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The Dialectical Unfolding of Spirit in Hegel: A Fallibilist Account of Knowledge

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Abstract

In the Hegelian system, Spirit attains absolute knowledge through a dialectical method involving speculative sentences, whose inner form is doubling up, contradictory views on a subject between two opposing sides, by which truth is established through reasoned arguments, a circular motion that expands upon itself and passes beyond its present state to grasp every human experience (i.e., the whole). This process consists of progressive evolution or development in which the earlier, less sophisticated definitions or viewpoints are sublated into the later, more sophisticated higher viewpoints. The present study examines the dialectical evolution of Spirit in the light of epistemic fallibilism, in which justification is inconclusive and open-ended. This dialectical fallibilism is explored within the context of Hegel's dialectical skepticism, speculative philosophy, and recollection (i.e., the process in which Spirit returns to its earlier, less sophisticated stages to possess them in a new form). The study also uses the Hegelian dialectic fallibilism to evaluate conclusive epistemic justification, including infallibilism, foundationalism, and critical reflection. The evaluation results indicate that natural laws, mechanistic laws, and even self-evident truths, such as logical principles, geometrical truth, and metamathematical truths have no conclusive justification and do not escape fallibility. Thus, the current study enhances the evaluation of the fallibilist account of knowledge and knowledge founded on infallibility, including epistemic immunities, certainty, indubitability, and incorrigibility.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Абстрактен

В Хегеловата система Духът постига абсолютно познание чрез диалектически метод, включващ спекулативни изречения, чиято вътрешна форма се удвоява, противоречиви възгледи по даден въпрос между две противоположни страни, чрез които истината се установява чрез аргументирани аргументи, кръгово движение, което се разширява върху себе си и преминава отвъд сегашното си състояние, за да обхване всеки човешки опит (т.е. цялото). Този процес се състои от прогресивна еволюция или развитие, в което по-ранните, по-малко сложни определения или гледни точки се свеждат до по-късните, по-сложни по-висши гледни точки.

Настоящото изследване разглежда диалектическата еволюция на Духа в светлината на епистемичния фалибилизъм, в който оправданието е неубедително и с отворен край. Този диалектически фалибилизъм се изследва в контекста на диалектическия скептицизъм на Хегел, спекулативната философия и припомнянето (т.е. процесът, при който Духът се връща към по-ранните си, по-малко сложни етапи, за да ги притежава в нова форма). Изследването също така използва хегелианския диалектически фалибилизъм, за да оцени убедителното епистемично оправдание, включително инфалцибилизъм, фундаментализъм и критична рефлексия.

Резултатите от оценката показват, че природните закони, механистичните закони и дори очевидните истини, като логически принципи, геометрична истина и метаматематически истини, нямат убедително оправдание и не избягват погрешимостта. По този начин настоящото изследване подобрява оценката на

фалибилисткия разказ за знания и знания, основани на непогрешимост,
включително епистемични имунитети, сигурност, несъмненост и непоправимост.

Dedication

Dedicated to my late father, Mr. Patrick Otumdi Akanaefu

May his soul continue to rest in the bosom of the Lord.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

In the introductory part of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel discusses cognition or knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) as an instrument for capturing the absolute but is also concerned about errors that are inevitable in using knowledge to capture it. Hegel argues that as an instrument of activity, cognition will reshape and alter the absolute. In contrast, if cognition is a passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us, we cannot receive it as it is in itself but only as it exists through this medium.¹ The problem is the same whether cognition is an instrument of activity or a passive medium. Hence, science either aims to use error prevention methods while producing knowledge or tries to produce knowledge and treat errors as it progresses. Philosophers like John Locke, Rene Descartes, and Immanuel Kant, choose error prevention methods. For instance, Kant's fear of error leads him to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he establishes the perfect conditions under which cognition can function. In contrast, Hegel sees errors, doubt, and skepticism as part of the consciousness' search for truth. Hegel's scientific method of cognition or search for truth is the dialectical method, which he calls the hallmark of philosophy or science.

In this study, I read the dialectical path of Spirit toward the absolute as a fallibilist account of epistemic justification. I also argue that Hegelian speculative philosophy and dialectical skepticism inevitably incorporate fallibility principles. Thus, the Hegelian dialectical method is a rejection of epistemic infallibilism, including empty or universal skepticism, dogmatism, foundationalism, and critical reflection. Westphal buttresses this point when he argues that Hegel's epistemological aim in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* was to develop a pragmatic, fallibilist account of human knowledge and to demonstrate that a fallibilist account of justification is consistent with a realist, 'correspondence'

¹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University, 1977), §73/46.

analysis of truth.² Similarly, Main Robert notes: “What is lacking in Hegel’s account of the dialectical evolution of Spirit is a sufficient awareness of fallibilism.”³

Statement of Problem

In the Hegelian system, Spirit attains absolute knowledge through a dialectical method involving speculative sentences, a process involving doubling up contradictory views on a subject between opposing sides, establishing truth through reasoned arguments, and a circular motion that expands upon itself to grasp every human experience (i.e., the whole). This process consists of progressive evolution or development in which the earlier, less sophisticated definitions or viewpoints are sublated into the later, more sophisticated, higher viewpoints. Critically viewed, Hegel's dialectical method is a fallibilist account of epistemic justification, rejecting universal skepticism and infallibilism. Fallibilism is an epistemological thesis that refutes conclusive justification, stating that no belief can be rationally justified with complete immunity from error, refutation, or doubt. Similarly, with its speculative philosophy, the dialectical method does not aim to sort out truth from false assertions, certain from uncertain assertions, or correctness from erroneous statements but to grasp the truth as a whole or absolute knowledge.⁴

Additionally, Hegel identifies the absolute with recollection (*Erinnerung*). Absolute knowing is Spirit recollecting its own development through the process of dialectical movement or deductions. In this process of recollection, Spirit keeps returning to its earlier, less sophisticated stages or viewpoints and possessing these stages in a new way until it grasps absolute knowledge. Therefore, Hegel emphasizes that absolute consciousness is a notion (*Begriff*) that returns to itself through the dialectics of determinate negation and sublation of its earlier determinations such that

² Kenneth Westphal, “Hegel’s Philosophy – A Conspectus,” in *A Dictionary of Continental Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

³ Robert Main, “Pragmatism, Promise, Naturalism’s Prospects: Fallibilism and the Freightage of Eternity,” PhD Diss., (Temple University, Libraries, 2010), 104 [my brackets].

⁴ Donald P. Verene, *Speculative Philosophy* (New York: Lexington Book, 2009).

they are preserved and remain within its later determinations.⁵ Thus, to attain absolute knowledge, speculative philosophy is produced by non-vicious, circular dialectics of memory or recollection in which consciousness keeps returning to its beginning and possessing earlier stages. This speculative process contrasts with epistemic infallibilism, including dogmatism, foundationalism, and critical reflection. Hence, Hegel's dialectical method can be read as a fallibilist account of justification.

However, limited research has been conducted to examine the Hegelian dialectical method, with its speculative philosophy, as a fallibilist thesis. Therefore, the problem to be addressed in this study is that the dialectical unfolding of Spirit in the Hegelian system involves a fallibilist account of justification. I will address this problem by reviewing the dialectical unfolding of Spirit to absolute knowledge and paying attention to dialectical skepticism, speculative processes, and the process of returning to its earlier sophisticated stages (recollection) embedded in this evolution; understanding dialectical skepticism, speculative philosophy, and infallibilism and fallibilism as conditions of justification; and evaluating the epistemic justification based on Hegel's dialectical fallibilism.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine fallibilism within the dialectical movement of absolute Spirit. Within this context, the dialectical unfolding of Spirit to absolute knowledge will be reviewed with emphasis on how each stage of Spirit exhibits inner contradiction, dialectical skepticism, and speculative process, leading to a higher viewpoint, which captures the essence of fallibilism. Hegel's dialectical skepticism and speculative philosophy alongside infallibilism, foundationalism, and critical reflection will be explored to determine further the fallibilist account of the dialectical evolution of Spirit. Also, epistemic justification based on Hegel's dialectical fallibilism will be evaluated.

⁵ Martin Akanaefu, "Scepticism in Hegel's Dialectics," *Religious Identity and Worldview: Hegel's Philosophy and Religion, 250 years Since the Birth of Hegel* 3 (2021), 196-220.

Research Questions

Two research questions guide this study: How does the Hegelian dialectical method account for fallibilism? Does Hegel's account of knowledge refute the traditional epistemic justification?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study explores the dialectical unfolding of Spirit as a fallibilist account of knowledge and how this account of knowledge refutes the traditional epistemic justification. It draws primary materials from Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit, including subjective Spirit (i.e., anthropology, phenomenology, and psychology), objective Spirit, and absolute Spirit. However, it also utilizes materials from the entire Hegelian system because the whole system can be read as a fallibilist account of justification. Also, documents from several other philosophers are adopted to understand more deeply how the dialectical evolution of Spirit presents a fallibilist account of knowledge.

Moreover, the study is within epistemology, logic, metaphysics, and continental philosophy. Primarily, epistemological, metaphysical, and logical concepts (e.g., fallibilism, skepticism, justification, foundationalism, critical philosophy, speculative philosophy, and logical principles) will be examined in relation to Hegel's dialectical evolution of Spirit to absolute knowledge. Critical philosophies of Descartes and Kant will also be examined in contradistinction with Hegel's speculative philosophy and the fallibility principles incorporated in the evolution of Spirit.

Explication of Terms

In the traditional, normative approach to knowledge, justification, truth, and beliefs are the three primary knowledge structures. This means that knowledge requires justified true belief in the normative approach. For instance, for S to know some proposition p , these three conditions must be met: first, p must be true; second, S must believe p ; and third, S must be justified in believing p . Precisely, the justification structure of knowledge deals with the central epistemic question: "What

makes S justified in believing that p ?”⁶ Several theories of epistemic justification abound, including foundationalism, coherentism, reliabilism, and contextualism. They are unique ways of answering this central epistemic question of justification. However, each theory defends either infallibilism or fallibilism based on its emphasis on the nature of justification as conclusive or inconclusive.

The Infallibilist Account of Justification

Infallibilism is a philosophical approach that asserts that knowledge is based on absolute certainty. It is based on the principle that knowledge occurs because the justification condition is comprehensibly accomplished. The primary conditions for infallibilism include logical impossibility, epistemic impossibility, and metaphysical impossibility.⁷ The logical impossibility condition asserts that it is logically impossible to believe that p (on the basis B) and $not-p$ simultaneously. The epistemic condition holds that it is epistemically impossible to believe that p (on the basis B) and $not-p$. The metaphysical conditions assert that it is metaphysically impossible to believe that p (on the basis B) and $not-p$ are the same. Philosophers, including Descartes, Locke, and Kant, have supported infallibilism. For instance, Descartes believes that knowledge is indubitable and self-evident and that only the intellect can produce the unity of clear, distinct, and certain knowledge. Hence, “in contemporary terms, Descartes of the *Meditations* was thus a knowledge infallibility.”⁸

Furthermore, Locke equates knowledge with certainty, stating thus: “With me to know and to be certain is the same thing; what I know, that I am certain of; and what I am certain of, that I know. What reaches to knowledge, I think may be called certainty; and what comes short of certainty, I think cannot be called knowledge.”⁹ However, Locke differentiates three levels of certainty: intuitive

⁶ Markus Lammenranta, “Theories of Justification,” in *Handbook of Epistemology*, ed. Ilkka Niiniluoto, Matti Sintonen, and Jan. Wolenski (Singer-Science & Media, B. V., 2004).

⁷ Tim Kraft, “Scepticism, Infallibilism, Fallibilism,” in *Discipline Filosofiche* 22, no. 2 (2012):49-70.

⁸ Stephen Hetherington, “The Redundancy Problem: From Knowledge-Infallibilism to Knowledge-Minimalism,” in *Synthese* 195 (2018): 4683-4702.

⁹ John Locke, “The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke: The Correspondence: Volume III, Letters 849-1241,” ed. E. S. Beer, (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1978, 145.

knowledge of the self gained through a direct acquaintance, demonstrative knowledge involving the perception of agreement and disagreement between ideas and the memory of previous steps in an argument, and sensitive knowledge of the external world. Fearing error, Kant analyzed the knowledge of the world in terms of an infallibilist model of *scientia* in his transcendental idealism, where he emphasizes specific apodictic pre-existing categories inherent in the mind to organize sensory contents. Kant places a stringent requirement of apodictic certainty on science, arguing that everything necessary should be cognized *a priori* with universality and necessity.¹⁰ Kant differentiates knowledge from opinion and belief, arguing that knowledge requires objectively sufficient ground in contrast to opinions and beliefs. Thus, Kant's concept of knowledge requires infallibility, and we can reach absolutely certain assent in analytic and synthetic *a priori* knowledge.

The Fallibilist Account of Justification

Fallibilism is a philosophical approach that rejects absolute certainty in knowledge. It argues that justification sufficient for knowledge strongly indicates the truth of what is known but does not entail the truth.¹¹ This means that even if a belief is true, the justification leading to the truth can still allow falsity or errors. For the fallibilist, no belief is conclusively justified; our knowledge can always be revised by further evidence. So, the fallibilist sees justification as inconclusive, open-ended, and always needing further justification. Some fallibilists accept that mathematical and logical knowledge is infallible, while others uphold the fallibility of every knowledge. Hegel's conception of truth captures the definition of fallibilism. Differentiating certainty (being sure of what is *here* and *now* without explanation) from truth, Hegel believes that truth is always the unfolded inner contradiction of what consciousness experiences at any given stage of the dialectical movement. This statement means that, at any given stage, what consciousness experiences is not the

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A823/B851.

¹¹ Kenneth Westpal, "Hegel's Philosophy - A Conspectus."

truth of that experience; rather, it is only when consciousness passes to the next stage that it can look back on the previous one and realize that what had seemed to be the case was not, in fact, true.¹²

Therefore, Hegel maintains that certainty is opposed to truth.

Fallibilism has roots in early Greek philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato, who encouraged intellectual humility and self-examination. Socratic open-mindedness acknowledges that knowledge claims are liable to errors and encourages accepting the risk of refuting earlier positions. This perspective suggests that knowledge is based on fallible justifications. However, a formal doctrine of fallibilism gained prominence in the 19th century with the pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dew. For instance, Peirce argues that human knowledge is never absolute due to indeterminacy and uncertainty at the core of reality, owing to the continued evolution of reality and the presence of real chance. Peirce asserts that absolute certainty, exactitude, or universality cannot be achieved through ratiocination, direct experience, intuition, revelation, or any other possible means.¹³ He uses the terms "phenomenology" and "phenomena" to describe phenomenology as a science that simply describes what it sees.¹⁴ In the 20th century, notable proponents of fallibilism included Karl Popper, Willard Van Quine, Pierre Duhem, and Thomas Kuhn. Popper maintains fallibilism in science, opposing Rudolf Carnap's verifiability thesis and other logical positivists. Popper argues that no conclusive proof exists, and that absolute certainty of scientific statements is problematic. He argues for falsification, stating that scientific statements are corroborated or supported relative to other statements, which are tentative and open to criticism.¹⁵

¹² Seoul Philosophy Club: A Discussion Group About Ideas for Everyone.
<https://seoulphilosophy.wordpress.com/2014/02/08/the-certainty-and-truth-of-reason>

¹³ Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vols. 1–6, ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur W. Burks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-1958), 1.13-14; 1.143.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959).

