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HEGEL'S CONCEPT OF PRESENTATION

Robert Grant McRae

PRECISELY how we are to understand the deployment and movement of moments within the *Enzyklopädie* is a question which receives no clear answer from Hegel's writings themselves. Nowhere does he offer us a 'method of presentation' delineated as such, and at the end of the system we are simply told that the concept of philosophy is the logical, but with the signification that it is universality certified in concrete content as in its actuality.[1] Of course the manner in which we conceive the logical as certified in concrete content and as a spiritual result can take on different nuances, depending on whether we view the logical as abstracted from concrete spiritual life or as the absolute *prius* of spirit in general. It is this nuance which leads us, correspondingly, to seek a mechanism of presentation valid for the deployment of moments within the system as a whole either within the speculative analysis of spiritual externalization and recollection or within the pure element of the logical concept.

Some recent research, in fact, has suggested that we are to find such a mechanism of presentation good for the entire system within Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*, and particularly in that section devoted to the the Doctrine of Essence. P.-J. Labarrière and G. Jarczyk suggest in the 'Présentation' to their new translation of the Doctrine of Essence that such an original mechanism of absolute self-présentation is to be found in the movement of reflection, in which is expressed the ontological structure of everything that is, in its negative universality.[2] If this mechanism exists, then of course they are justified in describing the reflection-moment as a "fundamental referential structure" and a "fundamental rhythmic cell", since this mechanism would go a long way in explaining not only the deployment of moments within the *Logik*, but would greatly clarify the systematic structure peculiar to the *Enzyklopädie* as a whole. Our immediate task, then, is to try to understand the role of reflection within Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*, and what implications this role may have for the nature of presentation within the system itself.

Limiting our discussion now to the greater *Logik*, why is it, then, that we are to find the original structure of presentation in the Doctrine of Essence, and more

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1. G.W.F. HEGEL, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830) ed. Pöggeler and Nicolin, Hamburg, 1969. #574, p. 462.
2. G.W.F. HEGEL, *Science de la Logique: La Doctrine de l'Essence*, tr., prés., et notes by P.-J. Labarrière and G. Jarczyk, Aubier Montaigne, Paris, 1976. pp. IX–XXV.

precisely in the first chapter describing positing reflection, external reflection, and determining reflection, rather than, for example, in the first chapter of the Subjective Logic describing the universal, particular and individual concept? The response to this question rests largely in the position of essence as the middle and mediating term in the logical syllogism of being-essence-concept, so that the movement of reflection which mediates externality with recollection and interiorization supersedes the simply external transition or 'going-over' characteristic of being. In other words, essence determines the deployment of the first part of the *Logik* (Quality, Quantity, and Measure), in its role as the timeless past or background (Hintergrund) of being under its logical universality. Hegel says that, "Not until knowing *inwardizes, recollects* itself out of immediate being, does it through this mediation find essence. The German language has preserved essence in the past participle (gewesen) of the verb *to be*; for essence is past — but timelessly past — being." [3]

The movement of reflection negates and mediates the immediate determinations and transitions of being, through the recollection that these determinations are in fact *posited.* Such a 'recollection' is possible in the first instance because, as the negation of being, essence is being for-itself, i.e., simply negative self-relation, and must differentiate the determinations which are implicit in it. The process of differentiation and determining remains within this self-relation and is neither a becoming nor a transition, and although the determinations are in a sense self-subsistent, they are not 'other' because they rest associated within the unity of being-for-itself. While essence is at first simple negativity, through the movement of reflection it is subsequently led to posit the determinateness that is implicit in it, in order to give itself determinate being.

Of course this entire process of positing and recollection hinges on the fact that the negativity of essence is reflection, whereby the determinations are reflected, posited by essence itself, and remain in essence as superseded. [4] It is by means of this movement of reflection that essence gives itself a determinate being that is equal to its being-in-itself, — the 'posited' immediacy of the concept. However it is not our intention at this time to work through the dialectic of position and recollection by which essence attains actuality, but rather to understand the mechanism of reflection itself, through which essence 'presents' those determinations that are already present at hand.

