Hegel and Institutional Rationality

by

Robert B. Pippin
University of Chicago

"„die Philosophie ist etwas Einsames."
Hegel, 1807

1. "Right is concerned with freedom," Hegel notes in the remark to Paragraph 215 in his *Philosophy of Right*, and freedom is "the worthiest and most sacred possession of man." In his account of the nature of this all-important freedom, Hegel makes two well known claims, and the problem I want to discuss is an obvious consequence of trying to think the two claims together.

First, according to Hegel philosophy is not concerned with the mere concept of such freedom, but with the concept and its "actuality" (*Wirklichkeit*). In his systematic language, this means that a philosophy of freedom is neither a rational analysis of the pure concept of freedom, nor some a priori formulation of an ideal, of what simply "ought to be." It is notoriously difficult to know what this claim means. But at the very least this account of actualized and not merely ideal freedom means that freedom consists in participation in various, historically actual (and that means, ultimately, distinctly modern, European) institutions. Anything other than this is only an incomplete, partially realized freedom.
Perhaps the most typical Hegelian claim about such actual or "objective" freedom is from his *Introduction to The Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. 

Every individual has his station in society, and he is fully aware of what constitutes a right and honorable course of action. If someone declares that, in ordinary private existence, it is not at all easy to decide what is right and good, and if he considers that moral excellence consists in finding it extremely difficult to be moral and in having all kinds of scruples about being so, we can only attribute this to his evil or malevolent will which is looking for excuses to escape its duties; for it is by no means hard to recognize what his duties are. (LPWH, p. 80)

This is the foundation for the even more infamous claims later in the *Introduction to the Lectures*, that "Only in the state does man have rational existence," (LPWH, p. 94) and in his unpublished 1818-19 *Rechtsphilosophie* lectures that it is "only in the state that the concept of freedom comes to its self-sufficient existence." (VPR 18, p. 222) Most speculatively: "The divine principle in the state is the Idea made manifest on earth." (LPWH, p. 95)

But why would being a family member, or a bourgeois or a citizen count as being free? The appearance of the adjective "rational" in that last claim about "rational existence" and the exactly parallel formulations about reason on the one hand and freedom in its self-sufficient existence on the other, already signal the second claim I want to start from. Not any modern institution can be said to
represent the actualization of freedom, and so only a few of one’s social roles can be said to embody “actual” ethical duties. The principle of this limitation is also clear enough. The content of a free life may derive from carrying out various modern social roles, but this is because the execution of those roles can be said to be rational. Already in the remark to §3 of the PR, Hegel notes

...a determination of right may be shown to be entirely grounded in and consistent with the prevailing circumstances and existing legal institutions, yet it may be contrary to right [unrechtlich] and irrational in and for itself, like numerous determinations of Roman civil law.

Thus, Hegel’s rationality condition clearly serves a traditional function of appeals to reason. He obviously means that there can be historical periods where the major actual institutions have, as Hegel says, a "hollow, spiritless, and unsettled existence," when finding one's duty in what is socially required would be a mistake, however indeterminate and unsatisfying the "inner subjective world" retreated to would be in such cases.² So, when, in the Lectures on the Philosophy of History Hegel again counts as objective freedom a citizen’s functioning in the role of a citizen of the state, he again insists that this is so under a clear condition: when this “substantial freedom” can be counted as an expression of “the reason which is implicit in the will [die an sich seiende Vernunft des Willens] and which develops itself in the state.” (VPG 135/104) By the time of the Berlin version of the Encyclopedia, Hegel was well aware of the
charge that his insistence on genuinely actualized freedom merely sanctified the historically positive, and he expressed amazement that anyone could have so understood him. "...(F)or who is not acute enough to see a great deal in his own surroundings which is really far from being as it ought to be?" (EL, §6)

So "conforming to right," and "being rational in and for itself" and participating in certain institutions, all amount to the same thing, and the same thing they amount to is the state of actual freedom. Having practical reasons is, for the subject, following institutional rules, and the quality of those reasons, let us say, is a function of the institution’s objective rational status. Hegel’s shift here towards historically actual social conditions as satisfying such a condition of rationality, and away from an individual’s possession of a causal power, his insistence that freedom must be understood as a collective human achievement, is a momentous one (especially for the left Hegelian tradition and for modern European history), but quite complicated in itself.³ The point we need to focus on here is that, like Rousseau and Kant and Fichte, when Hegel points to the key condition that would enable my identification with my own deeds, my being able to understand them as produced by me, not by the will of another, or as necessitated, he also points to the role of practical reason. He is, in other words, a member in good standing of that camp of post-Kantian philosophy that understands freedom as rational agency. What I need to be able to do in order to acknowledge a deed as my own, to stand behind it, take on the burden of responsibility for it, and so “see myself” in it, is in some way to be able to justify
it, understand my opting for it as rule-governed, and so as the appropriate deed, and not some other. Where Hegel veers off (or veers back to Rousseau, whose position on this issue Hegel did not fully appreciate) is in his linking being in some social roles to the realization of reason in both the “subjective” and “objective” sense noted above. Whatever else he means by this, he must mean thereby that “having justifiable reasons” is going to look a lot different than we might expect, since it won’t only be a matter of having maxims of a certain form or beliefs about the good, and the role of practical and moral reasoning will not be a matter of having applied a methodology or a test for universalizability. Reasoning and coming to have reasons will, it appears, have a great deal more to do with participation in social practices, and the sorts of reasons relevant to the achievement of genuine freedom, full rational agency, will depend on the character of those practices and institutions.

So we appear to have a "my station, my duties" or social role theory of right conduct, but one which sees the fulfillment of those socially defined roles as the actualization of individual human freedom (already somewhat of a paradox), and which counts one’s being in those roles as such freedom because the performance of such duties and functions can be said to be rational. And of course the question is, rational in what sense? Or at least that is the question I would like to raise here.

Already we can see the problem. Hegelian practical rationality will not amount to preference maximizing or adopting the moral standpoint of
universality, but, as we now might say, after the influence of Wittgenstein and Habermas, proper rule-following where the rules are rules regulating social practices and institutions. (I should note that in all cases where I invoke the notion of rule following, I do not mean anything like the conscious application of a criterion. There is of course a large controversy about the right way to describe being normatively minded in these cases that I shall have to ignore in what follows. What is minimally important for Hegel’s position is some sort of a distinction between subscribing to a norm, and just being norm-governed, going on in the appropriate way. Hegel’s claims about subjective rationality mean that requires some version of the former.) It is in this sense that Catholic priests can be said to have reasons to be celibate (in the “because that is what they are” sense), and male members of families in certain societies have reasons to seek revenge against insults to honor, and so on. If Hegel’s argument is successful, such rule-following considerations can be counted as justifications, and are the paradigmatic case of practical justification. But contrary to other such rule-following accounts (like Wittgenstein’s), Hegel clearly wants to defend not only claims like,

(i) “It is in participating in Institution X, in following its rules, that I am being practically rational, or can be said to have justifications for what I do,”

but he also quite obviously intends to avoid the relativistic implications associated with such a position and also defend the claim:
(ii) “Institution X is itself rational, has an objectively rational form.”