Proposing a more rational fallibilist account of scientific knowledge, Duhem and Quine reject Popper's strict falsification of scientific knowledge, arguing that theories and knowledge can be saved from falsification despite errors. They believe that theories or predictions require a supportive network of assumptions, and when a theory's prediction is refuted, it only means that at least one of the hypotheses is false, allowing the core hypothesis to be retained. Hence, the entire cluster of assumptions should be considered to filter out erroneous hypotheses. Logically, the Duhem-Quine thesis is represented using *modus ponens* or *modus tollens*. For instance, their *modus tollens* run thus: If H (the core hypothesis) & A1 & A2 & A3 & A4 & A5, then K; not K; therefore, either not H or not A1 or not A2 or not A3 or not A4 or not A5. In most cases, the problem lies in the supporting assumptions. Similarly, Kuhn proposes a paradigm shift from the normal, existing scientific paradigm to a new paradigm as a way science evolves. For instance, in the *Copernican Revolution*, Kuhn underscores that paradigm shifts from primitive empiricism to new paradigms occurred through conceptual evolution, a process of falsification, rather than accumulative observable facts.

Fallibilism and Skepticism

In this study, skepticism refers to traditional skepticism, which involves the general idea that knowledge does not exist. This clarification is crucial, as many forms of skepticism in philosophical arguments before the 19th century qualified actually as fallibilism after the introduction of fallibilism in epistemology by Pierce.¹⁶ That said, although fallibilism and (traditional) skepticism have the basic attitude of doubts, they are substantially different. On the one hand, fallibilists maintain that humans have knowledge despite admitting specific limitations in knowledge. For the fallibilist, knowledge exists, but this knowledge is not immune from errors, doubts, or refutations. Similar to Duhem-Quine's argument, Tim Kraft underscores that this error possibility maintained in fallibilism

¹⁶ Angel M. Faerna, "Scepticism, Fallibilism, and Certainty," in *International Workshop Wittgenstein's on Certainty: Scepticism, Normativity, and Relativity*, 2011.

is a local one because it is the possibility that the target belief is false while all other beliefs may be true to save knowledge from falsification.¹⁷ Thus, while fallibilism admits that each belief could be false, it rejects a global error possibility by asserting that not all beliefs could be false.

In contrast, the skeptic insists that knowledge does not exist. For the skeptic, all beliefs are false or erroneous. Hence, the skeptic maintains a global error possibility in which all beliefs are false at the same.¹⁸ Skepticism ends at mere abstract and empty negation. In this regard, skepticism is far stronger than fallibilism. In fact, skepticism is a form of infallibilism because maintaining a global error means admitting an absolute certainty in error. Therefore, it is fascinating that infallibilists themselves usually accuse fallibilism of a skeptical capitulation because it allows the possibility of at least some knowledge's fallibility. This refutation is not supported because fallibilism does not maintain a global error the possibility of knowledge.

Significance of the Study

Examining the Hegelian dialectical evolution of Spirit as a fallibilist account of knowledge is a gap in the philosophical literature, and this current study seeks to fill this gap. Within the context of the dialectical movement of Spirit to absolute knowledge, the study findings will underline how natural laws, mechanical laws, and even self-evident truths, such as logical principles, geometrical truths, and metamathematical truths, exhibit fallibilism. Hence, the current study will enhance the evaluation of the fallibilist account of knowledge and knowledge founded on infallibility, including epistemic immunities, certainty, indubitability, and incorrigibility. Additionally, the current study will provide insight into several other areas of philosophy, including ethics, philosophical anthropology, political philosophy, social philosophy, and philosophy of religion, as these areas are highlighted in the process of examining how the dialectical evolution of Spirit incorporates fallibility principles.

¹⁷ Kim Kraft, "Scepticism, Infallibilism, and Fallibilism."

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

Chapter 2

The Dialectical Evolution of Spirit in the Hegelian System

The Hegelian system, including Logic, Philosophy of Nature, and Philosophy of Spirit, involves fallibilism in its dialectical movement. This movement involves skepticism, speculation, and recollection. For example, regarding dialectical skepticism, Slavoj Žižek notes that the abyss of the dialectical movement of Spirit is a path of despair, where the measure of truth is always rejected when the perceived truth fails this measure.¹⁹ Also, Spirit undergoes a progressive evolution through speculative sentences to attain absolute truth. The lower stage (thesis) doubles up (antithesis) and sublated into a higher unity (synthesis). Thus, contradictions or doubling ups between truth and untruth exist in human history, science, and philosophy, leading to higher viewpoints in the unfolding of the absolute Spirit. Hegel's philosophy of Spirit comprises three main triadic stages: subjective Spirit (thesis), objective Spirit (antithesis), and absolute Spirit (synthesis). For precision and space, this chapter is limited to Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit* and *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Subjective Spirit (Self-Evolution)

Spirit begins its journey as a subjective Spirit and evolves through the triads of natural soul (anthropology), consciousness (phenomenology), and mind (psychology). The subjective, individual human mind is the content of this stage, and its subdivisions are successful stadia of individual consciousness, including sense-perception, appetite, intellect, reason, imagination, and memory.²⁰

The Soul (Anthropology)

Hegel describes the soul as Spirit in nature, the object treated in Anthropology.²¹ At this stage, Spirit is purely subjective; it is a monadic individual without any world of objects or external

¹⁹ Slavoj Žižek, "Hegel versus Heidegger," in *E-flux Journal* 32 (2012).

²⁰ Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*, (New York: Dover Pub., Inc., 1959), 440/322.

²¹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind: The Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science* 3, §387/10; §388/12.

universe. In this phase, Spirit evolves through three stages: (a) the natural soul, (b) the feeling soul, and (c) the actual soul. Spirit posits itself first as the natural soul and develops from physical qualities through physical alteration to sensibility. The natural soul begins with Spirit's absolute beginning with no advancement in nature. It is blank, undifferentiated, completely undetermined, and empty. It is not mediated by itself through internal distinction or by an external factor, such as an objective world through relations to things external. Hegel likens this stage to the Aristotelian passive nous, which is potentially all things.²² The soul develops internal distinctions and affections, forming physical qualities and alterations within its content.²³ Examples of such internal alterations include the passage from childhood to adulthood, sexual relations, and changes in sleeping and waking. The final phase of the natural soul is sensibility or sensation (*Empfindung*), which arises from the internal distinction between the soul and its contents. This sensation is distinct from the soul but is purely subjective and can be experienced through the mediation of the senses and body in which it is inhered. Stace suggests that hunger, fatigue, and pain are subjective sensations.²⁴

The next stage is the feeling soul. Hegel maintains that the already-received sensations become active, affecting the soul. This means that the soul is passive, receiving action from received sensation but still active in its own act because these sensations are still not separated from the soul, and its sensations are the soul's own act. Hence, the feeling soul is the activity of the soul in its affections. In contrast, sensation involves the soul's passivity in its affections. Hegel calls this stage the feeling soul (*die Fühlende Seele*), where the soul is sentient or feels. The feeling soul evolves through immediacy and self-feeling, eventually evolving into habit. At the first stage of the feeling soul, the soul relates directly to its contents without the mediation of sense organs, resulting in an

²² Georg W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind: The Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science 3*, §387/10; §389/12.

²³ Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

indistinct mass of singular feelings.²⁵ The feeling soul's experience of the world is disordered due to its withdrawal from the body and senses, making it difficult to integrate all feelings into one coherent order.²⁶ One example of the feeling soul is a baby's feelings in the womb. These feelings are the mother's feelings without the mediation of the baby's organs. Hegel explains that the feeling soul's activity involves realizing itself as a self. This phase involves the distinct feeling that it is "I" acting in contrast to the first moment of the feeling soul whose activity appears as passivity. This realization creates a distinction between the self and sensations and feelings and implies that the soul is now conscious of itself. It leads to the formation of two distinct sides of the soul: the soul's immediate being (abstract, empty universality) and its content (sensations and feelings). This distinction results in the evolution of habit, the third moment of the feeling soul.²⁷ Habit is the abstract universality of the soul realizing itself through repetitive particular sensations, feelings, and activities.²⁸

Hegel further argues that the soul's formal universality and specific sensations result in a single self, the actual soul. This is the final phase of the soul. After distinguishing itself from its content, the soul realizes that it is nothing but a mere empty homogenous blank without its content. Hence, the soul recognizes that its content is as essential as its formal universality. The state of mind in which the soul realizes the unity of its formal universality and its content is known as the actual soul. Put in another way, the soul's realization that its content is essential to its formal universality and so realizing that it is not one half, but two halves are known as the actual soul. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel defines actuality as the unity of inner and outer, essence and manifestation.²⁹ In this context, the soul's formal universality is regarded as the inner or essence, whereas the soul's content

²⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind: The Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science* 3, §403/25.

²⁶ Nicholas Mowad, "The Soul and Body in Hegel's Anthropology," PhD Diss., (Loyola University Chicago, 2010).

²⁷ Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (DigiCat, 2022).

is regarded as the outer or the manifestation of the inner. Hence, the inner side is not hidden behind the outer but is revealed through the outer side. In contrast, the particular content of the soul is the very essence of its universality. Therefore, the two halves of the soul are one.

Consciousness (Phenomenology)

Phenomenology is a more developed form of Spirit deduced through the explicit distinction between the soul and its content. It evolves through three stages: consciousness (thesis), which sees the object as independent from the subject; self-consciousness (antithesis), which considers the object to be identical to the subject; and reason (synthesis), which sees the object and subject as simultaneously distinct and identical.³⁰ In this stage, the soul's contents are thrown out, resulting in an independent existence in the external world. The mind becomes aware of the external universe but does not recognize it as its projection, thinking it is independent and against itself. The successful steps and changes that consciousness or thinking subject undergoes in this phase occur in the external object. However, external changes are the mind's spontaneous activity, and each stage aligns with the level of the mind's evolution into absolute Spirit.³¹ For instance, the level of civilization determines the stage of the collective mind's evolution into absolute Spirit.

Consciousness

The stage of consciousness evolves into three stages: sense-certainty (thesis), sense-perception (antithesis), and understanding or intellect (synthesis). In the sense-certainty (*Sinnliche Gewissheit*) stage, consciousness sees an object as an isolated unit of senses, resulting in immediate or receptive knowledge of the object as “there,” a singular, individual object, a mere pure “*this*” or “*that*.” without any mediating or intervening link between the thinking subject and the object.³² This kind of consciousness is nothing but the apprehension of mere *thereness*, the abstraction of bare

³⁰ Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

sensation, a sheer being of the object, or a pure 'I'.³³ Hegel argues that sense-certainty is the poorest truth, and such a state of mind does not exist in humans as a separate state. The mind transitions from sense-certainty to sense-perception (*Wahrnehmung*) when it discovers that sense-certainty embodies contradictions and tries to resolve them. Consciousness now recognizes that the pure *this* or *that* and *here* or *now* are not merely *pure immediacy* but are invested with a universal character, the opposite of what sense-certainty perceives. Also, a thing is constituted by its relations to other things, and consciousness apprehends objects in their class or universal nature as mediated and related to other objects (e.g., a chair is a member of the class of other chairs to which it belongs). In reality, what the senses apprehend is the object inseparable from universality. Hence, reaching pure immediacy or bare consciousness is practically impossible, as even the lowest sensation involves mediation and universality. Consequently, "sensuous consciousness refutes itself and breaks down."³⁴

The sensuous apprehension of a particular object, inseparable from universality, is known as sense perception. It involves spontaneous mind activity. Hegel emphasizes that sense perception is the wealth of sense knowledge because it contains negation and mediation within its essence. A thing is undivided and unrelated but has universal properties (e.g., color, shape, and texture) through which it is classified, mediates, or relates to other objects in its class. As a thing, the object is one, but as having properties, the object is many.³⁵ Consciousness recognizes that sense perception also exhibits contradictions between the individual object and the universal. What sense perception perceives is not an individual object but universal. This results in an unavoidable sense of unity or one (being for itself) and multiplicity or many (being for another) in a thing. This means that sense perception simultaneously perceives an individual and nonindividual object. It perceives the object as both one and many. It initially sees the unity of a thing itself but then reverses this process to see it as many.

³³ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §91/58.

³⁴ Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*, 474/343.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Consciousness must rise above sense perception to overcome this contradiction. Hence, consciousness now takes pure universality (e.g., force, gravity, law, one, and many, unity, and multiplicity) for its object, rejecting sensuous universality (e.g., chair, table, and man). This stage is known as understanding or intellect (*Verstand*), which categorizes universals into reality and the multiplicity of sense into appearance. At this phase, the only truth or reality recognized is pure universality. Understanding puts universals and the multiplicity of sense into two different worlds, categorizing universals into reality and the multiplicity of sense into appearance. It dismisses single individuals as nontrue objects or appearances. It views essence and appearance as opposites, viewing the universal as a law and the supersensuous world as a realm of laws. Understanding is the attitude of mind adopted by empirical sciences. It explains phenomena by referring them to their laws.

Self-consciousness

Hegel asserts that understanding transforms into self-consciousness when consciousness recognizes the external object as the subject itself. This does not mean that the individual person (e.g., Obi) sees an object (e.g., a car) as Obi; rather, it means that the individual mind or consciousness sees the universal mind in the object.³⁶ Hence, self-consciousness is the reflection of the world of sense and perception, and it is the return from otherness.³⁷ Self-consciousness “is only the motionless tautology of: ‘I am I’.”³⁸ It undergoes development in three stages: self-certainty, in which the need to assert selfhood is pure appetite or desire; self-consciousness recognition (*Anerkennen*); and universal self-consciousness. Self-consciousness begins as the desire or appetite (*Begierde*) to destroy and abolish the external object, becoming pure self-consciousness or simple "I" fully developed. This process raises an inner contradiction, dividing the mind into two forms: the higher form of self-consciousness, where the object is recognized as the mind or consciousness itself,

³⁶ Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*, 474/343..

³⁷ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §167/105.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, §167/105.

and the lower form, where the object is seen as independent. To fully develop, self-consciousness must transcend or supersede its lower form of consciousness, destroying the object and abolishing its independence.”³⁹ Desire is the impulse associated with consuming and abolishing the independent object, making self-consciousness the certainty of itself as the only self-subsistent being.

The next stage of self-consciousness is self-consciousness recognition (*Anerkennen*). Destroying the object (the other) gives the simple self or ego complete satisfaction of itself as the only being that truly is. This situation leads to a new inner contradiction because the self depends on (destroying) the object for its satisfaction. In other words, there must be the existence of the object (the other) to supersede or destroy before the self achieves satisfaction. Therefore, the object conditions the desire and self-certainty obtained in the gratification of the self. In this way, the self is now dependent on the object, which, to an extent, has its independent being. The only way the self can achieve full sense of itself (i.e., with perfect freedom and independence) is when the object negates itself as an independent entity exhibiting consciousness.⁴⁰ Only other selves exhibit this characteristic, allowing for freedom and independence while still in relation to the other. For the first time, the mind recognizes the existence of other selves as objects as its desire or appetite pushes it to abolish independent objects. This mode of self-consciousness is called self-consciousness recognition (*Anerkennen*). Thus, self-consciousness exists for another self-consciousness. It achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.

