

Solitude in a Phantasmal World
The Crisis of Modernity According to the Young Hegel

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ABSTRACT

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This paper attempts to understand the young Hegel's diagnosis of modernity as a singularly distinctive event, proposing that modernity inaugurates a new historical epoch characterized by a state of permanent crisis. The young Hegel saw modernity as a process of detachment from the past, producing a rupture in which the role of subjectivity takes on a twofold manifestation, as subjective freedom and as reflection. Although Hegel recognized the immense historical importance of the modern concept of freedom, he also argued that subjectivity is a one-sided principle, triggering the split [*Entzweiung*] between the individual and the whole. In my interpretation of the young Hegel, *Entzweiung* spreads itself through all spheres of culture and social life, forming many divisions and dualisms, which appear fixed in their oppositions, becoming unsolvable contradictions due to the reflective activity of the Understanding [*Verstand*]. The proliferation of contradictions in all spheres of social life constitutes what I call a *state of permanent crisis*, a deeply fractured totality, unable to reach a resolution [*Entschluss*] to its inherent negativity, giving rise to a melancholic longing and striving for reconciliation. Finally, I will defend the hypothesis that Hegel's solution to the state of crisis, inaugurated by the advent of modernity is none other than the formulation of his dialectical method, thus claiming that implied in Hegel's philosophy is an implicit notion of *philosophy for times of crisis*.

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1. Philosophical Modernity and the Young Hegel

In general terms, modernity¹ is commonly referred to as a cultural and societal process of rationalization of unexamined values and ideals, which marked the dissolution and end of traditional forms of life. The standard interpretation of modernity, heavily influenced by Max Weber, describes it as the rational process of disenchantment that led to the disintegration of the religious worldviews in Europe.² This process broke the internal connections of the historical context of so-called ‘Occidental societies’, producing a self-understanding of modernity as an epoch detached from its own historical past. As a result of this more or less internal rupturing, the modern world comprehends itself not in chronological continuity with the ‘Antiquity’ and the ‘Middle Ages’, but in an oppositional relation to these preceding historical periods.³ The modern period turns away from the past and opens itself up to the novelty of the future, and thus must generate its normativity out of itself⁴ rather than rely on models from previous epochs for guidance.

Renown Hegel scholar Robert Pippin (1997) believes this oppositional self-understanding about other historical periods is modernity’s central characteristic, for it comprises the main cultural trait of that era: namely, the “substantive questions [about] the right diagnosis of the putative normative or [...] ethical insufficiency of premodern life” (Pippin 1997, 5). This new

¹ Hegel does not use the term ‘modernity’, although his understanding of his own time has become exemplary of how we receive the modern age. Hegel constantly refers to his ‘own epoch’ as “a time of birth and a transition to a new period” (Hegel, 2017, page 8). By addressing his own age as a ‘new age’, Hegel was expressing a paradigmatic modern self-understanding of his time as *opposed* to the previous epoch.

² This process of rationalization and disintegration of the religious worldview is extremely important for Hegel, even though he does not use the term ‘disenchantment.’ This is precisely the main theme of *Faith and Knowledge*. The author opens his long essay with a discussion about the struggle of reason against religion, a battle which, according to him, culminates in an illusory victory of ‘enlightened’ reason, which, in reality, means nothing but the perishing of true knowledge, for the reflective philosophy of the Enlightenment can only universalize ‘finite’ understanding (cf. pages 7-8; 55-58).

³ In *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel refers to these periods as the medieval ‘age of faith’ and the classical ‘age of reason’ as opposed to the modern ‘age of reflection’.

⁴ This thesis comes mainly from Habermas: “the problem posed for the modern historical consciousness of Western culture [...] developed in connection with the oppositional concept of a ‘new age’ [is that modernity can] no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch” (Habermas 2007, 7).

cultural environment produced a “radically self-reflexive [and] rationally self-authorizing philosophy” (Pippin 1997, 6). Pippin traces the normative rupturing which notably the young Hegel will articulate, to the point that the fundamental aspiration of modernity can be summarized by Immanuel Kant’s slogan⁵: to step into maturity, to break out of its self-imposed immaturity and *Sapere aude* (dare to know!) in order to live freely.

Through the advent of modernity—which, for Pippin, includes the rise of a disenchanting natural world as projected by modern science, the adoption of a political discourse centered on rights and equality, the emergence of secular moral principles, the development of a heightened sense of subjective consciousness, and the flourishing of autonomous art (Pippin 1997, 2)—the role of philosophy shifts towards offering a deeply critical and profoundly self-reflexive conception of reason. Such an understanding aims to unveil the inherent justification for embracing these new forms of life. More precisely, these distinctively modern practices reveal an ideal of human freedom or autonomy wherein the worth of our pursuits hinges upon their self-legislation or self-authorization. Only what receives such self-authorization can be deemed rationally worthy of our allegiance.

In paragraph §273 of the *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right* (2008), Hegel claims that the detachment of modernity and its problem of self-reassurance quintessentially manifested in Kant’s

⁵ According to both Pippin and Habermas, Hegel himself considered Kant the greatest mind of his time, for Kant was the highest expression of what Hegel called the ‘philosophies of reflection’ and ‘installed reason in the supreme seat of judgment before which anything that made a claim to validity had to be justified’ (Habermas, 18). Why, then, would both contemporary authors consider Hegel the *first true philosopher of modernity*, and not Kant? Because according to them (and to Hegel), Kant expressed the essential features of the modern world only as a reflection of the age, which is not the same as *conceiving* [*begreifen*] it. According to Habermas: “Hegel can understand Kant’s philosophy as the standard (and authoritative) self-interpretation of modernity; [and thus] he sees what *also* remains unconceptualized in [Kant’s] reflective expression of the age” (2007, 19). Hegel shows a self-conscious knowledge of his time that Kant merely expressed as if reflected in a mirror. Hegel can see beyond Kant’s philosophy and apprehend the differentiations and dualisms incited by the transcendental philosophy as *entzweiungen*, as divisions and fissures within culture, and thus see “the need for unification that emerges with the separations evoked by the principle of subjectivity” (Habermas 2007, 19.).

divisions and separations as a way of grounding valid knowledge, was universally marked by a structure of self-relation he called 'subjectivity'. Hegel says: "The principle of the modern world as such is freedom of subjectivity, the principle that all the essential aspects present in the spiritual totality are now coming into their right in the course of their development"⁶ (Hegel 2008, 12). By *subjective freedom*, Hegel refers to a 'right to individuality' that only comes about with modern culture. According to him: "The right of the subject's *particularity*, his right to be satisfied, or in other words the right of subjective freedom, is the pivot and centre of the difference between antiquity and modern times. This right in its infinity [...] has become the universal effective principle of a new form of the world" (Hegel 2008, 122).