Now we tend intuitively to think that latter claim to mean,

(ii') “It is rational for any individual to opt to participate in and sustain X,”

but as we have seen, Hegel seems to think that is only qua participant that I can be said to have practical reasons at all and that they can be said to get some sort of grip. He will famously deny that there is any way of settling what a putatively pre-institutional individual would rationally will. As we shall see, Hegel thinks sociality is “prior” to individuality, that it is only within and as a result of certain sorts of norm-governed societies that I could become a determinate individual at all. So (ii') cannot be the right gloss on and we are left wondering what (ii) could amount to?

2. There is one more Hegelian turn to this screw that we need before the issue can be stated in his terms. At times, Hegel can appear to treat this claim about the “substantial” rationality of modern institutions as essentially a conclusion of a metaphysical argument about the genuine, objective realization of finite spirit, or as the end-point of the historical manifestation of this culmination of a developmental process (ultimately the developmental process that, on this reading, is what there is, being qua being). One can already detect this aspect in the “substantialization” of reason apparent in the passage quoted above from the History lectures: “the Reason” (die Vernunft) which “develops itself” in the state. And there are of course scores of other passages where Hegel writes of “reason” doing this or that, or realizing itself in various ways, or
appearing as this or that, and so forth. (See for example one of Griesheim’s additions, “The state consists in the march of God in the world, and its basis is the power of reason actualizing itself as will.” VPR §248) On such a teleological view (stated very generally) a developmental process can be said to exhibit “the work of reason” because the process gradually does result in the living being or the social form becoming “what it truly is.” The process has a logos, is not arbitrary or shaped wholly by contingent and, in this sense, meaningless events.

There is no doubt that Hegel does seem to invoke some version of this ontological notion of truth, and that he counts modern institutions as rational because they “exist in the truth,” as such a conception of truth would have it. And his practical philosophy, or his claim that freedom just consists in acting out certain modern social roles, and these because such roles can be said to embody “the rational” in this metaphysical sense, appears to invoke this “substantialist” notion of reason. Consider §145:

The fact that the ethical sphere is the system of these determinations of the Idea constitutes its rationality. In this way, the ethical sphere is freedom, or the will which has being in and for itself as objectivity, as a circle of necessity whose moments are the ethical powers which govern the lives of these individuals. In these individuals – who are accidental to them – these powers have their representation, phenomenal shape and actuality.
The Zusatz to this paragraph goes even farther in stressing that such “determinations of the ethical” or these social roles, “are the substantiality or universal essence of individuals” and that therefore these individuals are “mere accidents.”

3. However, by now, or at this point in the liberal-democratic re-appropriation of Hegel of the last thirty years or so, there is a fairly standard rejoinder to an exclusive concentration on passages like these. One points, quite rightly, to Hegel’s clear insistence in the *Introduction* to the *Philosophy of Right* that acting rationally and thereby freely has a “subjective” as well as an “objective” side. This means that participating in some social function that can be shown to be a “necessary determination” of the Idea of freedom only satisfies half of the rationality requirement, however we ultimately decide to interpret what Hegel says about objective rationality. The subjective half is what Hegel calls “the right of the subject to find satisfaction in the action.” (PR, §121) This principle is of the utmost importance in Hegel’s philosophy, since it amounts to his interpretation of the philosophical significance of Christianity, and therewith is the foundation for his whole theory of the modern world. So, most famously, for the Greeks, “customs and habits are the form in which the right is willed and done,” (VPG 308/252 )and “we may assert” of the Greeks “that they had no conscience; the habit of living for their fatherland without further reflection was the principle dominant among them,” (VPG 293/238) and therefore Greek
ethical life “is not yet absolutely free and not yet completed out of itself, not yet stimulated by itself.” (VPG 293/238) By contrast,

(T)he substance of spirit is freedom. From this we can infer that its end in the historical process is the freedom of the subject to follow its own conscience and morality, and to pursue and implement its own universal ends; it also implies that the subject has infinite value and that it must become conscious of its supremacy. The end of the world spirit is realized in substance through the freedom of each individual." LPWH, p. 55.7

Further, it is not sufficient merely that subjects actually have some sort of implicit, subjective faith in the rectitude of their social and political forms of life, that they in fact subjectively assent. When he discusses the compatibility of this right to subjective particularity with a recognition of the universal claims of reason, he insists that in modern ethical life individuals both “direct their wills to a universal end” and also that they act “in conscious awareness of this end” (PR§260); they “knowingly and willingly [mit Wissen und Willen] acknowledge this universal interest even as their own substantial spirit and actively pursue it as their ultimate end.” (Ibid.) In just institutions, according to Hegel, “man must meet with his own reason.” (“Seine Vernunft muß dem Menschen im Rechte entgegenkommen...” PR, p. 14).8

4. So this brings us finally to the question at hand, what it means to say that certain modern institutions are rational, and now, especially, what it means
to say that they are **subjectively**, not just objectively rational; and even more pointedly, what does Hegel mean when he says that individuals even affirm such a universal, or rational end “**knowingly**” (mit Wissen)?

As noted above, it would be natural here to think of institutions as rational if they could be shown to be the **products of the rational will of individuals**, that under some hypothetical pre-institutional and ideal conditions, we can show that it would be rational to found, form and sustain any such institution. This form of reasoning is most famous in the *exeundum e statu naturae* arguments in the modern contractarian defense of the state, but such a methodological individualism has become a staple of modern discussions about institutions, and can almost be said to define methodology in several social sciences. Since in many such models either the genuine interest or the ideal sum of subjective preference satisfactions of the individual is at stake, it is presumed that such considerations are in fact often the subjective reasons on the basis of which subjects act, and that, under conditions of even minimal enlightenment and non-distortion, could easily gain an even greater motivating force.

There are several Hegelian criticisms of this model of institutional rationality. Rehearsing them briefly will lead us to the positive question: if not this methodological individualism, or moral individualism, what does constitute institutional rationality for Hegel? I will group the objections together into two categories: Hegel’s attack on the **abstractness** of the notion of the individual in
many modern theories, and his claims about motivational and alienation problems.

5. Both criticisms rely on a claim about the priority of social relations to individual self-relations or to the results of individual choice. Individuality itself is dependent on social relations because such social relations are necessary for the development and maturation of determinate individuals in the first place. Hegel’s point here is that the notions of a rational egoist, or individual preference maximizer or of an individual conscience are all extreme abstractions, idealized starting points so idealized that reliance on any result that issues from such thought experiments is quite misleading.

