also allow that the individual committed to the duties and virtues of modern *Sittlichkeit* can think of his ends and dispositions as rational, not just in the sense that they contribute to the realization of a community that makes his own freedom possible, but also in the sense that they contribute to the realization of a community through which God expresses and realizes himself. Finally, the civic humanist reading is compatible with the suggestion that modern *Sittlichkeit* enables the flourishing of certain contemplative modes of relating to God: it enables the freedoms enjoyed in the spheres of art, religion, and philosophy (*VG* 113/95, 124–5/104–5).

Most complex of all, perhaps, is the relationship between the civic humanist and historicist readings. The two readings share the view that it is possible to step outside existing institutions and practices in order to provide them with some rational warrant that can reconcile us to them. However, whereas the civic humanist interpretation locates this reconciliation in a claim about human freedom and the institutional conditions of its full actualization, the historicist reading (on at least one construal) emphasizes the ways in which modern institutions and practices are meant to resolve various problems and insufficiencies of historically earlier forms of community. Having said this, the civic humanist reading is in no way obliged to ignore historical themes that obviously are present in Hegel's thought, nor is it incompatible with one quite plausible way of reading a historicist story into Hegel's position. It need not deny the obvious truth that, for Hegel, history is rational and it is plainly consistent with Hegel's view that objective and subjective freedom appear at different historical stages and are jointly realized only in the modern European, or 'Germanic', world. Finally, the civic humanist reading is also compatible with the thought that the Hegelian view of freedom itself can ultimately be warranted only by reference to a historical narrative that draws out the ways in which freedom so conceived responds to and resolves the tensions in earlier attempts to formulate a foundational value. The civic humanist interpretation does not suggest a justification of freedom itself but only seeks to explain why Hegel posits an intersection between freedom as he understands it and participation in modern *Sittlichkeit*.

2

Freedom as Rational Self-Determination

2.1. *Introduction*

According to one of Hegel's most important formulations, the free agent is one who 'limits himself, but in this other is with himself' (*daß es in seiner Beschränkung, in diesem Anderen bei sich selbst sei*) (*PR* §7A). Citing Goethe's dictum that 'Whoever aspires to great things must be able to limit himself' (*PR* §13A), Hegel denies that an agent is free when he refuses to commit himself to any particular activity or relationship with others (to any 'determination'). Moreover, even when he does commit himself to some determination, it does not necessarily follow that he is free. For this to be the case, Hegel insists, the agent must be 'bei sich selbst' in the determination he chooses, a phrase that can be translated as 'with himself', 'self-sufficient', 'self-aware', 'independent', or even 'at home'.[1] Freedom, he sometimes says, is 'Beisichselbstsein' (*VG* 55/48).

The broadest question that can be asked about Hegel's conception of freedom, accordingly, is what this condition of 'being with oneself' amounts to. Under what circumstances am I self-sufficient, self-aware, independent, and at home, even while committing myself to some particular action or relationship in the world around me?

Hegel's most general answer to this question is that an agent is 'with himself' in some determination if and only if two conditions are satisfied: a *subjective* condition and an *objective* condition (*VPG* 529/447). Hegel's usual way of putting this is to assert that 'absolute' or 'concrete' freedom—the kind of freedom that one enjoys in 'being with oneself in an other'—consists in the unity of two one-sided forms of freedom: 'subjective' freedom and 'objective' (or occasionally 'substantial') freedom (*PR* §§144–7, 258; *VPG* 134–8/104–7,

[1] Hegel often directly characterizes freedom as *Selbständigkeit* (self-sufficiency), *Unabhängigkeit* (independence), *Selbstbewußtsein* (self-consciousness), and as being *zu Hause* (at home). For good discussions of the phrase *bei sich selbst* and its relationship to these other terms, see Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 45–6, and Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 114.

540/456; *VPR18* 219). An agent is 'with himself' in some particular determination if and only if he is both subjectively and objectively free with respect to that determination.