As for what Hegel calls 'reflection', it is an operation of the understanding [*Verstand*] which distinguishes 'what is' from all thought about it, or 'awareness of it'⁷. In this sense, the 'reflective philosophy of subjectivity' takes the standpoint of consciousness as separate from the objective world and grounds the 'objective validity' of its knowledge on subjective conditions⁸. In *Faith and Knowledge* (1997a), Hegel claims that the understanding⁹, even at its furthest reach, its most 'objective' and rational limit, is still a merely subjective operation that can only apprehend

⁶ Hegel here alludes to another distinctive sentiment among the early moderns: the optimistic belief that the progress of history will inevitably lead the Spirit toward absolute freedom. Reinhart Koselleck, in his work "*Future Past: On The Semantics of Historical Time*" (2004), characterizes this euphoria regarding expectations of a bright future as the quality of a discontinuous experience of time within a historical period that sees itself as a new era distinct from the past, tasked with advancing and accelerating the march of history towards such future. As Adorno (2006) later claimed, such promises were not kept, and soon, modernity became a culture of melancholia. This is also expressed in Hegel's critique of the modern growing sense of alienation, as we will later see.

⁷ Although this description bears a resemblance to Kant's distinction between things-in-themselves (*noumena*) and our cognition of them (*phenomena*), I have chosen to characterize it as the opposition between 'what is' and our 'awareness' of it because, for Hegel, this dichotomy does not originate with Kant—although it reached its highest and most perfect form in Kantian philosophy. It is a characteristic feature of various manifestations of modern philosophy, which takes the standpoint of the subject and distinguishes it from the object.

⁸ This refers to the main problem of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*: how is it that "*subjective conditions of thinking* should have *objective validity*" (A89/B122)?

⁹ Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris here translate *Verstand* as 'intellect', but to maintain consistency, I will always refer to *Verstand* as 'understanding'.

the object in opposition to the subject. Habermas claims that, for Hegel, all forms of modern culture are pervaded by the subjective principle of reflection, causing a splitting and many divisions in every sphere of human life, what we will later see with the concept of *Entzweiung*.

Both Pippin and Habermas affirm that Hegel subscribes to the principle of subjectivity and affirms the superiority of modern culture. Although he indeed believed in the spiritual superiority of modernity over the past historical periods—mainly due to the modern consciousness of subjective individual freedom (cf. Hegel, 1985)—, seeing Hegel’s philosophy as a sheer defense of modern culture is a mistake. On my view, affirming Hegel’s subscription to the modern general claim to universal normative superiority of *new* practices and institutions over *old* traditional ones disregards the fact that, for the young Hegel, the aim was not radicalizing modern rationality¹⁰ in order to complete it, but rather to radicalize modern rationality in order to *overcome* it. This is the overall hypothesis that I seek to substantiate below.

We can now approach the controversy in more detail. Pippin’s main objective in his *Hegel’s Idealism* (1999) is to demonstrate that Hegelian idealism is best interpreted as a radicalization and completion of Kant’s Copernican Turn rather than a return to pre-Kantian metaphysics in which some supra-human entity, Spirit or *Geist*, posits itself in and realizes itself through human history. While I agree with many aspects of Pippin’s interpretation, I disagree with the notion that Hegel was a continuation of Kant’s philosophy, aiming to ‘complete’ Kant’s system. Through an examination of Hegel’s early essays, I suggest that, for Hegel, the Kantian Copernican Turn represented rather the epitome of the *reflexionsphilosophie* and its exemplary mode of being, the

¹⁰ When I say “modern rationality” or “modern/enlightened reason,” I am not referring to the Hegelian concept of Reason but rather to the (Kantian) Understanding. In the *Differenzschrift* and *Faith and Knowledge*, the problem with the philosophies of reflection is that they reduce Reason [*Vernunft*] to understanding [*Verstand*]. Hegel’s project, on the contrary, is to elevate the Understanding to the level of Reason.

modern *Entzweiung*¹¹. Hegel indeed articulates as his primary goal the overcoming of such dualisms and divisions, which he saw stemming from the *reflexionsphilosophie*. Hegel's early method, as we return to in greater detail, seeks to radicalize 'the manifold relations of the spirit' generated by the reflective operations of the understanding. The understanding's incomplete and partial fragments were subject to criticism and supplementation by one another, thus revealing their inability to stand in isolation and pointing back to their unity. In essence, Hegel's method, I suggest, entailed radicalizing these 'partial' philosophical perspectives, emphatically focusing on the faculties of reason, each into their ultimate consequences until they reached a self-defeating point. Hegel posits that only when these are unified with the Absolute, can they exist as *moments* of an organic totality.

On the other hand, Habermas presents, at least as concerns Hegel's allegiance to modern rationality, a more nuanced view. For once, he formulates the major turning point, that Hegel's critique of Kant, of subjectivity and dualisms, is at the same time a *critique of modernity*. According to him: "In carrying out this project, [Hegel's] critique can and should make use of no instrument *other* than that reflection which it encounters as the purest expression of the principle of modern times" (Habermas 2007, 21). If modernity must ground itself without taking anything from past traditions for granted, Hegel has to develop the critical concept of modernity through a dialectic inherent in modernity's own principles themselves, i.e., the principle of subjectivity, thereby showing its internal insufficiencies and one-sidedness from within. Habermas, however, notably asserts that Hegel, in radicalizing the self-authorizing modern reason, ended up elevating pure reason, against his initial program, to the heights of absolute knowledge through the

¹¹ I will later demonstrate that *Entzweiung*, according to my reading of Hegel's early texts, encompasses the contradictions typical of the modern age—namely, those arising from the reflective activity of the understanding (an activity on which all *reflexionsphilosophie* are based) and, therefore, cannot be resolved by the *Verstandeslogik*.

theoretical exclusion of all otherness and the totalization of a reconciling reason that overpowers and swallows up every finite being. On my view, this is a very odd criticism, although a very common one, for it perfectly corresponds to Hegel's own mature critique of Kant's picture of human nature: "Human beings' striving is directed generally at knowing the world, appropriating and submitting it to their will, and towards this end the reality of the world must, so to speak, be crushed" (cf. Hegel, *Enz.*, §42, add. 1). In the following sections I show first how Hegel's project was since the beginning invested in preserving difference and otherness, not crushing them.

