

CHAPTER 11

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THE LOGIC OF ESSENCE AS INTERNAL REFLECTION

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HEGEL presents the Logic of Essence in his *Science of Logic* as a necessary outcome of the collapse of the Logic of Being. The self-contradictions of the ontology of a logic of being lead to a new program in which the constitutive function of subjective capacities is explicitly recognized. It was precisely the suppression of these capacities that hindered the Logic of Being from doing justice to the claim to truth and knowledge immanent to each act of thought. Read systematically, Hegel's analysis of the failure of the Logic of Being can be interpreted as a critique of any program of naturalism that attempts to flatten the difference between being and essence, conceived as one of facticity and legitimacy, into a unidimensional conception of the absolute. Eliminative or reductionistic programs cannot, Hegel is convinced, do justice to the constitutive capacities of subjectivity.

If, against this, one develops a conception in which these constitutive subjective capacities become explicit, then one crosses over, in Hegel's terminology, from the paradigm of Being into that of the Logic of Essence. It is illuminating, from a systematic point of view, to reconstruct Hegel's Logic of Essence by means of a Fichtean analysis of self-consciousness in the form of first-personal reference.¹ *Qua* presupposition, the 'I' is activity—Fichte speaks of a fact-act (*Thathandlung*)—and does not exist in the manner of a thing. *Qua* self-consciousness, this fact-act is self-referential, and *qua* claim to knowledge or cognition, it is available in a propositional, and therefore linguistic, form. This activity is a linguistic act of reference to itself. With the word 'I', the speaker refers to herself and the speaker knows, if she uses 'I' competently, that she thereby refers exclusively to herself. If we consider this structure as a whole, we see that it is a matter of

¹ I would like at this point explicitly to leave open the possibility that there are other models for Hegel's logic of essence, as Klaus Hartman's assessment recommends: "Hegel's conception of essence is a structural abstraction which covers a variety of cases" (Hartmann, *Hegels Logik*, 165).

conceptual self-determination, a structure in which self-reference and the object of this self-reference are the same. The one referring to itself and that other referred to in the first-personal mode are identical. At the same time, a difference must be contained in the structure because self-reference and the object of reference are two roles that the speaker of the first-personal expression occupies. When, by uttering ‘I’, I constitute myself and at the same time tag myself as the speaker and the author of this utterance, I perform a speech act in which the two roles become distinguishable as moments of an underlying unity (the speech-act itself), while at same time remaining in a relationship of reference to one another. Hegel unfolds this movement in his conception of reflection and also develops a program of deduction categories that he calls ‘determinations of reflection.’²

In this ontology of self-consciousness, being is no longer what is primary. Rather, within the reflection-logical self-unfolding of essence, being has the status of illusion, or ‘shine [*Schein*]’. This is to be spelled out both epistemologically and ontologically.³ If one views the Logic of Essence as an anti-realistic paradigm and takes the model of self-consciousness as the yardstick for this, then these two dimensions cannot strictly be separated from one another. Just this move is what the development from the Logic of Being to the Logic of Essence consists in. The defect that stems from the obscuring of subjective capacities, which the Logic of Being brought to a breaking point, gives way to a challenge to adequately preserve the aspect of being within the anti-realism of the Logic of Essence. In light of contemporary debates, one can think of the moves of the Logic of Essence on the whole as attempts to stop an idealistic rationalism based on the constitutive contributions of subjectivity from falling into a contentless ‘spinning in the void’ in which the world goes missing, while also not falling back into any of the being-logical variations on eliminating this self-determining subjectivity.⁴

In what follows, I will explicate the main current of the conceptual development in the first section of the Logic of Essence, “Essence as Reflection Within Itself.”⁵ Since Hegel prefaces this section with an introduction to the entire second book of the Logic (The Doctrine of Essence), I (1) consider this overarching determination of the text’s starting point, an analysis that will reveal why Hegel himself viewed the Logic of Essence as the most difficult part of the logic.⁶ The subsequent discussion (2) follows the division of Hegel’s text and maps out the structure of the conceptual development, and I also briefly thematize (3) the second section (“Appearance”).

² Compare on this point Houlgate, *Opening*, Ch. 1.

³ By contrast, his conception of logic as a whole should be thought of as a “theory of absolute subjectivity” (Düsing, *Subjektivität*, 213).

⁴ On this, see McDowell, *Mind and World*, and Quante, *Wirklichkeit des Geistes*, ch. 2.

⁵ *Translator’s note*: This translates “Das Wesen als Reflexion in ihm selbst,” which di Giovanni translates as “Essence as reflection within.” “Reflexion in ihm selbst” is also the phrase that is rendered less technically in the title of the essay as ‘internal reflection’.

⁶ See GA 20, 145, 14 (E 179); the characterization of “this part of the Logic” as “the most difficult one” is also found in the second edition (E1827 §114 A = GA 19.112, 27), but is absent from the first edition of 1817.

11.1. THE INTRODUCTION TO ESSENCE⁷

Hegel opens the second book of his *Science of Logic* with a short introduction concerning the whole Doctrine of Essence. In a tone resembling the paratactic opening of the Logic of Being, he begins by summarizing the conceptual development of the Logic of Being as a whole: “The truth of being is essence” (SL 11.241, 3/337). As a justification for this claim, Hegel states that knowledge cannot remain at the determination of being any more than it can remain at being as the immediate. Therefore, the claim to cognition made with the claim to knowledge entails a ‘presupposition’ (SL 11.241, 7/337), which Hegel elaborates using the image of a ‘background’ and characterizes as ‘mediated knowledge’. Cognition of the mere datum finds that “*behind* this being there is still something other than being itself” (SL 11.241, 7/337). This “constitutes the truth of being” (SL 11.241, 8/337). This cognitive or argumentative operation is necessary in order for cognition of being to take place and for it to ‘find’ essence (SL 11.241, 13/337). Hegel justifies this connection by playing on the grammatical relationship of ‘to be’ (*sein*) and its past participle (*gewesen*), but not without clarifying that the spatial or temporal constellations are only illustrations of the logical relationship between being and essence.⁸ For “essence is past, but timelessly past, being” (SL 11.241, 15/337): the structure is a logical one in the space of reasons.

Hegel also rebuffs, with reference to the Logic of Being, the notion that the transition from being to essence is an “activity of cognition” (SL 11.241, 18/337) that remains external to being and only takes place in the “activity of cognition” (SL 11.241, 18/337). The transition of being to essence is the “movement of being itself” (SL 11.241, 20/337) because it “is being’s nature to recollect itself, and [. . .] becomes essence by virtue of this interiorizing” (SL 11.241, 21f./337). The transition from an immediate claim to knowledge to a justified cognition is “a mediated knowledge” (SL 11.241, 9/337).

After this retrospective opening, Hegel turns now to the point of departure of the Logic of Essence:

If, therefore, the absolute was at first determined as being, now it is determined as essence. (SL 11.241, 22f./337)

In order to reveal the fundamental makeup of essence at a deep structural level, Hegel develops a distinction between a being-logical conception of essence, which he brings into connection with the “sum total of all realities” and characterizes as “pure essence” (SL 11.242, 3/338), and the essence-logical conception of essence. On the basis of its claim to knowledge, cognition cannot remain at the level of reports of particular states of affairs, at the “manifold of existence” (SL 11.241, 23/337). It must rather press ahead to

⁷ Citations are given from the German and the English text. English citations follow the di Giovanni translation.

⁸ *Translator’s note:* The past participle of *sein*, *gewesen*, contains the German word for essence, *Wesen*.

‘pure being’ (SL 11.241, 25/337); but it also does not obtain a stable foothold there, since this pressing ahead itself “presupposes a recollection and a movement which has distilled immediate existence into pure being” (SL 11.241, 27f./337).⁹ According to Hegel, through this process of purification, being is “determined as essence” (SL 11.241, 29/337), and yet this purification, in which “everything determined and finite” in being “is negated” (SL 11.241, 29/337), remains deficient from the point of view of the Logic of Essence. The most pronounced shortcoming consists in the fact that this purification or negation only takes place in an ‘external manner’ (SL 11.241, 31/338) by means of a ‘external’ negation and an ‘abstraction’ (SL 11.242, 6/338). Conversely, one could say it has not come about through a negative activity of essence itself: “to this unity the determinate was itself something external and, after this removal, it still remains opposite to it” (SL 11.241, 31–242, 1/338).

The error of this being-logical conception of the essence of pure being consists in a deficient conception of the movement of reflection, which, as an ‘abstraction’ and merely ‘external’ negation (SL 11.242, 6f./338), remains external to its object. In this way, however, essence becomes merely a product and only an object “for another, namely for abstraction” (SL 11.242, 13/338). Its only determination is, *qua* pure being, to be “a dead and empty absence of determinateness” (SL 11.242, 13/338). The method of subtraction on which cognition relies in its being-logical form thus generates a constellation of pure and determinate being, which displays a twofold deficiency. On the one hand, both of the poles generated by external reflection—determinate being and pure being—are considered as independent unities whose being is left untouched by this abstraction. On the other hand, the whole constellation is understood as a product of something that is itself an external operation. Cognition thereby takes itself to be no longer relevant, merely an external magnitude, and does not conceive of the movement of reflection as pure being’s own activity.

