, which is to say, of becoming an *object* to *its own self* and of sublating this otherness. And experience is the name of this very movement in which the immediate, the non-experienced, i.e., the abstract (whether the abstract is that of sensuous being or of “a simple” which has only been thought about) alienates itself and then comes round to itself from out of this alienation. It is only at that point that, as a property of consciousness, the immediate is exhibited in its actuality and in its truth. (Hegel, 2018 [1807], pp. 22-23)

Moreover, he only speaks of the effects of the institution of the Symbolic for the determinate being (*l'étant*), and does not seem to be aware of the absolute necessity for the Real to be immediately differentiated within itself as pure immediacy; nor of the fact that through differentiation only is the Real properly itself, without it the Real only being nothing and that it would never even become object of discourse without being differentiated (Hegel, 2010 [1832], pp. 341-344; Opiela, 1983, pp. 113-121; Biard, et al., 1983, pp. 33-38); and that the Real reveals itself as Real only in and through the self-differentiation of its own immediation as ideality, that is, as Symbolic. Therefore, the Real is itself as properly Real only when it is absolutely self-altered in its own alterity as Symbolic. But this amounts as to saying that absolute self-negation of the absolute Immediacy, of the absolute Real, is, in fact, absolute Affirmation as revelation of the pure and immediate coincidence of the pure immediacy with itself as absolute negation (Hegel, 2010 [1832], pp. 346-348). If negation is the rupture that denies the pure coincidence or identity of the Origin with itself, then revealing that, in fact, this negation is the confirmation of its own alterity, therefore confirmation of the origin's absolute immediacy through its absolute passing as immediate Real, therefore, as acceptance of its own

remnant-in-the-passing, as embracing of its own death, is the absolute coincidence of absolute Immediacy with absolute Mediation in the origin of immediacy and of mediation themselves. Immediacy reveals itself as being its own origin and act of absolute and immediate mediation. Or, that which brings us to *Essence* (*Wesen*).

3 THE INEFFABLE IMMEDIACY

If Hegel's essence is that which has immediately passed (*Das Wesen ist Gewesen*), then the essence is the truth of Being as Being already dead and passed, therefore immediately remnant. The essence is the absolute passage of Being in Nothing and of Nothing in Being; but Nothing and Being are the same, therefore we speak of the absolute passing of Being in itself and of the absolute passing of Nothing in itself. Because passage is immediately given, then immediacy is the truth of the passing — immediacy is absolute passing. Thus, essence is absolute immediacy as absolute passing into itself and beyond itself. But passing has here two meanings, both recognized by Hegel, the first, explicitly; the second implicitly. The first meaning of passing is **Werden**, *Becoming*. Absolute and originary *Becoming* is the passing from indeterminate and immediate to determinate and mediated, in order to turn the determined and mediated towards the effective infinity of the Idea (Souche-Dagues, 1986, p. 51; Schlitt, 2012 [1984], p. 19). The second meaning is the absolute remnant of the absolute Unspoken as absolute frame of the passing. As Hegel says:

So the whole true result that we have here before us is *becoming*, but a becoming which is not the merely one-sided or abstract unity of being and nothing. It consists rather in this movement, that pure being is immediate and simple and for that very reason is just as much pure nothing; that the distinction between them *is*, but equally *sublates itself* and *is not*. This result does also assert, therefore, the distinction of being and nothing, but it asserts it as one which is merely *intended*.

The *ordinary assumption* is that being is the absolutely other of nothing, and that there is nothing as clear as this absolute distinction; indeed, nothing seems easier than being able to state it. But it is just as easy to convince oneself that this is impossible, that the distinction is *unsayable*. *Let those who insist on the distinction of being and nothing, let them just try to state in what the distinction consists*. If being and nothing had any determinateness differentiating them, then, as we said, they would be determinate being and determinate nothing, not the pure being and the pure nothing which they still are at this point. Their distinction is therefore completely empty, each is as indeterminate as the other; the distinction depends, therefore, not on them but on a third element, on *intention*. But intention is a form of subjectivity, and subjectivity does not belong to the present order of exposition. The third element in which being and nothing have their subsistence must however also be present here; and it is present indeed, it is *becoming*. In becoming, they are present as distinct; becoming only occurs to the extent that they are distinguished. This third is an other than they — they subsist only in another, which is equivalent to saying that they do not subsist on their own. Becoming equally is the subsistence of being and of non-being; or their subsistence is only their being in a *one*; precisely this, their subsistence in a *one*, is that which equally sublates their distinction.