My interpretation challenges Habermas's criticism that Hegel produced a "totalitarian" concept of Reason and Pippin's affirmation of Hegel's strong allegiance to modern institutions. With this in mind, I want to suggest a more radical reading of Hegel's philosophy: this takes us to the origins of Hegel's method itself. I propose that Hegel creates a new method precisely with the goal of overcoming the insufficiencies of the modern abstract subjectivity, and toward thereby unveiling a *process* capable of *transforming* it. This claim is made by Angelica Nuzzo (2006), who interprets Hegel's dialectics as a logic of transformative processes. According to Nuzzo: "The aim of [Hegel's] logic is to unravel the fundamental structures of change, to think and understand change 'in and for itself'" (Nuzzo 2006, 87). In this sense, the contradictory tension inherent in modern dualisms brings forward a moment of *crisis*, giving rise to a 'need for transformation'. As Nuzzo says, "contradiction is for Hegel the sign of historical crises; transformation and change are the development of contradiction [...] once it is not fixed within illusory limits" (Nuzzo 2006, 92). However, Nuzzo mainly takes her interpretation from Hegel's mature work, the *Science of Logic*, whereas I seek to trace the origins of this dialectics in his Jena writings, for I believe that, in these writings, Hegel's exigency of overcoming the limitations of modernity and thus transforming modern society is even more emphatic. In a nutshell, since his method is radically immanent—it

overcomes the position it seeks to criticize by employing the opponent's own concepts, i.e., the very determinations of reflection he criticizes, and radicalize them until they expose their internal limitations and insufficiencies—we cannot correctly comprehend the origins of his dialectical method without addressing his early critique of modernity, for his critique rises from the inherent categories and concepts prevalent in the modern age.

2. The Young Hegel's Discourse on the Origins of Modernity

Discussing the present state of culture in his own time, Hegel attributes a double origin to his own philosophy, which he calls 'speculative' instead of 'reflective'. First, speculative philosophy originates from the particular form of the split [*Entzweiung*] in modern life, in which the old oppositions of metaphysics (spirit—matter, body—soul, faith—understanding, freedom—necessity), are transformed and crystallized by the 'advance of culture' [*Bildung*] into the opposition reason—sensibility, form—matter, intelligence—nature, subjectivity—objectivity. Second, speculative philosophy originates from the life of reason itself, which, in the systematic apprehension of itself, actively re-establishes and reconfigures the split harmony. From this split, articulated by the modern oppositions, arises the 'need for philosophy'. Thus, in Hegel's early view, the problem of modernity, its internal bifurcation, results from the phenomenon of separation and isolation of the Absolute, fixing itself with the pretension of subsisting on its own without the Absolute. The need for philosophy (which is simultaneously a need of philosophy) is precisely the need to break through all the limitations of finite thought isolated from the Absolute, and this is exactly what speculative philosophy purports to do.

Hegel's battle against the dualisms and oppositions of reflective philosophy appears in his early writings primarily as a critique of Kantian formalism and, to that extent, it is both a critique of modernity, and simultaneously a radicalization of its philosophical principle, i.e., the autonomy of thinking. However, Hegel transforms Kant to such an extent that reflection and speculation become both forms of the self-apprehension and self-reproduction of Reason, conceived as a phenomenon of the Absolute. Modern culture is the isolation of the systematic self-reproduction of Reason as a phenomenon of the Absolute, an isolation that fixes this phenomenon into a thing-in-itself and gives it the pretension of subsisting on its own.

The Understanding, as "the power of dichotomy" (Hegel 1977b, 92), imitates Reason in its impulse towards totalization, seeking to reconstitute and extend to infinity, in an organized edifice, the multiplicity of oppositions that it establishes, interposing this edifice between man and the Absolute, so that the Understanding thus reproduces itself indefinitely as a faculty of limitation and oppositions. In multiplying its analysis infinitely, it potentiates the oppositions of modernity, reproducing its finitude *ad infinitum*. In short, modernity is characterized as the expansion of the Understanding to all levels of culture. The "need for philosophy" arises from this consolidation of diremption and the disappearance of the power to unify the lives of individuals, it arises when "the might of union vanishes from the life of men and the antitheses lose their living connection and reciprocity and gain independence" (Hegel 1977b, 91). With the expansion of the split, the need for reconciliation is a "necessary attempt" on the part of Reason conceived as life, an attempt to "suspend the rigidified opposition between subjectivity and objectivity" and "to comprehend the achieved existence (*das Gewordensein*) of the intellectual and real world as a [...] infinite activity of becoming and producing" in which Reason can reduce "the absolute dichotomy to a relative one" (Hegel 1977b, 91). Hegel continues:

“The sole interest of Reason is to suspend such rigid antitheses. But this does not mean that Reason is altogether opposed to opposition and limitation. For the necessary dichotomy is one factor in life. Life eternally forms itself by setting up oppositions, and totality at the highest pitch of living energy (*in der höchsten Lebendigkeit*) is only possible through its own re-establishment out of the deepest fission. What Reason opposes, rather, is just the absolute fixity which the [Understanding] gives to the dichotomy; and it does so all the more if the absolute opposites themselves originated in Reason” (Hegel 1977b, 90-91).

Insofar as the task of speculative philosophy consists in suspending the fixed character of limitations and giving them the ‘fluidity of life’ as an infinite ‘process of becoming’, I argue that Hegel’s Absolute is no longer the same ‘infinite substance’ of the young Schelling, but the self-reproduction of Reason through the activity of pure thinking, which introduces the split, the dialectical negativity of the finite, as a necessary element of systematic knowledge of itself. Separation is an essential factor of life, and Reason is only opposed to the fixation of separation in rigid dichotomies.

Hegel’s examination of modernity will further describe it as the “struggle of the [Understanding] with Reason” (Hegel 1977b, p. 93). At first sight, Hegel interprets this struggle in the context of Schelling’s romantic motivations, which outline the splits of everyday life on the horizon of a harmony between Reason and Nature and the affirmation of human freedom:

“The more stable and splendid the edifice of the intellect is, the more restless becomes the striving of the life that is caught up in it as a part to get out of it, and raise itself to freedom. When life as Reason steps away into the distance, the totality of limitations is at the same time nullified [life as Reason abandons it], and

connected with the Absolute in this nullification, and hence conceived and posited as mere appearance. [In such manner, the] split between the Absolute and the totality of limitations vanishes” (Hegel 1977b, 90).