If, however, the transition of the absolute from being to essence is itself to be thought of as an immanent movement of being, then this being-logical conception of essence cannot be adequate. The reflection of internalization (*Erinnerns*) must not be understood as external reflection, and likewise negation must not be understood as ‘external abstractive reflection’ (SL 11.242, 10f./338). Hegel uses the next part of his introduction (SL 11.242, 14–21/338) in order to characterize an adequate essence-logical conception of essence and the determinations of reflection inscribed therein, as well as to characterize the relationship of essence to determinacy.

The development of the Logic of Being as a whole shows that the essence-logical conception of essence comes about by an immanent development of being itself, not through “a negativity foreign to it” (SL 11.242, 14f./338): It is ‘being-in-and-for-itself’ (SL 11.242, 16/338). Hegel characterizes this structure as ‘absolute *in-itselfness*’ (SL 11.242, 16/338). By this he means the negation of all determinacies and thus an autonomously effected purification. This is an autonomous negation,¹⁰ standing in need of no manner

⁹ Hegel uses the term ‘reflection’ here (SL 337 / 241, 26) in the sense of external reflection.

¹⁰ Dieter Henrich viewed this as “Hegel’s fundamental operation.” See Henrich, „Hegels Grundoperation“; cf. also Koch, *Evolution des logischen Raumes*, ch. 6 and 7.

of external reflection, so that “otherness and reference to other have been sublated” (SL 11.242, 17f./338). Since essence, as the Logic of Essence conceives it, is the self-negation of being, it cannot be ‘only this in-itselfness’ (SL 11.242, 19/338), because that would make it once again “only the abstraction of pure essence” (SL 11.242, 19/338). As ‘for-itselfness’, it achieves self-determination on its own and is itself therefore, in Hegel’s terminology, ‘this negativity’ (SL 11.242, 20/338); the externality or foreignness of merely given determinacies is itself negated by essence. The essence of for-itselfness is, according to Hegel, in fact nothing other than “the self-sublation of otherness and of determinateness” (SL 11.242, 21/338). We will see in the course of our analysis how Hegel continues to develop the result that the essence of essence must be the negativity of the sublation of given determinacies, since it is the self-negation of being. It will also be seen that the fact of its origin in being is likewise constitutive of the course of thought’s further development.

Because essence has sublated all the determinacies of being into itself, it is “first [. . .] indeterminate essence” (SL 11.242, 22f./338). While it contains the determinacies (as sublated) “in themselves,” it does so, as Hegel emphasizes, “without their being posited in it” (SL 11.242, 24/338). Here it already becomes clear that Hegel wishes to differentiate the relations between being and determinacies (*Bestimmtheiten*), on the one hand, and essence and determinations (*Bestimmungen*), on the other, so as to be able to distinguish the essence-logical conception of the absolute from the being-logical one.¹¹ On the basis of this modified relation, “absolute essence in this simple unity with itself has *no determinate being*” (SL 11.242, 24/338).¹² Yet, since essence is determined as being-in-and-for-itself, it is not able to remain in this constellation of determinacies that are merely found in themselves: essence “must pass over into determinate being” (SL 11.242, 25f./338). Hegel expresses this as follows: “it *differentiates* the determinations which it holds *in itself*” (SL 11.242, 26f./338).

There are three things to note about this expression. First, Hegel’s formulation leaves it open whether essence differentiates the determinations from itself or whether it differentiates the various determinations from one another. Second, Hegel’s locution switches from speaking of ‘determinacies [*Bestimmtheiten*]’ to ‘determinations [*Bestimmungen*]’. Third, the transposition of the relation from the mode of ‘in-itself’ into the mode of ‘posited in it’ is of a piece with this movement.

In the text directly following, Hegel offers a decisive characterization of essence, which lays bare the motor of Hegelian conceptual development:

Since it is the repelling of itself from itself or indifference towards itself, *negative* self-reference, it thereby posits itself over against itself and is infinite being-for-itself only

¹¹ Determinacies (*Bestimmtheiten*) are characteristics conceived in a being-logical manner, characteristics that the bearer ‘has’ (this is a passive model that presupposes the ontological independence of the features). Determinations (*Bestimmungen*) are by contrast essence-logical features that the essence ascribes to itself and that are actively produced in this ascription.

¹² Translator’s note: I have changed Giovanni’s “existence” for *Dasein* to “determinate being” throughout.

in so far as in thus differentiating itself from itself it is in unity with itself. (SL 11.242, 27f./338)

Coming originally from being, essence is absolute in-itselfness because it has freed itself from all the determinacy of being. At the same time it is “*being-for-itself* [. . .] essentially” (SL 11.242, 20/338) in the sense that it sublates this determinacy itself, as well as its being-other (*Anderssein*). If its essence is determined as absolute being-in-itself, then the self-determination that Hegel characterizes here as negative reference to itself is an activity which goes back to essence itself (and not the product of an external reflection), and which is at the same time indifferent to the determinacy of being absolute being-in-itself. For if this autonomous determining is meant to be self-referential and in this sense ‘infinite being-for-itself’, then it must express this being-in-itself (or, in its culmination, realize it) and in its culmination negate itself. This is because it behaves as a being-for-itself toward its being-in-itself. Essence can only realize its overall structure of ‘being-in-and-for-itself’ autonomously, as coming from itself, if it turns out to be a unity of two different roles. By relating to itself through two oppositely determined roles, however, it repels itself from itself in the mode of being-in-itself. It does this, however, in order to realize itself in the mode of being-for-itself. This realization—and here its unity lies beyond this difference—is thereby essence itself *qua* reflection.

Hegel now discusses the respect in which the relation between essence and its determinations differs from a being-logical relation. Because the difference between essence and its determinations remains fundamentally unified in self-determination, in the process of ‘*negative self-reference*’ (SL 11.242, 27/338) neither the essence nor these determinations change in the sense of coming to be and passing away characteristic of the Logic of Being. Rather, they are ‘self-subsisting’ (SL 11.242, 36/339) in the face of such modifications. At first glance, this is a paradoxical result. Because the transitions in essence remain the results of their own negative relation to themselves, one might assume that both sides of this relation—essence and determinations—would lose their independence. Hegel, however, claims that the integration of the relata into a unity that encompasses both of them supports their mutual stability: “they are self-subsisting but, as such, at the same time conjoined in the unity of essence” (SL 11.242, 36f./338–339).

Hegel uses the rest of the introduction (SL 11.243, 1–28/339) to characterize the intermediate position of the Logic of Essence. The task is now to “posit in its sphere” (SL 11.242, 38f./339) the determinacy that belongs to it due to its origin in being. That is, essence, which is “at first *simple negativity*” (SL 11.242, 37/339), must go from a determinacy that it “contains in principle only in itself” to a determinacy that it posits for itself, in order “to give itself determinate being and then being-for-itself” (SL 11.242, 39. cf. also 243, 13f./339). The completion of this movement consists in “giving itself *determinate being* and becoming as infinite being-for-itself what it is in itself” (SL 11.243, 15f./339). It will then have become, as Hegel says looking forward, ‘concept’ (SL 11.243, 17/339). Before that point, essence will pass through various stages of development, which can be thought of as a series of different essence-logical conceptions of the relation between

essence and its determinations. The decisive difference from the being-logical sphere is that the following now remains constant:

The negativity of essence is *reflection*, and the determinations are *reflected*—posited by the essence itself in which they remain as sublated. (SL 11.243, 7–9/339)

It would not stretch the text to read Hegel's entire Logic of Essence as his ontology of self-consciousness, in the sense of a grammar of self-determination. Within the program of the Logic of Essence, the thought of an active determination dominates in contrast to the passive reception of determinacies. The underlying model for this is self-referentiality, since this represents, in Hegel's view, an alternative to the internal collapse of the Logic of Being, which had attempted to establish a system of independent determinacies from the perspective of an uninvolved observer, that is, to establish them purely descriptively. The Logic of Essence is Hegel's conception of autonomous self-determination as the fundamental organizing structure of a system of categories and ontological models. By accentuating active self-determination, the prescriptive character of positing gains primacy; at the same time, it is one of Hegel's most fundamental assumptions that there can be no self-determination without contentful determination, even if the latter needs to be made comprehensible as a result of the former. While the basic problem of the Logic of Being consisted in integrating the active constitution of the system of categories and thus the subjective character of the absolute, the crucial task of essence consists in retaining a place for the aspect of being within a conception of autonomous subjectivity. The three sections of the Logic of Essence—the relations of reflection, appearance, and actuality—represent ever more complex and stable constellations of the mediation of self-determination and the determinacy of essence.