What Hegel ultimately wants to say here against such abstractness depends heavily on a very ambitious claim about the ontology of individuality, and so his own distinct account of freedom as being-with-self-in-the-other (bei sich Selbstsein im Anderen). In social terms he means to highlight an aspect of freedom, independence and so individuality, that is not conceived of as some abstract and unreal absence of all dependence, but a kind of dependence by virtue of which genuine or actual independence could be achieved. (His best examples of this are friendship and love; the intellectual ancestor is again Rousseau and Rousseau’s argument that a “remarkable change in man” is necessary before true citizenship can be possible). But without ascending to such heights, it is clear enough what the arguments look like on the ground. Participation in a certain form of social life is transformative as well as
instrumentally useful, and so there is too great a contrast between what an individual becomes by such participation, and what he would have been without it, for the pre-institution individual to serve as a standard. Such social institutions are also originally formative of individual identities, and so would be conditions for the possible development even of rational egoists and rational egoist “culture” and so cannot be viewed as the product, even ideally, of such individuals. And the institutions necessary instrumentally to protect and guarantee individual egoism or conscience-following cannot themselves be sustained effectively without relations of trust and solidarity that cannot be supported on considerations of individualist interest or individual conscience.

Hegel even treats the genuinely normative claims for what he himself calls the “right” of subjectivity and individuality as themselves products of a certain sort of ethical culture, as claims on others that cannot be understood or realized without there being in place a culture in which “others” come to be understood and respected in a certain way. (Thus, in a way typical of many such argument strategies in Hegel, it being “a product of reason” to come to regard others in such a way is not for this way to be the product of moral, especially, deductive reasoning. A claim about a certain sort of development, not deduction, bears the weight of the claim for rationality.) The general thesis is stated in the Addition to §141, where Hegel claims that “the sphere of right and morality cannot exist independently ([für sich]; they must have the ethical as their support and foundation [das Sittliche zum Träger, zum Grundlage].” (§141, Z) Such
considerations of rights entitlements and moral duty can be said to “get a grip” and so come to count as reasons for an individual (have what Hegel calls “motivating force” [bewegende Kraft] not as a product of pure practical reason alone, but only as components of actual “ethical being.” (§142; an dem sittlichen Sein)

6. Hegel’s second main objection rests on considerations of motivation, or how some consideration could come to count for me as a practical reason, how it could be said to “get a grip” on an individual and make sense as a reason for her. This tack is clearest in Hegel’s rejection of the Kantian account of the “subjective side” of practical rationality, or the Kantian claim that pure reason itself can be practical all by itself. This is so despite the many similarities with the Kantian position that have already emerged in Hegel’s own account of freedom as rational self-determination or autonomy. But Kant believed that freedom and subjection to the moral law were “reciprocal” concepts, that an analysis of the concept of agency could reveal that conformity to the constraints of rationality constituted freedom, and since reason was unable to determine any substantive ends to be followed or substantive goods, subjection to such rationality could only mean subjection to the form of rationality itself. But conforming to the formal constraints of rationality can only mean conforming to the constraints of universal lawfulness, and when Kant interpreted that to mean conformity to the categorical imperative, that move started all the trouble.14 That is, conformity to such constraints can’t in itself mean much more than a commitment to the
universality claim inherent in claims to rationality - that anyone else in my situation would have such reasons to act - and not to the much stronger principle that conformity to the rationality constraint meant being able to will coherently that all others could have my maxim simultaneously. Since Kant had not established that extension, his own principle remained "empty."

Moreover, Kant appeared to abandon (after the *Groundwork*) a deductive attempt to establish what Hegel called the "actuality" of moral principles, that we were actually subject to such principles and could act on them. We need to be able to show not only that "this is what a purely rational practical will would will" but that we are unconditionally obligated to such results. Kant’s ultimate case for that subjection came down to a mysterious claim about the *Faktum der Vernunft*, or something like the practical undeniability of freedom (the form of the undeniability being something like, as Kant puts it, "trying to prove with reason that there is no reason"), where such freedom is again analyzed as conformity to the constraints of rationality in Kant’s dubiously extended (categorical imperative) sense. One could see, Hegel claimed, how little help such an account really provides in trying to understand the sort of "grip" on us the dictates of pure practical reason have by noting Kant’s needing to call on so many and so various other "helping" motivations and habituations to make his point about the possibility of moral motivation for finite, sensible creatures like us. Considerations like respect as an incentive, the role of the highest good, especially the Postulates, the place of religion and the ethical commonwealth, etc. revealed for
Hegel the inconsistency (or what Hegel called the Verstellen or dissembling) of the Kantian position on morality. The insufficiency of such an account of pure reason being practical ought then to lead us to look elsewhere, to the ethical world become "second nature" in individual lives, for an account of what considerations of moral equality actually amount to, and how they "get a grip," motivate individual allegiance.

Where then does all this leave us in trying to understand the subjective side of practical rationality in Hegel? Perhaps we could simply try to invoke positively what have emerged as required conditions for the actualization of freedom, as considerations for the subject, and so as what any rational (thereby free) subject must be presumed committed to. Here are two examples of how that might be done.

7. Axel Honneth, in his recent attempt at what he calls a "reactualization" of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, agrees with Hegel that "the ideas of 'abstract right' and 'morality' are each insufficient descriptions of the condition of individual freedom in modernity" and he coins a fine term to describe the state we are in as a result of this insufficiency; he calls it "suffering from indeterminacy." Modern agents can be said to be by and large committed to the right, truly authoritative modern norm, freedom, and so an equal entitlement to a free life, but suffer from the indeterminacy that the mere notion of freedom leaves us with. (As the twentieth century has made clear, libertarian, welfarist, socialist and totalitarian projects all claim a commitment to the supreme principle
of freedom.) Honneth invokes Hegel as having shown by far the most important condition for actual freedom: another's freedom, and therewith necessarily the objective social conditions wherein subjects could properly experience another's freedom as condition of their own, and so act as such social agents, and as subjectively rational. Whereas Kant and Fichte understood the sphere of right as external relations among atomistic subjects, with the key issue the legitimacy of coercion, and with restrictions on freedom understood as merely necessary in order to guarantee freedom for all, "...under the same concept Hegel understands all the social pre-conditions that can be shown to be necessary for the realization of the free will of each citizen."¹⁷ These social pre-conditions are then glossed as the "communicative relations" Hegel's present as elements of Sittlichkeit.