This ‘vanishing of limitations’ must be interpreted in light of Hegel’s previous assertion that ‘dichotomy is a necessary factor in life’. The disappearance of the split is not conceived by Hegel as a ‘simple vanishing’ of the split character of modern life and culture, for differentiation is a fundamental activity of life, as we have seen in the previous quote. Thus, on the one hand, if the romantic impulse to annihilate modern splits is formulated as a mere ‘interest in eliminating the oppositions of the Understanding’, on the other, Hegel immediately restricts this interest, interpreting the impulse to eliminate the split as a symptom of modernity itself caused by the longing and striving for the ancient harmony of life. However, as Hegel says, simply annulling the dichotomy is not in the interest of Reason, for separation is a necessary phenomenon of the Absolute, understood as self-reproducing through systematic speculative knowledge of itself in its oppositions.

Hegel’s critical diagnosis of modernity is thus articulated, first, around the dual function he attributes to reflection—the separating activity of the Understanding as the ‘faculty of limitation’, which gives subsistence to what it has limited and fixed in its finitude as opposed to the infinite—and, second, to speculation. He claims that the highest expressions of the activity of reflection are the transcendental philosophies of Kant and Fichte, but, as a more generalized form of culture, all modern post-Cartesian philosophies that seek to validate knowledge of the external world, the permanence of objects, and the identity of the self are expressions of the activity of just such one-sided reflection. The problem with such philosophies is elevating reflection to a supreme

instance and accepting the historically given divisions of knowledge and culture without questioning the rational unity underlying them or their principle of differentiation.

Speculative idealism sees reflection not as merely the opposite of speculation but also as its indispensable instrument: “The form that the need of philosophy would assume, if it were to be expressed as a presupposition, allows for a transition from the need of philosophy to the instrument of philosophizing, to reflection as Reason” (Hegel 1977b, 94). If the self-reproduction of Reason is an essential part of the Absolute, then reflection must be incorporated into this expanded Reason as its instrument. It not only operates the limitations and fixes the oppositions; as an instrument of Reason, it also negates these limitations and oppositions, suspending the finite. The task of reflection as an instrument of speculation is to make the Absolute accessible to consciousness, which implies a contradiction: “The Absolute is to be posited in reflection. But then it is not posited, but canceled; for in having been posited it was limited [by its opposite]” (Hegel 1977b, 94). To posit the Absolute is to posit it as a product of reflection, i.e., as result, thus as something limited, denying it as such precisely because it was posited; but reflection, as an instrument of speculative reason, becomes ‘the mediation of this contradiction’:

“Reflection in isolation is the positing of opposites, and this would be a suspension of the Absolute, reflection being the faculty of being and limitation. But reflection as Reason has connection with the Absolute, and it is Reason only because of this connection. In this respect, reflection nullifies itself and all being and everything limited, because it connects them with the Absolute. But at the same time the limited gains standing precisely on account of its connection with the Absolute” (Hegel 1977b, 94)

In other words, in the Jena writings, reflection becomes co-extensive with the Absolute through Reason. It annihilates itself at the same time as it gives subsistence to limited oppositions precisely as they are now the necessary appearance of the self-reproduction of Reason. Speculation depends on reflection insofar as the latter, appropriated by speculative Reason, operates as the negative force of the Absolute, as “a negating that is absolute” and, at the same time, “as the force that posits the opposed objective and subjective totality” (Hegel 1977b, 95). Reason instigates reflection to produce an “objective totality” of opposed and finite determinations at its own level, a totalization which, due to its inherent contradictions, limitations, and dichotomies, crumbles down if left on its own and suspends itself. What reflection cannot achieve in its indefinite totalization is the systematic unity that integrates these determinations into a whole. This is only achieved through the speculative activity of synthesis.

From what was said so far, we can see that what Hegel calls speculation also acquires a whole new meaning. In his time, speculation meant a privileged view, which could only be seen from an eminent height (*specula*, in Latin). Rather, speculative (as *speculum*) is intrinsically related to reflection (*reflexio*), in the sense that it can only achieve Absolute Knowing by mirroring reflection and going through the determinations and oppositions that come from it. Speculation only progresses through reflection, through the exhaustive mediation of contradictory oppositions, a mediation which suspends the limitedness and finitude of such determinations, apprehending them in their necessity and concreteness. Thus, I contend that Hegelian speculation is constituted as the self-apprehension and self-reproduction of Reason thanks to the introduction of a systematic unity into the conceptual determinations by which reflection thinks about objects, with the aim of integrating these determinations into a self-referential totality which suspends the finitude and limitations of opposed dichotomies while still maintains their difference and gives them

subsistence through such totality. The above conclusion on speculation is our first main result exhibiting what Hegel means by the need for speculative philosophy in the Jena writings thus far.

We have seen that Hegel's critical account of modernity entails an absolutization of the reflective activity, which reduces or limits Reason to mere Understanding, fixing the necessary separations and determinations of reflective thinking, which is a fundamental aspect of the self-reproduction and self-knowledge of the Absolute, into oppositions and dichotomies that give rise to the modern *Entzweiungen*. I propose that, when such divisions become *Entzweiungen*, modern rationality has spread to every sphere of culture and become the pavement of modern social structure. In this sense, *Entzweiung* is not merely an intellectual category but also a social one. In the next section, I will seek to show the effects of such divisions and dichotomies in a broader social and cultural contextualization. After, I will demonstrate how Hegel's speculative philosophy purports to overcome the splits of modern life dialectically.

3. On Modern Melancholia

The activity of reflection operates in terms of 'abstractions', i.e., by isolating certain determinations from their connection to the whole and fixing these isolated particulars in opposition to one another, obstructing their reconciliation and unity. In the *Tübingen Essays* (1988), Hegel's concept of abstraction coincides with a certain way of thinking that reduces the totality of life to a dead composition of parts in opposition to the organic unity of life. Abstractions produce a false claim of generality: they pretend to grasp the infinite multiplicity of the manifestations of human nature, but in reality they fix these manifestations in dead categories, excluding all variation and all difference.

In the *Jena period*, abstraction becomes not only a mere way of thinking but also assumes a *practical* and *social* role (Mascot, 2018). Within the framework I have established, with the absolutization of reflection and the reduction of Reason to Understanding, abstraction becomes a *concrete form of social relations*. In the pre-Jena perspective, abstraction was a mere threat to the unity of the ethical whole; now, he acknowledges the spiritual superiority of modernity over the simple political harmony of ancient Greece through beauty, for abstraction becomes a *constructive force* and consolidates modern sociality through abstract subjectivity. Thus, abstraction stops being seen in a mere negative light and acquires a positive aspect in the formation of the *individual*.