This first section is among the most difficult passages of the *Science of Logic* because Hegel here describes the implicit grammar of this mediation, its most unstable and, as an internal structure of self-relation, most complete form of mediation and immediacy.¹³ If it is nevertheless the case that no conception of the absolute that ascribes to this a rational, philosophically explicable structure can get by without assuming that this is absolute subjectivity and the knowing subject is active in the structure to be explicated, then we can appeal to Hegel's conception of self-determination in the structure of essence "as reflection within itself" (SL 11.244, 2/340). This basic conception manifests

¹³ According to Henrich, "Hegel was able to write some of the most dense speculative passages of his work [here]. Unfortunately, they are also among the passages whose hermetic character most quickly drives an interpreter to despair. Hegel himself provides practically nothing to clarify the logical relationships which he moves through with unreflective virtuosity" ("Logik der Reflexion," 114) [*Translator's note*: My translation]. As much as I agree with Henrich that the reader of this text might begin to despair at the task of its interpretation, I disagree with his claim that Hegel is unreflective here. If, in these sections, Hegel is explicating the grammar of all acts which we use to make normative claims to validity, then it is not possible for him to reflexively explain the method underlying this explication itself, because that would itself be a case of what is being represented. Hegel's seemingly unreflective virtuosity in these sections is due to the nature of the subject matter, which can only be enacted and thus shown, but not said.

itself in phenomena that aim at normative legitimacy, such as desire and cognition (as the basic modes of self-consciousness), as well in phenomena that are directed at truth and justification, such as giving and asking for reasons.

11.2. ESSENCE AS REFLECTION WITHIN ITSELF

Since essence arises from the failure of the Logic of Being, its specific character of being in-and-for-itself is not immediately available as a presuppositionless initial condition, but rather is a “result of that movement” (SL 11.244, 4/340). Because we are here dealing with a change in the fundamental model, the conception of essence must also be thought of as a new and, in this sense, immediate point of departure. There are now two opposing paradigms that can be thought of as independent of one another. In this way, essence has gained “specific determinate being [*bestimmtes Dasein*] to which another stands opposed,” so that it “is only *essential* determinate being, as against the *unessential*” (SL 11.244, 6/340).

11.2.1. Shine

By way of introduction, Hegel summarizes the tense internal relationship between being and essence: “As it issues from being, essence seems to stand over against it” (SL 11.244, 17/341). Yet this appearance is deceptive. The claim that being can be thought of as something separate from essence and at the same time reduced to ‘the *unessential*’ (SL 11.244, 18/341) cannot be reconciled with the fact that essence is being that has attained being-in-and-for-itself. The demotion to the unessential of the being that stands opposed to essence is too weak and leaves being with too much independence. As essence’s other, it is “being void of essence” (SL 11.244, 19/341) in which no degree of independence remains, because essence allows nothing to stand over against it. Thought of in this way, that which stands opposed to essence is merely ‘shine’.¹⁴ Yet it is indisputable that essence is related to being because of its origin. Furthermore, it is supposed to be being-for-itself in the sense of complete self-determination. On this basis, shine is not allowed to be “something external, something other than essence” (SL 11.244, 21/341). If essence is being-in-and-for-itself, then shine must, as a product of its own activity, turn out to be “essence’s own shining” (SL 11.244, 22/341). Hegel calls this constellation “the shining of essence within itself,” which he characterizes as the basic structure of ‘reflection’ (SL 11.244, 22/341).

¹⁴ *Translator’s note:* The German word *Schein*, which, following di Giovanni’s translation, I rendered here as ‘shine’, can also mean ‘illusion’.

In what follows, we will explicate this structure and consider its content. We can, however, already say with confidence that the model in the first subsection represents a deficient conception that sells short the result of the Logic of Being (it thus corresponds structurally to the being-logical conception of essence, which Hegel discussed in the general introduction to the Logic of Essence [SL 11.242, 2ff./338]). Shining and reflection will, on the other hand, turn out to be constitutive aspects of essence, aspects which themselves demand and can be given an essence-logical explication.

11.2.1.1. *The Essential and the Unessential*

If the difference between being and essence is characterized by means of the distinction between essential and unessential aspects of a thing, we have “made essence relapse into the sphere of existence” (SL 11.245, 17f./341), because these are only distinguished from “some external standpoint” (SL 11.245, 29/342). This distinction would be a “separation which falls on the side of a *third*” (SL 11.245, 27/342), with the result that essence’s character of being-in-and-for-itself would go missing. Hegel marks the inadequacy of this being-logical conception by distinguishing forms of negation: in the shape of the essential, essence is only a ‘determinate negation’ (SL 11.245, 9/341), which, as the ‘*first*’ (SL 11.245, 33/342) negation is still a ‘*determinateness*’ (SL 11.245, 34/342).

11.2.1.2. *Shine*

Because being has sublated itself into essence, it can be nothing completely independent over against essence. At the same, because essence is determined as issuing from being, it must leave its mark in essence. And because essence is being-in-and-for-itself, this mark must, in the end, be essence itself.

The first attempt to do justice to this requirement fails because, as the unessential, being had been accorded too much independence, and the differentiation between being and essence had been generated by an external ‘standpoint’ (SL 11.245, 26/342). On the second pass, this task is to be carried out by ascribing to being the character of a mere illusion: “*Being is shine*” (SL 11.246, 8/342).¹⁵ Here, shine is thought of as a ‘nothingness’ (SL 11.246, 9/342) whose character as being consists solely “in the sublatedness of being” (SL 11.246, 8f./342).

Hegel carries out his argument in two steps. In the first step (SL 11.246, 8–247, 23/342–343), Hegel explains the diminished potency of being that results from the progression from the unessential to shine. In a second step (SL 11.247, 24–249, 18/343–345), Hegel traces out the way that the aspect of independence remains and is preserved in the model of ‘being as shine’. Both steps are necessary for fulfilling the adequacy conditions of an essence-logical conception of essence that accounts for the origin of essence in the sublation of being. Between these two steps of the explication, Hegel inserts an excursus (SL 11.246, 24–247, 33/343), which introduces the skeptical conception of the phenomenon and the idealistic conception of appearance as two variants of shine. The first makes no claim to truth whatsoever; the second denigrates appearances because it does

¹⁵ *Translator’s note*: see note 11.

not “permit itself to regard cognitions as a knowledge of the thing-in-itself” (SL 11.246, 27f./343). Its character as being is located entirely in its “connection with the subject” (SL 11.246, 26f./343). At the same time, these conceptions ascribe determinations to essence ‘*immediately*’ (SL 11.247, 1/343), and thus the determinations are not acknowledged as products of the subject. Neither shine nor the subject is viewed as bringing forth these determinacies. Hegel diagnoses what is wrong with these conceptions as consisting in the fact that neither shine nor the subject counts as the “generating and controlling force” (SL 11.247, 13/343) which posits the determinacies of shine as its determinations. Even Fichte, whose conception of self-consciousness manages to avoid the idea of a thing-in-itself, requires a passive element: ‘the infinite obstacle’ (SL 11.247, 17f./343) does not come from the spontaneity of the ‘I’, so that, for Fichte, there remains an ‘external-ity’ (SL 11.247, 20/343) to be sublated in self-consciousness. For this reason, according to Hegel, Fichte’s conception of self-consciousness entails “an immediate non-being of it” (SL 11.247, 23f./343).

In the first step of the explication, shine is determined as “all that remains of the sphere of being” (SL 11.246, 12/342). Standing in opposition to essence, it still “seems [*scheint*]” (SL 11.246, 13/342) to have “an immediate side which is independent of essence” (SL 11.246, 13f./342). With its potency thus diminished, shine is left “only the pure moment of non-existence” because the errors of the model of determinate being [*Dasein*] have turned out to be the central shortcoming of the conception of the essential and the unessential. Hegel characterizes the independence that results from an externally induced absolute loss of potency as ‘*reflected immediacy*’ (SL 11.246, 21/342). This is because the independence of shine *qua* immediacy “has determinate being only with reference to another, in its non-determinate being [*Nichtdasein*]” (SL 11.246, 18f./342).

On Hegel’s conception of essence, the autonomous self-referentiality of the ‘I’ is thus characterized as absolute negation in the sense of a self-determination that stems only from itself. Hegel thereby also delineates what is to be proven next: because shine is already determined as ‘non-determinate being [*Nichtdasein*]’ (SL 11.246, 17/342), the task is now “not to demonstrate that it sublates itself” (SL 11.247, 26/343), but rather the “task is to demonstrate that the determinations which distinguish it from essence are the determinations of essence itself” (SL 11.247, 28f./343). This is one of the adequacy conditions for the development to come; furthermore, the essence’s character as being-in-and-for-itself needs to be preserved. The second goal is therefore to show “further, that this *determinateness of essence*, which shine is, is sublated in essence itself” (SL 11.247, 29f./343–344).

The character of shine as being results from the ‘*immediacy of non-being*’ (SL 11.247, 31/344). This in turn arises from the fact that shine represents a structural feature of essence itself, ‘essence’s own absolute in-itself’. Thus the absolute mediation of essence with itself contains a ‘*reflected immediacy*’ (SL 11.248, 3/344) and thereby ‘being as [a] moment’ (SL 11.248, 5/344). Shine is therefore a structural feature of essence, not something distinct from it in the manner of shine (in the way that appearance as the way of the thing-in-itself being given for us might be). Shine is instead the ‘*shine of essence itself*’ (SL 11.248, 11f./344).