In the Doctrine of Essence we see that the discussion of reflection follows immediately on those sections with which this second book of the *Logik* begins, the 'Essential and the Unessential' and 'Illusory Being'. This is significant because Hegel identifies Illusory Being with the description of appearance attained by scepticism and Kantian idealism, and we may infer from this allusion that if we are to go beyond critical philosophy then we must understand the manner in which appearance become actual, i.e., we must understand the mechanism of reflection. [5] The study of

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3. G.W.F. HEGEL, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 2 Bände, ed., Lasson, Hamburg, 1932. II p. 3; *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans., A.V. Miller, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1969. (389) Translation pages will be placed in parentheses after the German edition.

4. *Logik* II p. 5 (391).

5. *Logik* II p. 9 f. (396).

this mechanism then leads directly on to the determinations of reflection, — identity, difference, and contradiction, — by which we comprehend the categories and their dialectical self-movement at work within all reality. Therefore it is through the explication of the mechanism of reflection that we are taken from the unknowable thing-in-itself of Kant to the posited thing of Hegel, and contributes not a little to our understanding of how the actual is rational.

The movement of reflection is the negating of negation and is consequently self-relation, since the negation is present in such wise that it has its being in its negatedness, as illusory being. The becoming of essence, then, unlike that of being which is relation to other, is the movement of nothing to nothing and so back to itself. In essence it is rather the negating of nothing that constitutes being, and this pure absolute reflection that is this movement determines itself further as positing, external, and determining reflection.

However in the discussion of positing reflection we learn that the immediacy of illusory being itself is not the 'starting point', since its immediacy *is* only as the return of the negative into itself, and is, therefore, a self-superseding immediacy or positedness. As Hegel says, "Accordingly, the return of essence is its self-repulsion. In other words, reflection-into-self is essentially the presupposing of that from which it is the return." [6] This presupposition of an immediacy from which reflection returns is in truth a positing because this immediacy only comes to be through being left behind and superseded. Presupposing reflection is positing reflection and *vice versa*, and it is *reflection* because the superseding is at the same time a coincidence with itself, — i.e., the positedness is an immediacy that is not distinct from the return-to-self and is itself only this movement of return.

The transition to external reflection comes about when we understand this positedness as immediately opposed to something, to an 'other', whereby reflection is determinate. And as determinate, reflection has a presupposition, starts from the immediate as its other, and is external. But this time the immediacy which reflection presupposes is itself as superseded, so that it is related to itself as to its non-being. We may say that the immediacy which external reflection presupposes is not only positedness but self-relation as such, with the consequence that the determinations posited by external reflection in the immediate are to that extent external to the latter.

Of course external reflection is also a positing of the immediate and the supersession of this positing in so far as it presupposes the immediate. And the supersession of the immediate is equally a positing because the immediate from which external reflection seemed to start as something alien *is* only in this supersession. Hegel concludes that, "In this way, the immediate is not only *in itself* — that means, for us, or in external reflection — *identical* with reflection, but this identicalness is *posited*." [7] Thus the externality of reflection is superseded and its positing is the union of itself with the immediate, so that this union is now the immediacy of essence, — essence in and for itself.

6. *Logik* II p. 15 f. (401).
7. *Logik* II p. 18 (404).

When the self-relation of reflection is freely for-itself it is determining reflection, that is, the unity of positing and external reflection. Positing reflection starts from nothing, it has no presupposition, and positedness as such is not yet a determination of reflection since it is only determinateness as negation in general. But external reflection starts from immediate being and is in unity with this positing, with the result that this kind of reflection is a presupposing which posits the determinateness as determinateness of itself. Hegel states the matter concisely when he says that positedness as such is negation, — but as presupposed, it is reflected into itself and so a determination of reflection. [8] In contrast with the sphere of being where negation as quality is simply affirmative, the determination of reflection persists not through being but through its equality with itself.

Determining reflection accordingly effects a reconciliation of the two aspects of positing and reflection-into-self, through which determining reflection is reflection that has come forth from itself. Or, as Hegel says, « In so far, as it is the positedeness that is at the same time reflection-into-self, the determinateness of reflection is *the relation to its otherness within itself.*"[9] Thus the process of presentation is 'closed' through reflection taking its otherness back into itself and superseding its positedness within an infinite self-relation. But this does not mean that the independance of the other is totally dissolved, for within this relation-to-self the posited determination abides by having brought into subjection its transitoriness and mere positedness. If essence, as infinite return-to-self, is to be a movement through *distinct* moments and absolute self-mediation, then the discrete character of its self-externalizations must persist through the supersession and recollection of the return.