Hegel tends to emphasize two different ideas in explaining what he means by subjective freedom (he mentions both ideas, plus a third, at *PR* §25). In some passages, he connects subjective freedom with 'particularity' and the occurrence of subjective satisfaction in the pursuit of one's determination: 'The fact that this moment of the *particularity* of the agent is contained and implemented in the action constitutes *subjective freedom* in its more concrete determination, i.e. the *right* of the *subject* to find its *satisfaction* in the action' (*PR* §121). In other places, he attributes subjective freedom to the agent who reflects on his determinations rather than blindly acting on authority or trust, or unquestioningly following the conventions and traditions of his community: subjective freedom, he says, consists in 'the reflection of the individual in his own conscience' (*VPG* 135/105; cf. 308–11/252–4, 402/333; *PR* §§26A, 185; *Enz.* i, §81A; *Enz.* iii, §503).

Hegel is often not very specific about the precise character of the 'reflection' involved in subjective freedom, although, as we shall see, this turns out to be quite important to understanding his conception of freedom. The fact that he sometimes associates subjective freedom with the satisfaction one enjoys in performing an action suggests that the reflection in question may at times be as simple as stepping back from one's determinations and asking whether they can be endorsed on the basis of one's contingently given desires and inclinations. This suggestion finds further confirmation in Hegel's view that subjective freedom has an important role to play in decisions about marriage and occupation, since these are areas, he thinks, in which the individual's particular desires and inclinations ought to exert some influence (*PR* §§124, 162, 185, 206). In some passages, however, Hegel employs phrases such as 'infinite subjectivity' (*PR* §§104, 131A, 187; *LPR* iii. 340), 'subjectivity as infinite form' (*PR* §144), 'subjectivity as infinite relation to itself' (*VPG* 393/325), and the 'infinite greed of subjectivity' (*PR* §26A). Here he seems to have in mind a condition of *complete* reflective awareness with respect to one's determinations and the reasons underlying them, an awareness that does not stop at anything 'given'. He characterizes this more radical form of subjectivity as 'a unity excluding all others' (*VPG* 393/325), an 'antithesis within the subject itself' that is 'intensified to its universal, i.e. its

most abstract extreme' (*LPR* iii. 310), and an independence from 'every type of restriction whatsoever' (*LPR* iii. 109).

Objective or substantial freedom can be attributed to an agent if and only if the agent's determinations accord with reason, something that Hegel associates with the virtuous performance of the tasks and functions of a good citizen of the state: 'substantial freedom', he says, 'is the reason which is implicit in the will [*die an sich seiende Vernunft des Willens*], and which develops itself in the state' (*VPG* 135/104; cf. *PR* §§ 26A, 257–8). Whether or not a determination accords with reason, on Hegel's view, seems to have two aspects (see §2.3 below). It depends on whether the content of the determination accords with reason (for example, paying taxes, voting, etc.) and on whether the disposition that motivates the agent to pursue the determination accords with reason (for example, patriotism, love, etc.).

Putting this all together, then, Hegel holds that an agent is 'with himself' in some action or relationship, and therefore is fully free, if and only if: (1) the agent has both reflected on the determination in question and found some subjective satisfaction in performing it; and (2) the content of the determination, and the disposition that motivates the agent to pursue the determination, are both prescribed by reason. Another way of expressing Hegel's view would be to say that an agent is free if and only if his determinations are 'his own' both in the subjective sense that they are grounded in his reflectively endorsed desires and evaluations *and* in the objective sense that they are grounded in his own true, rational, or essential goals and purposes.

Obviously a striking feature of this view of freedom is its claim that freedom has what might be termed a 'particular content'. On the account that has just been sketched, one side of concrete freedom is objective freedom and this requires that the agent commit himself to certain determinate activities, relationships, and dispositions—ones that are in some sense deemed to be rational. Hegel's claim, in effect, is that one is really 'self-determining', or 'deciding for oneself', only when one picks certain particular options. When other options are selected, someone or something else is the determining agency.

As I suggested in Chapter 1, the claim that freedom has 'particular content' is crucial to Hegel's project of warranting the duties and virtues of *Sittlichkeit* by showing that they are required by the 'idea of freedom'. We can be confident that the duties and virtues of *Sittlichkeit* represent the content of everyday practical reasoning in

part because those determinations represent the particular content of freedom. It is thus of considerable importance for Hegel's project to explore whether the claim that freedom has 'particular content' is philosophically defensible.