Hegel shows how this determinacy “is sublated in essence itself” (SL 11.247, 30/344) in two steps: first (SL 11.248, 13–24/344) from the side of essence, and then from the side of shine (SL 11.248, 25–32/344–345). The determination that applies to essence immediately is absolute negativity, autonomous self-determination. It does not do justice to essence or this movement of essence to be, as immediacy, only *in* essence. Immediacy is, in Hegel’s considered opinion, itself the ‘negative or determinate’ (SL 11.248, 21f./344) as against the basic structure of essence. The indeterminate in this constellation thereby plays the role of being ‘absolute negativity’ (SL 11.248, 18/344). By taking over a definitive function of essence, immediacy becomes ‘negativity’ and ‘sublation itself’ (SL 11.248, 22f./344), for the completed act of determination negates the content of the act, namely the fact of immediacy. This relation itself thus has the structure of absolute negativity, so that it turns out to be structurally identical to essence itself. This determination is hence “a turning back into itself” (SL 11.248, 24/344). By presupposing an illusion proceeding from the immediacy of its structure, the fact-act (*Thathandlung*) establishes the total structure appropriate to it.

On the side of shine, too, we observe the same result: because shine, *qua* dependent, relates to itself negatively, it posits its dependence as dependence. This “reference of the negative or the non-subsistent *to itself*” is its ‘*immediacy*’ (SL 11.248, 28f./344), because shine has here precisely the character of being, namely the character of having determinateness “over against it” (SL 11.248, 30/345) and thereby having “an other than it” (SL 11.248, 29f./344) in opposition to it. The object constituted in the fact-act, determined as the negative or shine, has the requisite diminished independence. Its being consists exclusively in essence’s positing this structure in-itself but not yet for-itself. Seen in this way, shine is negative self-relation, the “absolute sublation of the determinateness itself” (SL 11.248, 32/345) and thereby the realization of the structure of essence.

In the final paragraph of section B (SL 11.249, 4–18/345), Hegel identifies what is lacking in the conceptions of the unessential and in that of shine as consisting in the fact that essence is “taken at first as an *immediate*” (SL 11.249, 9f./345). Having proven that we are dealing with essence’s own “shining of itself within itself” (SL 11.249, 17f./345), this deficit is lifted and we reach the structure of reflection within which essence for the first time achieves a conception of itself that is adequate to the Logic of Essence.¹⁶

11.2.1.3. Reflection

The structure of the first chapter of the Logic of Essence is reproduced in the construction of the subsection C, in which Hegel explicates ‘reflection’ (SL 11.249, 20/345). The first two levels of development, positing and external reflection, are inadequate

¹⁶ According to Hegel’s own methodological self-conception, it remains to be seen whether these deficient self-conceptions of essence can be shown to be necessary moments of its development. On this point, see Henrich, “Logik der Reflexion: Neue Fassung,” 229, who diagnoses these as “detours on the way to the concept of essence” [*Translator’s note*: My translation]. If they are not, then these sections, up to the initial development of a conception of essence meeting the essence logic’s standards, would either not form a part of the argument or else something added by the observer would be constitutive of the course of development as a whole; on this, see also Wirsing, “Grund und Begründung.”

conceptions of essence that are brought together and demoted to moments of determining reflection in the first adequate conception of reflection.¹⁷ From the determinacy of essence arises the following adequacy condition: it must give itself its determinations in order to transform its own determinacy, its autonomous negativity, from the mode of being-in-itself into the essence-logical mode of being-in-and-for-itself. By way of introduction, Hegel again attempts to provide an essence-logical account of the basic structure of essence, while at the same time preserving the moment of being in essence properly conceived. The movement of essence “*from nothing to nothing and thereby back to itself*” (SL 11.250, 3f./346) can be made intelligible using the model of self-consciousness. As autonomous self-determination, essence is the negation of being and at the same time an absolute, spontaneous beginning that proceeds ‘from nothing’. This connection generates the object of its reference, which is determined as a nothing because it is only an internal moment of essence itself. In this self-reference the identity of essence produces itself for itself because in pure negativity it refers to itself *qua* shine (i.e., in the form of pure negativity). Because, Hegel’s thinking continues, the ‘negation of nothingness’ (SL 11.250, 7/346) lies ready to hand, two aspects of being remain preserved: that it is a negation of nothingness and that it has immediate self-reference in the negation of shine. Properly understood, self-consciousness is essence as ‘this pure absolute reflection’ (SL 11.250, 12/346). Its task of bringing this being-in-itself to its own being-for-itself does not succeed until determining reflection, which thus counts as the first conception that is adequate to the Logic of Essence.

In the remark that Hegel inserts between the second and third steps of the explication, he clarifies how he understands ‘reflection’. For Hegel, the issue is “neither the reflection of consciousness, nor the more specific reflection of the understanding that has the particular and the universal for its determinations,” but rather “reflection in general” (SL 11.254, 23–25/350). With reference to Kant’s conception of the power of judgment, Hegel highlights the fact that reflection is “usually taken in a subjective sense” (SL 11.254, 7/350) or conceived of as ‘external reflection’ (SL 11.254, 36/350) in which a subject relates something particular to something general, the latter being taken as “the principle or the rule and law” (SL 11.254, 29/350). Even if reflection “applies itself to the immediate as to something given” (SL 11.254, 27f./350) and thereby lacks reflection’s essential character, Hegel finds something of lasting philosophical value in these defective models, which in his own system appear under the name of ‘external reflection’ (SL 11.254, 27/350). By treating “the universal, the principle or the rule and law” (SL 11.254, 29/350) as the “essence of the immediate” (SL 11.254, 30/350), this conception already implicitly contains “the concept of absolute reflection” (SL 11.254, 29/350). Nevertheless, this reflection remains deficient because it proceeds from “something immediately given that is alien to it” (SL 11.255, 3/350) and thereby conceives of itself as “a merely formal operation that receives its material content from outside” (SL 11.255, 4f./350). This passive self-interpretation of

¹⁷ This structure corresponds to the relationship between universality, particularity, and singularity that will be determined in the logic of the concept. This becomes especially clear in Hegel’s conception of the will in the *Philosophy of Right*; on this, see Quante, *Wirklichkeit des Geistes*, ch. 7.

reflection fails to recognize its own spontaneous character and considers its being-for-itself as a ‘movement conditioned’ (SL 11.255, 5f./351) by some content that is given in advance.¹⁸

Positing reflection : Within essence, shine preserves its “own equality with itself” (SL 11.250, 24/346), which is nothing other than the reflection of essence itself. Hegel calls this structure ‘absolute reflection’ (SL 11.250, 25/346) because essence only requires itself for its realization. Because the aspect of being in shine that constitutes itself via the negative self-relation of negativity (through the self-correspondence contained in that self-relation) is simultaneously the *negation* of the absolute negativity of essence, absolute reflection is determined as self-contradictory:

It consists, therefore, in being *itself* and *not being itself*, and the two in *one* unity. (SL 11.250, 29f./346)

Self-consciousness is accordingly faced with a self-contradictory structure. Absolute reflection is the ‘turning back’ (SL 11.251, 4/347) of essence determined as negativity from its internally generated immediacy. Hegel introduces the term ‘*positedness* [*Gesetztsein*]’ (SL 11.251, 7/347) for an immediacy that reflection cannot start from because it first comes into being in the act of reflection. In order to further explicate this structure, Hegel introduces the pair of concepts ‘*positing* [*Setzen*]’ and ‘*presupposing* [*Voraussetzen*]’. Because absolute reflection is fundamentally an internal structure, it cannot refer to something separate from it. This has the result that the immediacy which emerges must be a positing, a product of reflection. As equality of the negative with itself, positing cannot stand on its own. As an internal moment of the movement of reflection, it remains dependent on presuppositions made in the act of positing. The structure of essence only becomes actualized if an autonomous positing takes place whose presuppositions are posited with it at the same time. Since essence is being-in-and-for-itself, it can only presuppose itself (i.e., its structure) in the activation of its essence. Essence is not a substance but rather ‘self-movement’ (SL 11.252, 18/348) that takes place spontaneously and is not induced from without. Hegel characterizes this as ‘*absolute internal counter-repelling*’ (SL 11.252, 11f./348).

Positedness is a structural characteristic of essence in the double sense of being a negation (the result of a positing) and being an immediacy (a harmony with itself arising from this negation). Even so, essence is also determined in this constellation as “immediately in opposition to something, and hence to an other” (SL 11.252, 27/348). Absolute reflection is determined by the fact that something presupposed forms a part of its positing.

