

The End of Resistance: Hegel's Insubstantial Freedom

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After Tarrying with the Negative

Freedom is unimaginable without negation. The ability to negate the givens of its existence, whether they come from biology or from culture, provides the basis for the subject's freedom. Hegel, because he recognizes the central role that negation plays in the formation of subjectivity, is the philosopher of freedom. As Hegel sees it, the subject doesn't just play out the various determinations governing its actions but has the ability to determine itself, and this ability begins with the negation of what would otherwise determine the course that the subject pursues.

The role of negation in the subject's freedom shows itself clearly in the relationship of a child with its parent. The child experiences its freedom from the parent at the moment it defies the parent's commands and acts contrary to what the parent dictates. By transgressing the parent's authority, the child reveals that this authority does not have a determinative power. Parental authority appears as less than authoritative in the face of the child's disobedience, and this lack of authority serves as an indication of the child's freedom.

And yet, this example reveals the essential problem of the association of freedom with negation. As long as one negates an external authority, one remains on that authority's terrain rather than on one's own, which produces a very circumscribed notion of freedom. The child can disobey, but it is still the

parent who establishes the rules that the child disobeys. If freedom manifests itself only as rebellion or resistance, it isn't freedom as such. The child really becomes free when it moves past rebellion, lives on its own, and determines its own life. In the same way, Hegel's conception of freedom begins with negation, but it ends with the recognition that this negation must manifest itself in some positive form if the subject is to free itself completely from the external authority that it negates.

Hegel's subject discovers its freedom not just through a single negation but through a series of negations. In the "Self-Consciousness" section of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, this dynamic unfolds in its most straightforward fashion, which is why so many discussions of Hegel and freedom focus on it. In the dialectic of the master and the servant, Hegel famously locates freedom on the side of the servant. Even though servants must act according to the masters' whims and have limited control over the direction of their own lives, servants have negativity on their side: they experience their own nothingness through the confrontation with the fear of death, and they experience the nothingness of the external world as they negate this world through work.

The fear that keeps a servant a servant and impedes servants from risking their lives in revolt is actually an emancipatory fear that reveals the insubstantiality of the servants' own identity. Hegel notes that the servant "has felt the fear of death, the absolute master. In this experience, it is inwardly dissolved, has trembled in itself, and all that was fixed in it has shaken. This pure universal movement, the absolute melting of everything permanent, is the simple essence of self-consciousness, the absolute negativity, the *pure for-itself*."¹ The negativity of an absolute fear emancipates servants from their attachment to themselves as substantial beings. They grasp that everything about themselves that they assume to be fixed and stable can simply melt away, and this frees servants from a belief in their own identity as something determinative and authoritative.

According to Hegel, the same process occurs with the external world when servants work on it, which is what masters compel them to do. Servants experience directly the malleability of the external world as they alter it by growing food, digging holes, or building houses. Even though the world resists the servants' actions to modify it, they are able to do so nonetheless, which has the effect of proving to them its insubstantiality and impermanence, even amid its intransigence. For the servant, the external world's malleability reveals that it cannot be authoritative.

The fearless masters who don't labor have no contact with this negativity and thus enjoy the fruits of mastery in pure unfreedom. Masters remain enthralled both to their own identity and to the external world. Both

act as substantial authorities over the master that the master never has the opportunity to negate and to recognize their insubstantiality in the way that the servant does. Through the phenomenology of servitude, Hegel illustrates that negativity is occasion for freedom. But negativity does have the last word on the subject's freedom.

As Hegel explores the contours of the servant's negative freedom, its limitations become evident. The problem with pure negativity is that it is incapable of becoming self-determining, which is why Hegel doesn't end his exploration of freedom with the servant. Paradoxically, pure negativity is never negative enough—Hegel calls it incomplete—to negate the external authority that determines it. This becomes clear in the case of the stoic, the first figure of self-consciousness to appear after the master and servant in the *Phenomenology*. The stoic locates its freedom in the domain of thought, which doesn't suffer from the constraint of any external authority.

Stoicism negates the external world in order to grant pure thought an absolute value. In thought, the stoic is free from all the determinations of the external world. But when he probes this negative freedom of the stoic, Hegel finds that the determinations of the external world contaminate it. Since stoicism provides no guidelines for what to think in one's retreat from the world, the content of thought can only come from the world, which the stoic believes itself to have only a negative relation to. The private thoughts of the stoic have their basis in the public world that the stoic rejects as valueless. Through Hegel's analysis, the negative freedom of stoicism shows itself as dependent on what it negates. This is the paradigm for all philosophies of pure negativity or resistance.

As stoicism and the further developments of self-consciousness (skepticism and unhappy consciousness) reveal, the subject cannot content itself with negativity if it wants to recognize its freedom. The attempt to cling to negativity and conceive freedom in opposition produces a hysterical subject, a subject incapable of seeing how its rebellion actually feeds the authority that it challenges. The stoic's negation of the external world expands the power of external authority over the stoic, and this same process occurs whenever the subject refuses to recognize that freedom cannot remain purely negative (which is the case with both the servant and the stoic).

What the insistence on negativity misses is that negativity always has a positive manifestation, whether the subject is aware of this or not. All forms of freedom, even the freedom of pure negativity, have a positive correlate. This is the point at which the negation of external determinations becomes the subject's self-determination. This self-determination does consist in the subject's ability to do anything at all or in the multiplicity of choices that the

subject has. Instead, the subject's self-determination is its self-limitation, and this self-limitation becomes the positive instantiation of freedom.

This becomes apparent in Hegel's turn from self-consciousness to reason in the *Phenomenology*. Whereas the forms of self-consciousness conceive the external world in opposition to self-consciousness, reason sees itself actualized in externality. Rather than simply negating the external world and defining itself in opposition to it, reason justifies the form that the world takes and finds its freedom there in the midst of that form.

For example, the subject's decision to obey the speed limit while driving ceases to be capitulation to an external authority and becomes the expression of the subject's own freedom. In this act of obedience, the subject follows a law that its investment in the world has authorized. As a result, this limit does not function purely as an external limit for the subject but as an internal one. Or, to put it in Hegel's terms, the *Grenze* (barrier) is also a *Schranke* (limit). The free subject conceives the speed limit as its own self-limitation and thus experiences it as a sign of its own freedom, not as a constraint imposed externally. Though clearly the subject did not establish speed limits itself, they make up the legal order that the subject does posit through its daily activity. Recognizing a speed limit as a self-limitation might seem like a minute and even absurd gesture, but it is precisely the type of act that serves as an index of the subject's freedom. It is the unfree subject that experiences speed limits solely as a burden imposed by an external authority and that experiences its obedience as constraint that it would like to transgress.

Freedom is the recognition that the subject is the source of its own opposition, that its negation does not rely on any external authority but involves instead its own self-relation. Of course, the subject must negate external figures of authority in order to discover its own freedom, but negation is also a self-relation that these external negations obscure. Once one conceives of the opposition as internal, one recognizes the essence of freedom. As Hegel puts it in the *Science of Logic*, "the idea, because of the freedom which the concept has attained in it, also has the *most stubborn opposition* within it; its repose consists in the assurance and the certainty with which it eternally generates that opposition and eternally overcomes it, and in it rejoins itself."² The free subject recognizes that it doesn't require the external authority that it opposes. The opposition that animates freedom is ultimately an internal opposition.