One possible objection is that this way of understanding freedom has little or nothing to do with our everyday or 'common-sense' understanding of the concept. According to this line of argument, freedom, as it is ordinarily understood, is not tied to any specific actions, relationships, or dispositions but is open-ended: its content is not restricted or predetermined by anything but the agent's own empirically given ideas and purposes. Hegel's view might turn out to be philosophically coherent—so the objection goes—but it is not an exposition of *our* conception of freedom so much as an attempt to redefine the term. A second objection is that the view that freedom has 'particular content' seems to presuppose an untenable conception of human beings as split into two selves. It suggests a picture of the agent as divided into a true, rational self, whose unhindered expression represents full liberation, and a recalcitrant 'empirical' self, which needs only to be swept aside.

These two objections to the claim that freedom has 'particular content' point to a third apparent problem, which highlights the ideological danger implicit in understanding freedom this way. The suggestion that, in choosing certain options, an agent is not really 'deciding for himself' leads inevitably, it is argued, to the perverse and illiberal view that it is possible to force someone to be free. Once freedom is associated with a particular content, and the 'true' self is divorced from the 'empirical' self, then the concept of freedom may no longer be deployable against the oppressive exercise of state power but may instead offer a means of legitimating authoritarian rule. A final objection worth mentioning to the view that freedom has 'particular content' is that it seems difficult to reconcile with our practice of attributing responsibility to evil-doers. If the 'particular content' in question includes the duties and virtues of *Sittlichkeit*, and evil involves a violation of these duties and virtues, then how can we consider evil-doers free and therefore responsible for their actions?

For reasons that should become apparent, I will call Hegel's conception of freedom 'freedom as rational self-determination'. The aim of the present chapter is to develop an interpretation of freedom as rational self-determination. I shall be especially concerned to clarify

why Hegel thinks that commitment to certain determinate actions, relationships, and dispositions is an indispensable component of true or full freedom, why this is not simply a gross confusion, or even perversion, of our ordinary notion of freedom, and how Hegel might be defended from objections such as those mentioned above. My interpretation of freedom as rational self-determination involves two central claims. The first is that there is an important sense, for Hegel, in which freedom involves abstracting from one's contingently given desires and inclinations and acting on the basis of thought and reason alone. The second is that an agent guided by 'thought and reason alone' will have amongst his determinations the 'particular content' that Hegel associates with objective freedom. The present chapter will focus on articulating and defending the first of these claims, leaving a consideration of the second claim for Chapter 3.

If the interpretation I am proposing is correct, then it would be fair to say that there is a strong Kantian element in Hegel's conception of freedom. Like the position I will be attributing to Hegel, the Kantian view posits a fundamental opposition between an agent's capacities for freedom and reason, on the one hand, and his or her empirically given wants, desires, and inclinations, on the other. For Kant, I am free only if my will enjoys 'independence of all empirical conditions', an independence that precludes all reliance on a 'desired object', 'impulse', or 'inclination'.[2] To have no possible basis for one's activity other than the promptings of one's empirically given determinations, for Kant, is to be in a condition of heteronomy. Autonomy is a property of the will only in so far as the will is able to abstract completely from all of its given determinations and find a basis for action in the ends and duties to which it is committed just in virtue of its freedom and rationality.[3] According to Kant, to be able to regulate one's conduct in this entirely self-determined, rational way is to be subject to one fundamental principle—the moral law. A free will and a will subject to the moral law are thus one and the same thing.[4]

[2] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 29, 33–4. All references to this work are to the page numbers of the edition issued by the Royal Prussian Academy in Berlin, which are included in most standard editions. *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* is in vol. v.

[3] Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 440, 446–7. All references to this work are to the page numbers of the edition issued by the Royal Prussian Academy in Berlin, which are included in most standard editions of that work. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* is in vol. iv.

[4] Ibid. 447.

I suspect that for some readers a 'Kantian' reading of Hegel's conception of freedom will not seem terribly controversial. According to a fairly traditional view, Hegel agrees with philosophers such as Kant and Fichte about the relationship between freedom, reason, and desire and departs from the Kant–Fichte framework mainly in his insistence on a different account of the *content* of reason: where Kant, for instance, looks to a formal principle, such as the Categorical Imperative, to determine what reason demands, Hegel seeks to develop a richer, more concrete account of the ends and duties prescribed by reason, one that appeals to the 'ethical life' or 'customary morality' (*Sittlichkeit*) of the community.[5] As we shall see, however, several recent commentators have argued that Hegel has much sharper and more pervasive disagreements with the Kant–Fichte conception of freedom than this traditional view suggests and have concluded that Hegel's conception of freedom takes a considerably more accommodating stance towards the agent's contingently given desires and inclinations than is usually thought.