External reflection : Insofar as reflection presupposes “only shine, only positedness” (SL 11.252, 34/348), its determinacy as positedness brings to expression the primacy of

¹⁸ Hence this concerns not the epistemic activity of a subject, but rather a reflection that first constitutes a subject.

active reflection. This goes missing in external reflection; here reflection posits itself “as sublated, as the negative of itself” (SL 11.252, 36/348). This structure is robust, because the contradictoriness of the ‘one unity’ of absolute reflection is dissolved insofar as the conflicting determinations are split into two relata conceived as independent presuppositions, characterized by Hegel as ‘extremes’ (SL 11.252, 23/349).

By determining itself as external, reflection presupposes that the thing to be determined is self-standing. Determinateness then only counts as an ‘external reflection’ (SL 11.253, 15/349) placed on it by something else. Hegel justifies this fall back into the Logic of Being on the grounds that, within this constellation, the “negative is thereby sublated as negative” (SL 11.253, 7f./349) and reflection thus makes an ‘*immediate presupposition*’ (SL 11.253, 9/349) which it ‘finds’ (SL 11.253, 9/349) and from which it can proceed as reflection.¹⁹ This obscures the fact that the thing presupposed can play the role of a point of departure for reflection because it is thus posited through reflection (this aspect is only brought to expression in positing reflection).

If one also takes into consideration that the presupposition is, as a presupposition, itself something posited, then it becomes clear that what is immediate in external reflection, “from which it seemed to begin as from something alien,” exists only in “its beginning” (SL 11.253, 29/349). External reflection is thus at the same time “just as much the immanent reflection of immediacy itself” (SL 11.254, 2f./349–350). The result that reflection posits “essence existing in and for itself” (SL 11.254, 4/350) as its presupposition is thus achieved in itself, even if not for the reflection that is rooted in the model of external reflection. Reflection thus develops into determining reflection and for the first time attains a structure that meets the adequacy conditions of an essence-logical conception of essence.

Determining reflection : Determining reflection is hence “in general the unity of *positing* and *external reflection*” (SL 11.255, 19f./351), the unity of two conceptions whose strengths and weaknesses were complimentary. External reflection “begins from immediate being” (SL 11.255, 21/351) but presupposes that this other has the structure of essence. Unlike external reflection, positing reflection does not forget its own activity, but rather misapprehends the ‘presupposition’ (SL 11.255, 24/351) immanent to it *qua* essence. Hegel sees the shortcoming of positing reflection as consisting in the fact that, for it, this posited thing remains something ‘other’ than the movement of reflection itself. Thus positedness corresponds to being-logical determinate being, though since it develops within the Logic of Essence it has its immediacy only as a moment within reflection and essence. Thus positedness represents the ‘middle term’ (SL 11.256, 2/351) between determinate being and essence, because it ‘conjoins’ the two of them (SL 11.256, 3f./351).

Hegel now introduces the concept of a ‘determination of reflection [*Reflexionsbestimmung*]’ (SL 11.256, 13/352) as the further development of the conception

¹⁹ Hegel sees a fall back in this conception that he compares with the logic of essence (SL 11.253, 18, 20 ff./349).

of positedness. This conception arises by thinking of determining reflection as a unity of positing and external reflection. External reflection had already ascribed to the immediate, albeit implicitly, an internal essence-structure. This implicit ascription must be made explicit by the determination of reflection in positedness. Unlike positedness, the determination of reflection shows that ‘immanent reflectedness’ (SL 11.256, 24/352) is the aspect that ensures immediacy. The structural characteristic that implicitly preserved the independence of the object of reference in external reflection is now developed within the conception of a determination of reflection until that characteristic becomes the explicit basis for its own subsistence, that which “gives subsistence to it” (SL 11.256, 34/352).

11.2.2. The Essentialities or Determinations of Reflection

In the second chapter, Hegel develops the concept of a determination of reflection, thereby continuing his deduction of the central categories of self-consciousness from the first-personal mode of self-reference of the ‘I.’²⁰ The conceptual development takes place by showing that these “essentialities or the determinations of reflection” (SL 11.258, 2–4/354) have the internal structure that Hegel developed in determining reflection. Self-identity based on negation is what makes determinations of reflection appear as ‘*essentialities*’ (SL 11.256, 37/352) that admit of no further explication. Since determinations of reflection are also shine (insofar as they are posited), reflection here attains the status of ‘essential shine’ (SL 11.257, 2/352), which appears to be something that develops its content from out of itself. At the same time, in the conception of determinations of reflection, the prior conception of determining reflection has been completely “lost in the negation” (SL 11.257, 4/352), because the structure of first-personal self-determination is nothing other than the system of determinations of reflection.

The way that the determinations of reflection appear—as “free *essentialities*, sublated in the void without reciprocal attraction or repulsion” (SL 11.256, 36/352)—is in fact what is defective about them. For in the conception of a determination of reflection, the systematic connection of all determinations of reflection remains undeveloped, with the result that it can seem as if the individual essentialities each evolve in their content independently of one another. Furthermore, the relationship between self-determining reflection and the system of essentialities is neither explained nor integrated into the content of either of them.

In the third step of the argument, Hegel further develops the basic structure of the determination of reflection: on the one hand, it is “a non-being as against another, namely, as *against* the absolute immanent reflection or as against essence” (SL 11.257,

²⁰ Parallels to the first part of Fichte’s 1794 *Foundations of the Science of Knowledge*, in which the three laws of identity, opposition, and ground are derived from the fact-act of the ‘I’, are clearly visible here. On Hegel’s references to Fichte, see also Schmidt, *Hegel*.

18 f./353). Determinations of reflection are nothing other than products of the self-determining negativity of self-consciousness. At the same time, they achieve independence, since each determination of reflection is “reflected within itself” (SL 11.257, 20/353). Because both aspects must be held apart from one another as ‘distinct’ (SL 11.257, 21/353), their relation to their structurally identical counterpart, reflection, is only ‘*in it* [*an ihr selbst*]’ (SL 11.257, 24/353), not for the thing itself. This shortcoming is to be fully corrected by the development through the determinations of reflection: identity, difference (including the internal differentiation of ‘absolute difference’ [SL 11.265, 31/360], ‘diversity’ [SL 11.267, 8/362], and ‘opposition’ [SL 11.272, 17/367]), and contradiction.

In the first remark, Hegel brings out the specific difference between the being-logical understanding of a ‘determinacy of being’ (SL 11.259, 6/355) and the determinations of reflection. While the former are, as qualities, a ‘transition into the opposite’ (SL 11.259, 6 f./355), the determinations of reflection claim to be independent because they possess the internal structure of reflection; they “consequently abstract from the determinateness of others” (SL 11.259, 17 f./355). At the same time, Hegel holds that the determinations of reflection are “to be regarded in and for themselves” (SL 11.259, 33/355) and are not to be presented in the usual manner as ‘*universal laws of thought*’ (SL 11.258, 23/355). His reason for this derives from the fact that they are partially independent. Taking a linguistic-critical turn, Hegel criticizes the ‘drawback’ (SL 11.259, 33 f./355) of such propositions, namely that they are grammatically expressed using quantifying formulations (“everything is equal to itself”; SL 11.258, 28/354) that “have ‘being,’ ‘everything,’ for subject” (SL 11.259, 34/355). Hence they are expressed in a being-logical way: “They thus bring being into play again, and enunciate the determinations of reflection (the identity, etc., of anything) as a quality which a something would have within [*an ihm*]” (SL 11.259, 36/355).

This falls short of the basic essence-logical constellation in two respects. First, the form ‘something is *p*’ suggests that “something, as subject, persists in such a quality as an existent” (SL 11.259, 37/355). Second, this being-logical conception of predication obscures the possibility of developing the relatedness of the determinations of reflection to one another as a system of internal relations. This is because, as qualities, they are decoupled from the internal progression of essence’s development. Against both of these, Hegel posits a conception in the ‘speculative sense’ (SL 11.259, 36 f./355), a conception in which essence “has passed over into identity (etc.) as into its truth and essence” (SL 11.259, 38 f./355).²¹ The ontology of essence is not an ontology of things, but rather one of autonomous self-determination; the determinations of reflection are not properties that the ‘I’ has, but rather modes of its reflection; the ‘I’ is not a substrate, but rather

²¹ In the second remark on the law of identity, Hegel makes the claim that “[m]ore is entailed, [. . .] in the form of the proposition expressing identity than simple, abstract identity’ (SL 11.264, 24 ff./360) (by which he means numerical identity): “Entailed by it is this pure movement of reflection” (SL 11.264, 25 ff./360), Hegel claims, bringing in his conception of essence. We can say with Wittgenstein that the form of this sentence shows more than the sentence itself says.

the activity that exists in the self-generation of the system of determinations of reflection, that is, the system of the development of the system's essence.²²

As self-consciousness, essence is 'simple self-identity' (SL 11.260, 25/356), which as a fact-act is "a pure production, from itself and in itself" (SL 11.260, 29/356). In contrast to numerical identity, which Hegel calls 'abstract identity' (SL 11.260, 30/356), this 'essential identity' (SL 11.260, 30/356) does not come about through "a relative negation preceding it [. . .] existing outside it" (SL 11.260, 31/356). Identity is thereby in fact not a determination that essence might have, but rather it is "in the first instance, essence itself" (SL 11.261, 25/357). In the act of first-personal self-reference, the object is constituted and at the same time identified with the self-relating, so that the identity is with "the entire reflection, not a distinct moment of it" (SL 11.261, 25/357).