As long as the theorist insists on pure negativity and resistance, what freedom looks like remains mystified. Hegel articulates a philosophy of freedom unburdened of external opposition, a philosophy that requires moving beyond pure negativity and resistance. From the perspective of resistance, one does not see that every authority ultimately suffers from the same inextirpable

contradiction that besets the subject itself. One must theorize the positive form that freedom takes within the world, or else freedom remains a fetish that covers its absence.

The Insubstantiality of the Other

For Hegel, the subject is free because there is no substantial Other that can function as a determinative authority for it. The idea of a substance—an autonomous and independent entity—functioned as the basis for philosophical authority in every modern thinker prior to Hegel, and this hampered efforts at conceiving freedom. As long as the subject believes that an autonomous and independent Other exists, it cannot truly conceive itself as free. This is because the image of a substantial Other that knows its own desire and evinces perfect self-identity has a hypnotic effect on the subject's desire. This image captivates the subject and leads the subject to identify its desire with that of the supposed substantial authority.³ The subject posits the Other as substantial insofar as the Other remains obscure to it: absence of knowledge creates the illusion of substantiality that precludes the emergence of the subject's freedom.

There is an inverse relationship between the obscurity of the Other and the freedom of the subject. The subject interprets this obscurity as an inaccessible hidden truth, and it constitutes itself relative to this otherness, which leaves it enthralled to what it doesn't know. As Hegel points out in the *Philosophy of History*, "The unfree spirit knows truth only as something 'over there.' The spirit that is free is spirit for itself, is not in the presence of something other."⁴ The unfree subject remains hypnotized by the spell of what it doesn't know. But overcoming this spell requires more than simply conjuring it away. History, as Hegel understands it, is the unraveling of this image, the series of revelations in which an apparently substantial Other manifests its lack of independence and thus its lack of authority. Hegel's *Philosophy of History* doesn't show a progressive development of authority but its dialectical dismantling until the subject is left with nothing but its freedom.

Freedom doesn't just appear to the subject at some arbitrary point in time. Subjects discover their freedom through the recognition that occurs when what they took for a substantial authority reveals itself as insubstantial. This recognition happens again and again throughout history, as each successive figure of supposed substantial authority reveals its absence of self-identity. As subjects experience the failure of one authority after another, they gain increasing purchase on their freedom because they realize that there is no Other that is whole, and this is what Hegel chronicles happening throughout history. And finally Hegel arrives to punctuate the fundamental insubstantiality that

gives the subject absolute freedom.

As Hegel conceives it, the death of Christ is a decisive moment in the unfolding of freedom. At this point in history, the most substantial image of the Other that humanity has ever produced—the infinite God of monotheism that exists beyond the constraints that limit the physical world—identifies itself with a finite being in an utterly humiliated form. The humiliation of Christ is not just contingent aspect of his existence. The ignominious image of Christ on the cross reveals that insubstantiality of the most sublime conception of divinity, and this is why Hegel locates the emergence of modern freedom in Christ's death.

The subject is free only when its substantial Other suffers abject humiliation without ceasing to be the expression of authority. There is no freedom in one authority being toppled; another quickly replaces it, as when a political leader replaces a sports star or a teacher replaces a parent as the central authority in someone's life. Freedom requires the authority to lose its substantial status without losing its authority, so that the subject recognizes that the authority exists for it and through its support rather than independently.

We can see an instance of this freeing effect when a child sees its parent behave foolishly in public and endure mockery from others. The child undoubtedly pities the parent, but the parent loses substantial authority through this humiliation. The parent becomes a lacking figure and yet remains an authority at the same time. The child gains freedom from parental authority in this reconfiguration of authority as still authoritative but not substantial. The point is not simply that authority disintegrates leaving the child on its own. Instead, parental authority remains in force while losing its mysterious secret. This loss enables the child to recognize the role that it has played in the functioning of authority. Freedom emerges from the debris of the Other being deprived of its substantiality.⁵

This is what Hegel sees happening in the case of Christ. As he states in his discussion of religion in the *Philosophy of Religion*, "The highest divestment of the divine idea, as divestment of itself, i.e., [the idea that] is in addition this divestment—is expressed as follows: 'God has died, God himself is dead.' [This] is a monstrous, fearful picture, which brings before the imagination the deepest abyss of cleavage."⁶ The cleavage that Hegel announces here occurs not between God and humanity but within God: it is God's self-division. The event of this self-division—Christ's crucifixion—represents a monstrous moment for the believer because it strips away the idea of a substantial Other, but it is for this same reason also a moment of emancipation. The subject who experiences the death of God through Christ's crucifixion is a free subject, though most Christians retain the idea of a substantial and indecipherable God located in

the beyond who survives this crucifixion. This is how the majority of Christians avoid the freedom that Christ's death grants them.

The task of the Hegelian theorist is one of dismantling the forms that the substantial Other takes on as they arise. Though Christianity reveals the substantiality of God as a divided subject through the death of Christ, the idea of a substantial Other does not die so easily. It doesn't just have to be defeated twice like Napoleon but time and time again. Though the unknowable God is the most intractable form of the substantial Other, this figure nonetheless proliferates in many other guises in the contemporary world. We posit it in the secrets of the natural world, the desires of the terrorist, or even the innocence of the child. Substance is the secret truth that we believe that we cannot know.

What we posit as an epistemological barrier functions ipso facto as a barrier to our freedom. Though there will always be gaps in our knowledge, these gaps do not contain a hidden truth. The idea that what we don't know is a truth that we are missing obscures the internal limit through which our freedom constitutes itself. Hegel insists on absolute knowledge—that is to say, the idea that there is no hidden truth in what we don't know, even though there is always something we don't know—in order to articulate our freedom. The subject who rejects absolute knowledge and believes in an ultimate truth that exists elsewhere rejects its freedom through this gesture. Freedom depends on not believing in the substantiality of the Other and on recognizing that every Other is in the same existential bind as the subject itself.

The State of Freedom

For thinkers prior to Hegel, the state is a necessary interruption of the subject's freedom and an interruption of the potential war of all against all that would transpire without it. This is the position of both Rousseau and Hobbes, who see the state as the result of an implicit contract arranged by individual subjects to protect their interests. Hegel vehemently opposes this notion of the state as contractual, a notion that obscures the foundational role that state plays in the freedom of the subject. With Hegel the state becomes identical with the subject's freedom, and this freedom disappears without the universal structure of the state as its correlate. The state is the basis for freedom because it reveals to the subject the necessity of the contingent obstacle for this freedom to constitute itself.⁷

When the individual subject conceives itself without reference to the state, it conceives itself as a being of pure self-interest. One can imagine the subject pursuing its self-interest, but the problem is that this pursuit is not freedom. The subject's interests—even up to its interest in its own survival—are given to

it by the society and the natural world in which the subject emerges. Hence, as Hegel sees it, self-interest has nothing to do with the subject's freedom, which depends on the subject alienating itself from the interests that society and nature have given it. The free subject alienates itself from its own givens, and the state is the vehicle for making this alienation explicit to the subject, which is why Hegel insists on it so vehemently. It is only through identifying itself with the state that the subject recognizes that its freedom does not lie in the pursuit of its self-interest but rather in the uprooting of that pursuit.