The view defended in this chapter is that, although this recent scholarship forces us to be careful in articulating the precise ways in which Hegel agrees and disagrees with what he takes to be the Kantian position, it should not lead us to abandon altogether an understanding of Hegel's position as having a significant Kantian dimension. For those who are convinced by the 'Kantian' reading right from the start, I hope that the chapter will none the less offer a precise formulation of freedom as rational self-determination, clarify the intuitive basis of Hegel's position, and show how it might be defended from some of the standard objections.

2.2. *Three Models of Freedom*

To understand Hegel's position *vis-à-vis* the Kantian one, the best place to start is probably the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right* (and the corresponding lectures). This represents Hegel's most sustained and philosophically sophisticated discussion of the concept of freedom and its relationships with reason, desire, choice, and so on. The text is difficult and obscure in places, but certain central themes stand out and can help us to situate Hegel's view.

[5] See Schacht, 'Hegel on Freedom', 297–303; Taylor, *Hegel*, 76, 82, 368–75; Inwood, *Hegel*, 477–83.

The Remark to §21 sets the issue up quite succinctly. 'It is only as thinking intelligence', Hegel writes, 'that the will is truly itself and free.' 'Thinking intelligence', he adds, involves a process of 'superseding' (*Aufheben*) one's desires and inclinations and 'raising [*Erheben*] them to universality' (*PR* §21). The exegetical problem that must be addressed for the time being concerns what exactly this process of 'superseding' and 'raising to universality' amounts to.[6] To what extent, and in what ways, does Hegel follow Kant on the relationship between freedom, reason, and desire, and where does he differ? As almost every Hegel commentator points out, the term *Aufheben* and its cognates are central to Hegel's logic and usually refer to a process of both cancelling (*hinwegräumen, negieren*) *and* preserving (*aufbewahren*) (*Enz.* i, §96A). Applied to §21, this would suggest that the agent's desires and inclinations are somehow preserved in the process of thought and not just cancelled.[7] We still need to know, however, in what ways an agent's desires are preserved and in what ways they are cancelled when he is free in pursuing some particular determination.

To shed some light on this issue, it is useful to step back for a moment and notice something about the structure of Hegel's discussion in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*. In particular, we can observe that in two separate passages Hegel quite carefully distinguishes between three different conceptions or models of the will that he has been considering (*PR* §§15, 21). He calls the first 'the will as determined solely by natural drives' or 'the natural will' (at *PR* §21, 'the will, as drive and desire'); the second the 'reflective will'; and the third the will that is 'free in and for itself' or which 'has being in and for itself'. For ease of reference, these can be referred to simply as *natural freedom, reflective freedom,* and *rational freedom* respectively. An examination of what Hegel has to say about each of these conceptions shows that there is at least some sense in which he is committed to an essentially Kantian view of freedom, reason, and desire.

[6] This issue is obviously just one instantiation of a more general interpretative problem arising in the context of Hegel's logic: the problem of what it is for some representation (*Vorstellung*) or desire given by experience to be *aufgehoben* by the process of thought. The general question is addressed by Rosen in *Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism*, 63–70. Many of the texts cited by Rosen in favour of what he terms a 'generative' reading of Hegel's dialectic help to reinforce the case I make in the text for a 'Kantian' interpretation of Hegel's position on the relationship between freedom and desire.

[7] Cf. Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism*, 101, and Pinkard, *Hegel's* Phenomenology, 273 n. 4.

An agent enjoys natural freedom when his actions and determinations are grounded in his drives, desires, and inclinations. They are *his* desires, as Hegel points out, and to this extent he is *self*-determining in following them (*PR* §11; *VPR19* 62; *VPR18* 216). The defect in this conception, in Hegel's view, is that it stops at something given from outside: it stops at drives, desires, and so forth, whose content is determined not by the agent but by nature (construed broadly to include the agent's social environment (*PR* §195, A)). In this deeper sense, it is not a model of self-determination at all but of determination by something alien. With the natural will, Hegel says, 'I am still not free. For the content is still not posited as mine, but is something given, as a determination of nature' (*VPR18* 216).