The key difference between modernity and antiquity is that the former allows individual consciousness to manifest and actualize itself. According to Jamilla Mascot, Hegel, influenced by the romanticism popular in his time (an influence he would later energetically criticize), claimed that *social abstraction* is a negative form of individuality that affirms itself against the ethical community. In modernity, contrary to other historical periods, abstraction pervades all strata of society: the modern social sphere is permeated by impersonal structures such as “the system of needs” (that is, the economic sphere), the division of labor, the modern market, the civil laws. These structures produce what I call *socialization through atomization*: by separating individuals from one another and promoting the proliferation of parceled needs, mechanized labor, and multiple goods, abstraction ends up generating *concreteness*, for the *impersonal dominion* of these structures makes individuals mutually dependent on one another, creating a social bond.

Hence, Hegel sees the economic, juridical, and political abstract structures of modern society as aggregating tools that, through separation and disruption, preserve and expand social relations. Hegel considers these structures superior to ancient harmony, for they now grant every individual the right to *formal freedom*. However, this *concrete sociality* by means of *abstract*

atomization produces its set of deleterious effects and social pathologies. These negative social effects stemming from insufficient forms of reasoning are a central aspect of Hegel's philosophy, for he maintains an internal connection between rationality and sociality and, thus, between incorrect reasonings and social pathologies. One of the fundamental theses of Hegel's concept of Objective Spirit is that all social reality has a rational structure, before which one must avoid false or insufficient concepts that lead to negative consequences within social life since these concepts find in social reality a practical application. Hegel affirms with his presentation of society as Objective Spirit that the violation against rational arguments, with which our social practices are always intertwined, causes damage and injuries to social reality. With the intertwining of rationality and social reality, we see that rationality in Hegel is *objective* rather than mere *subjective rationality*. As Frederick Neuhouser puts it, Hegel's concept of

“Spirit is more than mere consciousness—it is not only subject but also substance—and that its characteristic activities are at once mental and material. This is because [...] what drives Spirit [...] is not merely the urge to conceive of itself in a certain way but also to make that self-conception real—to enact it in the world—and to do so in such a way that its activities and products bear objective witness to its actually being what, in consciousness, it takes itself to be. Material practices, then—the processes of life—are practices that at once give expression to Spirit's self-conceptions and shape, even correct, those self-understandings. In other words, the holding together of contradictions [...] does not occur only in consciousness; material practices, too, are an essential part of the spiritual negotiation of contradictions” (Neuhouser 2013, 689).

Material practices are essential to Spirit's self-knowledge and self-reproduction, for the only way it can correct its self-conceptions is through *experience*, i.e., by enacting such conceptions in material practices and discovering how they actualize the real relations between subject and object, between self-consciousness and life. The key concept here is Hegel's concept of Life, for Reason (understood as social consciousness) is also determined and transformed by social practices that are irreducibly material in that "they are thoroughly intertwined with the functions of life. Moreover, even if there is more to the social than mere engagement with life, it is also true that whatever belongs to the social—relations of recognition, for example—is at the same time inextricably bound up with the processes of life" (Neuhouser 2013, 689). It is Spirit's foundation in Life that enables us to think of rationality as something objective, for Spirit, like the processes of life, must reproduce and organize itself by assimilating and reshaping its external environment in accordance with its vital needs, i.e., by actualizing itself not only as a subject but also as substance (and vice-versa).

In summary, the emergence of abstraction and reflection as the central operation through which the understanding purports to acquire knowledge of the world is intrinsically related to the rising of subjective freedom but at the expense of harmonious unity. The loss of unity led to the '*unhappy consciousness*', which, according to Jean Hyppolite, is the fundamental form of modern consciousness: this figure comes forward with radical forms of individualism and the dissolution of individuals in an empty particularity. For Hegel, the vitality of the living individual can only be expressed within a community, and the life of an individual trapped in his own individuality can only bring a profound melancholy. The modern world represents a huge *progress* in the consciousness of freedom, but it comes with the *regress* of happiness, for now consciousness is always unhappy consciousness.

In *Faith and Knowledge* (1977a), Hegel claims that the process of abstraction produced a ‘rigid subjectivity’ incapable of grasping beauty and unity within an organic totality, for its self-conception is fundamentally oppositional (the subject is always opposed to the object) and therefore apprehends the world only as a dead objectivity. According to Hegel, “subjectivity turns the beautiful into things—the grove into timber, the images into things that have eyes and do not see, ears [that] do not hear” (Hegel 1977a, 58). Modern culture deprived Reason of its unity with the Absolute by ‘grounding itself negatively’, i.e., by grasping its own negativity (its limitations) and fixing it as its determining ground, thus becoming mere ‘understanding’ separated from the Absolute. In this negative procedure of self-grounding, reason is reduced to understanding, and the Absolute becomes a beyond which cannot be rationally known, only ‘believed’ in (as the realm of faith, and not knowledge). And thus, an essential *Entzweiung* appears: that which is the most important and fundamental, the Highest Good, is beyond our knowledge, and our consciousness becomes painfully aware of its own nothingness, filling the void of its subjectivity with melancholia and a longing for the lost unity or harmony of life. Faith is precisely what *crystalizes* this split, for it fixes the infinite, the ideal, or the Highest Good, in an unachievable beyond¹². Modern faith shows that our highest ideals cannot be grasped, and our highest aspirations cannot be achieved, for our world and existence are permeated by abstract finitudes absolutely separated from the infinite. We can also understand this process described by Hegel as a process of disenchantment.

This negative self-grounding of modern culture that reduces Reason to mere Understanding and causes an unbridgeable split between our finite existence and the infinite Absolute, a self-

¹² Hegel probably has in mind here Kant’s famous saying: ‘*I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith*’.

grounding based on grasping and fixing its own limitations, transforms modern culture in a culture of sadness: my point is that the limitations imposed on human reason becomes the source of sorrow, longing, and yearning; faith is the barrier that locks the infinite in the realm of beyond.

Hegel says:

“The torment of a nobler nature subjected to this limitation, this absolute opposition, expresses itself in yearning and striving; and the consciousness that it is a barrier which cannot be crossed expresses itself as faith in a realm beyond the barrier. But because of its perennial incapacity this faith is simultaneously the impossibility of rising above the barrier into the realm of Reason”
(Hegel 1977a, 64).

Hegel claims that modern culture established for philosophy a Reason “affected by sensibility” to such an extent that it cannot aim at the “cognition of God, but only at what is called the cognition of man” (Hegel 1977a, 65). The “humanity of man” is conceived as a “rigidly, insuperably finite sort [...]. Man is not a glowing spark of eternal beauty, or a spiritual focus of the universe, but an absolute sensibility. [Philosophy] is not supposed to present the Idea of man, but the abstract concept of an empirical mankind all tangled up in limitations, and to stay immovably impaled on the stake of the absolute antithesis” (Hegel 1977a, 65). Modern culture affirms the superiority of its absolute principle of freedom in between sighs and tears. But even this freedom, taken in abstraction, reverts to its opposite and becomes domination, for the limited opposites have no intrinsic connection to one another and only relate to each other if an external power imposes such unity from the outside in the form of violence.