But the state doesn't just alienate an isolated subject. It provides a shared obstacle for all the subjects that belong to it, and this shared obstacle holds them together as a unity. Subjects come together in the state not as an organic whole or an aggregate but as an alienated unity. They are held together through a shared way of being what they are not.

Hegel's celebration of the state in the *Philosophy of Right* has proven the most ignominious aspect of his philosophy since the book's appearance in 1821. Soon after its publication, it became the emblem of Hegel's conformity to the Prussian monarchy in power at the time.⁸ It signaled his refusal to use his privileged position as one of the most important philosophers in Germany to challenge authority rather than suck up to it. Even though many disciples of Hegel have debunked this interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right* as an exercise in conformity, it has resonated due to Hegel's unconditional embrace of the state, which cannot but strike modern readers as a dangerous moment of capitulation that we would like to strike from Hegel's political philosophy.

But to excise the state from Hegel's thought would be to mutilate it beyond recognition. The embrace of the state is not a moment of conformity that Hegel might have avoided but the basis on which he constructs his idea of freedom. As he grants the state a central role in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel puts the finishing touch on his philosophy of freedom that begins with the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This completes the turn from Kant's subjectivist freedom (where Hegel begins) to an objective form, from freedom as pure negativity to freedom as a positive expression of this negativity. As Shlomo Avineri puts it in *Hegel and the Modern State*, "subjectivist philosophy has made it a rule to see freedom only in opposition to the state, overlooking what is to Hegel the immanent truth of the state as the actuality of rational freedom."⁹ The state actualizes freedom through making the obstacle to self-interest explicit. When the subject recognizes its essential link to the state, it also recognizes that its satisfaction doesn't lie down the path of self-interest.

The great danger of modernity is not a powerful state that impinges on individual freedom but the failure to recognize the state as a state and to mistake civil society for it. In civil society, individuals benefit the whole by

following their self-interest, such as when the baker profits from selling bread and the customer survives by eating it. The baker doesn't bake for the sake of the customer, and the customer doesn't buy bread to support the baker. Instead, the pursuit of self-interest benefits the whole and unites both parties.¹⁰

Because economy dominates politics to such an extent in modernity, we risk falling into the trap of thinking that the state is nothing more than civil society, in which shared self-interest unites us. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel articulates his fear of this development. He writes,

If the state is confused with civil society and its determination is equated with the security and protection of property and personal freedom, *the interest of individuals* as such becomes the ultimate end for which they are united; it also follows from this that membership of the state is an optional matter. – But the relationship of the state to the individual is of a quite different kind. Since the state is objective spirit, it is only through being a member of the state that the individual himself has objectivity, truth, and ethical life.¹¹

As capitalism has developed since Hegel wrote this, civil society has increasingly encroached on the state and placed its own logic over that of the state, so that subjects have completely fallen for the ruse that the state is nothing but the guardian of mutual self-interest. The danger that Hegel foresaw in 1821 has come to fruition.¹²

The more the state appears as an optional encumbrance, the more the subject loses touch with its freedom. Since the state restricts what the subject can do—it passes laws against theft, against drunk driving, and against other enjoyable activities—it seems as if the state has an oppositional relationship to the subject's freedom. But this form of appearance is the key to the state's revelatory power. The state's restrictiveness has a heuristic function and shows the subject that it asserts its freedom only when it accepts a fundamental alienation from what serves its self-interest.

The state is the center of power, and identification of the subject's freedom with this power risks association with state sponsored violence—not just wars and executions but the implicit violence in existing social arrangements. When he foregrounds the necessity of the state for the subject's freedom, Hegel understands the risks involved. But without the state or some equivalent nonsensical signifier demanding identification, the subject could not be free. The freedom of the subject is an achievement of modernity, and it is not by accident that modernity frees the subject from the despotic authority of tradition that had formerly characterized subjectivity. Hegel identifies with the authority of the state as the foundation of the subject's freedom.

Why We Don't Remain in the Provinces

Hegel's critique of the freedom of pure negativity has an analogue with a key decision in his life, and it provides an instructive contrast with Martin Heidegger, who faced a similar decision and made the opposite choice. Hegel spent ten years of his philosophical career on the outside of the German university system, working first as a newspaper editor and then as a Gymnasium rector rather than teaching philosophy at a major university. Hegel never romanticized this outsider position, and through the publication of the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia*, he worked to make himself more attractive for a university post. He eventually gained a position at the University of Heidelberg in 1816, which led to the call to Humboldt University in Berlin, which he accepted. Hegel started teaching in this prestigious post in 1817.

Hegel's move from provincial newspaper editor to philosophy professor at the center of the German university system was a move from the margin to the center. When he published the first part of his most important book (the *Science of Logic*) in 1812, Hegel was an anonymous gymnasium rector in the provinces. But when he suddenly died in 1831, he was on the top of the German philosophical world. His thought became the standard against which all other philosophical systems constituted themselves.

Hegel accepts the call to Berlin because he wants to disseminate his philosophy of freedom, and Berlin offers him the largest stage for doing so. By accepting a position at the center of German intellectual life, Hegel exemplifies his own conception of freedom. Freedom does not consist in fighting against some dominant external power but in recognizing that the subject must provide the ground for its own act. When one becomes the supreme philosophical authority in Germany, one recognizes the insubstantiality of this authority because its self-division is directly evident. Of course, one can come to this recognition without actually becoming the supreme philosophical authority, but refusing this position and clinging to an outsider status would have the effect of sustaining the image of authority's substantiality. Had Hegel refused the call to Berlin because he didn't want to compromise himself with the center of power, he would have violated his own philosophy of freedom, which requires such compromises to make itself actual.

Hegel's vision of freedom is certainly possible in the provinces, but it prohibits the philosopher from fetishizing the provinces. Insisting on distance from the center of power or maintaining one's marginality misleads us into constructing a philosophy of opposition, which is, for Hegel, the great danger. When we create a philosophy of opposition, we necessarily posit a substantial authority in the Other that we oppose and, in this way, fail to recognize

ourselves as free. For philosophical reasons, Hegel has to accept the call to Berlin, and this places him in direct opposition to Heidegger, who receives a similar call a little over a century later.

Just as Hegel's acceptance of the call to Berlin offers a personal analogue for his conception of freedom, Heidegger's refusal does the same, and unfortunately, the prevailing conception of freedom today is much closer to Heidegger's than it is to Hegel's. When it comes to the decision to move to the center or remain in the margin, Heidegger made the contemporary decision. In contrast to Hegel, he opted to remain at the University of Freiburg amid the Black Forest and refused to heed the call to Berlin that Hegel so eagerly accepted. Leaving his Nazism aside, this decision seems to place Heidegger on higher ethical ground than Hegel. He chose slow country life where he was able to spend time thinking and interacting with everyday neighbors rather than hobnobbing with political leaders and famous writers. In short, being a philosopher was more important for Heidegger than being recognized as a philosopher, which is what would draw one to Berlin.