Having briefly sketched out the mechanism of reflection as we find it described in the Doctrine of Essence, let us now return to our original question, — as to whether we can see in reflection a 'referential structure' basic to the mode of presentation in the *Logik* as a whole. Certainly there is some indication that it is only in essence that we comprehend determinate being as posited being or positedness, and that there is a general correlation between the determinations within the sphere of being and the movement of reflection. However the suggestion that reflection equally structures the deployment of Subjective Logic is somewhat more problematic. While the immediacy of being is shown in essence to be mediated by the movement of reflection, is it not also true that 'the new immediacy which has become' characteristic of the concept, particularly in the transition to Objectivity, equally supersedes and puts by this mediation within a higher, more inclusive configuration? Indeed Hegel remarks that, "*objectivity* is the immediacy to which the Concept determines itself by the supersession of its abstraction and mediation." [10]

If in this return to an immediacy that has become the mediation of essence is superseded, then we must assume, too, that the mechanism of reflection is also somehow superseded. But this in itself need not diminish the claim that reflection is a referential structure : the immediacy of being is equally superseded by the mediation

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8. *Logik* II p. 21 (406).
9. *Logik* II p. 22 (408).
10. *Logik* II p. 357 (708).

of essence and yet this immediacy abides within essence in the form of existence, actuality, and substantiality, not to mention 'posited immediacy' generally. The new immediacy of Objectivity within the Subjective Logic is no less 'posited' and hence presupposes the return-to-self explicated by the mechanism of reflection, through which all externality is recollected as self-externalization. Reflection explains the manner by which essence mediates being and concept, and while the logical progressions from being to essence and essence to concept are important transition-points, it is nonetheless reflection which holds the whole together within a *single* mediating process. In terms of the binary structure of the *Logik*, we might say that the reconciliation of the subject-object brought about by the mechanism of reflection, and existing as an immediacy that has become, is under an objective determination, so that it simply remains for this reconciliation to be realized within the realm of subjectivity, — indicating a shift in focus rather than a change in the process.

In any case the transition from an immediacy to an immediacy 'become' can only be understood by means of some kind of mediation, and it is only in essence, and especially in the movement of reflection, that we understand the dynamics of this mediation in its logical universality. But if we accept that reflection is a referential structure for the greater *Logik*, then, certainly, we must extend this claim to take in the entire system,[11] and with this broadening of the discussion new problems arise in the attempt to isolate a universal mode of presentation. First and foremost there is the total absence of any description of positing, external, and determining reflection within the smaller Logic of the *Enzyklopädie*, which is a strange fate for a referential structure.[12] Hegel now explains the determinations of being not through the deployment or 'positing' characteristic of the movement of reflection, but through the one concept which is "the underlying principle (Substantielle) of all"[13]: this would seem to suggest that the structural parallels within the determinations of being and essence are less the result of a mechanism of reflection than the *immanent* movement of the concept.[14]

While the Logic of the system states that essence includes the categories of metaphysic and the sciences in general, it does not provide us a mechanism or fundamental structure by which these categories are posited: instead, it asserts that

11. It is with this larger claim that Labarrière and Jarczyk close their argument for a referential structure in the *Logik*: "Ainsi donc, il n'est point de danger de placer trop haut l'importance et la portée spéculative de 'La Doctrine de l'Essence'. En elle s'expose bien, dans son formalisme premier, 'la structure ontologique de tout ce qui est' — et bien au-delà du 'concept du concept': jusqu'au 'concept adéquat', ou encore jusqu'au 'concept complètement posé' qui, au travers et au-delà de la Subjectivité *et* de l'Objectivité de la 'Logique subjective' ressaisies dans leur fondamentale unité, porte jusqu'aux limites extrêmes du Système — expression la plus complexe mais aussi la plus exactement proportionnée à son objet de la Réflexion totale, entendue comme réflexion posante, réflexion extérieure et réflexion déterminante." *op. cit.* p. XXIV f.