Understood in this way, the identity is "immanent reflection, reflection which is such only as inner repelling, and it is this repelling as immanent reflection, repelling that immediately recovers itself" (SL 11.262, 3–5/357). Both the differentiation between subject and object and knowledge of their identity are constitutive of a self-consciousness; this self-reference constitutes identity via the sublation of internally generated 'absolute non-identity' (SL 11.262, 10/357). With this, the internally generated non-identity, as a distinguishable moment, stands opposed to the movement of the reflection of identity as a whole. Thus identity and difference, which both proceed from autonomous reflection, arise as mutually independent determinations of a structural whole.

Difference is hence developed as a second determination of essence and is determined as "the negativity that reflection possesses in itself" (SL 11.265, 32/361). As autonomously generated, it is 'absolute difference' (SL 11.266, 1 f./361) that does not come about through an external comparison. Hegel explains this second determination of reflection by way of three aspects: First, it is 'difference of reflection' regarding 'the other in and for itself' and 'simple determinateness in itself' (SL 11.266, 9 ff./361). In contrast to the sphere of being, however, it makes itself manifest not only "as the transition of a determinateness into the other"; rather "here, in the sphere of reflection, difference comes in as reflected" (SL 11.266, 17 ff./361). Second, Hegel claims that a moment of identity belongs to difference because of this internal structure of reflection, which makes it 'not itself but its other' (SL 11.266, 21/361). This other of the difference is identity, so that it is "therefore [. . .] itself and identity" (SL 11.266, 22 f./361). This structure, which one can also express in the formula of 'the identity of identity and non-identity', gives adequate expression to essence: "This is to be regarded as the essential nature of reflection and as *the determined primordial origin of all activity and self-movement*" (SL 11.266, 28 ff./362). Because difference and identity are thus determined in opposition to one another, both have internal reference to their opposite and, as 'positedness' (SL 11.267, 2/362), attain their own 'determinateness' (SL 11.267, 2/362).

²² It is surprising that Hegel buries this consideration, one that is so central to his entire approach, in a remark instead of presenting it as the introduction to the second chapter (this would still not make it an internal component of the explication, which, on Hegel's self-conception, it cannot be).

Owing to this moment of identity, both determinations possess an independence that Hegel explicates under the heading of ‘diversity’. Identity and difference no longer spill over into one another, as in the Logic of Being. Rather, in reflection, they can be taken as diverse things related to one another and at the same time stable in opposition to one another. One structure that preserves a facet of being is thereby identified in the Logic of Essence. The price of the stability of the determinations thus attained is, however, that reflection becomes ‘external’ (SL 11.267, 32/363); somewhat later, Hegel also speaks of “reflection [. . .] alienated from itself” (SL 11.269, 1/364). By contrast to ‘reflection in itself’ (SL 11.268, 10/363), which should be thought of as internal self-movement, ‘external reflection’ (SL 11.268, 16/363) falls short of its essence, which is to be ‘absolute reflection’ (SL 11.268, 17/363). It attaches diversity to the determinations in the manner of an external appendage, and it at the same time presupposes that the identity of the determinations is not affected by this comparison.

The identity thus diminished to equality is, however, like the difference demoted to inequality, unstable. Because external reflection holds these apart as different aspects or perspectives, it destabilizes what is supposed to be preserved, since both only achieve stability thanks to their internal relation to one another: “this keeping of likeness and unlikeness apart, is their destruction” (SL 11.269, 12 ff./364). There is a double failure in the strategy of avoiding contradiction via the epistemic self-interpretation of reflection as external. First, it destroys the determinations of reflection that were supposed to be preserved, those for which their relation to one another is essential and which “have no meaning outside” this relation (SL 11.269, 16/364). Second, the contradiction is only deflected into reflection itself, which simultaneously holds these aspects apart and relates them: “But it is this reflection which, *in one and the same activity*, distinguishes the two sides of likeness and unlikeness, by the same token contains them *in one activity*, and lets the one shine reflected into the other” (SL 11.272, 7 ff./367).

With this result, ‘determining reflection’ comes into play and “difference [. . .] is brought to completion” (SL 11.272, 18/367). Hegel calls this constellation ‘opposition’ and analyzes it as “[t]he positedness of the sides of external reflection” (SL 11.272, 27/368). The ‘moments of opposition’ are interlocked: equality is generated by a reflection that aims at inequality, while inequality is constituted by a negative relationship to equality: “Each of these moments, in its determinateness, is therefore the whole” (SL 11.272, 36/368). At the same time—and this constitutes their character as determinations of reflection—each moment is “the whole because it also contains its other moment” (SL 11.272, 37/368). Since this other is at the same time posited in this constellation of reflection as something independent, as “an indifferent existent” (SL 11.273, 1/368), ‘the whole’ becomes posited as “essentially referring to its non-being” (SL 11.273, 2 f./368). Both of these moments, conceived in this manner as a whole, are what Hegel calls ‘the *positive*’ (SL 11.273, 5/368) and ‘the *negative*’ (SL 11.273, 6 ff./368). The first is the successor of the moment of equality; the latter denotes the moment of inequality.

The positive and the negative are ‘simply *opposites*’ (SL 11.273, 37/369). That is, they are not opposed only in certain respects, but they are “*first, absolute moments of opposition*” (SL 11.273, 34 ff./369), which subsist ‘inseparably’ (SL 11.273, 35/369). Due to the aspect

of identity that lends them stability, both moments are also independent of one another, so that the determination of being positive or negative remains external to them. As ‘merely diverse’ (SL 11.274, 11 f./369), their role of being positive or negative can be ‘interchanged’ (SL 11.274, 15 f./369). As a “self-subsistent unity existing for itself” (SL 11.274, 27/370), each determination, which is able “to exclude” the opposite which is constitutive of it, is positive or negative “not just in themselves, but in and for themselves” (SL 11.275, 7 f./370).²³

In the remark to the section on diversity, Hegel had, looking forward, mentioned that by distinguishing aspects, the “contradiction is not thereby dissolved but is rather shoved elsewhere, into subjective or external reflection” (SL 11.272, 11 ff./367). With the positive and the negative, the first “*self-subsisting determinations of reflection*” (SL 11.279, 7 ff./374), the first ‘posited contradiction’ (SL 11.279, 27/375) is attained.

The positive and the negative likewise suffer from a contradictory composition: “the positing of both in *one* reflection” (SL 11.280, 9/375). At the same time, Hegel marks an asymmetry. Although it is “the same contradiction” (SL 11.280, 22 f./375) in both cases, the positive is “only *implicitly* this contradiction” (SL 11.280, 22 f./375), because it relates to itself as something identical. The negative, “on the contrary, is the *posited* contradiction” because, being something negative, it is determined to be “a negative which is identical with itself” (SL 11.280, 24 f./375). Essential identity has turned out, according to Hegel’s explication, to be the identity of identity and non-identity. The negative, it turns out, “is therefore the whole opposition—the opposition which, as opposition, rests upon itself” (SL 11.280, 28 ff./376).

The contradiction, however, is not stable but rather “resolves itself” (SL 11.280, 33/376). The first result that comes about in this way “is the *null*” (SL 11.280, 39/376), which Hegel refers to as “this internal ceaseless vanishing of the opposites” (SL 11.280, 27/376). Yet this ‘*first unity*’ (SL 11.280, 38/376), which shows up in this vanishing, only gives expression to the negative moment. Because the positive moment also forms a part of this paradox, this instability has a positive result: “It is this *positedness* [of the self-subsistent] which in truth founders to the ground in contradiction” (SL 11.281, 5 f./376). The second negation is thus not the return to the condition that was given before the first negation. The sublation of this positedness is “not, therefore, once more positedness as the negative of an other, but is self-withdrawal, positive self-unity” (SL 11.281, 32 ff./376).

Because essence retains its self-subsistence in this sublation, the opposition “has not only foundered” (SL 11.282, 1/377) in the contradiction, but rather “in foundering it has gone back to its foundation, to its ground” (SL 11.282, 2/377). In this movement, “*essence is as ground a positedness, something that has become*” (SL 11.282, 16 ff./377). And yet since it concerns the internally persisting movement of reflection, the ground of autonomous self-determination does not lie outside it: “Ground is essence as positive

²³ In the remark to this section, Hegel establishes a connection to ‘arithmetic’ (SL 11.275, 26/371) and the conceptions of positive and negative found there. For more detail on this, see Wolff, *Begriff des Widerspruchs*, ch. 5.

self-identity [. . .] and essence is ground, self-identical in its negation and positive” (SL 11.282, 33 ff./378).