In his defense of the decision to remain in the provinces, Heidegger points out how life at an intellectual hub has a distorting effect on one's thought. He writes, "In the public world one can be made a 'celebrity' overnight by the newspapers and journals. That always remains the surest way to have one's ownmost intentions get misinterpreted and quickly and thoroughly forgotten."¹³ During the years that have passed since Heidegger made this pronouncement, the distorting effect of the cult of celebrity has multiplied exponentially. Today, even the retreat into his little hut in Todtnauberg could not keep Heidegger safe from international attention. Fame reaches everywhere, and even philosophers are not immune today to becoming celebrities in a way that would have been unthinkable in Heidegger's time.¹⁴

In today's intellectual universe, there is much more critique leveled against Heidegger's politics than Hegel's. This is due not to the time that Heidegger spent at his hut in retreat from the world but to the moments when he ventured out. Though Heidegger resisted the call to Berlin, he did not refuse the opportunity to become the rector of the University of Freiburg after the Nazis came to power in 1933. As rector and as Nazi party member, Heidegger openly identified himself with figures of authority. If Heidegger had simply remained at his hut in Todtnauberg and continued to philosophize about the dangers of modernity, he would have eliminated *avant la lettre* almost all criticism of his politics. But in a sense, the rectorship and the public engagement associated with it represent Heidegger's attempt to articulate a positive form of freedom. It fails because he found the image of rebellion too attractive to resist, and rebellion fundamentally shaped the form that his public engagement took.

It is the same impulse that led Heidegger to reject the call to Berlin that also moved him in the direction of Nazism. He saw in Nazism a rebellion against modernity, and this spirit of rebellion enthralled Heidegger. He sees modernity as the ruling authority that contemporary philosophy must contest. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger offers a clear portrait of the danger confronting Europe that Nazism promises to defeat. He writes, “Russia and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same: the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and of the rootless organization of the average man.”¹⁵ Against this onslaught of enforced conformity coming from both east and west, Nazism, as Heidegger conceives it, offers the possibility of preserving what doesn’t fit in modernity—like a philosopher in a hut in the Black Forest.

The contrast between Hegel and Heidegger is a contrast between two competing ideas of freedom. Hegel’s freedom has its basis in the absence of any basis. That is to say, we discover our freedom at the moment when we discover that the Other has no substance, that what we don’t know doesn’t hold any secret truths. Our freedom relates to an obstacle, but this is our freedom’s own obstacle—an internal stumbling block. The subject realizes Hegel’s form of freedom through the abandonment of pure negativity and the acceptance of the subject’s self-limitation.

For Heidegger, the free subject does not follow along with the crowd. The crowd is anathema, but at the same time, Heidegger requires the everydayness of the crowd (what he calls *das Man* or the they) in order to constitute his freedom in relation to. The they must play the role of the villain in Heidegger’s thought, and freedom exists through the overcoming of this villain. Hegel’s conception of freedom, in contrast, internalizes the villain. He can go to Berlin because he recognizes that the opposition that animates freedom will accompany him there. Hegel’s freedom doesn’t require an external villain because this form of freedom always brings its own villain along with it.

Hegel’s Aftermath

In the wake of Hegel’s exploration of freedom as the positive manifestation of negativity, two thinkers emerged to challenge directly this conception of freedom. They located freedom in the pure negativity of history’s victims and in the marginalized of history—in the proletariat and in the individual. For Karl Marx and Søren Kierkegaard, Hegel’s philosophy of freedom represents a circumscribed conception of freedom that they make more inclusive. But while doing this, they reintroduce a substantial Other that has the effect of obviating the subject’s freedom that Hegel discovers.

From our perspective, it is almost impossible not to look on Marx and

Kierkegaard collectively as an advance on Hegel. Their expansion of freedom seems much more appropriate to modernity than Hegel's less radical version, and, in clear contrast to Hegel, they both give us something to do. Hegel's freedom involves nothing but a change of perspective—seeing oneself in absolute otherness or, in other words, recognizing the insubstantiality of the Other. Marx and Kierkegaard impel us toward political revolution and the leap of faith, and these parallel gestures move us toward absolute otherness rather than simply adopting a different perspective on it.

But it is because they give us something to do that we should think twice before going beyond Hegel to Marx and Kierkegaard. To be sure, the proletarian revolution and the leap of faith evince more activity than Hegel's theoretical arrival at the absolute idea. But they both represent a philosophical retreat from Hegel's conception of freedom. In their own specific ways, Marx and Kierkegaard reinstall the image of a substantial Other, and this is why we should be skeptical of the advance on Hegel that they offer.

Marx's great achievement involves the revelation that substance is subject in the capitalist economy. Capitalism appeals to its adherents because profit appears substantial, the result of a magical process in which the savvy capitalist buys low and sells high. In volume 3 of *Capital*, Marx introduces subjectivity into this equation in the form of the appropriation of surplus value. As Marx grasps, profit appears substantial only because we don't readily see that the production and appropriation of surplus value that generate profit. Once we recognize this substance (profit) as subject (the appropriation of surplus value), it loses its hold over us, and we can escape the reign of the capitalist economy in which profit has the last word.

But Marx's investment in freedom is not as thoroughgoing as that of Hegel, and he reintroduces a substantial Other when he turns from economics to politics. Marx shrouds his vision of the communist future in silence. He offers only a few vague descriptions of what life in this future will be like, although he does characterize it as a realm of freedom, which seems appealing. Toward the end of volume 3 of *Capital*, he differentiates between the economic realm of necessity and the realm of freedom that exists after the means of production have met all needs. He writes, "The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself, begins beyond [the realm of necessity], though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis. The reduction of the working day is the basic prerequisite."¹⁶ Here Marx ensconces freedom in an absolute beyond, and it is not at all surprising that he does not go on to describe this realm of freedom. It is by definition beyond description and unknown, and this gives it the status of a substantial Other. Marx substantializes freedom in the form of a future to be realized, and in doing so he falls victim to

the precise trap that Hegel works to avoid throughout his philosophical system. At no point does Hegel point toward an unknown future in which things will be better as Marx does. Operating with this image of the future anchors the subject and provides a guide wire for its actions, and this represents an abandonment of the subject's freedom, which is also what occurs with Kierkegaard.

The substantial Other in the case of Kierkegaard is more subtle. In many ways, Kierkegaard, despite his rabid opposition to Hegel, formulates a very Hegelian philosophy that identifies dialectical moments in the structure of belief.¹⁷ But Kierkegaard refuses Hegel's interpretation of Christ's death. For Kierkegaard, God remains utterly distinct from the world of finitude. The humiliation of Christ in the finite world does not manifest God's descent or desubstantialization. The danger, as he articulates it in *Judge for Yourself!*, is believing that "the unconditioned ... merges with the conditioned."¹⁸ This is an impossibility that would eliminate the infinite distance that separates the subject from God, but it becomes everyday theology in the Christendom that Kierkegaard excoriates. This infinite distance is correlative to the subject's freedom. Kierkegaard poses it in opposition in opposition to Hegelian absolute knowing as the emblem of this freedom.