This argument leads Hegel to a consideration of reflective freedom. An agent enjoys reflective freedom if and only if he not only follows his own desires and inclinations but has also engaged in reflection and deliberation about which desire or inclination to follow (*PR* §15). Hegel intends this model to embrace a broad spectrum of different cases, from the agent who simply chooses which of his desires to follow (*PR* §§14–15) to the agent who reflects and deliberates about how to integrate his different desires and inclinations into a complete life of happiness (*PR* §20, A). Hegel clearly feels the intuitive pull of reflective freedom, associating it with Kantian *Willkür* and suggesting that it is 'the commonest idea [*Vorstellung*] we have of freedom' (*PR* §15; cf. *VPR19* 64). He is especially drawn towards the happiness model: 'In happiness, thought already has some power over the natural force of the drives, for it is not content with the instantaneous, but requires a whole of happiness' (*PR* §20A).

But in a deeper sense he holds that the reflectively free agent is not fully self-determining, because the material of his reflection and deliberation, the menu from which he chooses, is given by nature: 'If we stop our enquiry at the power of choice [*Willkür*], at the human being's ability to will this or that, this does indeed constitute his freedom; but if we bear firmly in mind that the content of what he wills is a given one, it follows that he is determined by it and is in this very respect no longer free' (*PR* §15A). Despite his preference for happiness over other forms of reflective freedom, Hegel explicitly includes the will oriented around happiness in this judgement: 'Happiness thus contradicts freedom; happiness has as its content drives and determinations of nature and as such they are opposed to universality in the form of freedom . . . With happiness I find myself in a circle

of dependency, in a situation of subjugation to change, a change which comes from outside. The principle of happiness is therefore in contradiction with the higher principle of freedom' (*VPR* iv. 138).

The third model, rational freedom, identifies freedom with thought and rationality: it involves the process of 'superseding' one's desires and inclinations and 'raising them to universality' that was referred to earlier (*PR* §21). The fact that Hegel *contrasts* rational freedom with reflective freedom sheds light on what must be involved in this process of 'superseding' and 'raising to universality'. This process must require something more than integrating one's choices into a rational harmony with one's other choices, desires, goals, and so on, for this is, roughly speaking, what Hegel means by happiness. It must, in some sense, involve a more *complete* abstraction from one's actual desires, inclinations, and so on, for not to do so would be to stop at something 'given' from 'outside' and this is precisely the ground on which Hegel rejects reflective freedom as a model of self-determination.

Hegel's distinction between reflective and rational freedom, and his clear preference for the latter, thus strongly suggest that he endorses some version of the Kantian view that an agent is fully free only if his determinations can be completely grounded in his own thought and reason and not at all in his contingently given desires or inclinations. It is not enough that an agent be able to ground his determinations in some degree of reflection and deliberation if in the end this involves stopping at his given desires and inclinations: by rejecting reflective freedom Hegel expressly rules this out. Freedom, for Hegel, requires a grounding in reason that goes *all the way down*: it is opposed to any process of determining one's ends that stops at contingently given desires and inclinations, even one that involves a degree of reflection and deliberation.

So attention to Hegel's distinction between three models of self-determination and a careful reading of what he has to say about each shows that there is an important sense in which he does endorse the idea of an opposition in free agency between reason and an agent's given wants, desires and inclinations. For Hegel, I am free in my determinations only if my determinations have their source in my 'thinking intelligence', and this means that they must not be grounded in any merely 'given' desire or inclination.