But Honneth realizes that this form of argument amounts to an "extension" of the modern notion of natural right since it involves a justified claim to entitlement to the conditions of free individuality.¹⁸ But he also realizes that the justifiability (the rational legitimacy) of Sittlichkeit cannot be understood as a matter of the legal rights of individuals, as in a right to the conditions for the realization of freedom. A social world conceived of as individuals laying claim on each other for the guaranteed protection of the existence of certain communicative practices or forms of social life does not make sense as a matter of entitlement claims. It would instead count just as much as a mark of the corruption and distortion of modern ethical life if individuals "subjectively"
claimed such a life as a individual right as, explicitly for Hegel, familial life were experienced as the realm of right and contract. As we have already seen Hegel assert, this also gets the cart before the horse. He has argued, and Honneth presumably agrees, that one cannot understand the authority of rights claims themselves as a result of some deductive, purely rational thought experiment, dependent only on the concept of individual freedom. That was why Hegel had insisted that "right" and "morality" cannot exist independently or for themselves; such claims can only become practical reasons for individuals within and as a result of a certain form of social life. A common ethical life cannot be understood as the object of a rights claim if that life amounts to a necessary pre-condition of the determinate meaning and binding force of such a rights claim. (The somewhat paradoxical situation here is captured by a nice image used by Martin Hollis: how could Eve have possibly known whether it was right or wrong to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, before she did?)

It does not, I think, help much, to argue as Honneth does that these "social forms of existence" can themselves be said to have rights, as in "have a right to a legitimate place in the institutional order of modern societies." Such forms are not and cannot be the realization of rights claims in any sense (they are the condition for the "actuality" of such claims). The notion of right, no matter the bearer, is tied necessarily to the capacity to place others under an obligation, and if such social forms are said to have a right to existence, then by parity of reasoning we will have to ask again, under what social pre-pre-
conditions could such claim to entitlement have binding “actual” force? The very arguments that led us to the issue of pre-conditions for rights claims will arise again if we consider those pre-conditions as matters of right.21

8. Another approach might concentrate in a more narrowly Kantian way on the general question of whether anything contentful can be derived simply from a consideration of what a rationally self-determining will would will. Kant may not have been right that such a will, qua rational, could only subject itself to a moral law, but the framework for the question itself might be right; all we need to do is to broaden the results. One can at least see that such a will could will nothing or approve nothing which would make a rationally self-determining will impossible. If one understands Hegel's theory as a self-realization theory, where what is being realized is one's nature as a rational self-determiner, one might be able to suggest at least certain minimal social conditions as required for this possibility, and so have an argument for the rational legitimacy of, and our unavoidable commitment to, Sittlichkeit. Each individual subject could be presumed to be committed to the formative familial, economic, legal and state institutions thanks to which protection of the development of any possible rational self-determination would be secured. And Hegel does appear to invoke the Kantian language on this issue: "The will in its truth is such that what it wills, i.e. its content, is identical with the will itself, so that freedom is willed by freedom." (PR 21Z) and the entirety of §27 also insists that the free will is the will "which wills the free will." (Alan Patten has recently argued this thesis in his
Hegel’s Idea of Freedom, and Fred Neuhouser defends a version of it in his Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory.

It is true that, if we consider, hypothetically, a purely rational agent in order to consider what social forms such a self-determiner would be necessarily committed to, we can end up saying generally that such an agent would have to be committed to the “social conditions of agency,” and that their being so necessary constitutes such institutions as rational. But we have not thereby said very much that is concrete or even specific, certainly not enough to get us to the modern, bourgeois family based on romantic love, a market economy, the civil society/state distinction, and so forth. As noted, Hegel has said from the start that the concept of freedom “gives itself” its own actuality, and in his logical language there is much talk of an infinitely self-determining universal, the concrete manifestation of which is not a mere empirical instantiation but is determined by that concept. But if couched in these Kantian terms, the gulf between the promise of such claims and the reality of what we are left with if we follow this “deductive” interpretation is a chasm. And it is unlikely in the extreme that the subjective sense of one’s own rationality qua participant in such institutions is some philosophically simplified understanding “that the free will wills the free will itself.”

9. So, what, according to Hegel, does make a practical justification adequate to the subjects involved, especially adequate in the sense that we have been investigating: appeal to such a consideration makes it possible to stand
behind and claim a deed as one’s own? It is clear enough that for Hegel there is an inseparable objective side to this question. Actions can be said to conform to the constraints of practical reason when the agent has not counted his own position as due more than others, just because it is his own, or when the rules governing all participants have been followed. We understand what it is for individuals to have “actually” come to adopt this sort of constraint, and what it means for it to function as a constraint, by understanding it as the result of a coherent social development, a story that is most famously known as the struggle for recognition. But this emphasis on the “priority” of ethical life claim already also suggests something quite important for the subjective side. Being moved by such a consideration, practically accepting it as a constraint, is not to be understood as something one elects to do at some moment in time, as if one pauses and engages in moral reasoning that has such a constraint as a deductive outcome. Being a property owner, there are claims I am allowed to make on other property owners, a justification that circulates and functions, can be accepted or rejected or modified, according to the rules of the property-owning institution; being a parent, there are claims on and demands from children and other parents, and so forth. The consideration is not properly understood as a belief held by, or ideal believed in by, a subject, some propositional object of an attitude. The point one needs to understand to get Hegel right is that this participation in a practice, offering, accepting and rejecting institutional reasons,
is all that Hegel counts as “having” the sorts of reasons that allow the action to be counted as free, genuinely mine.