The subject's freedom, for Kierkegaard, depends on an absence of knowledge about God, who thus acquires a substantial status. Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel focuses on how the latter fails to grasp his own inability, as a finite subject, to know God.¹⁹ We can have access to God, but this access is only indirect, which is why Christianity requires the leap of faith on the part of the subject. Unlike Hegel, Kierkegaard gives the subject a task—accomplish the leap and become an authentic Christian—but the cost of this task is prohibitive.

Even though Kierkegaard emphasizes that the existing individual is free to accept Christ or not, he stacks the deck through his characterization of God. No matter how often Kierkegaard proclaims that the individual experiences anxiety in her or his freedom, even this anxiety becomes reassuring because God regains a substantial status in his philosophy (that was lost with Hegel). This becomes clear in *The Concept of Anxiety*, when he states, "Anxiety is freedom's possibility, and only such anxiety is through faith absolutely educative, because it consumes all finite ends and discovers all their deceptiveness."²⁰ Anxiety is not the horror of experiencing no ground for my freedom (as it would be for Hegel); instead, it has a pedagogical effect on the subject and teaches it the insufficiency of all finite options. The subject benefits from anxiety, according to Kierkegaard's schema, because it attests to the substantiality of God in relation to the subject unsubstantial ends. This is Kierkegaard's version of Marx's retreat from Hegelian freedom.

Both Marx and Kierkegaard denude Hegel's philosophy of freedom. They

balk at the evisceration of all substance that Hegel accomplishes and reimagine it in new forms. However much sympathy we might feel for the proletariat and the individual, the philosophies that champion them end up abandoning freedom in their attempt to correct Hegel's theorization of it.

Contemporary Hegelians

In the last half of the twentieth century, an effort to cut Hegel in two began. In this endeavor, theorists warmly greeted the Hegel of the negative while criticizing the Hegel of positive reconciliation. From this perspective (which enjoyed widespread theoretical acceptance), the Hegel of the negative is the politically tenable Hegel, and he stands opposed to the triumphant Hegel. Though Hegel concludes his philosophy by finally abandoning the restlessness of the negative for the security of an endpoint, he nonetheless reveals in what comes before how the negative both disturbs and constitutes every positive identity. Hegel was the first philosopher to give the negative its due, and this marks his enduring theoretical value, according to this position.

In each of Hegel's major works, the negative or nothing plays the central role in the unfolding of the philosophy. His definitive statement on the philosophical significance of the negative comes early in his first major work. In the preface to the *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel announces that the task of spirit "only wins to its truth when it finds itself utterly torn asunder" and when it "looks the negative in the face and tarries with it."²¹ So far, so good. Just on the basis of these lines, it is difficult to imagine a more enthusiastic champion of the negative in philosophy. The negative is the birthplace of subjectivity and the smithy in which its truth forms. Hegel's embrace of the negative here resonates throughout twentieth century philosophy.

The emphasis on the Hegel of the negative dominates his reception in the twentieth century reception, and the thinker who does the most to shape this reception is undoubtedly Alexandre Kojève. In his influential lectures on Hegel, Kojève argues that he conceives of human existence as essentially negative or negating. He claims, "Man is negating *Action*, which transforms given *Being* and transforms itself by transforming it."²² To say, as Kojève does, that human essence is a process of negating is to say that there is no human essence—or at least no positive quality that would constitute this essence.

Like most who follow in his wake, Kojève separates Hegel's negativity from the moment in the system when all negativity dialectically becomes positive. But Kojève, unlike those coming after him, does not dismiss or critique the abandonment of negativity that occurs in Hegel's thought. For Kojève, this ultimate victory of positivity over negativity—the end of history—is inevitable,

though he vacillated on the time frame of negativity's demise.²³ While Kojève's insistence upon Hegelian negativity has largely directed the course of thought about Hegel in the latter half of the twentieth century, his embrace of Hegel's idea of an end, a final accounting in which negativity reaches a positive conclusion, has made itself felt only in its abeyance.²⁴

Rather than seeing negativity as eventually reconciled into the structures of positivity, rather than seeing history as coming to an end, most recent theorists view negativity as irreconcilable, as eternal. Hegel was right, so this thinking goes, to stress the negative, but he didn't go far enough. In abandoning the negative in the last instance, Hegel jumped from critique to capitulation.²⁵ Hegel begins on the right path, but he deviates too soon, abandoning the negative and thereby abandoning that which has been left behind. The task for theorists coming in Hegel's wake consists in extending negativity and attempting to refuse the turn to the positive, because it is this ultimate turn to the positive that places Hegel in league with the winners and the insiders in history. To abandon the negative, from this perspective, is to abandon one's freedom.

This line of thought finds its apotheosis in Theodor Adorno, who embodies the split attitude toward Hegel as no one else does. Hegel's great achievement, according to Adorno, is his negativity, his critical spirit. It is this negativity that draws him to Hegel despite the latter's ultimate abandonment of it. In his book on Hegel, Adorno makes clear that his high estimation of Hegel stems from precisely this focus. He writes, "Hegel's philosophy is indeed essentially negative: critique."²⁶ Here Adorno seems an unabashed fan of Hegel for his devotion to negativity, a devotion that Adorno himself emulates throughout his own philosophy. But in the end, this devotion requires leaving Hegel by the side of the road because Hegel doesn't sustain his fidelity to negativity. Adorno adds, "By specifying, in opposition to Hegel, the negativity of the whole, philosophy satisfies, for the last time, the postulate of determinate negation, which is a positing. The ray of light that reveals the whole to be untrue in all its moments is none other than utopia, the utopia of the whole truth, which is still to be realized."²⁷ Adorno's project continually stresses the persistence of negativity, its ability to haunt every positive formation, but Hegel ultimately concludes with the whole, in which every negativity becomes subsumed.

To Adorno's way of thinking, the systematic whole belies the radicality of the dialectical method. While Adorno celebrates Hegelian negativity, Hegel's system becomes untruth because it insists on the truth of the whole, thereby joining the side of history's winners. Hence, Hegel's error lies in his failure to take critique far enough and to see negativity even in the seemingly positive whole itself. Proclaiming the falsity of the whole is Adorno's way of maintaining

the critical spirit that Hegel too quickly abandons for an embrace of—and a justification for—the world as it exists.²⁸ Adorno's critique of the ultimate failure of critique in Hegel represents the prevailing theoretical view. Adorno is exemplary because he commits himself so thoroughly to opposition. Freedom is questioning, not conforming.

Adorno at least credits Hegel with abandoning the negative. Other more recent theorists simply dismiss whatever in Hegel's thought doesn't match their vision of Hegelian negativity. The exemplar of this strategy is Jean-Luc Nancy. In *Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative*, he aligns Hegel's philosophy with unbridled negativity and negativity with freedom. In a statement interpreting Hegel's philosophy, Nancy asserts, "Freedom is the position of negativity as such."²⁹ The idea of an endpoint in Hegel's thought, a point at which negativity reaches a conclusion, has no place in Nancy's interpretation. From Nancy's perspective, Hegel becomes the philosopher of permanent resistance, which is the privileged theoretical position today.³⁰

The problem with the insistence on the negative is that this position blinds itself to its dependence on what it opposes. Hegel conceives every negation as a determinate negation and thus as a positive assertion in order to avoid the hidden dependence of pure negativity. If I oppose the corruption of the political system, for instance, my negation requires the corruption that it negates. When the corruption disappears, so does my negating subjectivity, which is why pure negativity secretly preserves what it opposes. This is not to say, of course, that the theorist cannot oppose corruption but just that this opposition must include a positive determination of its negativity.