Hegel also explains that in self-consciousness, the notion of Spirit in its fullness first emerges in its implicit form, where each self-consciousness can attain recognition from other self-consciousness and remain independent. Hegel describes the first emergency of the notion of Spirit in self-consciousness as “the unity of the different independent self-consciousness, which in their

³⁹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §167/105.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, §175/109.

opposition enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is We and We that is 'I'."⁴¹ Self-consciousness exists in and for itself only through existing for another self-consciousness, and it cannot be certain of itself without another independent being through which it realizes its existence. Hegel posits that in superseding the other self-consciousness, self-consciousness loses itself and finds itself as the other, allowing the other to achieve simplicity without destroying independence, as self-consciousness only exists when it has the other self-consciousness. Thus, Hegel writes:

Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other self-consciousness, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self.⁴²

Hegel calls this movement the “ambiguous supersession of its ambiguous otherness.” because it involves the double movement of two self-consciousnesses, each striving to attain freedom through their absolute identity and independence.⁴³ This leads to a play of forces between the two self-consciousnesses, leading from simple being-for-itself (self-equality) to pure abstraction of being-for-itself (absolute negation or destroying the other’s being) and eventually to inequality, where one self-consciousness submits to the other and abandons its freedom and independence. However, as each self-consciousness seeks to destroy the other’s independence, it destroys its dependence on life. This struggle raises a contradiction because, in destroying the other, self-consciousness destroys its means of livelihood and its objective, ultimately destroying itself. This struggle is similar to the institution of slavery, where the lord retains independence and recognition, while the bondman is not recognized but depends on the lord, accepting the role of a mere thing or instrument of the lord's will.⁴⁴ This means that the slave no longer has self-consciousness but is forced back to the stage of

⁴¹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §177/110.

⁴² *Ibid.*, §179/111.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, §180/111.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, §187/113-114, §192/116; Martin Akanaefu, “Multiculturalism and the Challenges of Identity and Recognition Within the Context of Hegelian Dialectics,” *Philosophy of Religion and Worldview: Tradition and Innovation-Part II*, (2023): 39-53.

consciousness. However, the lord's negation of the bondsman's independence and freedom, which is the condition for self-consciousness, deprives the lord of the freedom he seeks. Thus, Hegel writes:

In this recognition, the unessential consciousness (the bondsman) is for the lord the object, which constitutes the truth of his certainty of himself. But it is clear that this object does not correspond to its Notion (the lord's self-consciousness), but rather that the object in which the lord has achieved lordship has in reality turned out to be something quite different from an independent consciousness (the lord). What now really confronts him is not an independent consciousness but a dependent one. He is, therefore, not certain of being-for-self as the truth of himself. On the contrary, his truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its unessential action.⁴⁵

The lord-bondsman relationship results in three moments of servile consciousness, where self-consciousness or self-certainty emerges: stoicism (thesis), skepticism (antithesis), and unhappy consciousness (synthesis). Stoicism is a conscious manifestation of freedom of self-consciousness, where consciousness asserts its freedom by withdrawing into abstract thought (*apatheia*) and absolutely negating everything. This freedom allows the stoic to determine or choose their attitudes or approaches to the world by their way of thinking, nullifying the relationship between the subject and the external world.⁴⁶ However, this freedom is only a notion of freedom and not a living reality or concrete freedom, as it is located purely in the thought without.⁴⁷ Because stoic thought has no intrinsic content or is abstract, it raises a contradiction (antithesis). The stoic wants to achieve absolute, concrete negation of the other's existence but ends with an incomplete negation of otherness, and so the object stoics want to achieve eludes them.⁴⁸ Thus, stoicism gives way to skepticism since the content of its abstract thought cannot provide the criterion of truth.

Skepticism is the unfolding of the stoic world, as it realizes the living reality of freedom that eludes stoicism (i.e., concrete thinking contrary to the stoic abstract thought). Skepticism negates

⁴⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §192/116-117 [my brackets].

⁴⁶ Martin Akanaefu, "Scepticism in Hegel's Dialectics."

⁴⁷ Here Hegel is using Notion as an "abstract" idea that has to be worked out (being-for-other), and not the idea of Notion as that which is fully developed.

⁴⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §201/122, §200/122.

everything absolutely through concrete thinking, which annihilates the being of the entire world.⁴⁹ Hegel maintains that there is a radical contingency running in everything for the skeptic. By declaring that the world is unreal to demonstrate the unlimited freedom of self-consciousness, the skeptic also negates himself and so immerses his self-consciousness in the world of flux. Similarly, skepticism is self-contradictory, affirming what it denies. For instance, “it affirms the nullity of ethical principles and lets its conduct be governed by these very principles.”⁵⁰ It simultaneously affirms unchangeableness (sameness) and utter contingency (non-identity) and experiences itself as internally contradictory. Consequently, skepticism falls apart according to its own criterion, leading to a new shape of consciousness, the unhappy consciousness, which unites these opposing thoughts by turning away from the unessential self and focusing inward in search of underlying security and existence in the form of God, a stable, unchanging being.⁵¹ However, the unhappy consciousness runs into contradictions within itself, as it is divided between unchangeable and changeable selves. It seeks stability or the unchangeable within itself by avoiding the physical world yet recognizes its inherent connection to the world. Thus, it constantly struggles between its changeable and unchangeable sides because they are alien to each other.⁵² Hegel writes:

The two [selves] are, for the Unhappy Consciousness, alien to one another, and because it is itself the consciousness of this contradiction, it identifies itself with the changeable consciousness and takes itself to be the unessential Being. But as consciousness of unchangeableness, or of simple essential Being, it must at the same time set about freeing itself from the unessential, i.e. from itself.⁵³

Hegel identifies three forms of unhappy consciousness, as each strives to achieve oneness with the unchangeable: pure consciousness, desire and work, and being for itself. Pure consciousness

⁴⁹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §202/123.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, §205/125.

⁵¹ Sahand Farivar, “*The Unhappy Consciousness in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit: Secular Reading*,” MA Thesis, The University of Guelph, 2018.

⁵² Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §206/126.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, §208/127.

strives for unity as a pure inner feeling. The difference between consciousness and the unchangeable being is still predominant. The unchangeable is seen as an alien being [*das Fremde*], and consciousness is still unhappy (*in Seinem Unglücke*).⁵⁴ In the second phase, the unhappy consciousness seeks unity with the unchangeable as an individual who approaches the actual world with desire and work. Its inner life remains incomplete, as it is not explicitly aware that desiring and working imply being certain of itself and that its feeling of the unchangeable is actually self-feeling.⁵⁵ In the third phase, the unhappy consciousness seeks unity with the unchangeable, becoming aware of its being for itself and seeing itself as an individual in the unchangeable. Hence, consciousness sees the unchangeable as Spirit and becomes aware of its unity with the universal.⁵⁶

Reason

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel examines how self-consciousness expands its knowledge beyond immediate self-knowledge to the world and its concerns for independence and freedom through positive relations to otherness in his treatise on reason. Reason is the synthesis of consciousness (that sees the object as independent from the subject) and self-consciousness (that holds that the object is identical to the subject), maintaining an identity in the difference between the subject and object. Put differently, reason is the speculative process in which the subject and the object are folded back on themselves while remaining different. This idea is a bedrock upon which every form of infallibilism is refuted. With the unity of the two extremes (subject and otherness), reason becomes a turning point through which consciousness relates to the world. Consequently, Hegel begins the chapter on reason by stating that self-consciousness has returned to itself, realizing that it is one with the absolute essence (which is placed essentially beyond itself) and is now ready to

⁵⁴ Tom Rockmore, *Cognition: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §211/128; §210/128.

⁵⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 214/130, 218/132.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, §231/139.

convert negative relations to otherness into positive relations.⁵⁷ Thus, Hegel writes: “Now that self-consciousness is Reason, its hitherto negative relation to otherness turns around into positive relation.”⁵⁸

This new relationship between reason and the world begins at the lowest level of reason, the immediacy of reason, which is a one-sided view of the unity between the subject and the world.”⁵⁹ This one-sided view of reason experiences reality as immediately present without noticing the processes of mediation generating them and so affirms subjective idealism, upholding the inseparability of existence from the perception of existence. However, reason must transcend the immediate unity of self-consciousness and the world and demonstrate itself through dialectical movements similar to perceiving, understanding, lordship, stoicism, skepticism, and unhappy consciousness to grasp reality in a new way (i.e., recollection).⁶⁰ Reason evolves through three stages: passive reason as thesis, active reason as antithesis, and self-actualizing reason as synthesis.

Observing or passive reason

Observing reason is the first and least developed form of reason. It is reason in its abstraction, immediacy, or certainty of consciousness. It focuses on the immediate unity of the subject and object without any question. This form of reason contradicts itself because it intellectually apprehends and transforms things into concepts or notions without recognizing it does, thinking it apprehends things as sensuous objects. In its observational role, reason evolves through three moments: observation of nature, reason observing self-consciousness, and reason observing the relation between nature and self-consciousness. In its first moment, reason seeks the certainty of being all reality by seeking the true nature of inorganic and organic natural objects through rules and principles, which emerge as

⁵⁷ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §231/139.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, §232/139.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, §233/140, §235/142, §238/144.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, §239/145.

universals (selfsameness, identity, repeated patterns, essentials, intelligibility, definitions, or descriptions), divisions (differentiae or distinguishing marks), and natural laws, mechanistic laws, and internal teleology respectively. However, these rules and principles lack truth and necessity. For instance, a bad plant, which is also a plant, ultimately frustrates the empirical search for the essential properties or definition (i.e., universal) of plants. Also, divisions are less successful in botany due to boundary-line vagueness and confusion.

In the second moment, observing reason turns inward to seek the truth of its certainty in self-conscious activity, focusing on its own self-consciousness (just as sense-certainty did). In observing its thought, it discovers the first laws of thought or logical laws governing thinking in self-conscious activity, such as the law of non-contradiction, identity, and excluded middle.⁶¹ However, these laws are abstract, pure forms without any content or reality and untrue in general despite being formally true. Hegel describes their content as “content that merely is.”⁶² Turning in search of psychological laws, observing reason also discovers no necessary principles for inferring the individual’s behavior from specific social and cultural circumstances. Psychological necessity is an empty phrase, as it includes the possibility that what is supposed to have had an influence could as well not have had any influence.⁶³ In the third phase, observing reason seeks laws governing the relationship between the human body and its consciousness.⁶⁴ The body must express the individual’s determining character, with the outer being the visible sign of the inner. It considers physiognomic laws (which assume that peoples’ character is determined by their appearance) and phrenology (which associates the brain with the skull, outer reality) but finds no necessity in these laws.⁶⁵ Hegel concludes that

⁶¹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §299/180; H. Anna, *Notes on George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

⁶² Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §300/181.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, §307/185.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, §309/185; 310/185.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, §329/198; §330/199.

humans cannot be known through observation (which consists of making lists of things and constructing laws from these lists), as it does not grasp the essence of humans, who are Spirit and not a thing. Humans can only be known through the activity in which they freely realize themselves.

Active reason

This is the second shape of reason. It focuses on actualizing rational self-consciousness in social relationships, and it is governed by unwritten laws and social customs. Ethical life is the universal substance of society, and individuals actualize themselves most perfectly through community customs.⁶⁶ This self-realizing reason evolves through three stages: the undisciplined pursuit of pleasure, the law of the heart, and the pursuit of true Spirit. These stages are all forms of social revolution.⁶⁷ The pleasure-seeker often opposes societal necessities and universality but ends up alienated by these necessities. For instance, pleasure is shared in loving relationships, which also requires alien necessities, such as commitment and the pain of knowing your loved one will die.⁶⁸ Realizing the limitations of pleasure, self-consciousness turns to a more communal form of love expression driven by the undisciplined law of the heart. The heart-ruled individual opposes societal oppression and views himself as an agent of universal love, striving for the good of all.⁶⁹ Thus, the heart's law has evolved from private feeling to public order, becoming an actual law binding all.⁷⁰

Hence, this idea of a personal law, which is valid for everyone (universal law), is self-contradictory, leading the heart-ruled individual to become torn between personal law and universally instituted law, and so become insane.⁷¹ Moreover, others reject the universality of the law of heart, claiming it contradicts their individual laws. To cope with this contradiction, active reason

⁶⁶ H. Anna, *Notes on George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

⁶⁷ John E. Russon, "Hegel's *Phenomenology of Reason and Dualism*," in *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 31, no. 1 (1993), 81

⁶⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §363/219; §364/220

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, §370/222

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, §372/223.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

learns that what seems to be public order is a universal Hobbesian state of war, with each law of heart claiming its own correctness.⁷² Hegel calls this state of war that is beneath the stability of society “the way of the world” (*Weltlauf*).⁷³ The state of war gives rise to the knight of virtue, in which individuals struggle to bring the good into existence through sacrifice. The disciplined knight of virtues advocates for egolessness and impartiality, challenging the chaotic individuality of the world. However, the knight of virtue recognizes that the way of the world is already disinterested and seeks unity between self-interest and virtues. This leads to civil society, where individuals seek not to save the world or virtuously master themselves but to express themselves socially.

Real individuality (individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself)

This is the third shape of reason. At this stage, rational self-consciousness recognizes individual actions as part of a larger social whole, making the individual singular and universal. This realization leads to a union of the world and the individual, being and self-consciousness, object and subject, in-itself and for-itself, certainty and truth for the first time in *Phenomenology*.⁷⁴ Like other forms of consciousness, the first shape of real individuality is the immediate form, where the individual recognizes the singular use of their gift with the pursuit of the universal good. Hegel describes this as the spiritual animal kingdom and deceit. The immediate individuality is an original determinate nature, a negativity, a passive material, and a range of possibilities, which action shapes.⁷⁵ It is limited but unlimited from the perspective of consciousness’ free action.⁷⁶ Thus, it involves the coexistence of restriction and freedom, manifesting in activities and products through skills, talents, and capacities.⁷⁷ Through work and activities, the individual achieves full reality,

⁷² Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §379/227.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., §395/237.

⁷⁵ Ibid., §398/238.

⁷⁶ Ibid., §398/238.

⁷⁷ H. Anna, *Notes on George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

eliminates emptiness, and becomes publicly responsible. While the slave became aware of himself through his work, the real individual's work brought him to self-awareness, his unity with the environment, and the identity in the difference between universality and individuality.

An action consists of three moments: the original nature (the beginning), means (performance), and end (results). The original nature involves circumstances and interest in the act, while means are one's talents, the inner means of transitioning from intention to reality.⁷⁸ Action (the unity of inner and outer) removes the gap between beginning and end, making the original nature explicit and legible. However, actions may be misunderstood or not express the original nature or yield desired results. Thus, in working, we become aware of the split between original nature and reality, willing and achieving.⁷⁹ Hence, moments of work fall apart, and the individual becomes alienated. Alternatively, true work unites universality and being, subjective individuality, objectivity, and the whole process and moments (original nature, means, and result). Hegel asserts that this unity is the very heart (crux) of the matter or matter in hand [*die Sache selbst*].⁸⁰ Hegel notes that individuals engage with the heart of matter through stages similar to sensuous certainty and perception. Initially, the naive individual is conscious of the heart of the matter only immediately, recognizing all activities and moments as honorable. The honest individual moves from one meaning to another without achieving anything and finds satisfaction in the belief that each moment is the real heart of their activity, inspiring others to find satisfaction. Thus, the honest individual deceives himself and others, adopting activities without achieving anything.