The modern system of culture raises finitude to an absolute, and it is the sole bearer of reality. Everything that exists is measurable according to its worthiness regarding singularity—i.e., if it can be particularizable and individuated. Religion, ethics, beauty, or anything that was supposed to be higher than the mere empirical is reduced to a limited and singular thing, for only what is singular has any worthiness. “The infinite and the finite are here not to be posited as identical in the Idea; for each of them is for itself absolute” (Hegel 1977a, 60). In this sense, both the finite and the infinite become limited things: the finite is limited by the infinite, and the infinite is limited by the finite. In this absolute opposition between the finite and the infinite, the opposites only relate to each other through domination. The universal connects only by doing violence to the opposite sides. Hence, in my reading, this is Hegel’s criticism of modern reflective rationality: universality becomes totalitarian. The finite becomes determinable as singularity, and reducing everything worthy of reality to a singular, particularizable thing, is also a way of dominating and doing violence to this very particular, for the understanding dissects the living into a dead thing. Every Idea is posited under finitude, the particular is subsumed under a universal only by means of violence, and the connection established is domination of one pole over the other (Reason is meant to rule over Nature, for example). The eternal becomes something ‘beyond’ that cannot be known and only believed in; it is something inconceivable and empty. When we take the finite as the only reality, the empirical world is real only to the extent that it is limited, and whatever is supposed to be ‘more than this’ or ‘higher than the mere finite’ either suffers violence and is reduced to a limited thing or is taken as superstition or fiction by the understanding. Thus, the process of disenchantment, which led to a loss of unity with the Absolute and to the split [*Entzweiung*] between the finite and infinite, transforms the living, organic world into a lifeless, phantasmal realm characterized by limitations and contradictions. In this world, any ideal of a

nobler spirit is regarded as an illusion—a mere ghost of a forgotten past. The crisis of modernity is also a crisis of melancholia, marked by the despair of a "nobler spirit" reduced to mere nothingness. The pervasive longing and striving in the modern age is also a sign of its enduring crisis, for the loss of unity is permanent and cannot be reversed.

To anticipate my argument: To understand modernity as an essentially *fractured* historical-philosophical period in which the *Verstandeslogik* fixes its concepts and categories in unmoved terms, blocking all change and transformation—both in reality and in thinking—is to understand modernity as a historical period of *permanent crisis*. In this interpretation, crisis refers, as I showed, to a significant moment of historical transition where existing social and political structures are challenged, leading to a disjunction between established forms of life and the changing conditions that underpin them. This crisis is characterized by a discrepancy between the fixity of current practices and the transformation of the broader context that gives those practices meaning and validity. Modernity challenges the traditional forms of life and seeks to transform them, but through a logic that blocks and prevents the movement from continuing. During such crises, the present form of life resists change, yet it becomes increasingly untenable as the conditions for its existence, if they remain unmoved and fixed, start to crumble until they become ruins. Angelica Nuzzo describes this situation as an '*interregnum*', a term used by Gramsci to denote a period where the old order is in decline, but the new order has not yet fully emerged, creating a space of uncertainty. From a Hegelian perspective, we might say that modernity is precisely this *interregnum*, a period where the old order of things is challenged, but the movement of transformation remains *incomplete*. The negativity that destroys the traditional forms remains a *simple negation*, and in its hesitance to move forward, afraid that its next step might lead to the wrong path, this negativity does not produce synthesis, it does not conclude its movement towards

the new—it halts its march in the face of contradictions and refuses to take a decision [*Entschluss*]. Hegel’s method is precisely a response to the most pressing issue of modern life: how to overcome the fixed contradictions in the world, change the actual historical conditions and resume the movement of life.

4. Synopsis of the Contribution from Hegel’s Early Dialectic

The Ancient Greek word κρίσις, or *krisis*, was used by the Hippocratic School to designate a decisive point in the progress of a disease, a *turning point* in which the fight between life and death takes place. *Krisis* is derived from *krino*, which means ‘to separate, to choose, to decide, and to fight’. The concept of crisis is also prevalent in the field of theology, associated with the legal concept of ‘*judicium maximum*’, acquiring the meaning of an ‘unappealable judgment’—the ‘judgment of God’, whether it is the Final Judgment, manifest at the end of times, or present in the lifetime of the believer. Thus, *krisis* refers to a separation, an *Entzweiung* between two extreme alternatives that demands a definitive and irrevocable decision (or a judgment), allowing no further revision, leading to failure or success, justice or injustice, life or death, salvation or doom. The relationship between crisis and judgment was very present during Hegel’s time and was elaborated by his best friend, Hölderlin.

According to the latter, subjectivity arises from a split in the heart of an undifferentiated ground called ‘Being’. This separation, Hölderlin contends, is judgment. The German word for judgment is *Urteil*, implying an original (*ur-*) separation (*Teilung*). In this sense, *Urteil* is the ‘original division’ [*ursprüngliche Teilung*], which characterizes the structure of human consciousness. Our consciousness can only produce knowledge through judgments, but this is

precisely what removes us from the undifferentiatedness of Being (Hölderlin also refers to this unity as the harmony of life), distinguishing the objects of our knowledge from the *things-in-themselves*, making the unity of Being inaccessible to human consciousness.

In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel claims that judgment, as posited by reflection, is something limited, defective, and antinomian, and for this very reason, judgment points beyond itself and reasserts the speculative nature of Reason. A judgment is much more complex than we might initially think.

According to Hegel, judgment concerns the copula 'is', and its fundamental form is 'S is P', which is taken to mean 'S equals P'. If S is equal to P, what is being affirmed, according to Hegel, is the principle of identity, expressed as 'A=A', meaning in this context 'S is identical with P'. Hegel contends that the principle of identity, 'A=A', is the *form* of the judgment, while the symbols 'S' and 'P' are the matter/content of the judgment. Moreover, the identity affirmed is not merely linguistic (in the sense of the syntax and grammar of Subject and Predicate) but also ontological (the Subject is often taken to be a particular being, while the Predicate, as a general concept, is taken to be our thought) and epistemological (particular beings are objects, and concepts or thoughts pertain to the subject¹³). Thus, 'S is P' expresses the identity between being and thought, object and subject, matter and form. The problem, Hegel says, is that Reason "does not find itself expressed in this one-sidedness of abstract unity" (Hegel 1977b, 106). Here, Hegel is hinting at the speculative capacity of Reason, thereby speaking from the implied need for a speculative philosophy.