11.2.3. Ground

With ground, the development of the determinations of reflection comes to a close.²⁴ Hegel opens this chapter with another extensive introduction and a remark. In the remark he draws attention to the proposition “everything has a sufficient ground or reason” (SL 11.293, 3/388), which states that nothing should be considered to exist “as an *immediate*” (SL 11.293, 4/388) but rather should be considered “as a *posited*” (SL 11.293, 5/388). Simultaneously, Hegel uses a reference to Leibniz as an occasion to introduce the distinction between the teleological understanding of ground (*final causes*; SL 11.293, 31/388) and the idea of “causality taken in its strict sense as mechanical efficiency” (SL 11.293, 20 f./388). The Logic of Essence cannot be about causality “in a teleological sense” (SL 11.293, 32 f./388). Rather, “taken one by one, the determinations are comprehended through their causes” (SL 11.293, 23 f./388), for which reason, Hegel claims, the “unity of the determinations” (SL 11.293, 28 f./388) cannot be attained, since for Hegel this occurs “only in the concept, in the purpose” (SL 11.293, 27/388). The principle of sufficient reason is thus conceived teleologically, and finds its place in the logic of the concept. On this reading, Hegel’s remark serves to keep apart the concept of a final cause from the essence-logical determination of ground.

The introduction to the third chapter recapitulates the development of essence through the end of the development of the determinations of reflection. Ground, which essence determines itself to be, is the last determination of reflection and only expresses the ‘determination’ that it is ‘sublated determination’ (SL 11.291, 17 ff./386). By determining itself in this way, it gives rise to the ‘true meaning’ (SL 11.291, 19/386) of the determination of reflection, that it is “the absolute repelling of itself within itself” (SL 11.291, 19/386). Absolute self-determination, as the essence of essence, is thus adequately realized through the positing of the essence.

In contrast to reflection, which as “*pure mediation* in general” (SL 11.292, 10/387) through shine continued to refer to an other that in its independence was not completely sublated, ground represents “the *real mediation* of essence with itself” (SL 11.292, 10 f./387). This “pure mediation is only pure reference, without anything being referred to” (SL 11.292, 16 f./387). The relatedness of the relata remains unstable and thus remains something external to the relating as an unsublated aspect of being. Ground, on the other hand, is “mediation that is real, since it contains reflection as sublated reflection” (SL 11.292, 19 f./387). The relationality of the things related thus contains its own

²⁴ Within the ontology of self-consciousness, the double-meaning of ‘ground’ (an ontological basis, such as a cause, on the one hand, or rational justification, on the other) need not be detrimental, because the distinction between ontological and epistemological aspects is not to be conceived as a dualism. The best commentary on this aspect of Hegel’s logic is still Rohs, *Form und Grund*.

immediacy, in which their self-subsistence exists apart from their being related. The relation thus manages to be a real relation between relata, whose relationality forms a part of their own determination.

11.2.3.1. *Absolute Ground*

Ground is “essence determined through itself” (SL 11.294, 12/389) and is for this reason absolute; but it determines itself “as *indeterminate* or as sublated positedness” (SL 11.294, 12f/389). This double role of essence leads to the constellation “of the *ground* and of the *grounded*” (SL 11.294, 16/389). In the case of autonomous self-determination, essence takes on both roles simultaneously. But each determination, and each self-determination, requires an identifiable content, something that essence determines itself as. Reflection is the structure of essence, though not a determination that essence merely has, but rather it is the activity in which it realizes itself. Hegel calls this structure ‘*form*’. Only in ground does essence gain the character of a substrate with determinations, and it thereby gains a self-subsistence that makes it possible to say that essence carries out the positing. Before the attainment of the reflection-determination of ground, there arises for the exposition the problem that one must describe the structure of essence in an inauthentic manner:

Essence *has* a form and determinations of this form. Only as ground does it have a fixed immediacy or is *substrate*. Essence as such is one with its reflection, inseparable from its movement. It is not essence, therefore, through which this movement runs its reflective course; nor is essence that from which the movement begins, as from a starting point. It is this circumstance that above all makes the exposition of reflection especially difficult, for strictly speaking one cannot say that *essence* returns into itself, that essence shines in itself, for essence is neither *before* its movement nor *in* the movement: this movement has no substrate on which it runs its course. A term of reference arises in the ground only following upon the moment of sublated reflection (SL 11.295, 7 ff./390).

Qua ground, essence is a substrate and “has form as essence” (SL 11.295, 17/390). Whereas quality “is one with its substrate, being” (SL 11.295, 26 ff./390), form has its self-subsistence over against essence, which is its substrate, and is “positing and determining” (SL 11.296, 11/391), while “simple essence, on the contrary” is the “indeterminate and *inert* substrate” (SL 11.296, 11 f./391). By determining essence, form sublates the distinction presupposed between itself and its foundation: “These distinctions, of form and of essence, are therefore only *moments* of the simple reference of form itself” (SL 11.297, 1 ff./392). If form is completely abstracted from it, “essence becomes matter” (SL 11.297, 11/392); at the same time, “form *presupposes* a matter to which it refers” (SL 11.297, 25/392). The contradiction consists in the fact that form and matter, presupposed to be self-subsistent, refer to one another in their self-subsistence and “*pre-suppose* each other” (SL 11.298, 36/393). Like symmetric determination of form and matter, “the original unity of the two is, on the one hand, restored; on the other hand, it is henceforth a *posited*

unity” (SL 11.300, 11 ff./395). As posited, this unity is determined; as a unity, a moment of self-subsistence pertains to it over against form, which Hegel refers to with the term ‘*content*’ (SL 11.301, 10/396): “Content has, *first*, a form and a matter that belong to it essentially” (SL 11.301, 21/396) and “is, *second*, what is identical in form and matter” (SL 11.301, 28/396).

11.2.3.2. *Determinate Ground*

In this constellation, ground becomes ‘determinate ground’; it not only stands in opposition to content generally, but also retains a determinate content whose ground it is. Since the content is what is identical in the opposition of essence and form, it occurs in two ways: “once in so far as it is *ground*, then again in so far as it is *grounded*” (SL 11.303, 15 f./398). But this only captures “formal ground” (SL 11.302, 23/397) because this is an analytic connection that relies on a presupposed identity of content. In his remark on this, Hegel therefore speaks of a ‘mere formalism’ and ‘empty tautology’ (SL 11.304, 12 f./399) and gives as an example the dispositional explanations of physics such as ‘*attractive force*’ (SL 11.304, 20/399). These are, according to Hegel, not informative, so that a philosophical question arises as to why “the explaining is not set aside and the facts are not taken as they simply stand” (SL 11.307, 9 ff./402). In an explanation, according to Hegel, one requires that “ground and grounded have a diverse content” (SL 11.307, 28/403), and thus one requires a real ground and not a formal one. The diversity needed “is therefore the *reference to another*” (SL 11.309, 2/404). As Hegel discusses in the remark on this section, from this structure there arises a ‘manifold’ (SL 11.310, 9/405) of determinations that can be offered as real grounds. A variety of ‘formalism’ (SL 11.310, 15/405) thus shows up again in this schema of explanation because no real ground can be a ‘*sufficient ground*’ (SL 11.312, 2/407).

11.2.3.3. *Condition*

The fluctuation between the formality of a tautology and the formality of the perpetually insufficient real ground shows that determinate ground cannot achieve the ‘totality’ (SL 11.314, 15/409) that is the aim of explanation. Because of this failure, the requirement to capture “the total ground-connection” must be weakened. Hegel introduces the category of the condition for the form of explanation that relies on this weakened connection. The real ground is now referred to another, to its condition. On the basis of its presupposed self-subsistence, a being is ‘indifferent’ to the determination of “*being a condition*” (SL 11.315, 10/410), so that the being at the same time “constitutes the *pre-supposition* of ground” (SL 11.315, 11 f./410). Thus arises the “contradiction, that they are indifferent immediacy and essential mediation, both in one reference” (SL 11.318, 10 f./413). The “absolutely unconditioned” (SL 11.318, 27/414), which Hegel later also calls “the *truly unconditioned; the fact in itself*” (SL 11.318, 17 ff./413),

is in its movement of positing and presupposing only the movement in which this *shine* [the relationship of condition and ground; MQ] sublates itself. It is the fact’s

own doing that it conditions itself and places itself as ground over against its conditions. (SL 11.319, 5 ff./414)

The fact is thus its own ground and at the same time its own condition, since, as something absolutely unconditioned, it has no external presupposition, but rather presupposes all of these through its own positing, by positing the very fact that it is posited. “When,” Hegel continues, “*all the conditions of a fact are at hand*, the fact steps into concrete existence” (SL 11.321, 5 ff./416). Because essence, as ground and condition, itself brings about these preconditions of its existence, the ontological status of being applies to them before their existence: “The fact is, *before it exists*” (SL 11.321, 6/416).