Rational self-consciousness only moves out of this dilemma when the unity of the three moments is reasserted through the universal as a self-legislator. This unity is the absolute matter in

⁷⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §401/240.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, §406/244; §407/244.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, §409/246.

hand, which is the ethical substance.⁸¹ This is the second stage of the real individual, and Hegel describes it as “*Reason as lawgiver*.” At this stage, the individual grasps the spiritual essence of society, focusing on ethical substances from which actual laws can be derived. This stage is similar to the Kantian categorical imperative, where self-consciousness is committed to conforming to universal laws. Hegel examines universal laws of self-consciousness (e.g., "everyone ought to speak the truth" and "Love thy neighbor as thyself) and noted that they are unintelligible and must be modified to serve their essence."⁸² He notes that after modifications (e.g., "everyone ought to speak the truth as far as one knows the truth”), they lose universal objectivity, allowing different subjective interpretations. Therefore, the law-giving reason ends in producing empty commands and concepts.⁸³

Finally, rational self-consciousness tries to salvage the self-identical content of reason as the basis for the universality of real individuality by using the standard of self-identity as the criterion for evaluating laws.⁸⁴ Hegel describes this moment as “*Reason as testing laws*.”⁸⁵ However, the law-testing reason cannot succeed based on its content since the only criterion for law-testing reason is a tautology, as one content is equally acceptable as its opposite.⁸⁶ Kant's belief that reason creates and tests moral laws is challenged by the findings of law-giving and law-testing reason, proving that neither can be rationally defended. For Hegel, true ethical laws are unwritten and eternal laws of gods, such as those spoken in Sophocles' *Antigone*.⁸⁷ Ethical laws reside neither in the objects nor in the mind but in the organized social whole (a collective self-consciousness) and are accepted as the standard by all community members. Hegel calls this dimension of collective consciousness *Spirit*.

⁸¹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §420/253

⁸² *Ibid.*, §424/254; §425/255.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, §427/256

⁸⁴ John E. Russon, “Hegel’s Phenomenology of Reason and Dualism.”

⁸⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §428/256.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, §430/257; §431/259.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, §437/261.

Mind (Psychology)

As the subject matter of psychology, mind occupies the highest phase of the subjective Spirit. In the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science*, Hegel describes more clearly the mind as the highest phase of subjective Spirit. According to Hegel, mind is the Spirit, which has returned to itself after going forth into consciousness and enriching itself. It has achieved consciousness of itself as all reality. It evolves through theoretical mind or cognition (which passes through intuition, representation, and thinking), practical mind or will (which passes through practical sense or feeling, impulses, choice, and happiness), and free mind, which is both subjective and universal. However, a close examination indicates that, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel presents a discourse on mind as the highest phase of the subjective Spirit in the last phases of observing reason under “Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself.” In both *Phenomenology* and *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, mind, as the highest phase of subjective Spirit, has achieved the ethical idea and is in the process of raising its certainty of being all reality to the truth.

Objective Spirit

The subjective Spirit transitions to the objective Spirit when it wills the universal, transforming itself into an ethical order such as institutions, laws, and customs. Hegel's treatment of objective Spirit covers ethics, institutions, politics, and philosophy of law, focusing on the sphere of rights (moral, legal, and state rights). In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel's discussion of Spirit (i.e., objective Spirit) begins with the ethical order or substance (*Sittlichkeit*), the third phase of the objective Spirit in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science*. This stage involves spiritual essence (designated as ethical substance) becoming self-conscious and forming ethical actuality (the unity of moral subjectivity and objectivity), and reason's certainty of being all reality elevated to truth, as reason becomes conscious of itself and the world.⁸⁸ Ethical order evolves through three stages: (i)

⁸⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 438.

immediately the true Spirit as moral, (ii) self-estranged mind, cultural formation (*Bildung*), or civil society, and (iii) Spirit certain of itself, a system of morality or social ethics (state).⁸⁹

Immediately, the True Spirit as Moral

Ethical substance first exists in the phase of immediacy, abstract, formal, or general laws: divine and human laws. The family is a prime example of a human ethical community, revealing Spirit's dual nature through divine and human law. Divine law governs family relationships, such as husband and wife, parents and children, and siblings. Human law, consciously built by the community, is manifested in the state's legal system. The divine law of the family and one's status as a family member are more immediate than citizenship status. The relationship between brother and sister connects the human and divine laws, as the brother transitions into the realm of human law (public, self-conscious, and universal), while the sister becomes the head of the household and guardian of divine law (private and unconsciously universal).

Hegel argues that human actions cannot implement both divine law and human law simultaneously, leading to a conflict between the two. As the individual character commits the individual to one law, the other law appears as an unrighteous actuality. Ethical self-consciousness falls decisively on one law, experiencing guilt when it opts for one law against the other. This conflict among people destroys the ethical customs of society, leading to a society based on the multiplicity of atomic individuals seeking personal qualities by becoming property owners. This greedy society can only be arrested by war and tyranny, leading to the elevation of a single individual as an emperor, living a life of excess, similar to a living god. Hegel's terms in this section suggest he is thinking specifically of ancient Roman society. The atomistic multiplicity of individual self-consciousness has transformed the ethical substance of community and state into a soulless

⁸⁹ K. Rosenkranz and G. S. Hall, "Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind," in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (1872): 64.

community, a new kind of universality. However, everyone is equal and counts as a legal person. The atomic person is similar to the stoicism. Like stoic self-consciousness, a person's abstract right or legal status is bound solely to a person's self-consciousness, not rooted in the universal living Spirit. Thus, personal legality is stoicism in the sphere of political action.

Hegel maintains that the world of the right-endowed person (legal personality) undergoes a dialectical evolution similar to stoicism, falling into emptiness and passing over into skeptical confusion about personal independence and legal rights. Additionally, because the world of atomic persons is artificially collected together (i.e., has no spirit to hold it together), individuals only remain within it artificially through an emperor's rule. However, this content is hostile and alien to them, depriving them of their essential nature and destroying their personality. The atomic individual ruled by an emperor is totally alienated and left as a lonely, isolated, and individuated self. This stage is similar to the unhappy consciousness seen in the earlier stage, where individuals feel alienated from God, who (unknown to them) was within them from the start. Similarly, individuals recognize themselves as part of a society in which they feel alienated.⁹⁰ Hence, the substance of society becomes its externalization or self-relinquishing, splitting into externalization and internal self-consciousness. The self in its immediate existence is without substance, as it causes its alienation.⁹¹

Self-Estranged Mind or Cultural Formation (*Bildung*)

The self-alienated Spirit, which evolved from internal existence into self-externalization, falls apart into two realms: the world of culture and modernity, where self-consciousness and its object are actual, and the realm of pure consciousness, which exists only for religious faith.⁹² The world of culture is the self-certainty realm related to human law. The world of pure consciousness, apprehended as religious faith (which is related to divine law), is the genus behind the world of

⁹⁰ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §483/293-294.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, §484/294.

⁹² *Ibid.*, §486/196; §487/296-297.

culture. The world of religious faith is involved in self-alienation and retreats from the actual world of culture, while the world of culture is opposed to religious faith due to its ignorance of its absolute notion. Just as the divine and human laws vanish in the atomic legal person, both worlds of faith and culture vanish in the pure insight of enlightenment, the intellectual movement in the 18th century.⁹³ The pure insight of enlightenment completes the stage of culture, the self-estranged Spirit, and synthesizes all destructive aspects of consciousness into utility.

Enlightenment is a new form of skepticism, attacking tradition and authority and opposing religious faith. It accuses religious faith of unconscious error and superstition, denying the content of religious beliefs and misinterpreting aspects of religious beliefs.⁹⁴ Hegel argues that enlightenment is the same as religious faith but completely opposes it. However, in its pure insight, enlightenment gives false reality to superstition confronting humanity, pretending it can defeat it. In opposing religion and making religious faith recognize its intrinsic nature, enlightenment encounters the same internal conflict experienced in connection with faith.⁹⁵ This conflict comes as a double absolute, with one party of enlightenment seeing the absolute as a predicateless first cause or supreme being existing in thought (deism), while the other calls it the underlying or absolute matter (materialism).⁹⁶

Hegel underscores that, although both concepts of the absolute differ in their starting point, they share a fundamental simplicity, implying being is simple without predicate or determination.⁹⁷ Hegel claims that the ultimate truth of enlightenment is utility or usefulness, which involves an endless oscillation of knowledge from one thing to another. However, when there is withdrawal from the objectivity of usefulness into subjectivity (i.e., when usefulness is no longer seen as a means of knowing an object but becomes a self-consciousness in possession of it), absolute freedom or

⁹³ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §486/296.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, §542/549.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, §575/350.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, §578/351.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, §579/353.

subjectivity emerges, putting itself on the throne of the world without resistance, as it becomes a general will.⁹⁸ At this moment, all social groups or classes are abolished, leading to a new conflict.⁹⁹ The meaning of utility, the predicate of all real beings, has been lost, and society now exists as an object without content, organization, and possession. The only truly common work of the general will is terror, destruction, and death.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the general will is unproductive and unrewarding, seeking the death of its individuals, leading to a significant loss of absolute freedom.

Morality: Spirit Certain of Itself

Since the general will and the individual self-consciousness are one, the individual cannot be destroyed by the general will but is absorbed as pure knowledge and will. Therefore, absolute freedom (individual sovereignty) leads to universal and individual morality, despite negative consequences (e.g., terror, destruction, and death), transitioning the self-estranged Spirit into the moral will. Absolute freedom and morality are closely linked. Hegel argues that morality is strongly associated with duty, particularly to the community and others, and must oppose nature.¹⁰¹ Nature may render moral purposes or activities impossible. Thus, a fully autonomous subject operating from self-legislation is impossible in the Kantian moral system (categorical imperative). Hegel also argues that morality requires nature as something present in itself, such as contingent, sensuous urges and tendencies directed to specific ends. He postulates three ways morality and nature are united: an implicit harmony between morality and external nature, morality conforming to internal nature or sensuous urges, and the divine legislator making specific duties (e.g., helping your family members) sacred. For Hegel, moral self-consciousness holds pure duties (e.g., helping the less privileged), which is indifferent to specific duties.¹⁰² Divine legislation harmonizes morality with happiness,

⁹⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §582/355-356.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, §585/357.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, §589/359; §590/360.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, §599/365.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, §606/370.

allowing humans to do right when faced with conflicting duties (specific and pure duties) and feel no guilt when they fail to observe a pure duty. Moral humans place the pure law of duty beyond themselves into a divine legislator, where pure morality resides untroubled by sensuous urges.

Consequently, moral agents view themselves as imperfect, leading to the belief that moral consciousness is infinitely imperfect. Hegel argues that the divine legislator (God) is above moral struggle with nature and sense and so has no moral validity.¹⁰³ Hence, a divine being cannot be the source of morality. As a result, moral consciousness retreats into itself, taking up the position of pure conscience indifferent to transcendent moral self-consciousness. In the realm of conscience (*Gewissen*), moral self-consciousness reabsorbed the transcendent moral authority into itself, expressing individual conviction and giving universal validity to individual actions. Hence, moral self-consciousness overcomes various internal moral contradictions, including the paradox of Kantian morality.¹⁰⁴ Conscience is the third self to emerge out of Spirit. The first self, the legal person, lacks particularity, and the second self, the absolute free self (the end product of the world of culture), lacks universality. Conscience possesses universality within its particular self. It is based on individual conviction of moral right without submitting to transcendental or universal moral standards. This is true freedom. However, the synthesis of the universal and particular moral principles in moral self-consciousness falls apart, as it is challenged by the plurality of circumstances, where conscience must consider past and present conditions and foreseeable consequences to determine the right course of action. This uncertainty makes conscience impulsive, empty, arbitrary, and unsuitable for decision-making.¹⁰⁵ As a result, other individuals see conscientious actions as evil.

¹⁰³ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §628/381.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, §633/384.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, §643/390.

Hegel argues that moral self-conscience cannot control the meaning of its actions, as others interpret them differently, leading to an abstract morality and anarchy.¹⁰⁶ Conscience needs to convince others of the value of its actions through language or moral discourse. As a verbal articulation to assure others of the value of its duty, conscience retreats from action into pure duty, resulting in the beautiful soul, universal moral solipsism that is too fine to commit to action. Because the individual conscience stresses the necessity of acting in everyday life and doing one's duty, the beautiful soul, as a universal conscience, sees individual conscience as evil. However, it later recognizes the importance of acting and its insistence on purity as vanity. This leads to mutual self-respect between the beautiful soul and individual morality, resulting in the Absolute Spirit.¹⁰⁷

Absolute Spirit

Hegel claims that the absolute only reveals itself in the last stage of the dialectical movement of Spirit. In the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, this phase begins with art or beauty, then religion as the intermediate stage, and philosophy (pure thought) as the final stage. In the *Phenomenology*, it begins with religion, then art or beauty as a moment of religion, and absolute knowing as the final stage. Thus, the entire dialectic process begins awareness of itself in an insufficient fashion, needing completion in philosophy.

Religion

Hegel explains that several shapes in the previous movement of Spirit have touched on the absolute but never truly or fully because the absolute being was not aware of itself in them.¹⁰⁸ However, in religion, the Spirit achieves self-consciousness and sees itself objectively as a universal Spirit. Religion is the "perfection of Spirit," whose moments constitute the existing actuality of the totality of Spirit. Hegel argues that religion evolves through three stages of thought: natural religion,

¹⁰⁶ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §649/395.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, §670/408.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, §672/410.

religion in the form of art (*Die Kunst-Religion*), and revealed religion (*Die Offenbare Religion*).