The challenge to produce the distinction between being and nothing also brings with it the challenge to state what, then, is *being*, and *what is nothing*. Those who resist acknowledging that the two are equally only a *transition* of the one into the other, and who assert this or that about being and nothing, let them declare *whereof* they speak, that is, let them advance a *definition* of being and nothing, and let them demonstrate that it is correct. (Hegel, 2010 [1832], p. 68)

It is evident, then, that Being and Nothing are immediately identical in their *unsayable* Origin, and that this immediacy is itself its own self-differentiation and sublation of itself as pure and absolute distinction of Being and Nothing (for opinion to the contrary, see (Biard, et al., 1981, p. 47). But this absolute and pure distinction of Being and Nothing is their absolute vanishing as isolated subsistences in their reciprocal immediate sublation as identical-differentiated instances of Becoming.

Moreover, Hegel insists in criticizing the use of the concept of "unity" for describing the state of identity between immediate Being and Nothing (Hegel, 2010 [1832], pp. 67-68). As he correctly remarks, the concept of unity already supposes the elements that it concerns as separated, and therefore indifferent to the proper concept of unity. Thus, it already engages in the idea of mediation and cannot account for the absolute immediacy that is hereby searched as pure and originary unbegun beginning.

It is noticeable, however, that when he determines that the absolute and first mediated result of the immediacy of Being and Nothing is Becoming, he names this instantiation as “unity”:

The unity, whose moments, being and nothing, are inseparable, is at the same time different from these moments. It thus stands as a third with respect to them — a *third* which, in its most proper form, is *becoming*. (Hegel, 2010 [1832], p. 69)

Thus, we can surely identify within Hegel's movement concerning the Immediate beginning two fundamental instantiations in respect to the identity of Being and Nothing.

The first concerns the very origin of this immediacy, or, if we wish, the immediacy of immediacy itself. This moment is only briefly considered by Hegel only in order to be immediately put aside as “unsayable” or “ineffable” — this moment is that of the lack of difference between Being and Nothing.

The second concerns the movement of immediacy as immediately mediated within itself and such it reveals as difference between Being and Nothing and, because of the immediate and simultaneous identity of the two, it results as the “third” of Becoming, the unity of Being and Nothing.

But, since Becoming is put as unity, and unity is not the concept of absolute Immediacy, it results that the entire Hegelian speculative movement of absolute beginning in and through Immediacy is founded on the absolute ineffable Immediacy which, as above quoted, is implicitly put aside by Hegel as the immediate point of the self-opening of mediation.

4 CONCLUSION

Thus, there is the absolute ineffable instantiation of pure Immediacy that is the absolute Origin of Being's and Nothing's pure, absolute and immediate identity. Whereas Becoming is only the terminal revelation of this identity, but only through the immediate difference of Being and Nothing that is, itself, opened as immediate transition of Being in and as Nothing and of Nothing in and as Being.

These moments are theologically constituted (König, 1999, pp. 34-41; Schlitt, 2012 [1984], pp. 19-23, 51-52)²: the absolute and pure Immediacy is the Trinitarian Interior of the Principle and it expresses the eternal Begetting of the Logos and the eternal Procession of the Spirit;³ whereas the moment of the Becoming concerns the terminal and concrete opening of the absolute towards the institution of determined being (*Dasein*). Hegel is very specific in rejecting that Being and Nothing have no truth in themselves, but only in Becoming:

For this reason I also refrain from taking notice of the many self-styled objections and refutations that have been advanced against the claim that neither being nor nothing are something true but that becoming is their truth. The intellectual education required to perceive the nothingness of these refutations, or rather to dispel such arbitrary ideas on one's own, will be attained only through a critical cognition of the forms of the understanding. (Hegel, 2010 [1832], p. 70)

This Hegelian rejection of the subsistence of Being and Nothing is in itself part of the speculative movement since without the two initial instantiations, there would be no Becoming — which he recognizes implicitly:

For the purpose of expressing the speculative truth, the defect is first remedied by adding the contrary proposition, namely “*being and nothing are not the same*,” which we also stated above.