Kojève, Adorno, Nancy, and all the other partisans of the negative Hegel create a more palatable Hegel. But by extrapolating the negative Hegel from the affirmative one, they transform the outspoken critic of philosophical hysteria into a hysterical philosopher. For Hegel, there is no freedom in simply negating. Doing so resuscitates the substantiality of the Other that his entire philosophy undermines. The attempt to purify Hegel has the effect of dismantling his philosophy of freedom. If we want freedom, we cannot confine ourselves to negating—which is to say, we cannot simply spend our time in rebellion.³¹

Confederate Flags Everywhere

The ideal ego of the modern subject is that of the rebel. Even if the subject's rebellion is nothing but the guise for a thoroughgoing conformity, the subject clings to it feverishly because it enables the subject to navigate the contradictory imperatives that characterize modernity. The image of the rebel connotes freedom and self-determination, a refusal to conform to the demands

of authority, which is what modernity calls for. But while adopting this ideal ego, one can at the same time follow authority's demands without avowing this conformity to oneself. As just an image, rebellion doesn't require acting without the security of an authority figure. One has the security of authority without the embarrassment of open conformity.

Hegel's philosophical project aims to strip away this ideal ego from the modern subject. As he sees it, this image disguises the subject's freedom and causes the subject to misrecognize its relation to authority. It creates a subject incapable of performing a transformative act who nonetheless remains convinced of its own radicality. By demolishing this image that holds sway over the modern subject, Hegel makes his contribution to the project of freedom, the project that he identifies with history itself.

The rebel is an insider who experiences existence as an outsider. This paradox holds the key to the attractiveness of the position. Whenever one would pin the rebel down to a specific position, she or he is always elsewhere, on the outside of this position. In this way, the rebel's freedom remains a negative freedom that has no positive identity. The rebel is free and never complicit.

Despite his marginal status in the recent theoretical landscape, the paradigmatic thinker of rebellion is Albert Camus. His work devoted to it is entitled *L'homme révolté* (translated as *The Rebel*), and this book inadvertently demonstrates the danger that the ideal ego of the rebel poses to the freedom of the modern subject. It is not an accident that the great apostle of freedom in the twentieth century, Jean-Paul Sartre, went out of his way to denounce this book and break with his former friend over its publication. Though Camus doesn't have many disciples today, his conception of rebellion implicitly informs the investment in resistance that proliferates throughout the contemporary theoretical universe.

In *The Rebel*, Camus takes pains to dissociate himself from the winners in history and to side with the losers. This is, according to Camus, what it means to embrace the philosophical stance of rebellion. The tendency to rebellion manifests itself philosophically (in rebellion against the human condition and against God) and historically (in rebellion against concrete domination). In both cases, the urge to rebel, the urge to struggle against an unbeatable opponent, demonstrates humanity at its best. Revolt has value because, for Camus, it embodies the subject's freedom. To rebel is to reject domination—either the domination of God or of a human master—and not simultaneously to participate in domination oneself. Herein also lies the difficulty in sustaining rebellion and why, ultimately, it is always doomed to failure in Camus's eyes. If rebellion were to win—which is to say, if it were to become a successful rebellion—then it

would cease to be rebellion and would lose its link to freedom. If rebellion wins, it becomes revolution, and revolution necessarily leads to a conformity that the rebel avoids.

As Camus sees it, the thinker guiltiest of betraying rebellion is Hegel, who was also the first to grasp rebellion's importance. The betrayal consists in Hegel's insistence that the winner is always right, an idea that Camus sees present not just in the final affirmation of the absolute, but even in the dialectic of the master and the slave. Though he attacks those who would completely dismiss Hegel's important contribution to the thought of rebellion, Camus nonetheless renders a damning verdict in the end. He writes, "Hegel ... furnished, on the level of the dialectic of master and slave, the decisive justification of the spirit of power in the twentieth century. The conqueror is always right; that is one of the lessons which can be learned from the most important German philosophical system of the nineteenth century."³² Oddly enough, Camus locates the idea that "the conqueror is always right" in the dialectic of the master and slave (chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology*), where Hegel shows, in no uncertain terms, that it is the conquered, rather than the conqueror, who is "right."

This profound misreading is doubly significant for its error. It is not just, as Jean-Paul Sartre claimed, that Camus hadn't bothered to read Hegel before attacking him, but that his commitment to rebellion utterly conditions his reading. For Camus, Hegel's great error—and he can find this error anywhere in Hegel, even in passages that seem most opposed to it—lies in Hegel's abandonment of negativity for a positive form of freedom.

For critics Jean-Paul Sartre and Francis Jeanson (who wrote the initial negative review of *The Rebel* in *Les Temps Modernes*), Camus's mistake lies in his allergy to revolutionary victory and in his allegiance to rebellious struggle. But neither Sartre nor Jeanson grasp why Camus rejects revolutionary victory. Camus transforms hysteria into a political and philosophical principle. In the face of what Camus considers an absurd world, the subject seemingly has no substantial Other to serve as a ground for its freedom. Rebellion is a strategy for reconstituting the substantiality of the Other in the modern world. This is why Hegel sees such a danger to freedom in the development of the rebel as modernity's ideal ego.

The rebel always has a substantial Other in the form of the authority that the rebel struggles against. This authority is substantial because it remains an authority even as its form undergoes a series of complete transformations. It doesn't matter what form the external authority has: external authority as such will endure. The struggle will go on, and freedom will never have to manifest itself in a positive form. The rebel never has to see how her or his resistance manifests itself without what it resists. Rebellion provides the comfort of being

on the outside while imagining that there is a substantial enemy on the other side.

We Ought Not Invoke Ought

Kantian morality is another version of rebellion that never takes a positive form. By definition, one never fully achieves one's status as a Kantian moral subject. For Hegel, this is the profound limitation that besets Kant's position and that finally renders it untenable for him. And yet, Kant does make a significant advance: the revolution of Kantian morality is that it locates freedom within the law rather than in the law's transgression. According to Kant, the fact that the subject gives itself laws functions paradoxically as an index of its freedom. In the act of giving itself a moral law, the subject declares its freedom either to obey this law or not to. Even recognizing a law as a law indicates the subject's freedom from the givens of its being insofar as it suggests that the subject could act otherwise. This capacity for acting otherwise emerges with the formulation and recognition of the law.

The law arrives from the subject itself, according to Kant, even though the subject experiences the law as an external constraint. The law does not first come from outside and then become internalized by the subject; instead, the subject's act of giving the law to itself renders it capable of accepting external laws. Kant does not view the existence of the law as part of the subject's ideological manipulation but as the sign that such manipulation must pass through the subject's freedom.