¹³ The language here can be misleading. The symbol of equality "=" affirms the identity of two different poles, and we must not confuse the terminology. In the linguistic sense, the first pole represents the "Subject", and the second pole, the "Predicate"; however, in the epistemological sense, the grammatical "Subject" becomes the epistemological "Object" in the sense that what is expressed is a particular thing, and the other side becomes the side of the Subject, i.e., of thought. Subject in the linguistic sense and Subject in the epistemological sense have different meanings.

The principle of unity $A=A$ is achieved simply by the reflective abstraction of all inequality and difference contained in judgment, for the first ‘A’ and the second ‘A’ are poles expressing different things. Hegel says, "One A is subject, the other object" (Hegel 1977b, 106). In this sense, ‘ $A=A$ ’ affirms identity by positing ‘A’ in different roles in the opposites of subject and object, thought and being. It asserts the identity of both poles, but since thought is evidently *different* from what is thought about—the subject is evidently different from the object—we cannot assert $A=A$ without at the same time asserting $A\neq A$. ‘A’ in the mind does not equal ‘A’ in the world. But the second principle, $A\neq A$, is also an abstraction, for it abstracts from pure identity and posits non-identity, the pure form of non-thinking¹⁴; however, “non-thinking too is thought because $A\neq A$ is posited through thinking”. Hence, “non-thinking is posited by thinking” (Hegel 1977b, 106). Hegel says that both propositions, $A=A$ and $A\neq A$, can only be affirmed in their purity by abstraction of the other, but are in their truth conditioned by one another. A better way of expressing the idea that Hegel is advancing here is using the formula $A=B$, for it contains the identity of A and B together with their difference—the object of my thought A is this real being B, expressing the difference of A as subject and B as object together with their identity.

Thus, for Hegel, the judgment ‘A is B’ says both ‘ $A=A$ ’ and ‘ $A\neq A$ ’, but such judgment, posited by reflection, is subjected to “the law of the [Understanding], the law that it must not contradict itself, that it cannot suspend itself” (Hegel 1977b, 104). What the Understanding fails to recognize is that judgments are both inherently contradictory and antinomic and, as such, suspend themselves.

¹⁴ The idea here is that the principle of identity is the form of pure thinking, for it affirms the identity of “being and thought”, while the principle of difference is the form of non-thinking, for it affirms the difference between thought and being (hence, that being cannot be thought).

Hegel's account of judgment shows "how a conception of determinacy in the form of an identity with itself, which is for the logic of understanding something isolated and self-sufficient, necessary leads to the establishment of a relationship with an opposite element and then to a re-comprehension of the identity of determinacy in the form of limit" (Luciano 2023, 11). Hegel's discussion of the insufficiency of the logic of understanding shows that the determinations of thought, which initially presents the appearance of self-identity ($A=A$), is posited by the understanding as something isolated and self-sufficient, necessarily leading to the establishment of a relation to its opposite element, the non-identical. This non-identical is taken up as the *limit* of self-identity (the 'A' as opposed to the 'not-A'). Thus, the Understanding posits 'not-A' as the *limitation* of 'A'.

According to the logic of the Understanding, the concept of 'limit' expresses the identity that excludes the difference, but Hegel shows that this concept is much more dynamic and contradictory. Hegel reinterprets Kant's Transcendental Dialectic in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as no longer a critique of reason's illegitimate extension of the Understanding's categories beyond its limitations and tries to show that it is precisely the concept of limitation that causes the negation of the logic of understanding and is in the limit between conceptual pure self-identity and the real content of the manifold where a *turning point* takes place, a turning point leading to the redefinition of our initial categorial determinations. According to Giovanna Luciano, "the concept of limit is the first emergence of contradiction within the logic of understanding, which has its own ground in the principle of non-contradiction (the pure self-identity of determinacy)" (Luciano 2023, 13). The law of non-contradiction taken as an absolute 'locks' reflection in fixed products opposed to each other and to the Absolute, limiting thought to mere finitude.

The concept of limit, as taken up by the Understanding, which is grounded in the principle of non-contradiction, is a fixed concept: it marks the separation between a self-identical reality and its contrary (i.e., its negation), excluding *otherness* as a simple negation and positing the two as opposites. However, Hegel contends that this relation of opposition in the form of limit already implies a mutual reference to each pole in the sense that the affirmation of A corresponds to the affirmation of not-A, and the negation of A corresponds to the negation of not-A, as we have already seen. The failure of self-sufficiency and independence of the determinacy of opposites against each other causes the emergence of a *contradiction*, which, in this case, is the negative self-connection through the relation to its opposite. For Hegel, the experience of this inherent contradiction triggers a *Wendungspunkt*, a turning-point in the initial determination, a moment of *advancement* beyond the initial limitation. This movement of advancement is precisely what Hegel would later call “the dialectical turn.” According to Nuzzo,

“Hegel sees difference and contradiction as the chief functions of [advancement], as the functions whereby the immediacy of the beginning is forever disturbed and interrupted, a transition is produced across which the beginning is carried, thereby advancing the overall process, making it internally different from itself, making it really transformative as a process” (Nuzzo 2018, 62).

Advancement occurs when we attend to the determinations in and for themselves, bringing to light the *inner life of things*, which is their inner, self-generated movement and internal contradiction. Thus, the advancement is precisely a *transition* [*Übergang*] as a “*self-othering*,” a generation of *otherness* through their inner contradiction and difference. Contradiction is the *life* of all self-generated movement because it is the internal difference that causes a transition to

otherness. Self-othering is the action of advancement disclosed by contradiction, the force that brings the beginning out of its initial immediacy and simplicity, generating its other. Difference and negativity are not imposed by external reflection, but are found within the determinations themselves, brought by the splitting and differentiation of judgment. In other words, the moment of transition is a *turning point* [*Wendungspunkt*] of the movement of the concept where truth first emerges, transforming the beginning into something new.

Hegel's task is to provide a conceptual, rational form to the experience of change. But Hegel can only grasp transformation and change rationally because it is a 'logic of action,' i.e., it grasps transformation rationally because it *produces* the very transformation it seeks to grasp, thus bringing change to bear directly on pure thinking, which makes thinking one with the movement it accounts for. Hegel's logic seeks to *enact* what it purports to understand. Angelica Nuzzo contends that "the action that advances or the action that produces the advancement is fundamentally connected with the crisis generated and encountered within the logical process of transformation" (Nuzzo 2018, 59).