Natural religion is the immediate stage of religion, with its spiritual character distinguishing it from sense-certainty. It evolves into flower religion, animal religion, and artifacts. Religion further moves into the realm of art (*Die Kunst-Religion*), where the Spirit puts itself into self-conscious activities or spiritual work. Religion as art is the activity of the ethical or true Spirit of human beings who are fully conscious of their actions.¹⁰⁹ Hegel describes the real Spirit in the religion of art as the free nation (*das Freie Volk*), where customs constitute the substance of all.¹¹⁰ At this stage, Spirit remains part of society's custom and has not yet transcended the real world to true or absolute art.¹¹¹

Religion as art evolves through the immediate, abstract work of art, the living work of art, and the spiritual work of art. In the immediate, abstract moment, the Spirit selects an individual as a vessel of its universal and power over him when he suffers pain, violence, and the loss of self-consciousness freedom. However, the negative power of the pure self subdues the positive power of universality, resulting in a work representing the individualized universal Spirit (i.e., an artwork representing a human with divine properties).¹¹² However, the artist learns that his work is at lower level than his, as other people admire his artwork and even bring offerings to it.¹¹³ Because there is a separation between the artist and his artwork, the individual artist does not recognize himself in his artwork. Hence, the work of art demands a higher mode of its existence, which is necessary for the god to come forth more effectively than the art object. Hegel suggests that the higher element of the work of art is language or speech (*Sprache*), which is a self-conscious existence in its immediacy. In language, production and product are one, making the individual feel like the artwork.¹¹⁴ The living

¹⁰⁹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §700/424.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, §700/425.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, §701/426; §702/426.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, §704/427.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, §709/429; 708/429.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, §713/432.

work of art (the second moment of religion as art) is exemplified through cults of the religion of art, which involves hymns and devotion, Bacchic revels, and individual corporeality with lucid language and universality. Devotions and sacred songs are essential art forms that share Spirit's self-consciousness with worshipers, leading to the full realization of religious cults in the construction of dwelling places of the god for glory and honor and fostering the nation's honor, glory, and enjoyment.¹¹⁵ In the religious cult, spiritual essence and self-consciousness are also mediated through the mystery of bread (Ceres) and wine (Bacchus).¹¹⁶

In the Bacchic rite, the Christian mystery of flesh and blood is not yet understood. Hence, the Bacchic enthusiasm, which did not attain consciousness, must produce a work that confronts it, leading to the third moment of the religion of art, the spiritual work of art, where the living self, complete, and finished individual is recognized (unlike the intrinsically lifeless statue confronting the artist) and his self-consciousness is one with the national Spirit. At this stage, the cult is associated with an ethical, self-conscious nation, where people revere their god as Spirit, whose essence is unity with the self and the truth that is knowing. Hegel emphasizes the role of religion in unifying different nations into a single state, with national spirits (*Volksgeister*) coalescing into a single pantheon through language or speech (e.g., the epic universal songs, myths, and poetic imaginations).¹¹⁷ However, the pantheon does not hold absolute unity, and gods are at the level of immediate knowing. Also, nature (nature gods) and the ethical world will conflict. Epic and tragedy are two phases of a complex conflict between nature gods (natural law) and the ethical world of human law. The Epic's narrative disturbs the tranquility of the substance and divides its simple, unitary nature into natural and ethical powers.¹¹⁸ It presents a contradiction between the absoluteness

¹¹⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §710/581; §714/432; 715/432.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, §742/438.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, §727/439-440.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, §730/441.

of each god and the necessity of each ceding this absoluteness, as each relates to humans. The tragedy has higher language as it depicts the roles of real human beings and heroes played by actors. Comedy overcomes the situation in tragedy, revealing that all gods' fates are products of human self-consciousness, leading to a state of spiritual well-being.¹¹⁹

Religion further evolved into revealed religion, the third moment of religion. In natural religion, the divine being is represented as a substance or a thing, while in art religion, the substance (i.e., divine being in the form of a statue) disappears or advances to a subject with self-activity or life, and the self becomes the absolute essence. In revealed religion, there is a converse movement in which the self degrades itself and comes to depend on the divine once again in ways that the union of human and divine natures enjoys equal value without one of the sides taking precedence over the other and so uniting consciousness and self-consciousness.¹²⁰ Christianity is a model of revealed religion, as it believes that God became human and believers have physical awareness of his presence. God becoming a man or having the shape of self-consciousness is the simple content of the absolute religion. It is the fulfillment of what it means to be God because God is not merely an abstract being remote from humanity. Hegel emphasizes that revealed religion is an absolute religion, and through the incarnation, the absolute being reaches its highest essence.¹²¹ Hegel argues that revealed religion is one with speculative or absolute knowing, as it has the absolute truth as its content, the unity of being and essence. Absolute knowing and revealed religion both attain knowledge of the universal essence as an individual being. However, religion presents the absolute content in the form of representation, sensuous, or pictorial thought (*Verstellung*), while philosophy

¹¹⁹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §747/453.

¹²⁰ Tom Rockmore, *Cognition: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*; Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §749/454.

¹²¹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §760/460.

presents the absolute content conceptually. Hence, in religious consciousness, "This Notion of Spirit that knows itself as Spirit is itself the immediate Notion and is not yet developed."¹²²

Hegel explains the absolute Spirit's content in revealed religion, beginning as pure substance (pure thought or consciousness), descending into existence or individuality, and returning to Spirit proper as self-consciousness. Hegel describes these three distinct moments of Spirit as essence (the Father), being-for-itself or otherness of the essence (the Son who took human nature), and being-for-self (the Spirit who is the principle of self-consciousness). Hegel notes that revealed religion pictorially describes the passing over of Spirit as thought into nature as objects and subjects (i.e., creatures) that are simple selves. Because Spirit as thought is instantiated into objects and subjects that are simple selves or not self-conscious as Spirit, a person not yet self-conscious is innocent but hardly good.¹²³ Hegel argues that evil is the first expression of self-consciousness and is pictorially misrepresented as a historical fall in the revealed religion. Evil involves self-centredness of consciousness or withdrawal into oneself, whereas "goodness is what is simple and without a self."¹²⁴ He argues that good and evil have their roots in the absolute being (God) from whom nothing can be separated. Evil, Hegel insists, is essential for good. For instance, withdrawing into oneself from the immediacy of nature is the first moment of God's reconciliation with humanity.¹²⁵ Hegel also notes that through picture-thinking, religion captures the movement of Spirit alienating itself through the death of Christ and redemption of the world and reconciling itself with the absolute being (ascension). The transcended immediate presence of the self-consciousness that is absolute (Christ) alienates itself through death and establishes a religious community (the universal).¹²⁶ Hegel argues that the transformation of Spirit into universal self-consciousness of members, involving God's

¹²² Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §762/461.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, §775/467.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, §780/472.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, §783/474.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, §780/471

incarnation, death, and resurrection, is a necessity rather than an act of free will, as the absolute being remains abstract and unreal without manifesting itself as Spirit in the redemptive act.¹²⁷

Absolute Knowing (Philosophy)

Hegel argues that the absolute knowing or philosophy overcomes religion's limitations (reliance on representations, which fails to grasp the absolute Spirit conceptually or achieve true self-consciousness), as individuals recognize their externalization in various objects and sublimate this externalization back to themselves, recognizing all its objective forms as themselves. Particularly, the Spirit's actual self-consciousness is recognized as the object of its consciousness. The subject grasps that what they know is ultimately themselves. In conceptual reconciliation (the unity between subject/self-consciousness and object/consciousness), which occurs implicitly in religion through picture-thought and other previous stages, Spirit lacks the simple unity of concept or notion.¹²⁸ In absolute knowing, conceptual reconciliation occurs in its proper form, developed and differentiated through the simple unity of concept or notion. In this shape, Spirit reaches full self-consciousness¹²⁹ Such a unification closes the series of the shapes of Spirit.

Hence, Hegel defines absolute knowing as a comprehensive knowing (*Begreifende Wissen*) that gives its complete and true content the form of self, realizing its concept and remaining within its concept.¹³⁰ This knowledge relies on self-certainty, self-knowledge or self-consciousness, (in contrast to the truth, which relies on certainty). It involves knowing oneself in otherness and otherness as oneself and is the highest form of knowledge. Hence, knowledge is neither separation of the self from the world (against Descartes) nor immersion of the self into the world (against Locke) but that which is both in-itself and for-itself, the movement of the self alienating itself and

¹²⁷ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §779/471; 784/475.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, §795/483.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, §794/483.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, §798/485.

immersing itself into the substantial world while remaining one with itself.¹³¹ Hegel also refers to the last phase of Spirit as science. Hegel argues that science only appears in world history once Spirit has reached this final moment. Hegel defines time as the period when Spirit is not yet complete with itself.¹³² When Spirit grasps its pure concept, it abolishes time. Thus, time is not historical but dialectical, a movement of Spirit through which substance is transformed into subject.

Similarly, science must fulfill two conditions: self-externalization of the pure concept within experience and the passage of the concept into consciousness.¹³³ Hence, the distinction between subjective and objective knowledge is eliminated in science so that each side has both aspects. Absolute Spirit's self-knowledge requires Spirit to release itself freely from its form into itself, and this is the supreme freedom and assurance of self-knowledge.¹³⁴ Surprisingly, Hegel argues that the conceptual journey is still incomplete because the concept of externalization is incomplete due to the connection of self-certainty to the object without considering nature.¹³⁵ Thus, Spirit must return to itself in time. According to Verene, the return of Spirit or self to itself is recollection.¹³⁶ The key to absolute knowing is recollection (*Erinnerung*). Absolute knowing as self-knowing has no content. Its content is only its own recollections of the shapes of the highway of despair. Knowing as an act of self-motion or self-development is essentially autobiographical. Thus, in addition to being descriptive, *Phenomenology* is speculative and memorial, essentially an autobiography of consciousness, allowing for self-motion or self-development.

¹³¹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §804/490.

¹³² *Ibid.*, §801/478.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, §806/491.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, §806/491.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, §807/491-492.

¹³⁶ Donald P. Verene, *Hegel's Absolute: An Introduction to Reading the Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Chapter 3

Fallibilism in Hegel's Dialectics of Skepticism

As already indicated, fallibilism was introduced in epistemology by Pierce in the 19th century. Therefore, before this time, skepticism in several philosophical arguments, including Hegel's, qualified as fallibilism.¹³⁷ The purpose of this chapter is to highlight how Hegel's dialectical skepticism and truth incorporate fallibility principles. Areas to examine include how dialectical skepticism renders the truth inconclusive, transcends the fatalism and pessimism of traditional skepticism and exaggerated optimism, and plays the role of a second moment of every shape of Spirit. Another aspect to examine is dialectical skepticism as a solution to the criterion problem.

Dialectical Skepticism and the Inconclusiveness of Truth

One essential feature of fallibilism that dialectical skepticism possesses is maintaining that knowledge or truth is inconclusive, open-ended, and always in need of further justification. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel argues that skepticism is intrinsic to the dialectical process because it is necessary for tracing out the path of the Spirit. The entire range of phenomenal consciousness is a thorough-going skepticism, which renders the Spirit competent to examine what truth is and brings about despair about all-natural and dogmatic positions that understanding holds to be firm.¹³⁸ In skepticism, Spirit always fails to discover the truth about its being at each stage and presses on throughout the entire range of phenomenology. All the efforts of consciousness to substantiate its foundational concept (i.e., its certainty) end in failure.¹³⁹ Identifying that what it experiences at each stage is not the truth of that experience, consciousness constantly rises to a higher stage to attain the truth of its being.¹⁴⁰ This indicates that truth is open-ended and always needs justification or update

¹³⁷ Angel Faerna, "Scepticism, Fallibilism, and Certainty."

¹³⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §78/50.

¹³⁹ Michael A. Becker, "Method and the Speculative Sentence in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," in *Inquiry* 66, no. 3 (2023): 450-470.

¹⁴⁰ Seoul Philosophy Club: A Discussion Group About Ideas for Everyone.

throughout the unfolding of Spirit. This dialectical movement, characterized by skepticism, essentially involves fallibilism, which rejects absolute certainty in knowledge or truth.

In this regard, Hegel's dialectical skepticism is properly a fallibilist concept. It is imperative to reiterate that the purpose of the entire chapter two was to underline how each stage of the Spirit exhibits inner contradiction or skepticism, leading to a higher viewpoint or update, which captures the essence of fallibilism. For instance, at sense-certainty, pure this or that object is considered the truth. However, consciousness recognizes that nothing is merely this or that object; everything belongs to a class through universal qualities (e.g., shape, size, and color), and so has universal characters, the opposite of this or that object. Consciousness tries to resolve contradictions by rising beyond sense-certainty to sense perception to integrate the universality. In sense-perception, the truth or reality involves perceiving particular objects as inseparable from sensuous universalities. As sense-perception, consciousness also faces a contradiction between one and many, singularity and universality. It rises to understanding or intellect to resolve this contradiction, rejecting sensuous objects and embracing pure universality (e.g., gravity, force, and one) as the truth. Understanding also involves contradictions between objects and pure universals, as it tries to make sense of external objects against pure universals, where its reality or truth lies. Consciousness rises to self-consciousness to resolve this contradiction, conceiving external objects as consciousness itself.

Additionally, the lord's effort to achieve independence unavoidably leads to relations of dependence on the slave. The stoic wants to achieve absolute, concrete negation of the other's existence but ends with an incomplete negation of otherness. By declaring that the world is unreal to demonstrate the unlimited freedom of self-consciousness, the skeptic also negates himself, and so immerses his self-consciousness in the world of flux. The unhappy consciousness raises itself from its nothingness into the unchangeable, only to realize that this elevation is the same consciousness of

nothingness. Also, observing reason made several lists of things and constructed laws from these lists, yet these laws lack universalization and necessity and do not grasp the essence of human beings and natural objects, and the consummation of individual pleasure directly incurs necessity that defeats the pleasure.¹⁴¹ Hegel modeled the movement of Spirit on this kind of dialectic movement, where the practical realization of a shape's characteristic concept or notion inverts or yields another.¹⁴² From what is gathered in the previous chapter, dialectical skepticism continued as a conscious insight, revealing the untruth of phenomenal knowledge even after absolute knowing was attended. This dialectical movement, triggered by dialectical despair or skepticism, is essentially fallibilism, which sees justification as inconclusive and always in need of further justification.

Dialectical Skepticism Transcends the Fatalism and Pessimism of Traditional Skepticism

Another important feature of fallibilism that dialectical skepticism possesses is that it simultaneously preserves and transcends the fatalism and pessimism of traditional skepticism (which runs into empty and abstract negation) through determinate negation and sublation. Hegel argues that dialectical skepticism is different from the empty and pessimistic negation of traditional skepticism due to its constructive role in being construed in terms of dialectics.¹⁴³ It recognizes the positive content of its negation and goes beyond abstract negation to usher in a new higher viewpoint, shape, or configuration. In the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science*, Hegel underscores that when the dialectic has the negative as its result, then precisely as a result of something in the prior knowledge, this negative is at the same time the positive, for it contains what it results from, sublated within itself, and it cannot be without it.¹⁴⁴ In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel notes:

¹⁴¹ Michael A. Becker, "Method and the Speculative Sentence in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit."

¹⁴² Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §203/123.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, §82/220.

¹⁴⁴ Georg W. F. Hegel and William Wallace, *Hegel's Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.), §81/221; George W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (DigiCat, 2022), §62/19; 67/20.

But when, on the other hand, the [negative] result is conceived as it is in truth, namely, as a *determinate* negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation, the transition is made through which the progress through the complete series of forms comes about of itself.¹⁴⁵

Hegel sees dialectical skepticism as genuine skepticism and maintains that it is the hallmark of philosophy, science, and culture, revealing inadequacies of ideas and opinions and guiding progress through determinate negation. Dialectical skepticism is present in all aspects of life, including scientific, cultural, historical, social, and biological progress. Also, it transcends modern and contemporary skepticism, which focuses solely on denying the truth and certitude of the metaphysical or supersensible, by acknowledging the positive aspect of negation to the supersensible in the dialectical evolution of consciousness. Hence, Hegelian dialectical skepticism exhibits fallibilism by giving content to its negations through determinate negation and sublation.