Just like a disposition is absorbed into its manifestation and does not remain behind as a substrate, so also the self-subsistence of ground stays behind only as a posited shine of essence determining itself:

If, therefore, all the conditions of the fact are at hand, they sublimate themselves as immediate existence and as presupposition, and the ground is equally sublated. (SL 11.321, 22 ff./417)

The self-positing fact-act of the ‘I’ brings essence to existence and is thus its own ground and its own condition. This “coming forth is thus the tautological movement of the fact to itself: its mediation through the conditions and through the ground is the disappearing of both of these” (SL 11.321, 26 ff./417). The essence-logical reflection-framework of positing and presupposing can be explicated philosophically. The autonomous negation completed by the ‘I’ generates in this act its own identity through difference and thereby posits the totality of all of its conditions, the complete system of determinations of reflection, in one act: “The coming forth” of essence “into concrete existence is therefore so immediate, that it is mediated only by the disappearing of the mediation” (SL 11.321, 27 ff./417). The free decision of an autonomous subject, which in Hegel’s view has the fact-act of the ‘I’ as its prototype, therefore must be conceived in its proper meaning as ‘the *groundless*’ (SL 11.322, 3/417).

11.3. APPEARANCE

If one reads the first section of the Logic of Essence as an ontology of self-consciousness in the sense of an *genitivus objectivus*, then a good interpretive hypothesis is that the second section can be read as an ontology of self-consciousness in the sense of a *genitivus subjectivus*. In this second section of his Logic of Essence, Hegel develops an ontology of the object in which the constitutive epistemic capacities of self-consciousness are contained in a form that becomes increasingly reflexive.

By the end of the first section, the self-mediation of essence (which vanishes in the constellation of ground and condition) has given rise to the category of existence

(*Existenz*) as an essence-logical successor of shine. The motor of this development is the contradictoriness of essence, which determines itself in ever more complex constellations through its autonomous negation. If this development at the end of the first section brings to light the aspect of being in the form of existence as a starting point, then two things are to be expected in the development of the second section. First, the aspect of negativity will again be expressed as Hegel works through the contradictoriness of the constellations that capture the aspect of being. Second, ontological constellations will arise in the course of the development that increasingly bring to expression the constitution of essence as autonomous negation.

‘Essence must appear’ (SL 11.323, 3/418); with this famous phrase, Hegel introduces the subsequent development of the Logic of Essence. In saying this, he claims that existence cannot be a stable endpoint for essence. The immediacy attained “is, *first, concrete existence*, and a concrete existent or *thing*” (SL 11.323, 22/418), yet it remains deficient: “The thing indeed contains reflection, but its negativity is at first dissolved in its immediacy” (SL 11.323, 24 ff./418). This is Hegel’s reconstruction of the ‘thing-in-itself’ (SL 11.323, 28 ff./418). But since reflection is constitutive of the Logic of Essence, this immediacy must become explicitly the result of a positing. In the first chapter, “Concrete Existence” (SL 11.324, 8/420), Hegel traces the “dissolution of the thing” (SL 11.336, 15/432) that takes place via this explication. Because the thing in itself and reflection (or the epistemic capacities of the subject) were related to one another only externally, the thing in itself became alienated from its essence:

It is for this reason also self-repelling thing-in-itself which *thus relates itself to itself as to an other*. Hence, there are now a *plurality* of things-in-themselves standing in the reciprocal reference of external reflection. (SL 11.328, 37 ff./425)

The determinateness of the thing-in-itself brought to light thereby is the “*property of the thing*” (SL 11.329, 39/426). And yet the thing-property ontology is also incapable of dissolving the contradiction between the ontological interdependence of the relata and their simultaneous self-subsistence. The things-in-themselves are differentiated through their properties, “not because of some viewpoint alien to them” (SL 11.332, 31 ff./429). Thus the “reciprocal action of things” (SL 11.332, 27/429) becomes their essence, which thus transitions from thing into property.²⁵ If these properties are thus reified as ‘matter’ (SL 11.334, 11/430), the fundamental contradiction returns. Furthermore, the thing is thus reduced to matter and thereby the “dissolution of the thing” (SL 11.336, 15/432) is brought to a completion.

According to Hegel, the thing-in-itself is determined as a ‘positedness’ (SL 11.323, 27/418) and thus as an ‘appearance’ (SL 11.341, 3/437) in this development. This “is what the thing is in itself, or the truth of it” (SL 11.323, 28 ff./418). Because this ontology of a “world of appearance” (SL 11.323, 30 ff./419) only arises as the result of the negation of immediacy,

²⁵ One can understand this as the switch from an ontology of intrinsic essences to an ontology that conceives of essential properties as relations; on this, see also Yeomans, *Freedom and Reflection*, 51.

as mediation, the reference to its other—to “the *world* that *exists* in itself reflected into itself” (SL 11.323, 31/419)—remains constitutive of it. Content applies here to both sides as an identical moment in the form of a law: “The law, therefore, is not beyond appearance but is immediately *present* in it; the kingdom of laws is the *restful* copy of the concretely existing or appearing world” (SL 11.345, 20 ff./441). It gives expression to the invariant structure—Hegel speaks of it as “unchanging” (SL 11.348, 31/444)—of the manifold grasped as a perpetual subject of change. It is not, however, only an external description of this, but rather constitutive of it as a law: “Law is this simple identity of appearance with itself” (SL 11.347, 12 ff./443). Thus laws are “the *determinate* ground of the world of appearance” (SL 11.351, 3 ff./447); and yet at the same time, “it is precisely in this opposition of the two worlds that *their difference* has disappeared” (SL 11.351, 13 ff./447). In the manifold of existence, the law is ‘*realized*’ (SL 11.352, 19/448) and its reality is to be a manifold: “‘World’ signifies in general the formless totality of a manifoldness; this world has foundered both as essential world and as world of appearance” (SL 11.352, 27/448).

The dualism of this constellation remains unstable and gives expression in turn to the contradictoriness of essence: “what appears shows the essential, and the essential is in its appearance” (SL 11.324, 2 ff./419). The tension alluded to through “to show [*zeigen*]” and “is [*ist*]” ends in a complex constellation that Hegel develops in the third chapter of the second section: “The truth of appearance is the *essential relation*” (SL 11.353, 3/449). From the very beginning, Hegel makes clear that it is “not yet the true *third* to *essence* and to *concrete existence*” (SL 11.353, 16 ff./449); this will be ‘*actuality*’ as “the unity of essence and *concrete existence*” (SL 11.369, 3/465). But the essential relation “already contains the determinate union of the two” (SL 11.353, 17 ff./449). It is, however, “something internally fractured” (SL 11.353, 29/449), because it is “a totality which, however, essentially has an opposite or a *beyond*” (SL 11.353, 26 f./449). The first constellation of this self-contradicting unity is the “relation of the whole and the parts” (SL 11.354, 28/450). In this constellation, “*immediate self-subsistence*” (SL 11.354, 33/450) and an essential relation to one another are features of both the whole and its parts, thus also of “their sublateness no less” (SL 11.354, 33/451). Then, in the “relation of force and its expression” (SL 11.359, 19/455), the dynamic of this essential relation is registered as the positing and presupposing of essence. Essence is thus “the truth of that first relation” (SL 11.359, 21/455) because the relation of both sides to one another is given expression as the activity of essence itself. The shortcoming of this essential relation is twofold. On the one hand, it consists in the fact that force, as a property, is conceived as a “*quiescent determinateness of the thing* in general” (SL 11.360, 26 ff./456) and thus immediacy’s character as being becomes once again dominant. On the other hand, force is the expression of the side of activity, and the other made available by its character as being can only be “*another force*” (SL 11.362, 7/457), so that one force “is reciprocally a *stimulus* for the other force against which it is active” (SL 11.362, 18 ff./458). The whole relation is therefore infinite in the sense of a relation of force that remains internal. The external relationship of one force to another is structurally identical with force’s self-relation. Force determines itself as a dynamic relation in the entire system of forces, whose “stimulus by virtue of which it is solicited to activity is its own soliciting” (SL 11.364, 16 ff./459). In the third

essential relation “of the outer and the inner” (SL 11.364, 23/460), the way that this difference is stabilized into a dualism also turns out to be unstable: “the two, however, are only one identity” (SL 11.365, 7/460). At the same time, the relation of inner and outer are determined in this essential relation in such a way that each, through its own structure, “points to the totality of both” (SL 11.366, 16 ff./461). The category that sublates the deficiency that essence is only inner, and the complementary deficiency that appearance is only the outer of essence, is actuality, the “identity of appearance with the inner or with essence” (SL 11.368, 36 ff./464).

The grammar of subjectivity, in particular in the form of self-consciousness, belongs to this day to the most difficult objects of philosophy. This holds both in the philosophy of German Idealism as well as in analytic philosophy. On the one side, this grammar supplies the basic structure of all fundamental epistemological conceptions. On the other side, the metaphysical aspect of this grammar is itself the object of various ontological interpretations. Hegel’s analysis of essence as internal reflection is one of the most rigorous analyses of this grammar of subjectivity. His conception has two main strengths: first, the approach operates at such a fundamental level that the distinction between the epistemological and the ontological dimension is itself conceived as an element of this grammar. Second, Hegel succeeds in unfolding the complexity of this grammar out of a single principle by means of a self-referential movement of the Concept.

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