Though Hegel finds much to criticize about Kantian morality, he stops to admire the radicality of the moral revolution that Kant inaugurates toward the end of his *History of Philosophy*. He recognizes that the decisive step forward that Kant makes lies in linking morality to freedom rather than to constraint, which is how we typically conceive morality. In his discussion of Kant, Hegel states, "there is no other end for the will than the one created out of the will itself, the goal of its own freedom. The establishment of this principle was a great advance; human freedom is the ultimate pivot upon which humanity turns, the ultimate and absolutely firm pinnacle that is not open to influence, such that we grant validity to nothing, to no authority of whatever form, if it goes against human freedom."³³ Hegel grants that Kant doesn't just postulate but actually proves the subject's freedom and that he does so through the moral law, just as he says.

Kant makes what Hegel calls a "great advance," but his conception of the moral law as what the subject ought to do rather than what the subject already does marks his fundamental misstep. By aligning his philosophical position with

the ought (*Sollen*), Kant distances himself from moral success. The Kantian subject constantly struggles to act morally but never fully does so. Morality consists of striving toward moral action, and the incessant failures of the subject force Kant to posit the subject's immortality in order to allow this striving to continue. Because the subject defines itself through unending striving, death does not represent a genuine barrier.

Fichte makes the ought of Kantian morality into the basis of his entire philosophical system. The problem with this is that striving after the good replaces the act. Kantian and Fichtean subjects avoid acting, according to Hegel, because when they do, "they enter the sphere of limitedness. They foresee this and therefore fear every contact, remain enclosed within themselves, and revere their inner infinitude."³⁴ Kantian and Fichtean freedom has the paradoxical effect of creating a subject unable to act.

Kant and Fichte's version of morality is that of the rebel. Though they align morality with the law rather than with its transgression, they fail to take their realignment far enough. Hegel pushes the realignment a step further. By identifying ourselves with the achievement of the moral law rather than striving to achieve it, we reveal that freedom is not the absence of limitation but the encounter with an internal limitation that drives us to act.

We should not think of Hegel's philosophy as a rejection of Kantian morality but as the absolute development of it. Kant and Fichte correctly grasp that the subject realizes its freedom in the act of giving itself the law, but they fail to see that this act itself is sufficient. They believe that there is something more to morality, a fulfillment of moral perfection that the subject is yet to achieve. This hysterical view of morality always leaves the subject on this side of moral probity, and in doing so, it creates a moral paralysis. The Kantian and Fichtean subject aims at moral perfection and in this way misses the opportunity for the garden-variety ethical act, an act accomplished by compromising one's morality with actuality.

Compromised Resistance

Compromise is often the manifestation of opportunism. One resorts to compromise instead of taking a principled stand and fighting for one's position because one doesn't really have a position to fight for. While most compromise undoubtedly suffers from the taint of opportunism, every practical political activist knows that compromise is nonetheless necessary. In addition to being critical of the institutions of power, one must see the institutions themselves as the expression of freedom. Compromise with institutions of power doesn't simply represent an abandonment of conviction; it also represents a fulfillment

of it: an uncompromised idea is an unrealized idea.³⁵

Though practical activists necessarily school themselves in the importance of compromise, theorists do not. For the theorist, pure uncompromising negativity is always a more comfortable position. This position guards one against complicity with murderers—not just Heidegger's with Hitler, but Maurice Merleau-Ponty's with Stalin, Alain Badiou's with Pol Pot, and so on. It seems that every time a theorist abandons pure resistance for a compromise with a positive political position, this is a decision that the theorist will come to rue and likely apologize for.

No one will celebrate Merleau-Ponty's defense of Stalin or Badiou's defense of Pol Pot, but we should nonetheless acknowledge the importance of such gestures. Though they both subsequently recognized their errors, the step out of pure negation to a positive embrace of a political position represents the task of theory. Pure resistance has the virtue of never being wrong, but this also prevents it from ever being right—that is, from ever actualizing itself as a positive entity in the world. This is why theory must move beyond resistance and identify the positive attainment of freedom.

Thought appears to run ahead of action, and the practical world seems to require time to catch up with the theoretical one. We can imagine utopias that we lack the capacity for realizing, and thought gives tasks for our practical activity to achieve. This vision of the relationship of thought and action holds for most modern philosophers, inclusive of materialists like Marx, who theorizes revolutionary conditions for the proletariat to act on. But Hegel reverses the priority of thought and action entirely. According to Hegel, it is not the task of our actions to catch up to our thoughts but for our thoughts to catch up to our actions. Thought can do so because our actions are always thinking actions, even if unconsciously so.

In the light of this reversal, the theoretical privileging of resistance consigns theory to always remaining behind the practical activity that it hopes to theorize, while at the same time assuming that it runs ahead. Pure negativity constructs an image of freedom that eliminates the possibility for the recognition of freedom as actual. On the other hand, when one compromises one's theoretical position with actuality and when one identifies positive formations of freedom, one is not tainting thought with the scourge of the real world. Instead, through this path one elevates thought to the dignity of actuality.

Hegel pushes negativity to its ultimate point so that it loses its purity and manifests itself in actuality. Without this actualization, negativity cannot serve as the site for freedom. If one wants freedom, one must discover what happens when there are no external authorities left to fight, when the external authorities

appear as the mark of our freedom rather than as an obstacle to it. The freedom to denounce fails to see that it remains caught up in what it denounces, whereas the freedom that identifies its own limit in the external authority reaches the point of self-determination.

¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 153.

² G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 674.

³ In the case of Spinoza, it is not a question of aligning his desire with the substantial Other because, for him, there is nothing but this one substance. Spinoza himself becomes swallowed up in the substance of God, which is why his philosophy can leave no place for the subject and must conceive of freedom merely as the reconciliation with necessity.

⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, Volume I, 353.

⁵ The classic cinematic instance of the parent's humiliation in front of the child occurs in Vittorio de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948). After helping his father Antonio (Lamberto Maggiorani) search for his stolen bicycle, Bruno (Enzo Staiola) watches him attempt to steal someone else's and then endure the public humiliation of being caught. This moment represents freedom for Bruno as a subject, but not simply because he no longer has any attachment to his father as an authority. Despite his tears, Bruno's look up at his father shows that his father remains an authority even at the moment of his desubstantialization. In one of the concluding shots of the film, De Sica focuses on Bruno grasping his father's hand, indicating his identification with his father at this moment. This is the positive manifestation of freedom, as Hegel conceives it. Just as the speed limit sign continues to exist in the external world when the subject recognizes this sign as its own limit, so does the father. What changes is that Bruno now sees his own role in the father's authority. (I am indebted to Richard Boothby at Loyola University Maryland for this point and for his general comments on the essay.)

⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Volume III: *The*

Consummate Religion, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 125.

⁷ In Hegel's *Philosophy of Freedom*, Paul Franco points out that Hegel was the first thinker to grant the state a positive role in the formation of the subject's freedom. The state does not just provide a milieu in which the subject can act freely without constantly fearing for its life. Much more than this, it forces the subject to undergo an explicit and necessary alienation for its interests, which enables the subject to disentangle its freedom from the advancement of its interest. According to Franco, "It is only with Hegel that the state and the social institutions comprising it are no longer viewed as merely establishing negative or external conditions for the quest for human autonomy but as directly promoting and cultivating such autonomy." Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 343.