Skeptical Dialectics as a Second Dialectical Moment Between Truth and Error

An important feature of fallibilism is that it operates as a second moment, simultaneously rejecting a global error possibility by asserting that not all beliefs could turn out to be false and affirming the possibility of errors, untruth, and contradictions, and so maintains an inconclusive justification. Similarly, dialectical skepticism operates as a second moment between the two extremes of traditional skepticism (which maintains a global error possibility) and dogmatism (which upholds absolute certainty), maintaining an inconclusive justification while avoiding the fatalistic pessimism of traditional skepticism. On the one hand, it upholds that knowledge is possible. On the other hand, it affirms that the justification leading to the truth of the belief in some way allows falsity or errors, allowing for revision through further evidence. Similar to occupying the position between the exaggerated optimism of dogmatism and the fatalistic pessimism of traditional skepticism, Hegel places dialectical skepticism at the second side of any shape (*Gestalt*) of Spirit, where contradictions/

¹⁴⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §79/51; §87/56 [my bracket].

antitheses exist between truth and falsity in human history, giving rise to higher viewpoints (the third side or synthesis that grasps the unity of the first two moments in their opposition) in the unfolding of absolute Spirit.¹⁴⁶ This second dialectical moment is essential in the evolution of the Spirit or consciousness, as it is the self-sublation of all the finite determination of what the understanding makes of what we experience. Hence, fallibilism is the Hegelian second moment playing the skeptical role of contradictions/antitheses between truth and falsity/untruth, giving rise to higher viewpoints in the unfolding of absolute Spirit.

Hegelian Dialectics and the Classical Skeptical Problem of the Criterion of Truth

The dialectical skepticism also exhibits the nature of fallibilism as a Hegelian solution to the criterion problem (the primary reason classical skeptics deny the possibility of knowledge), using self-correcting consciousness. The criterion problem involves the difficulty of justifying justifiers, leading to an infinite regress or vicious circle. For instance, we use *B* to justify *A*, and *C* to justify *B*, and *D* to justify *C*, and *E* to justify *D*. This will continue ad infinitum or runs into a vicious circle of using *A* to justify *E*.¹⁴⁷ This problem makes it impossible to have a foundation in knowledge. To address this, Hegel underscores an inner criterion, situating every justification/criterion within consciousness and arguing that concepts and objects are located within the consciousness of an object.¹⁴⁸ Spirit or consciousness compares its knowledge of an object with itself through skeptical despair as it progresses through different moments of history. If the comparison shows that these moments do not correspond, both knowledge of consciousness and the object will be altered. A sound rational justification requires self-correcting consciousness, self-assessment, self-criticism, immanent critique, or internal critical assessment. This makes the dialectics of phenomenal consciousness independent of any justification from outside itself.

¹⁴⁶ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §78/125; §82/131.

¹⁴⁷ Martin Akanaefu, "Scepticism in Hegel's Dialectics."

¹⁴⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §85/53-54.

Westphal notes that Hegel's analysis of the comparisons of an object in the consciousness consists of six main aspects that need to align constantly through self-correcting consciousness: our concept of the object, our cognitive self-concept, our experience of the object, our cognitive self-experience, the object itself, and our cognitive constitution and engagement.¹⁴⁹ These six elements must align in three phases: experiencing an object occurring as we use the concept of the object to know the object itself; experiencing ourselves as knowers occurring as we use our cognitive self-concept to know ourselves in our cognitive engagement; and our concept of the object and our cognitive self-concept mutually corresponding and our experience of the object mutually corresponding with our cognitive self-experience. The first phase of the correspondence implies that our experience of an object can only correspond with the object itself if our concept of the object also corresponds with the object.¹⁵⁰ When our concept of an object does not align with its actual existence, we detect an error in our experience of the object and rectify it through consistent and precise attempts to comprehend it.¹⁵¹ The second phase means that our cognitive self-experience corresponds with actual cognitive constitution and engagement only if our cognitive self-concept corresponds with them.¹⁵² When our cognitive self-concept fails to align with our cognitive constitution and engagement, we detect an error in our cognitive experience of the self and correct it through consistent and focused efforts to comprehend the self.¹⁵³ The third phase involves the alignment between our concept of the object and our cognitive self-concept and the alignment between our experience of the object and our cognitive self-experience. Precisely, our cognitive concept of ourselves and our concept of the object must align to enable us to understand the object.

¹⁴⁹ Kenneth Westphal, "VIII - Hegel' Manifold Response to Scepticism in the Phenomenology of Spirit," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 103, no. 1, pp. 149-178, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 156.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Hegel maintains that these aspects of the consciousness of an object ground and justify one another when they mutually correspond and support each other.¹⁵⁴ The concepts of the object and the self must correspond and support each other, and our experience of the object and cognitive self-experience must be consistent and support each other. Westphal also highlights comparisons in Hegel's account of mutual recognition for rational justification:

For anyone accurately and rationally to judge that she or he is a rational judge requires (1) recognising one's own rational fallibility, (2) judging that others are likewise genuine rational judges, (3) that we are equally capable of and responsible for assessing rationally our own and each other's judgments and (4) that we require each other's assessment of our own judgments in order to scrutinize and therefore maximally to refine and to justify rationally our own judgments.¹⁵⁵

Hence, solving the criterion problem with skeptical dialectics requires rejecting justificatory infallibilism, which holds that knowing something requires knowing oneself.¹⁵⁶ In contrast, dialectical skepticism involves the fallibility principle, where Spirit compares itself with itself through skeptical despair for continual updates or justification as it progresses through different moments of history. Because this method involves determinate negation and sublation, which provide a constructive step toward a superior alternative, self-correcting consciousness or internal critical assessment refutes the criterion problem and avoids the fatalistic negation of traditional skepticism (which only identifies faults and inadequacies) and dogmatism.¹⁵⁷ Westphal refers to this method as "a sound fallibilist account of rational justification."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Kenneth Westphal, "VIII - Hegel's Manifest Response to Scepticism in the Phenomenology of Spirit," 157.

¹⁵⁵ Kenneth Westphal, "Hegel's Philosophy – A Conspectus," 8.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7

Chapter 4

Hegel's Speculative Philosophy and Fallibilism

Speculative process or sentence (der *Spekulative Satz*) is the basic canon, the master key to Hegel's dialectics. Speculative philosophy takes the truth as a whole or absolute, in which the opposites (e.g., identity and non-identity, positive and negative) are united and sublated (*Aufhebung*). Thus, the speculative process involves grasping the opposites in their unity, sublating the unity, and this leads to a determinate truth (i.e., the specific concept that Spirit affirms at the next stage of its development).¹⁵⁹ The inner form of speculative philosophy is circular motion, a doubling-up, a concept inversion, a twice-reading that expands to grasp a higher stage and consequently every aspect of human experience. The subject and predicate of speculative sentences are folded back on themselves, capturing consciousness' inner movement and the object's inner life.¹⁶⁰ This chapter examined further how Hegel's speculative process demonstrates the fallibilist account of knowledge.

Truth in the Hegelian Speculative Philosophy

The speculative process involves grasping the opposites in their unity, sublating the unity, and leading to a determinate truth. This process is crucial for understanding fallibilism in speculative philosophy. The inner form of speculative philosophy, which is circular motion, involves a triadic movement, with the first stage being the thesis doubling up or bifurcating itself, the second stage being grasping the unity of opposites or synthesis, and the third stage being sublating the unity into a new or higher determinate concept, which posits itself once more as a thesis for further bifurcation and sublation. This triadic movement is typical of Hegel's dialectics, where an affirmative higher genus (thesis) deduces its *differentia* (antithesis) and eventually ends in the species of the genus (synthesis), which takes up the role of a new genus to continue the movement.¹⁶¹ The first step, thesis

¹⁵⁹ Georg W. F. Hegel and William Wallace, *Hegel's Logic*.

¹⁶⁰ Donald P. Verene, *Speculative Philosophy*.

¹⁶¹ Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*, 88.

doubling up or bifurcation, involves a concept inversion, yielding its opposite or determinate negation, an irreconcilable concept. This is evident throughout the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For instance, sense-certainty generates mediated universality; perception generates nonsensuous universality; the lord's effort to achieve independence leads to relations of dependence on the slave; and individual pleasure leads to self-defeating necessity.¹⁶²

The second step of the inner form of speculative philosophy is grasping the unity of opposites after a concept has doubled up or inverted itself. Žižek describes this stage as a passage from determinate negation to negative determination, from the mediation (the difference or opposite) of every immediacy (the identity) to the immediacy of mediation itself.¹⁶³ Hegel maintains that truth is composed of two contradictory or opposite relations. Identity or thesis is not the whole truth, and the difference or antithesis is not the whole truth. The whole truth is the unity of identity and difference.¹⁶⁴ In philosophy, truth is often defined as the correspondence of proposition to fact, concept to reality, or reality to concept. However, based on this stage of Hegel's inner form of speculative philosophy, "reality corresponds to the concept only insofar as it also at the same time does not correspond to the concept."¹⁶⁵ Thus, the truth of human existence is a synthesis of two contradictory relations. Any determinate concept is involved in the relation of two contradictory sides. This means that truth or knowledge always has limitations (e.g., negation or the not-yet), which contribute to making the truth a whole in relation to its identity. Demonstrating how the not-yet of the truth relates and becomes part of the whole truth when commenting on Hegel's

Phenomenology of Spirit, Martin Heidegger writes:

¹⁶² Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §110/65-66; §192/116-117; §365/220; Michael A. Becker, Method and the Speculative Sentence in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

¹⁶³ Slavoj Žižek, "In Defense of Hegel's Madness." in *Filozofija i Društvo* 26, no. 4 (2015): 786.

¹⁶⁴ Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*; Gareth Polmeer. "Sublating time: Hegel's speculative philosophy and digital aesthetics." in *Electronic Visualisation and the Arts* (2016): 257-264.

¹⁶⁵ Timothy Huson, Truth and Contradiction: Reading Hegel with Lacan, in *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, London, Verso (2006): 2.

This not yet absolute is absolute, not in spite of, but precisely because of its being not-absolute. The not on the basis of which the absolute can be relative pertains to the absolute itself. It is, therefore, not different from the absolute. The not in non-absolute does not express something which exists in itself and lies next to the absolute but expresses a mode of the absolute.¹⁶⁶

Žižek argues that the properties of a thing are determined by what it is not, and the very absence of property can count as a property.¹⁶⁷ This limitation in truth, the not-yet or negation, is similar to the inconclusiveness of fallibilism. Hence, fallibilism is evident from the first and second stages of the inner form of speculative philosophy, with the first characteristic being truth or knowledge inconclusiveness and the second being that knowing some aspects of truth does not entail that truth, as truth is the unity of opposite moments, which cannot be valid without each moment.¹⁶⁸

Hegel's examples of how opposites essentially relate to each other in constituting the truth include the son determining the father and vice versa, the student determining the teacher, truth defined by error, above by below, being by nothingness, spirit by nature, and absolute by finite. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel enumerates many examples of such relations of opposites when comparing the first intelligible world (inner world) to the second intelligible world (the world of appearance). He argues that everything in the first world is inverted in the second world (e.g., sweetness in the first world is sour in the second, whiteness in the first words is black in the first, and a criminal act in the second world can be good in the inner world).¹⁶⁹ Hegel's arguments against general principles of logic also provide an example of the unity of contradictory relations and inconclusiveness in justification. The identity principle holds that what is is ($+A = +A$), every concept is always identical to itself and different from other things.¹⁷⁰ The non-contradiction

¹⁶⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. P. Emad and K. Maly (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 33.

¹⁶⁷ Slavoj Žižek, "In Defense of Hegel's Madness." 786.

¹⁶⁸ George W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic (DigiCat, 2022)*.

¹⁶⁹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §159/97-98.

¹⁷⁰ Obi-Okogbuo, *Philosophy and Logic: An Outline* (Owerri: Assumpta Press, 1997).

principle states that a thing cannot simultaneously be and not be in the same respect.¹⁷¹ The principle of the excluded middle asserts that a being is either true or false, and knowledge is either justified or inconclusive.¹⁷² This implies that there is no middle position between being and non-being. However, Hegel's principle of unity of contradictory relations suggests that there is always a middle position between contradictory sides, the "A" that encompasses both "+A" (the asserted A) and "-A" (the denied A). For instance, father and son pass into each other through the middle category, human. Similarly, being and nothing are identical as complete emptiness and vacancy. Being and nothing pass into each other through the middle category, becoming. Hegel's unity of identity and difference reconciles Parmenidean parallel poles of being (which affirms absolute identity, +A) and non-being (-A), permanence and multiplicity. For instance, within 20 years, Peter has changed from adolescent to adult and still remains the same Peter. It is the same Peter and yet a different Peter. This suggests a middle ground between truth and falsity, knowledge and nonknowledge, where affirming something necessarily implies admitting its non-being, leading to open-ended justification or fallibilism.

The third stage of speculative philosophy involves sublating the unity of opposites into a new, higher determinate concept, which posits itself as a new thesis for further bifurcation, unity of the opposites, and sublation. The repeated (circular) movement of sublation is crucial for speculative philosophy. Thus, Hegel discusses sublation in analogies to circularity, an organic whole (e.g., the mind is the Spirit that returns to itself after going forth into consciousness and enriching itself). This movement is self-correcting and enriches itself as it progresses. The fallibility characteristics of speculative philosophy are fully realized at this stage. Whitehead uses the analogy of an airplane's fight to explain the speculative process, stating that reality is not a closed system defined by absolute laws of nature but an open, evolving, dynamic system knowable with probabilistic certainty.¹⁷³ In his

¹⁷¹ Obi-Okogbuo, *Philosophy and Logic: An Outline*

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Brian G. Henning, "Recovering the Adventure of Ideas: In Defense of Metaphysics as Revisable, Systematic, Speculative

words: “The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation.”¹⁷⁴

The Speculative Process of Hegel’s Categories and Fallibilism

As indicated, Hegel posits that reason and knowledge run through a speculative process, where contradictory relations are united and sublated. This process implies that truth is not one-sided and knowledge involves inconclusive justification. However, some philosophers do not perceive knowledge as a speculation process. For instance, Kant stresses the infallibility of thought categories or concepts, arguing that they are pure forms, nonsensuous, pure universals that are necessary and certain. Kant underlines 12 categories: quantity (unity, plurality, and totality); quality (reality, negation, and limitation); relation (substance and accidents, cause and effect, and reciprocity); and modality (possibility/impossibility, existence/nonexistence, and necessity/contingency).¹⁷⁵ In contrast, Hegel argues for the fluidity or uncertainty of such pure concepts. For Hegel, categories overcome and transform themselves as they spiral over to the absolute. The entire Hegelian logic is characterized by the speculative process of the categories of being, essence, notion, and idea. I will use Hegel’s speculative process of being to illustrate the fallibilist model of categories of thoughts. Being is considered the most fundamental and certain category, but in Hegel's speculative process, it is conceived as unstable and uncertain. Pure being (thesis) is simply nothing (non-being) or mere emptiness (antithesis) because it is abstracted from every specific determination (e.g., this book, that table) and qualities (e.g., hardness and whiteness).¹⁷⁶ Thus, the concept of being contains its opposite (nothing), implying that being and nothing are unstable and uncertain as they pass into each other.

Philosophy.” in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 29, no. 4 (2015): 437- 456.

¹⁷⁴ Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 5.

¹⁷⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A80/B106.

¹⁷⁶ George W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic (DigiCat, 2022)*, §132/35.