² For example, pp. 19-20:

That each logical moment is in its own way the totality of the Concept and that each moment is for Hegel only conceivable in terms of the triadically structured dialectical method—these are the two characteristics which fundamentally justify the identification of Hegel's logic as a philosophically transposed and, in the form of pure thought, for Hegel adequately formulated trinitarian movement of divine self-constituting subjectivity.

³ This position is openly and extensively criticized by Dale M. Schlitt in his study. He insists in this criticism against Hegelian speculative Trinitarian claims by committing multiple times the same fallacy of positing the impossibility of gaining any position of thought beyond determinateness or finitude. For Dale M. Schlitt every postulate of a transcendent instantiation is prisoner of immanence. The simple evidence that any determinateness is immediately constituted by the supposition of the horizon of indeterminateness, and that even the objection that indeterminateness can be perceived as in implicit relation to determinateness (thus, apparently, as something relative) also pre-supposes the same indeterminateness, does not seem to occur at all to the American author.

But another defect then crops up, for these propositions are disconnected and therefore present their content only in an antinomy, whereas the content refers to one and the same thing, and the determinations expressed in the two propositions should be united absolutely – in a union which can then only be said to be an *unrest* of simultaneous *incompatibles*, a *movement*. The commonest injustice done to a speculative content is to render it one-sidedly, that is, to give prominence only to one of the propositions in which it can be resolved. This proposition is then undeniably asserted; but *the statement is just as false as it is correct*, for once one proposition is taken out of its speculative context, the other also must be given at least as much attention and articulation.

[...]

So the whole true result that we have here before us is *becoming*, but a becoming which is not the merely one-sided or abstract unity of being and nothing. It consists rather in this movement, that pure being is immediate and simple and for that very reason is just as much pure nothing; that the distinction between them *is*, but equally *sublates itself* and *is not*. This result does also assert, therefore, the distinction of being and nothing, but it asserts it as one which is merely *intended*. (Hegel, 2010 [1832], pp. 67-68)

The Hegelian's philosophy compatibility with Trinitarian theology is manifest in Hegel's precise identification of Being and Nothing. — As he well puts it, if Immediacy in itself would not beget its own absolute identity of Being and Nothing, there would be two non-speculative contradictory consequences:

1. Either passing from the Unbegun and Undetermined Immediacy to something else would be impossible (at least at the explanatory level).
2. Either the passing would entail a contradictory and exterior, accidental, arbitrary and dual passing from Indeterminateness to determinateness. And that would still let completely unaccounted the reason that would make the Origin capable of opening itself to such immediate alterity.

But by making this speculative identification-self-differentiation between Being and Nothing, Hegel reveals the speculative reasoning that can account for the Trinitarian principle: identity-self-differentiation of the One within Himself. In Trinitarian dogmatic formulations we encounter precisely this concept of the absolutely immediate Begetting of the Son from the Father and the absolute and immediate Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father (Gregory of Nyssa, 2009); thus, absolute and immediate differentiation of the Same Substance in Three Hypostases Who are Each One immediately identical and immediately different from the Others Two, and They are Each One entirely and immediately the Same Substance, while Each One being immediately different from Each Other in and through the very Same originary Substance that They share without any particularity.

In fact, Hegelian speculative exploration of the issue of absolute beginning and immediacy has postulated, through the above shown speculative revelation of the absolute and immediate identity and difference between Being and Nothing, precisely the speculative mirroring of the superrationality of Trinitarian dogmatics' principle.

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