⁸ One of the primary culprits of this interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right* was Rudolf Haym, an avowed enemy of Hegel. See Rudolf Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit* (Berlin: Rudolf Gärtner, 1857).

⁹ Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 124.

¹⁰ Hegel read Adam Smith and derived his conception of civil society in part from Smith's description of the laws that govern economic interaction. But unlike Smith, he saw that unbridled capitalist interactions necessarily would produce a realm of intractable poverty that no economic strategy could remedy. Hegel would call this realm of intractable poverty the "rabble." For more on Hegel's theorization of the rabble, see Frank Ruda, *Hegel's Rabble* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

¹¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, ed. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 276.

¹² If we think about the two totalitarian horrors of the twentieth century—Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany—it seems as if Hegel misses the real danger. The problem is not imagining the state in terms of civil society but the excessive power of the state to curtail individual freedom. But ironically, both of these totalitarian enterprises avoided complete identification with the state. In each case, a party apparatus adjacent to state structure pulled the strings, and this party apparatus arose out of an implicit recognition that the state alone is the

realization of freedom.

¹³ Martin Heidegger, "Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?," trans. Thomas Sheehan, in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, ed. Thomas Sheehan (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 27-30.

¹⁴ In the contemporary world, Slavoj Žižek has become a philosophical celebrity. Žižek's full embrace of his celebrity—he makes films, accepts interviews everywhere, engages in public debates, and so on—marks his status as a Hegelian philosopher. Like Hegel, Žižek does not associate the freedom of thought remaining in the margins.

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 40.

¹⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume Three*, trans. David Fernbach (New York: Penguin, 1981), 959.

¹⁷ One might speculate that without Hegel's friend-become-enemy Schelling as his teacher, Kierkegaard would have built upon the philosophical edifice that Hegel created rather than struggling against its caricature. Schelling's tendentious and ultimately preposterous version of Hegel's thought rendered this impossible.

¹⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *Judge For Yourself!*, in *For Self-Examination / Judge For Yourself!*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 208.

¹⁹ See Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, vol. 1, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

²⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation of the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, trans. Reidar Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 155.

²¹ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 36.

²² Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, ed. Raymond Queneau (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), 167. Kojève's image of the subject as a negating being

finds echoes throughout twentieth century French thought, especially that of Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan.

²³ Kojève repeatedly changed his mind about when and where history ended: he went from seeing Napoleon as the embodiment of this end (a position he attributed to Hegel), to Stalin, to American consumer society, to Japanese society.

²⁴ The idea of the end of history is more Kojève's than Hegel's. According to Philip Grier, Kojève bases his idea of the end of history on his acquaintance with Hegel's writing from 1802 on the priority of the future over the past, an acquaintance that he gained thanks to his friend and fellow Russian émigré Alexandre Koyré. Grier postulates that Kojève's procedure for developing his thesis involved "taking an obscure set of passages on time from a very early version of Hegel's *Naturphilosophie* which Hegel certainly rejected prior to writing the *Phenomenology*, and treating them as the basis for an interpretation not only of that work but of the whole of Hegel's philosophical position." Philip T. Grier, "The End of History and the Return of History," in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 188-189. But even if Kojève incorrectly imputes the idea of the end of history to Hegel, he is not wrong to recognize a moment when the negative manifests itself as a positivity, which Hegel calls the absolute.

²⁵ Julia Kristeva gives Hegel credit for introducing negativity into philosophy. She states, "the notion of negativity, which may be thought of as both the cause and the organizing principle of the *process*, comes from Hegel." Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 109. Despite this contribution, Hegel—even the young Hegel—fails to give this negativity its full due. As Kristeva says, "already in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* negativity is presented under the rule of the One and the Understanding, even in those moments when it appears most material and independent." Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 114.

²⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholzen (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), 30-31.

²⁷ Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, 87-88.

²⁸ Whereas Hegel proclaims the whole (which subsumes all negativity) as truth, Adorno famously reverses that judgment, stating in *Minima Moralia*, "The whole

is the false.” Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974), 50.

²⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative*, trans. Jason Smith and Steven Miller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 68.

³⁰ Judith Butler ends her otherwise faithful analysis on Hegel's impact on twentieth century French thought by signaling the problem with his identification with the universal. She writes, “Both the ‘subject’ and its ‘desire’ have come to suffer the process of historicization, and the presumed universality of the Hegelian discourse becomes increasingly suspect.” Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 231. With this conclusion, Butler points toward her own development of a politics of resistance, a politics that represents a clear step away from the allegiance to Hegel that she expresses in this first book.

³¹ The exception among recent theorists is Gilles Deleuze, who takes Hegel to task not for his abandonment of negativity but for his embrace of it in the first place. Deleuze argues that the turn to the negative itself is part of the (positive) structure that it supposedly contests—and thus must be eschewed. In rejecting the negative, he advocates, instead, an embrace of the initial positivity of desire (an embrace he sees Spinoza accomplishing). Though this position seems dramatically removed from that of someone like Adorno (who believes that Hegel doesn't take negativity far enough), it actually bears an incredible resemblance. According to Deleuze, negativity is part of structure, part of power (and thereby antithetical to desire), and so one must refuse negativity if one is to refuse structure and, at the same time, remain true to one's desire. In this way, Deleuze sees sustaining an initial positivity of desire as the only way of actually accomplishing what Hegelian negativity pretends to accomplish. This is why Deleuze's initial positivity resembles Hegelian negativity to such an extent. Despite his critique along these lines, Deleuze's position on Hegel remains well within the theoretical landscape of recent critical thought.

³² Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage, 1991), 136-137.

³³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 1825-1826, Volume III: Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, trans. Robert F. Brown and J. M. Stewart, ed. Robert F. Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 190-191.

³⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right, Heidelberg 1817-1818 with Additions from the Lectures of 1818-1819*, trans. J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 127.

³⁵ Lenin, as both a thinker and an activist, always insisted upon his hatred of opportunism. His break with Karl Kautsky and with the Second International occurred over their willingness to acquiesce to bourgeois rule and to content themselves with gradual change. No one would confuse Lenin with someone quick to—or even amenable to—compromise. Throughout his life, he consistently identified and attacked the proclivity to compromise, demanding that communists hold fast to their radical position despite its unpopularity. And yet, in 1920 Lenin turned his attack away from opportunism and toward what he called “‘Left-Wing’ Communism,” the communism that flatly rejects all compromise. In *“Left-Wing” Communism, An Infantile Disorder*, Lenin claims that “to reject compromises ‘on principle,’ to reject the admissibility of compromises in general, no matter of what kind, is childishness which it is even difficult to take seriously.” V. I. Lenin, *“Left-Wing” Communism, An Infantile Disorder: A Popular Essay in Marxist Strategy and Tactics* (New York: International Publishers, 1940), 22. Refusing all compromises, according to Lenin, results in a position so far left, so pure, that it can never achieve the slightest actualization.