As being and nothing pass into each other, the category of becoming emerges, containing the underlying unity of being and nothing.¹⁷⁷ It is a being, which is non-being, or a non-being, which is being. Hegel writes: “What is the truth is neither being nor nothing, but that being - does not pass over but has passed over - into nothing, and nothing into being.”¹⁷⁸ Becoming is further sublated into the category of determinate being (*Dasein*), which Hegel describes as the simple oneness of being and nothing. In contrast to pure being, the determinate being does not disappear into nothing. It is concrete, and so a number of determinations ensue from it.¹⁷⁹ In its immediacy, it is a quality that bifurcates into reality and negative. This speculative process, where a basic category (thesis) generates contradictions and falls apart, leading to the need for a complex category to unify these contradictions and sublating the unity into a new category, continues through the phase of being and beyond. The speculative process makes the Kantian infallibility model of knowledge impossible.

Hegel’s Speculative Philosophy in Contradistinction with Critical Philosophy

Critical and speculative philosophies are two approaches to understanding the possibility of certainty. Thus, one way to examine speculative philosophy as presenting the fallibilist account of knowledge is to contradistinguish speculative philosophy from critical philosophy. Critical philosophy asserts certainty as the first philosophical principle. Charlie Broad underlines two fundamental tasks of critical philosophy: (a) analyzing and defining the concepts used in daily life and science to clarify their meaning and relations, and (b) subjecting our presumptions about the truth of specific principles of reasoning to criticism.¹⁸⁰ Both tasks presuppose each other. From the two tasks, critical philosophy involves critical analysis, review, reflection, and criticism of every

¹⁷⁷ George W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic (DigiCat, 2022)*, §134/36; Martin Akanaefu, “The Dialectic Triad of the Categories of Being, Nothingness, and Becoming in Hegel’s Philosophy and the General Principles of Logic,” *Philosophy of Religion and Worldview: Tradition and Innovation-III*, (2024).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ George Di Giovanni, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: The Science of Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁸⁰ Charlie Dunbar Broad, "Critical and Speculative Philosophy." in *Contemporary British Philosophy: Personal Statements* (1924): 77-100.

theory and measure of its validity. Thus, critical philosophy seeks certainty as the standard of knowledge or the first philosophical principle because certainty withstands criticism. Critical philosophy is driven by the fear of error that might destroy certainty, leading philosophers to wander in the dark woods of bad infinity, sorting truths from error and constantly critiquing conclusions.¹⁸¹

Descartes and Kant are examples of philosophers of critical reflection or analysis.¹⁸² In *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes seeks certainty as the first philosophical principle, overcoming criticism, review, analysis, error, and doubt through rational, clear, distinct, indubitable, infallible, and error-free demonstrative thought. In this infallible foundationalism, Descartes criticized and doubted every presumed truth about the universe, including his own existence and that of God, placing knowledge at the level of absolute certainty. The only thing Descartes did not doubt was that he was doubting. Hence, the first truth of the Cartesian system of certainty is *cogito ergo sum* (“I think, therefore, I exist”). Thus *cogito ergo sum* is certain or indubitable knowledge. Descartes argues that intellect alone can produce clear, distinct, certain, and indubitable knowledge, such as *cogito ergo sum*. He emphasizes freeing our minds from fluctuating testimonies of senses and dogmatic knowledge and doubting everything to reach certainty. As a secure sign of the grasp of the truth, a clear and distinct idea becomes the second pillar of the Cartesian system of certainty.¹⁸³

Descartes' system of certainty became problematic when he attempted to build all other forms of knowledge on clear and distinct knowledge through deductive proofs. Descartes used principles less indubitable to his self-evident knowledge.¹⁸⁴ Hence, accepting the Cartesian basis of infallible foundationalism means that only a few obvious truths exist, leading to deep skepticism and the destruction of the knowledge edifice. Hegel's dialectics and speculative philosophy also challenge

¹⁸¹ Donald Verene, *Hegel's Absolute: An Introduction to Reading the Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007).

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Kenneth Westphal, “Hegel’s Philosophy – A Conspectus.”

Descartes' system of certainty. Hegel argues that clear and distinct ideas or self-evident truths are the first axioms from which the Cartesian system of certainty is built.¹⁸⁵ However, every first proposition or axiom is a presupposition without proof or deduction, making it a dogmatic fact inexplicable by reason.¹⁸⁶ The first axioms (e.g., *cogito ergo sum*) are mysteries; knowledge gained using them remains a mystery.¹⁸⁷ Secondly, Hegel argues that Cartesian clear and distinct ideas are the work of understanding, which presents one-dimensionality of reason, proceeding according to the principle of the identity (e.g., $+A = +A$), and so are devoid of dialectical movement. Its categories are fixed and lifeless, preventing the moment of reason, which proceeds according to the principle of identity of identity and difference. In contrast, categories in speculative philosophy are alive with the movement of breaking up and flowing into each other. Therefore, the Cartesian self-evident truths constitute a fallacy, as they are one-sided truths that do not tell us the complete truth.¹⁸⁸

Kant is a good disciple of the Cartesian emphasis on critical philosophy. He establishes perfect conditions under which philosophy or cognition overcomes every form of criticism, review, analysis, error, or doubt in knowledge. In his transcendental idealism, Kant emphasizes the importance of necessary and certain pre-existing categories in the mind to organize sensory material contents. He argues that science must be systematically ordered according to rational principles and known *a priori* with apodictic certainty, ensuring universality, necessity, and certainty.¹⁸⁹ Consequently, Kant argues that every cognition at empirical and nonempirical levels must involve the combination of two fundamental tools of the mind: intuition (receptive, passive, tied to the senses) and concepts (spontaneous, active, and certain categories of understanding). The mind receives mental representations passively in intuition. Pure intuition provides the form that

¹⁸⁵ Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*.

¹⁸⁶ Georg W. F. Hegel and William Wallace, *Hegel's Logic* §231/394.

¹⁸⁷ Walter T. Stace, *Hegel's Philosophy: A Systematic Exposition*, §134/100.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, §134/100.

¹⁸⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A823/B851.

prestructures the manifold of intuition, while pure concepts provide the categories of pure understanding (the *a priori* judgments of quantity, quality, relations, and modality) and actively apply them to cognize the raw material provided by intuitions. He presents the formal unity of cognition as the product of a threefold synthesis: apprehension synthesis in the intuition, reproduction synthesis in the imagination, and the synthetic unity of apperception in the concept, corresponding to senses, imagination, and the act of pure apperception (the Kantian term for I think or *cogito*).

In the Kantian philosophy, apperception means self-consciousness.¹⁹⁰ Kant distinguishes pure apperception (pure self-consciousness) from empirical apperception (empirical self-consciousness), which is a progressively mutable inner sense or perception.¹⁹¹ Pure apperception is immutable and independent of the manifold. It produces the representation "I think," which must accompany all others and cannot be accompanied by any further representation.¹⁹² It is the principle of cognitive certainty. Pure apperception with its categories is similar to the Cartesian clear and distinct idea, which is free from sensible data. Thus, it is the pillar of the Kantian model of infallible knowledge. Kant argues that pure apperception is the foundation of *a priori* cognition, and this is possible due to the synthetic unity of apperception (the transcendental unity of self-consciousness), wherein the I think accompanies and comprehends manifold representations and carries consciousness identity in these representations, allowing me to call them all together my representations without perceiving them as multiple items or having diverse a self.¹⁹³ Hence, before I think of an object, the "I think," the act of pure apperception must occur to create the transcendental unity of self-consciousness. In this way, the Kantian model of knowledge is not limited to pure apperception but includes empirical objects, and so goes beyond the Cartesian few clear and distinct ideas. However, Kantian infallible

¹⁹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B134.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, A 107.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, B132.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, B134.

knowledge could not escape uncertainty. In Hegel's speculative philosophy, Kantian *a priori*, certain categories are conceived as fluid. Hegel demonstrates that even being, seen as the most certain category, is unstable and uncertain, with pure being and nothing disappearing into becoming. Hegel also notes that categories lack objectivity, as they are subjectively imposed on our experiences.¹⁹⁴

Also, Kant's transcendental unity of apperception ends in reflective splitting, causing self-consciousness to reflect on itself infinitely without recognizing itself as the "I" that accompanies the act of reflection.¹⁹⁵ Fichte describes this problem accurately when he writes:

You are – conscious of yourself, you say; accordingly, you necessarily differentiate your thinking self [*Ich*] from the self that is thought in the thought of yourself. But in order for you to be able to do this, the thinking part of that thinking must be again the object of a higher thinking in order to be able to be an object of consciousness, and immediately you get a new subject which has again to be conscious of that which was being conscious of yourself.¹⁹⁶

Hence, Fichte posits that the result is the transcendental apperception ending in an infinite series of consciousness, where I am conscious that I am conscious and so forth. Fichte argues that the solution to self-consciousness reflective splitting or infinite series lies in collapsing the reflecting and reflected into subjective unity, without which consciousness cannot result in a coherent experience needed for reliable judgments. Hence, he notes that the subject is neither that which reflects nor reflected nor reflected, but rather both in their unity. However, the subject cannot think of this unity because in thinking, he sunders that which is reflected and that which reflects.¹⁹⁷

Also, imagination is essential for the Kantian unity of transcendental cognitive processes. In the Kantian system of *a priori* and apodictic cognitive process, imagination synthesizes disparate

¹⁹⁴ Kenneth Westphal, "Contemporary Epistemology: Kant, Hegel, McDowell," in *European Journal of Philosophy* 14:2 (2006): 286.

¹⁹⁵ Alexander Schlutz, *Mind's World: Imagination and Subjectivity from Descartes to Romanticism*, (Seattle: University Press Washington, 2009).

¹⁹⁶ Fichte 1971 I p. 526 (Cited in Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetic and Subjectivity*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 76).

¹⁹⁷ Fichte, 1971 I, p. 489 (cited in Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetic and Subjectivity*).

elements of intuition, and only then will pure concepts produce cognition in the proper sense.¹⁹⁸

Thus, Imagination bridges the gap between concepts and intuition. Without imagination's synthesis, no unity of apperception, self-consciousness, or rational subject or cognition is possible. However, Kant recognizes that imagination poses a problem in his system of apodictic certainty because of its danger to knowledge and moral self. Imagination is linked with the senses, potentially posing a deceptive and uncontrollable power that is dangerous to reason.¹⁹⁹ Imagination is also seen as a threat to reason's privacy as it potentially connects to the transcendent and promises what reason denies.²⁰⁰

In contrast, speculative philosophy holds that certainty alone is insufficient as a standard of knowledge. It aims to grasp both truth and errors, positive and negative through sublation, emphasizing that reality is open, evolving, and dynamic. In this light, imagination is crucial for speculative philosophy. For instance, Verene posits that speculative sentences are created through recollective imagination, enabling the human soul to participate in the dialectical self-development of ideas.²⁰¹ The *Phenomenology of Spirit* involves recollecting what consciousness has already grasped. Hegel's speculative narrative of consciousness is a work of imagination that liberates reason from the chains of understanding imposed by Kantian reflective philosophy. Hegel believes that the highest act of reason is an aesthetic act. Thus, reason reaches its peak through imagination. Verene believes that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a mythology of reason, and Hegel's system is a science of recollection (*Erinnerung*).²⁰² Verene emphasizes that speculative narrative as a natural form of memory expression is true infinity, in contrast to critical philosophy, which leads to bad infinity.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ Alexander Schlutz *Mind's World: Imagination and Subjectivity from Descartes to Romanticism*.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Donald Verene, *Speculative Philosophy*.

²⁰² Ibid., 64.

²⁰³ Ibid., 4.

Chapter 5

Hegel's Dialectical Fallibilism and Epistemic Justification

From what has been gathered in this study, Hegel's dialectical path of absolute Spirit is a defense of the fallibilist account of knowledge, which emphasizes that justification is inconclusive. This contrasts with theories, such as foundationalism, infinitism, and reliabilism, that maintain the conclusiveness of justification. In epistemology, three necessary conditions for epistemic justification are the ground for justifying a belief, adequacy for the ground, and the proper basing relation between the belief and its grounds.²⁰⁴ For the foundationalist, beliefs arising from immediate sensory experiences or mental states are the grounds for knowledge. Other grounds include self-evident truths (e.g., logical principles and mathematical truths). The virtue reliabilist's ground for justifying a belief is the intellectual virtue (e.g., hearing, seeing, memory, introspection, inference).²⁰⁵ For the epistemic infinitist, it is an infinite regress of justified supportive beliefs.

Adequacy for the ground (the second criterion) is the sufficiency of the ground for a relevant belief. For instance, *S* is justified in believing that *p* only if *S*' belief is properly or adequately based on adequate grounds.²⁰⁶ The proper basing relation (the third criterion) is the relationship between the belief and its grounds.²⁰⁷ Hence, it is not enough to have adequate ground for a relevant belief; the subject must hold the relevant belief (doxastic justification) based on that ground rather than a different reason or ground. For instance, Obi's wife and Uche's wife told their husbands they would visit their friends today. As both women are away, Obi believes his wife is away to visit a friend, while Uche believes she went to the church. Obi's belief is justified, while Uche's is not. A proper

²⁰⁴ Kihyeon Kim, "Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology," in *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1993): 303-316; Robert. C Roberts and Jay W. Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁰⁵ John Greco, "Knowledge and success from ability," in *Philosophical Studies* 142, no. 1 (2009): 17-26; Grimm, S. R., "Ernest Sosa, Knowledge, and Understanding," in *Philosophical Studies* 106 (2001): 171-191.

²⁰⁶ Kihyeon Kim, "Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology."

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

basing relation exists between Obi's belief and the ground of his belief, whereas an improper or false basing relation exists between Uche's belief and the ground for his belief. These conditions align with the infallibilist account of justification, ensuring that a person's belief is justified based on adequate grounds and a proper basing relation between the belief and the ground. Putting all three conditions together, *S* is justified in believing that *p* only if *S*' belief is properly or adequately based on adequate grounds with a proper basing relation between the belief and the ground.²⁰⁸ This approach aligns with the infallibilist account of justification. This chapter evaluates the adequacy of the ground (and invariably the basing relation between a belief and its adequate ground). Because foundationalism is the main position of epistemic justification, it will focus on its inadequacies.

Logical Principles as Self-Evident Truths

Hegelian dialectics challenges the foundationalist view of ultimate traditional logical truths as self-evident or self-warrant truth (the principles of identity, noncontradiction, and excluded middle), arguing that they are the work of understanding, whose truth is incomplete or one-sided. Hegel's dialectics demonstrates that what is is and is not ($+A = +A$ and $-A$) when it becomes. For instance, within 20 years, Peter has changed from an adolescent to an adult and remains the same Peter. This affirms the identity of identity and difference. Also, Hegel argues that a thing both is and is not, demonstrating that there is always a middle position (A) between contradictory sides ($+A$ and $-A$) that encompasses both $+A$ (the asserted A) and $-A$ (the denied A). For instance, being and nothing are identical as the same complete emptiness and vacancy. Being and nothing pass into each other through the middle category, becoming. Also, father and son are united as humans and the subjective and objective worlds are inseparable. The whole truth is neither being nor nothing but the identity of the two opposites.²⁰⁹ Hegel's recognition of the identity of identity and difference (i.e., the

²⁰⁸ Kihyeon Kim, "Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology."

²⁰⁹ Georg Hegel, *Science of Logic*, (DigiCat, 2022), §134/36.

A that unites +A and -A) through becoming is a reconciliation between Parmenidean parallel poles of being (which affirms absolute identity) and non-being (-A).