12. This is an unfortunate lack because the three syllogisms which close the system seem to give the Logic primacy in the necessary, structural mediation of the whole (#577), and if it could be shown that this Logic itself contained a referential structure, then the larger claim for its importance would be simply a matter of inference.

13. *Enz.* #114 R. p. 124.

14. In other words the 'referential structure' of the *Logik* is replaced in the system by the self-differentiating whole.

they are the products of reflective understanding.[15] Thus in place of an explanation of the dynamic of externalization and recollection in its logical universality, we are referred to a moment of consciousness within subjective spirit, a moment anterior to, and susperseded by, reason. Certainly there is at least implicit in this reference the suggestion that the manner by which the *categories of science* are posited is best studied within the realm of spirit, and, in particular, within the sciences of phenomenology and psychology. Indeed, the movement of reflection is given the greatest attention within the system as it is manifest in consciousness, which is described by Hegel as constituting the grade of reflection for spirit.[16]

Again, when reflection *is* dealt with more extensively within the Logic of the system, such as in the 'Precise Concept and Division of Logic', it comes into poor comparison with the movement of the dialectic. Hegel says that, "Reflection is at first the going out beyond the isolated determinateness and a reference to it, whereby this determinateness is posited in relation and, at the same time, left its isolated worth. Dialectic, on the other hand, is the immanent going out, where the onesidedness and limitation of the determinations of understanding are presented as they are, that is, as their own negation. Everything finite is this, the supersession of itself." [17] In terms of the scheme outlined in the larger *Logik*, the reflection described by Hegel above seems to be more exactly 'external' reflection, for the aspect of positive presentation (Darstellung) associated with 'determining' reflection is here aligned totally with the dialectic, and in contrast with reflection in general. It should also be remarked that within this passage from the system we find a new distinction between the *positing* of reflective understanding and the *presenting* of dialectical reason, which may indicate that the positing of reflection as we have discussed it was no longer considered to be the model or referential structure for presentation by the later Hegel of the *Enzyklopädie*.

All in all, there is some evidence to suggest that the mechanism of reflection is important, even essential, to our understanding of the mode of presentation in the *Logik*, but that, in addition, this importance seems to have diminished greatly within the system. Presentation in the latter is not related to any one referential structure, — rather, it achieves clarity and determinateness with each successive configuration as the immanent process of the whole, and which attains its highest definition in the presentation special to philosophy. If this is the case, i.e., that there is no *single* referential structure of presentation good for the entire system, then it would appear that an interpretive approach consisting of a 'phenomenology' of all possible structures of presentation demands our attention. This does not mean that we cannot use the mechanism of reflection as a model for reference in examining the presentation characteristic, for instance, of spirit, but that we must be circumspect in claiming for it universal applicability.

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15. *Enz.*, #114 R. p. 124 f.
16. *Enz.*, #413 f. p. 344. Within this line of argumentation it is perhaps not an exaggeration to suggest that, if there is a referential structure or model for presentation to be found, it is rather in labour and thinghood and the linguistic object, as first described by the *Phänomenologie*, than in the *Logik*.
17. *Enz.* Vor. #81 R. p. 103.

However there is a second implication to be derived from our investigation of the mechanism of reflection within the *Enzyklopädie*. The Doctrine of Essence in the lesser Logic not only gives short shrift to the mechanism of reflection, in its place it refers us to the derivation of categories within reflective understanding. In fact it is within the chapter dealing with consciousness in the Philosophy of Spirit that we find the most extensive discussion of reflection, so that, apparently, if we are to understand the origination of the categories of science and their presentation then we must examine first and foremost the spiritual mode of self-presentation peculiar to labour. The mode of presentation that we find in labour is, of course, itself deficient and does not adequately explain the deployment of moments within the system since labour, too, is included and superseded within the higher moments of language creation and philosophic presentation. Indeed, if there is no fundamental referential structure within the lesser Logic, and if reflection itself is regarded as a lower spiritual moment within the system, then it would seem that such a structure of presentation would better be identified with philosophic presentation itself, as that moment which closes absolute self-manifestation and is the presupposition for all prior, even logical, configurations. This identification brings with it two suggestions for further research, first that we interpret the presentation described by reflection in the greater *Logik* from the standpoint of the necessities special to philosophic presentation, and second that we examine the adequacy of language as that element within which the presented certification of the logical occurs.