We can see this more clearly by noting what Hegel think happens “subjectively” when those objective conditions are not fully actual. Of course, the claim to justifiability alone establishes the “no special weight” constraint, but the “realization” of such a commitment can be quite various, depending on these objective conditions, and can even result for the subjects, as they understand things, in opposing realizations. When Antigone and Creon in Hegel’s famous treatment of Sophocles’ play, are struggling about what it means to attempt to bury Polynices’ body, whether it is an unavoidable act of familial duty, or a treasonous betrayal of the polis, they are arguing in effect about who will set or determine socially the meaning of the deed, and the objective religious and political concepts available to them at the time make a resolution of such claims impossible, and so, subjectively, allow each party an objective claim to rectitude, make the appearance of the opposite claim wholly outside what can be justified. And this failure of such objective conditions begins to reveal what would be subjectively successful in the appeal to reasons. For what Hegel suggests about the kind of social development that would ameliorate this situation is first of all that it is a social development that would do so, not the discovery of some “truth-maker” in the world, or better access to such a truth-maker, or some greater subjective clarity. And this suggests a distinctly unusual story about adequate practical reasons, experienced as adequate by a subject.
That is, first of all, the lesson to take from these results so far is that practical rationality, the exercise of which constitutes freedom and establishes the condition under which I can experience my deeds as truly my own, is always “institution bound,” that no one can be said to have any sort of effective, practical reason to do anything if conceived just as a "purely rational" self-determining agent. To think of oneself as radically “disengaged” from the content of my life is in fact to reflect another sort of engagement “somewhere else.” This is true, according to Hegel, even of universal moral obligations to all persons, since he understands morality itself as a specific historical institution, and, as with so much, understands its normative authority developmentally, not deductively. Said another way, according to Hegel there is no “place” to stand, putatively outside such institutions, from which one could be said to have a reason to sign up, anymore than one can be said to have a reason to move a knight or a pawn unless one is playing chess. The obvious retort here –that it must be possible to discuss whether one has reasons to play chess in the first place – is one that Hegel’s account accepts, but he does not treat it as introducing any pre-institutional perspective. In effect, the way the whole PR works is for Hegel to show how anyone playing one sort of institutional game (or offering, accepting, rejecting, or modifying proposed justifications) also has good reasons (reasons derived wholly from his trying to play that one game) to play another. We can thus distinguish kinds of reasons relevant to claims of abstract right (like “that is my property, therefore you may not take it” or “I did not
stipulate that in the contract, so you may now not demand it”), from reasons relevant to moral judgments (“No; because it violates my conscience”), from reasons relevant to ethical life (“because I am a father,” “because a good business man must be trustworthy,” “because my country is in danger”). What can look like a purely rational reflection on the limitations of some normative institution is in reality the pull of another unavoidable, already in place institutional commitment. (Historically, for example, the most important such differentiation in Hegel’s account is between: “because he is a citizen,” “because that is what a citizen does,” and “because this is a common means for us to improve productivity,” or “because we discover we have a common good in the pursuit of our individual goods.”) In Hegel’s view human subjects are, and are wholly and essentially, always already underway historically and socially, and even in their attempts to reason about what anyone, anytime ought to do, they do so from an institutional position. (Antigone and Creon do not rely on personal sentiment or oracles to determine what to do. Each is trying to argue for what, respectively, any sister or any ruler must do, even though they make no appeal to or deduction from “what anyone at all must do.”) If we abstract from that position in an attempt at an idealization, we abstract from the conditions of the possibility of practical rationality. The conventions of ethical life governing what sorts of reasons can be offered, in what context, and how much else one is committed to by offering them, are not, in other words, rules that one might
invoke and challenge all at once; they are criterial for what will count as raising and challenging any claim.

It is important to note that this is not a prelude to a claim for a smug cultural positivism, as if we count as justifiable only what functions as a justification in our game, and this because that is just the way we do things. As we shall see below, this too is far too reflective and abstract a position for it to count as a practical reason. But the position does mean that in cases where we are confronted by a justification we do not accept, say one which justifies treating wives and children as a husband’s property, we have no practical choice but to react to the claim as a move in the space of reasons, an attempt at justification, and then to trot out the extended understanding of personhood and natural right and so forth that function in our claim that this is unjust. (Otherwise, we would not be treating such other subjects as subjects.) There is also no possibility for us to count “respect for cultural differences” in this case as a norm for action (or inaction) unless that too can be understood as justifiable, and this in a way that may very well require action when we inter-act with cultures that do not value such tolerance.

10. None of this relativization of practical reasons to institutional presuppositions should be taken to mean that Hegel’s own reflections, in the Phenomenology, the Encyclopedia, and his lecture courses about the inherent or objective rationality of modern institutions, are somehow in tension with this restriction. We are so accustomed to think of this issue “Platonically” that we
expect there to be this tension. That is, we think that everyday life depends on “presuppositions,” the justification for which “runs out” at some point in everyday life, that this represents a justificatory failure, and that only philosophy can complete what we incompletely do in our ordinary practices. This way leads both to philosopher kings and intellectual vanguards. We also tend to think that such justificatory practices cannot just constitute practical rationality because they can break down, participants can experience their real, determinate insufficiency and there can be a kind of learning process or genuine moral improvement and all of that must mean that we are after, and might be getting closer to, some state of perfect practical rationality, completely adequate exchange of impartial justifications. And if that is so, it must be in principle possible simply to lay out those conditions and not worry that, imperfect creatures that we are, we cannot find much exemplification of such a state in the real world.

These are apposite, important considerations, but from Hegel’s point of view, we must be careful how we state the issues. We must especially attend to the difference between the kinds of breakdowns, aporiai, and unresolvable tensions that occur in a community’s linguistic and so justificatory practices, and, thereafter, the experience of partial resolutions, Aufhebungen, etc. This phenomenon is real but would only be the local context where, once practical rationality is defined in this post-Wittgensteinean way (as rule-following), participants could be understood as negotiating with others at a time better
candidates for such rules, for normative status, that is, better, motivating practical reasons for the participants, given what had broken down. There is no particular reason to think that such participants do or must understand themselves as "getting closer to absolute truth or acceptability" in order to do that. (What Orestes and Clytemnestra, eventually the Eumenides, need is the Homicide Court, not the Kingdom of God on Earth.) And, on the other hand, much more reflectively, and at a "level" that is irrelevant to motivating practical reason, there could be an attempt to situate these sorts of normative permissions and constraints within some ever clearer self-understanding with regard to normativity and justification in general (a "Science of Logic," say).