Hegel argues that logical principles of identity, noncontradiction, and excluded middle are works of understanding with abstract forms and no content or reality and are untrue despite being formally true. Hegel describes logical content as "content that merely is."²¹⁰ The law of thought without dialectical sense is too abstract to tell us anything about reality. To unite thought and reality, the laws of thought must undergo a dialectic movement between thought and reality and draw thought and content from reality, for self-consciousness cannot formulate laws devoid of reality as content. However, it is worth emphasizing that the identity of opposites in Hegelian dialectics does not exclude the distinct facts of the opposites (i.e., $+A = +A$ and $-A = -A$) but rather highlights the harmony and unity between them, which is the whole truth that eludes the three principles of logic.²¹¹

Mathematical and Geometrical Truths as Self-Evident Truths

Mathematical and geometrical truths are another set of self-evident truths that serve as a foundation for epistemic justification in foundationalism. Hegel argues that these truths are not immune to uncertainties because they are based on first propositions or axioms, which are premises, presuppositions, presumptions, and assumptions generally accepted to be true without proof.²¹² Examples of axioms in mathematical axioms and geometry include: a straight line is the shortest distance between two places; angles of any triangle add to 180 degrees; the whole is greater than the part; $A + B$ (e.g., $2 + 3$) = $B + A$ (e.g., $3 + 2$); and If $A = B$, therefore $B = A$. Hegel argues that mathematical axioms or postulates are uncertain. They are without proof, and so are dogmatic facts and, ultimately, mysteries. Hence, it is dangerous to build knowledge upon mysteries. For instance, Euclidean geometrical axioms, which have dominated mathematics and geometry since 300 BC,

²¹⁰ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §300/181.

²¹¹ M. Akanaefu, The Dialectic Triad of the Categories of Being, Nothingness, and Becoming in Hegel's Philosophy and the General Principles Logic.

²¹² Georg W. F. Hegel and William Wallace, *Hegel's Logic* §231/394.

have been modified by non-Euclidean geometry in recent times. For example, the sum of angles in a triangle in Euclidean geometry is 180 degrees, but in Lebachevskian geometry, the angles of a triangle with negative curvature are less than 180 degrees.²¹³ Also, the shortest distance between two places is a straight line in Euclidean geometry but not a straight line in elliptic geometry.

Following Hegel, modern philosophers of mathematics have shown that mathematical claims are not proved with total certainty. For instance, Mateljevic writes: “All that arithmetic, algebra, trigonometry, and calculus you have studied for years and years is not real mathematics until every statement is proved.”²¹⁴ He argues that in mathematics, we take for granted statements called axioms or postulates and then deduce theorems from our assumptions.²¹⁵ Also, Gödel's incompleteness theorem states that there are unprovable statements in any consistent system for arithmetic.²¹⁶ These unprovable statements are mysteries that render the certainty of mathematical truths inconsistent. Hegel believes that, like logical principles, mathematical and geometrical truths do not tell the whole truth because they are the work of understanding, which proceeds according to the identity principle (e.g., $+A = +A$) and presents us with one-dimensionality of reason.²¹⁷ Hence, Hegel insists that mathematical and geometrical truths constitute a fallacy because they do not tell us the whole truth.²¹⁸ Commenting on Hegel's critique of mathematics, Emanuel Copilas highlights that mathematical truths do not understand dialectical movement, leading to bad infinity and its counterpart, bad reality.²¹⁹ They are isolated truths, and this eventually turns them into errors.²²⁰

²¹³ M. Mateljevic, “Hyperbolic Geometry and Schwarz Lemma,” in *Proceedings of the 6th Symposium “Mathematics and Applications,” Faculty of Mathematics, Belgrade*, (2016): 1-17.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Lev D. Beklemishev, “Gödel Incompleteness Theorems and the Limits of their Applicability.” in *Russian Mathematical Surveys* 65, no. 5 (2010): 3.

²¹⁷ Georg W. F. Hegel and William Wallace, *Hegel's Logic*, §231/394.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, §231/394.; Walter. T. Stace, *Hegel's Philosophy: A Systematic Exposition*.

²¹⁹ Emanuel Copilas, “The Challenge of Bad Infinity: A restatement of Hegel's Critique of Mathematics,” in *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* 9, no. 2 (2017): 681-699.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

Immediate Sensory Experiences and Mental States

The foundationalist also views immediate sensory experiences and mental states (inferential beliefs or logical truth) as valid grounds for certain knowledge. Hegel's dialectics demonstrate that sense-certainty is uncertain. It is the lowest level of knowledge, which eventually collapses and transitions to higher forms in the dialectical movement of Spirit. At sense-certainty, consciousness experiences the pure this or that as immediacy and certain but later realizes it has universal characters too. This leads to sense perception, which integrates the irreconcilable universality with sense-certainty.²²¹ The truth of sense perception eventually gives way to the truth of understanding, as consciousness tries to resolve contradictions within perception (i.e., singularity and universality) by rising beyond perception to understanding, rejecting particular objects, and embracing pure universality as truth. This dialectic movement continues to absolute knowledge. Thus, no sensory perception can serve as an indubitable foundation for knowledge. For Hegel, "sensation is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for empirical knowledge of particular objects and events."²²²

Against certain knowledge arising from mental states (inferential beliefs), Hegel underlined the fallibility of passive and active reasoning. A summary of this argument is presented in the second chapter of the present study. Following Hegel, coherentists argue that no mental states can serve as a foundation for knowledge, as every mental state either incorporates or lacks a propositional attitude (e.g., belief or hope).²²³ A mental state with a propositional attitude lacks direct contact with reality, while a mental state without a propositional attitude (e.g., a headache) cannot provide logical support for any hypothesis.²²⁴ Hence, a mental state cannot serve as an infallible foundation for knowledge.²²⁵

²²¹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*; Walter T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition*, 343.

²²² Kenneth Westphal, "Hegel's Internal Critique of Naïve Realism." in *Journal of Philosophical Research* 25 (2000): 193.

²²³ Ernest Sosa, "The Raft and Pyramid: Coherence Versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge," 6 -7.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

This study examined the Hegelian dialectical movement in the evolution of absolute knowledge as a fallibilist account of knowledge and how it refutes traditional epistemic justification. It examined Hegel's dialectical fallibilism alongside dialectical skepticism and speculative philosophy within this context. The study also evaluated critical philosophies, conclusive epistemic justification, infallibilism, and foundationalism based on Hegel's dialectical fallibilism. The study findings indicated that Hegel's dialectical skepticism is not skepticism in its traditional sense but a fallibilist account of knowledge in its proper sense. The findings also highlighted that natural laws, mechanical laws, and self-evident truths, such as logical principles and metamathematical truths, have no conclusive justification and do not escape fallibility.

Specifically, the current study runs in five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced this study. Based on the previous philosophical literature, the present study sought to fill the gap of reading Hegel's dialectical evolution of Spirit as a fallibilist account of knowledge. Based on this study problem, I hypothesized that Hegelian speculative philosophy and dialectical skepticism incorporate fallibility principles. Basic steps proposed to address the study problem include reviewing the dialectical unfolding of Spirit to absolute knowledge and paying attention to the dialectical skepticism and speculative processes embedded in it, understanding infallibilism and fallibilism as conditions of justification, and evaluating the epistemic justification based on Hegel's dialectical fallibilism.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit* (the third part of Hegel's *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science*) and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* with emphasis on how each stage of Spirit exhibits inner contradiction, skepticism, and speculation, leading to a higher viewpoint, which captures the essence of fallibilism. This dialectical movement of Spirit involves its development into soul, consciousness, mind, objective Spirit, and absolute Spirit (i.e., subjective Spirit, objective

Spirit, and absolute Spirit). Although the scope of this dialectical movement centers on the subjective Spirit to absolute Spirit, the dialectical movement in other stages is also underscored throughout this study for a clearer account of Hegel's fallibilism. In Chapter 3, I examined how dialectical skepticism incorporates fallibility principles. Particularly, I explored how dialectical skepticism renders the truth inconclusive, transcends the pessimism of traditional skepticism and the exaggerated optimism of dogmatism, serves as a second dialectical moment between truth and error in every shape of Spirit, and provides solutions to the criterion problem.

In Chapter 4, I examined how Hegel's speculative process demonstrates the fallibilist account of knowledge. This exploration indicated that the basic characteristics of fallibilism are evident in all the stages of the inner form of speculative philosophy. The first characteristic of fallibilism evident is the inconclusiveness of maintaining knowledge or truth. The second is that truth is the unity of opposite moments, which cannot be valid or true without each moment. Several examples substantiating how opposites essentially relate to each other in constituting the truth were provided. Hegel's speculative process was also contradistinguished from critical philosophy, particularly that of Descartes and Kant. The findings indicated that even self-evident and certain truths in the Cartesian system and Kantian pure apperception and apodictic categories are uncertain under Hegel's speculative philosophy. In Chapter 5, I evaluated conclusive epistemic justification using Hegel's dialectical fallibilism. Focusing on foundationalism as the mainstream position of epistemic justification, the results indicated that self-evident truths, such as ultimate logical principles, mathematical truths, and immediate sensory experiences, do not escape fallibility.

However, Hegel's dialectical system, around which the current study is built, has faced criticisms. For instance, Rosa Lichtenstein accuses Hegel of misinterpreting Aristotle's logic and accepting Spinoza's throw-away line (which holds that every determination is a negation) and the

medieval logico-linguistic theory now known as the identity theory of predication.²²⁶ Lichtenstein insists that Hegel developed his negation of negation, determinate negation, and unity of identity and difference through these three backgrounds. Lichtenstein notes that in the identity theory of predication, the statement “John is a man” is usually confused with “John is identical with manhood.” Precisely, the “is” in the former proposition, which functions as a copula, has now been turned into the “is” of identity in the latter. A predicate expression (“a man”) has turned into a proper name (“manhood”) or the concept of man. By confusing identity with identification, Hegel concluded that identity implies difference, simultaneously identifying and differentiating a thing from its concept and thus developing his negation of negation and unity and the interpenetration of opposites.²²⁷ For Lichtenstein, Hegel’s dialectic is a failed theory with no rational support.

Similarly, Søren Kierkegaard denounces Hegel’s introduction of movement and transition into logic. Kierkegaard argues that pure thought either abrogates motion altogether or meaninglessly imports it into logic, for logic is, and everything logical simply is.²²⁸ Hegel has also been accused of equating logical concepts with the world process. In this light, Lichtenstein argues that, by erroneously developing his negation of negation and unity and the interpenetration of opposites, Hegel believed dialectics are built into concepts, thoughts pass from one opposite to the other, and such thoughts mirror or constitute the world order. Also, Kierkegaard criticizes Hegel for equating logic with historical truths, importing necessity into the historical process characterized by change. For Kierkegaard, this is a contradiction in terms, for nothing comes into being necessarily because becoming and necessity contradict each other. Logic is in the realm of necessity, while historical truths are accidental or contingent. Kierkegaard writes.

²²⁶ Rosa Lichtenstein, *Hegel’s Basic Logical Blunders*, (2023).

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, edit. & trans. Alastair Hannay (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 93.

Everything that becomes historical is contingent, for it is precisely through coming into being, becoming historical, that it has its moment of contingency, for contingency is precisely the one factor in all becoming. In this again lies the incommensurability between a historical truth and an eternal decision.²²⁹

Kierkegaard notes that introducing necessity into the historical process compromises the categories of possibility, actuality, and necessity. Necessity is artificial within historical processes, as it ignores the real concrete subjective factors such as conscience, personal intention, and inward freedom.²³⁰

With necessity, Hegel's dialectical system imposes determinism on the historical process.

Bernard Lonergan also criticizes Hegel's dialectical evolution of Spirit of panlogism, which dissolves the concrete or the existential in the abstract dimension of the concept or the all-encompassing absolute Spirit and denies evidence as sufficient for justification of the existential. Precisely, Lonergan argues that Hegel's viewpoint is a universe of all-inclusive concreteness devoid of the existential or the virtually unconditioned.²³¹ In this regard, Hegel's system has been described as a coherent theory of truth and justification because it is a system of coherent or consistent thoughts without corresponding to reality. In this criticism, there can be a consistent body of falsity. Hence, knowledge divorced from the way the world actually is is not knowledge.

Another criticism against Hegel is his insistence that only relative opposites exist. For instance, Kierkegaard argues that absolute opposites, which cannot be mediated, also exist. Unlike relative opposites, absolute opposites do not fall within the speculative enterprise (e.g., the irreconcilable "otherness" of the absolute divine mind against contingent created beings). Hence, Kierkegaard denounces Hegel's complete identification of God with the world, the infinite with the finite, and the absolute with the temporal. He argues that no analogy exists between the infinite and

²²⁹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 83.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, edited by F. E. Crowe and R. M. Doram, 5th ed., Vol. 3, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 398.

infinite beings, creator and creatures, but only an abysmal difference. What is true of the relation between two human beings is not true of the relation of human beings to God.²³² Hence, he writes:

But the absolute difference between God and the human being consists precisely in this that the human is a particular existing being (which holds as much for the cleverest as for the most stupid), whose essential task, therefore, cannot be to think *sub specie aeterni*, since as long as he exists, he is, though eternal, essentially someone existing for whom the essential thing, therefore, has to be inwardness in existence, while God is the infinite, who is eternal.²³³

The logicity and relevance of these criticisms, however, do not directly deny the fallibilist account of justification that runs through the dialectical evolution of Spirit. The speculative process and the proper abyss of the dialectical movement of Spirit as the path of despair capturing the fallibilist nature of truth must be reiterated. In this movement, the measure of truth is always abandoned if what is thought to be true fails this measure of truth. Moreover, criticisms substantiate Hegel's systematic philosophy. Lonergan confirms this point when he writes: "Hegel's system is not afraid of contradictions: it explains any contradiction alleged against it by revealing what opposed and incomplete viewpoints, accounted for by the system, yield the alleged contradictory terms."²³⁴

²³² John. J. Ansbro, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Hegel: An Interpretation*.

²³³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 183.

²³⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 397.

Principal Contributions

Firstly, the present study filled a gap in the philosophical literature. Limited research has been conducted to examine that the Hegelian dialectical method, with its speculative philosophy, is a fallibilist thesis. Therefore, the current study filled this gap by examining the Hegelian dialectical evolution of Spirit as a fallibilist account of knowledge.

Secondly, the findings of the current study indicated that, within the context of the dialectical movement of absolute Spirit, natural laws, mechanical laws, and even self-evident truths, such as logical principles, geometrical truth, and metamathematical truths, exhibit fallibilism. Hence, the current study enhanced the evaluation of the fallibilist account of knowledge and knowledge founded on infallibility, including epistemic immunities, certainty, indubitability, and incorrigibility.

Thirdly, the current study provided insight into several other areas of philosophy, including ethics, philosophical anthropology, political philosophy, social philosophy, and philosophy of religion because all these areas were highlighted in the process of examining how the dialectical evolution of Spirit incorporates fallibility principles.

Technical Data

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1. Akanaefu, Martin. "Multiculturalism and the Challenges of Identity and Recognition Within the Context of Hegelian Dialectics." *Philosophy of Religion and Worldview: Tradition and Innovation-Part II*, (2023): 39-53.
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