Hegel reinterprets the three structural moments of Aristotelian poetics—beginning, middle, and end—by giving the second moment, the 'middle', the role of *advancement*. "The middle moment of the advancement is the moment on which the dynamic, transformative character of the action depends" (Nuzzo 2018, 60). The middle, for Hegel, is not just an intermediary stage that connects the beginning and the end, but is taken to be a *mediation as advancement*, as the action taking place and *changing* the initial conception into something else. It is the *transformation* of what was fixed in the beginning into something new that will only come forward as a result of such action. The fundamental aspect is that the advancement occurs immanently, without the

imposition of any external content or arbitrary assumption, but solely out of the inherent contradictions of the thing in question.

Thus, the “dialectical procedure [...] involves the analysis of a concept and the discovery that such a concept pushes towards its own overcoming” (Luciano 2023, 13). Hegel’s dialectical procedure is the *process* through which an initial determination, taken in its immediate self-identity and independence, already contains within itself a second, opposite category, which corresponds to an internal contradiction and conflict between both determinations, causing a turning point that advances beyond our starting point and enriches the conception of our former determination through a synthesis that unifies both poles while still preserving their inherent difference.

To go back to the terms from which we started the discussion, it is *Urteil*, in its attempt to unite being and thought, that reveals the conflictual nature between them. Ultimately, contradictions arise from the necessary separation between the conceptual and the real and their necessary unity. To summarize, “dialectical logic is the science of the movement of the mutual and incongruent reference of thought and being” (Luciano 2023, 15). ‘Limitation’ is the category that expresses the *crisis* between the level of concept and the level of being, showing the “inconsistency between the conceptual form of determinacy in general and the real determination of determinacy” (Luciano 2023, 12).

The negativity inherent in judgment creates a crisis in the unity of Being, which becomes lost to us due to the division or split caused by it. This crisis, however, is the actual development and realization of the concept. We have already seen that judgment, in its original sense, is synonymous with crisis. The relationship established by judgment, which coincides with the split it creates, results in the crisis of the “unity of Being”. This moment of crisis in judgment is the logical point where the action consolidates to progress by determining a genuinely new direction

that can critically differentiate or “decide” [*Entschluss*] among potential alternatives. This turning point [*Wendungspunkt*] marks the emergence of a new sequence of events that leads the concept to its ‘realization’. Hegel’s speculative philosophy tries to show that transformation and change come only through the tension inherent in moments of crisis.

Speculative thinking shows the unity between identity and non-identity; it shows that non-thought is taken up into thought while acknowledging thought as something that differs from its object at every instant. On the one hand, Hegel’s speculative philosophy affirms the identity of subject and object, thought and being, the finite and the Absolute; on the other hand, it precisely endeavors to express the opposition between these poles. But how can this be understood? It is precisely at this point in the *Differenzschrift* that Hegel introduces the condition of systematicity:

“Philosophy, as a totality of knowledge produced by reflection, becomes a system, that is, an organic whole of concepts, whose highest law is not the [Understanding], but Reason. The intellect has to exhibit correctly the opposites of what it has posited, as well as its bounds, ground and condition. Reason, on the other hand, unites these [contradictions], posits both together and suspends them both” (Hegel 1977b, 103).

It is precisely the contradiction introduced by judgment, the moment of non-identity within our own conceptual inadequacy to express the unity between thought and being, that propels our knowledge to develop itself out of its initial inadequacy or non-identity, suspending the opposite poles in a new speculative synthesis. This reveals the dynamic character of human knowledge as a process developed out of its contradictions into an organic whole (and by organic, Hegel means that this whole, as a totality, preserves the life of its moments as particulars, it preserves the difference or non-identity as a constitutive moment of universality). If the reflective Understanding

fixes the poles in rigid terms, speculative Reason suspends such terms in their rigidity as moments of a further synthesis, showing the developmental nature of our knowledge and reestablishing the internal movement of concepts.

5. Concluding Remarks: Why Insist on the View of Modernity as Permanent Crisis

In the work entitled *Constitution of Germany*, Hegel sees the political background of his time as a situation of deep institutional crisis in which the dangers of dissolution and self-destruction facing the German people are felt. Here, *Entzweiung* becomes a real force operating in history and not just as a matter of philosophical reflection. In modernity, this division in the heart of society cannot be reconciled, it is a plain and hard fact that must remain in its contradictory character, a *situation of crisis that endures and persists*. Like an open wound that cannot be healed, it produces a growing feeling of insecurity and the striving for its sublation [*Aufhebung*], but nothing can be done from the standpoint of mere reflection, for its internal wound remains static, its internal contradictions remain fixed in opposite poles which block their reconciliation. This tension is the mark of the modern epoch: an epoch in which all certainty and security have been shattered, and the only way to deal with the negativity which life has been reduced to, is to *overcome modernity through change and transformation*. For Hegel, the contradictions springing forth from an unsolvable *Entzweiung* are the historical sign of a crisis inaugurated by modernity. Modern culture is this crisis, and it can be dealt with only by inflicting it with the movement of change and transformation.

Let me conclude with two basic proposals. The main characteristic of modernity for Hegel during his pre-*Phenomenology* Jena period is precisely that *Entzweiung* becomes a permanent *social* category, not a mere concept of thought, constitutive of society as a whole. Hegel does not

engage in any criticism of modernity aimed at restoring the ancient harmony of the social bond. The individual's alienation is a feature of modern times, which endures and remains as long as modernity persists in its fixed terms. Although it is a deprivation, it embodies a peculiar form of *Bildung*, of cultural formation, adding a certain gain with it (namely, subjective and individual freedom). We also gain, through deprivation, a universal formal socialization—through the division of labor, individuals must socialize in order to fulfill their needs. However, this universal socialization doesn't mean a universal cohesion, for socialization through opposition and antagonism also remains a defining feature of modern society (the individual and society, civil society and the State, the salaried worker and the capitalist, etc., will always remain in antagonistic opposition).

The fixation into immobility of *Entzweiung* produces the concept of *modernity as permanent crisis*. The modern dilemma is a “morbid and pathological in-between state that arises when the old forms of life are dying and the new ones cannot be born” (Luciano 2022, 344). Hegel's dialectic method arises from the pathologies of his time, as a response to the traumas brought up by a fractured life on a world-historical scale, notably the new era of the French Revolution, and the German and French experience of social reality from the early 1800s. This kind of philosophizing takes place in a wholly immanent perspective, i.e., *fully immersed* in the contradictions that make life unbearable. Hegel's philosophy is not a theoretical exclusion of all otherness and the totalization of a reconciling reason, neither a naïve defense of modern superiority over anterior historical epochs, but a philosophy *of change and transformation*, a radical answer to the diagnosis of modernity as a *constant crisis*, a period where a truly rational form of life can only be born by radical transformation.

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