For Hegel in other words philosophy does not do better what persons at the level of “objective spirit” do poorly; it does something else. It may count in Hegel as a “higher” and “freer” activity, but it is not relevant to objective spirit, and actual moral competence is not a dim, confused grasp of principles or theory. It is not an inferior version of philosophy, but a version, perhaps a good and getting-better version, of such moral competence. Indeed in some matters (like a civil religion) such a theory would distort ethical life if imported as what Hegel calls an “ethical power.” In fact, In Hegel’s most radical claim of all, the content of such "logical" philosophical activity is nothing but an explicit re-enactment of the development of the inter-subjective logic of breakdown and recovery, a comprehensive logic of such explanation and justification that itself plays no role for such subjects.
The original critic of Plato on this “continuity” point was of course Aristotle, and it is interesting that the importance of this differentiation is often neglected in accounts of both Hegel and Aristotle. Aristotle’s claim is also that he is in effect not providing in his ethical writings any reasons for anybody to do anything, that the ethical world is “all right” by itself, and requires no instruction or philosophical justification. But commentators sometimes assume that the phronimos must know something about nature and human realization which forms the basis of his practices. And all that is certainly not the case, even though there is, according to Aristotle, something to say about the basis in nature for an ideal human being and polis.26 And Hegel is also clear enough, in his own way, that the considerations adduced in a philosophy of objective spirit that show modern institutions to satisfy the conditions of right are not and could not be practical reasons. When he claimed in §145, quoted earlier, “(t)he fact that the ethical sphere is the system of these determinations of the Idea constitutes its rationality,” he was not offering the sort of account that might be practically relevant in generating allegiance and forestalling defections, in the way that a contractarian or even a Kantian might assume practical relevance for their accounts. The same could be said for Hegel’s appeals to his historicized rather than systematic account of rationality, of the sort we get in the Phenomenology and history lectures. He is not summarizing in some sort of longhand what emerges as shorthand in the practical experience of modern individuals.
And this differentiation in tasks between the limited role of reason as practical in objective spirit, and the “freest” realization of reason in absolute spirit, is the basis for the most well known and most misunderstood claim of the PR. In the Preface, Hegel claims that even though he is attempting “to comprehend and portray the state as an inherently rational entity,” it is also the case that his philosophy “must distance itself as far as possible from the obligation to construct a state as it ought to be.” (PR, p.21) Since he also goes on to stress both that philosophy can discover “the rose in the cross of the present,” thereby “delighting in the present” and providing through this “rational insight” a reconciliation with actuality, and that philosophy absolutely cannot offer any instructions about how the world ought to be, that it always comes on the scene too late for that, like the owl of Minerva that only takes flight at dusk etc., and since these two claims are in considerable tension (why wouldn’t one way of instructing the world about “how it ought to be” be to claim that is as it ought to be? why do things look like a dancing rose in the cross of the present, and a grey landscape at dusk?), commentators have often solved the problem by simply discounting Hegel’s “no instruction,” no “ought to be” qualifications and assume he did mean to say that the contemporary state and even the contemporary Prussian state, was just as it ought to be.  

But his procedure throughout is to differentiate these two considerations. He does so quite explicitly in his 1818-19 Rechtsphilosophie lectures when he differentiates practical reasons based on knowledge of the law; a further kind of
knowledge “based on reasons,” and “philosophical understanding...based on the Concept.” (VPR.2, p.106) When he had claimed in the Preface that his account might allow a “reconciliation” with modern actuality, he noted immediately a very specific accusative:

...to those who have received the inner call to comprehend, to preserve their subjective freedom in the realm of the substantial, and at the same time to stand with their subjective freedom not in a particular and contingent situation, but what has being in and for itself. (PR, p.22)

This sort of comprehensive perspective on the fully objective rationality of modern institutions, both within a systematic account of the various "moments" of account-giving and justifiability, and as the historical culmination of the self-education of the human spirit, is to be strictly distinguished from any account of what circulates effectively as a justification within some institutional setting at a time.

So, when Hegel wants to give a concrete example of the subjective side of the rationality claim, he invokes the publicity and rationality conditions of jury trials (§228). Citizens, he claims, could not themselves, subjectively, have reasons to keep faith with the trial system if all decisions were made by professional courts, based on strict standards of evidence and complex legal arguments, even if all those standard and arguments met the highest standards of legal expertise "in themselves." Their (the citizen's) reasons for sustaining
such an institution depend both on the implicit standards of the institution itself (in this case equality before the law) and considerations that can be given and accepted by the participants in the institution itself. Or, to revert to the standard case, while it is true that all a citizen has to go on in determining what to do is his station and its duties, and while he can only come to affirm such a role by appeal to the sort of critical reflection available at the time, it is perfectly possible to claim that the station he occupies does not in itself conform to the demands of reason.

Requesting, providing, accepting or rejecting practical reasons, in other words, are all better viewed as elements in a rule-governed social practice. Such justifications are offered to others as claims that the rules governing their common practice are being followed, and the practical issue of adequacy must be answerable only within such a practice, all given the way a practice or institution has come to embody the crises, breakdowns, and changes that have made it what it is. 29 Our assumption that an action should be understood as such-and-such and not so-and-so always involve the expectation that another should so construe it also, and we can make such assumptions only if we have already come to understand each other as fellow participants, in some determinate way, or only given relatively “thick” and reciprocal assumptions and expectations. Practical reasoning always presumes such contexts, and so while there is no Hegelian solution to the question of whether prudential reasoning can ever justify some qualification or suspension of my partial good, there is also no
“actual” problem to be solved. The trust and solidarity without which cooperative action is impossible, and which cannot be justified on egoistic premises, or on the basis of “self-interest rightly understood,” is, if it exists and if Hegel is right, best understood as the product of a collective historical experience of its absence and only partial presence.

So, for us, now, "because families should try to foster independence in their children" might count as a perfectly fine and conclusive reason in such a practice, with no more needing to be said, for the agent. As Hegel keeps insisting, the agent must of course know and affirm the reason, and understand what else one is committed to in so responding, but that is all much different than an appeal, even an “implicit” appeal, to dialectical transformations in history, or conformity to the developed Idea of right.

Now obvious worries and questions start creep in again here: that we are headed for something like the position Durkheim advocated in The Rules of Sociological Method, that "Individual human natures are merely the indeterminate material which the social factor moulds and transforms." And we need to ask questions like: how do such institutional boundaries begin to break down, unless by appeal to purely rational critique? It can all seem relativistic; does any of this help us understand any Hegelian basis for claims by the individual against institutions, and so on. There is much more that would have to be said about the Hegelian category of agency, the connections (if there are any) between philosophical "comprehensibility" and practical sufficiency, the status of
individual responsibility in Hegel, his account of punishment, and so forth, for his approach to be defended.\textsuperscript{31}

And finally, many of these formulations can sound deflationary and anti-rational in spirit, and indeed many neo-Humeans, like Bernard Williams, are compelling advocates of the internalism condition and so the limitations of “ethical theory.”\textsuperscript{32} But it is important to note in closing that Hegel is not denying that human reason can set ends, or determine action on its own, nor is he qualifying his controversial claim that modern individuals are responsive to practical reason in ways unlike and superior to prior civilizations. He is denying the Kantian and even the rational egoist notions of practical reason itself, and is trying to show that what one has a justified reason to do cannot be made out without attention to the forms of institutional life that concretely determine what adequate self-understanding and successful justification are.\textsuperscript{33} He is claiming that “having a reason” (not just in the explanatory sense, but in the justificatory, adequate, \textit{good} reason sense) is not some sort of reflective and ultimately absolute certification before the Bar of Reason Itself. As noted throughout, Hegel is prepared to claim that some institutions can be said to embody the historical self-education of the human spirit. The account and justification of that claim to genuine education and so moral progress can be given, but only "at dusk," never in a way that legislates "what ought to be done" and only for what he calls in the \textit{Philosophy of Religion} lectures, the "sacred priesthood" of philosophers.\textsuperscript{34} Marx was right about Hegel, in other words. The point of philosophy for Hegel is to
comprehend the world, not to change it; and this for a simple reason that Marx
never properly understood: it can't.

§ indicates paragraph numbers in Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, Werke,
vol. 7. A = his remarks (Anmerkungen) to the paragraph’s topic; Z = his
additions (Zusätze) to the paragraph, and N = his handwritten notes to the
paragraph.

Werke Hegel: Werke Theorie Werkausgabe, 20 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp
Verlag, 1970)

LPWH Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction, trans. H.B.
Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1975)

VPR 18 Die Philosophie des Rechts.: Die Mitschriften Wannenmann (Heidelberg
1817-1818) und Homeyer (Berlin 1818-1819), ed. K.-H. Ilting (Stuttgart: Klett-
Cotta Verlag, 1983).

VPG Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte. Werke, xii;

EL Hegel's Logic, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University press,
1975)

VPR Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie. 4 vols., ed. K.-H. Ilting (Stuttgart:
Fromman Verlag, 1974). (Includes Hotho's transcriptions from 1822-3 lectures
and Griesheim's from 1824-5 lectures.)

PR Elements of the Philosophy of Right, trans. H.B. Nisbet, ed. Allen W. Wood

E Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Werke, vol. viii, ix, and
x.
The situation would be tragic, in other words, since reliance on such subjective certainty alone would still produce indeterminate and unreliable results, even if that (that reliance on conscience), was all that such a social world would make available for guidance.

I do not, of course, mean to deny that freedom has something to do with effective capacities. For one thing, one must be able (in numerous senses of that word) to do what one's role and self-understanding demand of one, etc. The idea of individual, causal spontaneous initiation of action is what is being contrasted with such a state theory. Cf. "Naturalness and Mindedness: Hegel's Compatibilism,” The European Journal of Philosophy, vol. 7, n.2, (1999), pp. 194 - 212.

There is a loose and general sense in which I can be said to have set a goal myself (autonomy of a sort), to have psychologically identified wholeheartedly with the end (authenticity), to have had the means to achieve it (power), to have experienced no human impediments (negative liberty), to have experienced in my striving a development and growth (dynamic self-realization), and to experience the result as a genuine reflection of me and what I intended (self-realization in the sense of self-recognition). Thus one might say that such widely various conceptions of freedom are normatively neutral in way, beyond freedom itself being an abstract ideal. But the point Hegel is making is that it can

---


2 The situation would be tragic, in other words, since reliance on such subjective certainty alone would still produce indeterminate and unreliable results, even if that (that reliance on conscience), was all that such a social world would make available for guidance.

3 I do not, of course, mean to deny that freedom has something to do with effective capacities. For one thing, one must be able (in numerous senses of that word) to do what one's role and self-understanding demand of one, etc. The idea of individual, causal spontaneous initiation of action is what is being contrasted with such a state theory. Cf. "Naturalness and Mindedness: Hegel's Compatibilism,” The European Journal of Philosophy, vol. 7, n.2, (1999), pp. 194 - 212.

4 There is a loose and general sense in which I can be said to have set a goal myself (autonomy of a sort), to have psychologically identified wholeheartedly with the end (authenticity), to have had the means to achieve it (power), to have experienced no human impediments (negative liberty), to have experienced in my striving a development and growth (dynamic self-realization), and to experience the result as a genuine reflection of me and what I intended (self-realization in the sense of self-recognition). Thus one might say that such widely various conceptions of freedom are normatively neutral in way, beyond freedom itself being an abstract ideal. But the point Hegel is making is that it can
appear this way because the role of reason (and so the inherent sociality of practical reasoning) has been suppressed in such a summary. Cf. Raymond Geuss's comments on the limitations of the "see myself in" locution in self-realization theories in his very helpful "Auffasungen der Freiheit," in Zeitschrift der philosophischen Forschung, Bd. 49 (1995), pp. 1-14.

5 Another longer topic: answering worries like Isaiah Berlin’s about a great modern “inflation” in the concept of freedom, whereby many other things we want to count as elements of a good life are unjustifiably packed into claims about what it is to be free.

6 See also PR, §147n, where Hegel again says that “...the Greeks had no conscience.”

7 It is not at all clear just how Hegel means to contrast this so-called modern principle of subjectivity with premodern, especially ancient “shapes of spirit.” The surface of his claim, that Greek individuals “had no conscience,” did not reflect, lived only and immediately for the fatherland, etc. is absurd. Nothing in Sophocles’ play makes any sense unless Antigone and Creon could have acted otherwise than they did, as the presence and arguments of Ismene and Haemon make dramatically clear, and the viewer, the Greek viewer, could not experience the play as tragic if he entered the amphitheater locked into one role or the other, was not himself pulled one way then the other, and instead took in the play as a cheerleader for one side or the other. Even in the Homeric world, the
temptations of Calypso wouldn’t make much sense as temptations, were Hegel’s surface claim correct.

I think that what he means to say is not that individuals function in some completely unreflective way in their roles, but that when the objective deficiencies in the social order do force a crisis-like confrontation with other equally required social functions, reflection and doubt are indeed inspired (Cf. Orestes in the Libation-Bearers), but they lead nowhere, suggest no resolution, and must merely be suffered. This is in effect what Hegel says in his hand-written notes to PR§147. The Greeks “were unable to give an account,” and so “had no conscience, no conviction,” what they believed was “unmediated by reasons.” (§147N) (This is still extreme; one of the oddest things about Sophocles’ play is how much of it is sustained and genuine arguing. But it is on the right track.)

8 See also E §503A, and the assertion there that modern subjects ought to find “assent, recognition, or even justification [Begründung] in his heart, character (Gesinnung), conscience, insight, etc.”

See PR, §7Z, and Axel Honneth’s gloss in Suffering from Indeterminacy: An Attempt at a Reactualization of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 2000), p. 26, and cf. the Phenomenology’s famous claim about Geist as an “I that is a we and a we that is an I.” See Terry Pinkard, Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) for the best account of the importance of the notion of "sociality" in Hegel’s overall project, and in the Phenomenology.


14 The best account of this gloss on Hegel’s charge of “emptiness” is Allen Wood’s in his Hegel's Ethical Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Chapter 9, especially pp. 164-5.

15 Henry Allison has attempted to defend Kant form the charge that a Rational Egoist could just as easily fulfill the rationality (and so universality) requirements by noting that Kant is assuming a certain notion of freedom, “transcendental freedom,” or an ability to act in complete independence of anything empirical. Cf. Henry Allison, Kant's Theory of Freedom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.
207. But this reply is potentially question-begging, arbitrarily allowing only that notion of freedom which will fit Kant's claim, and appears inconsistent with Allison's own "incorporation" principle, which has it that empirical desires and inclinations never simply cause an action to occur; they must be "taken" to be sufficient reasons by a subject, and so what turns out to be motivating the action is not a sensible desire but the principle that one ought to act on such a desire. This is, in the relevant sense, acting independently of empirical desires. That is, even with the "transcendental freedom" assumption, this seems all the freedom we need to make the case against Kant's attempt to link the universality condition with, and exclusively with, his universalizability test.

16 Honneth, Suffering from Indeterminacy op.cit., p. 20

17 Honneth, Suffering from Indeterminacy op.cit., 28-9.

18 Honneth, Suffering from Indeterminacy op.cit., p. 29.

19 Martin Hollis, Reason in Action, p. 11. Or, as Hollis also puts it, there is no point at which Eve could have said, "Adam, let’s invent language."

20 Honneth, Suffering from Indeterminacy op.cit., p. 30.

21 I had the same sort of problem with Honneth’s earlier, equally interesting and valuable "neo-Hegelian" book, his The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts. Translated by Joel Anderson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996). There the "moral grammar of social conflicts" was analyzed by appeal to the importance of esteem or recognition as a social good, and so
disrespect as a social harm. The same questions arise. What sort of a good is the esteem or solidarity without which full individual subjectivity itself is impossible? Can it be legally or in some other way demanded when it is absent (like a right)? How? If not demanded, what sort of redress is appropriate? If the broadest form of social esteem depends on some form of common values, why should we believe that developed, ever more secular modern cultures can provide any such successful common goals?

22 Cf. Hollis, Trust Within Reason, op.cit., p. 115”...I, as an individual cannot mean anything by my action unless there is something which my action means and other people to recognize that this is what it does mean.” For more on the indispensable “recognition” requirement in Hegel’s account of normativity, see my “What is the Question for Which Hegel’s ‘Theory of Recognition’ is the Answer?” in The European Journal of Philosophy, vol. 8, no. 2 (August 2000).

23 Hegel thus continued to develop a version of “critical theory” pioneered by Kant, and developed in Habermas and Honneth, where reflection could establish certain “boundary conditions” in attempts to render intelligible or justify deeds, and then could explain what is going wrong when these conditions, or sorts of reasons, are not observed or are confused. Kant started this particular ball rolling with his Verstand-Vernunft distinction, and while Hegel did not accept Kant’s terms, his own philosophy is likewise committed to distinguishing “the philosophy of the understanding” from “speculation,” or finite reflection from absolute reflection, and so forth. Claims of abstract right are thus valid, but not
in an unlimited sense, or not without being limited by moral claims of persons to consideration as responsible subjects and ends in themselves, etc.

24 Honneth, *Suffering from Indeterminacy op. cit.*, shows very well what Hegel understands to be going wrong when subjects act on a valid but limited conception of freedom and ignore such limits, or how various social “pathologies,” like loneliness, emptiness, alienation, and so forth develop. Cf. p. 36, and PR, §136, §141, and §149.

25 This obviously introduces the question of the historical and systematic presuppositions for a possible philosophy of objective spirit, and such a consideration would have to range all the way from Hegel’s claims about the unusual “logic” necessary to account for the concept of freedom (being-with-self-in-the-other), to his case for a social conception of agency (that for Hegel, to be an agent is to be taken to be one in a certain way). For more on this recognition (*Anerkennung*) theme, see my “What is the Question for Which Hegel’s ‘Theory of Recognition’ is the Answer?” in *The European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 8, no. 2 (August 2000).


27 There is a good deal more to be said about Hegel's relation to Aristotle on this "theory-praxis" issue, and much of the best that has been said can be found in Chapter Four of the third part of Michael Theunissen's *Hegels Lehre*

28 VPR.2, 106.

29 Terry Pinkard’s account of reasoning and “assuming positions in social space” is an important version of what such a social view of practical reasoning looks like in the contexts that Hegel takes up. See his Hegel’s Phenomenology, op.cit., and his account of the Hegelian Rechtsphilosophie in Chapter Seven, “The essential structure of modern life,” pp. 269-343.


31 There are two issues in particular that would have to be addressed in a fuller account, and they both concern what appear on the surface to be inconsistencies in Hegel’s text. (i) Hegel seems to see no problem in both describing the subjective attitude of modern citizens as a kind of “trust” and even non-reflective (E §§514-515), just as he insists, as we have seen several times, that they “knowingly and willingly” will “the universal.” See Neuhouser’s Chapter Seven, “The Place of Moral Subjectivity in Ethical Life”, in Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory op.cit., pp. 225-280 for one of the best discussions of this problem.
And (ii) there is the question of the bearing of these issues on the account of moral psychology which undergirds the PR, especially as formulated in that work’s "Introduction." Hegel seems both to reject any view of the role of practical reason which has it as an independent faculty assessing the worthiness of various drives, desires, and aversions, as if these later were brute psychological givens (a denial especially apparent in his diatribes against Kant, positive religions, ascetic moralities, etc.), and to invoke more traditional rationalist language, as if one could separate oneself from and "stand above" (§11 and §14) one’s distinct connative states and evaluate their worthiness to serve as motives. For a very brief and introductory pass at this latter problem, see my "Hegel, Freedom, The Will: The Philosophy of Right, #1-33," in Hegel: Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, ed. Ludwig Siep, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), pp. 31-53. The problem is complicated by our intuitive suspicion that one might be said to have reflected rationally on what to do, have come up with a socially effective reason, have fixed on a goal, have had the sufficient self-control and intelligence and means to achieve the goal, and have in fact achieved it, only to find oneself dissatisfied, that one still could not "see oneself in the deed." This dimension of freedom is of concern to Hegel and he has to have some way of dealing with it. See Geuss, "Auffasungen," op.cit., p. 6: "Ich kann nicht durch einfache Instrospektion immer feststellen was meine wirkliche Wünsche sind; durch einfach theoretische Reflexion auch nicht." See also his suggestions about Hegel on both "reflection" and "identification" in "Freedom as
One of the themes central to Williams’ project – de-emphasizing any supposed categorial difference between moral and non-moral reasons – is also quite relevant to Hegel, and involves again a connection with Greek themes worth pursuing. The practical reasoning that Hegel links with “right” action is not a distinctly moral form of reasoning and so he in effect has no distinct theory of “morality.” Casuistical questions, dilemma situations, conflicting duties problems, moral worth issues, and so forth, play no decisive part in his discussions of modern ethical life.

These considerations raise the question of how Hegel handles the issue of personal responsibility and is another large, separate issue. I discuss some aspects of it in "Taking Responsibility: Hegel on Agency," forthcoming in Subjektivität und Anerkennung, edited by Barbara Merker, Georg Mohr, and Michael Quante.

Hegel, Werke, Bd. 16, p. 356. (Philosophy is an "abgesondertes Heiligtum und ihrer Diener bilden einen isolierten Priesterstand, der mit der Welt nicht zusammengehen darf.")