This picture finds confirmation in the many other passages in Hegel's writings and lectures that associate freedom with a struggle

between reason and desire. Consider, for example, the following characterization of *Bildung* (the process of education and socialization in which one becomes free (see Chapter 4 below)) as consisting in a process of 'eliminating' (*wegarbeiten*) and 'hard work against' (*die harte Arbeit gegen*) one's immersion in needs and desires:

> [Reason's] end is rather to work to eliminate *natural simplicity*, whether as passive selflessness or as barbarism of knowledge and volition—i.e. to eliminate the *immediacy* and *individuality* in which spirit is immersed, so that this externality may take on the rationality *of which it is capable*, namely the *form of universality or of the understanding*. Only in this way is the spirit *at home* and *with itself* in this *externality* as such . . . Within the subject . . . liberation is the *hard work* of opposing mere subjectivity of conduct, of opposing the immediacy of desire as well as the subjective vanity of feeling and the arbitrariness of caprice. (*PR* §187; cf. *VPR19* 63)

The same idea of an opposition between reason and desire is expressed even more bluntly in a number of passages in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. He says, for instance, that,

> Sensation [*Empfindung*], sensuality [*Sinnlichkeit*] and the drives are also ways of realizing the inner, but in the individual they are temporary, for they are the changing content of the will. That which is just and ethical, however, belongs to the essential, universal will, which has being in itself, and in order to know what right demands one must abstract from inclination, drive and desire, as from the particular; one must know what the *will* is *in itself*. (*VPG* 524/442)

And he frequently claims that there is an opposition between freedom, reason, and spirit, on the one hand, and 'nature', on the other, a term he often uses as shorthand for an agent's empirically given needs, desires, inclinations, and so forth. For example, he asserts that 'Man realizes his spiritual essence only when he overcomes his nature [*überwindet seine Natürlichkeit*]' (*VPG* 453/377), and he talks of spirit 'liberating' itself from the natural (216/174), making a 'break' with the natural (403/333), and 'negating' the natural (*tilgen*) (386/319). In his 1817–18 lectures on *Rechtsphilosophie* he claims that, whereas freedom is the 'foundation' (*die Grundlage*), nature is 'something dependent' (*ein Unselbständiges*) (*VPR17* 38; cf. *VPR18* 211). And in his 1824–5 lectures, he asserts that, 'Freedom does not allow itself to be mixed with nature, but wants to be alone and only recognizes nature as something that is entitled by it' (*VPR* iv. 80).

All of these passages have a strongly Kantian flavour to them: they suggest that there is an important sense for Hegel, as for Kant, in which one's freedom and reason are radically opposed to one's contingently given desires and inclinations and require something more than integrating one's desires and choices into a coherent whole.

2.3. *Hegel's Conception of Freedom: A Formulation*

There is compelling textual evidence, then, that Hegel does accept some version of the Kantian opposition between an agent's freedom and reason, on the one hand, and his contingently given wants, desires, and inclinations, on the other. But how can we square this with the interpretation of *Aufheben* suggested earlier and with the prominent anti-Kantian themes that can also be found in his writings and lectures? In one of Hegel's early theological essays, for instance, he argues that the divided Kantian self simply internalizes the bondage to positivity characteristic of most established religions, replacing obedience to external religious authority with obedience to an inner command of duty that remains alien to the agent's experience (*ETW* 211). In his mature philosophical work, Hegel goes on to develop a clear statement of the objection that the Kantian view of freedom and morality is incompatible with our understanding of action. Against a morality of 'duty for duty's sake', he argues that impulses, inclinations, and subjective interests are an indispensable condition of there being any action at all:

> An action is a purpose of the subject, and it is his activity too which executes this purpose: unless the subject were in this way [even] in the most unselfish action, i.e. unless he had an interest in it, there would be no action at all.—The drives and passions are on the one hand contrasted with the empty reverie of a natural happiness, where needs are supposed to find their satisfaction without the subject doing anything to produce a conformity between immediate existence and his own inner determinations. They are on the other hand contrasted with the morality of duty for duty's sake. But drive and passion signify nothing but the liveliness [*Lebendigkeit*] of the subject and they are needed if he is really to be himself in his purpose and its execution. (*Enz.* iii, §475; cf. *VGP* iii. 304–5/400; *VG* 81–2/70)

Hegel also thinks that the Kantian view of freedom underestimates the ethical significance of various emotions and feelings.[8] One aim of

[8] For a good discussion of this point, see Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung*, 15–19 and part I (especially sections 3–5). For the argument that Kant can go much further than is generally supposed by Hegelians in accommodating these kinds of

the doctrine of *Sittlichkeit* is to integrate dispositions such as love, honour in one's estate, and patriotism into a theory of freedom and into ethics more generally. Finally, Hegel's name is widely associated with the empty formalism objection. As we shall consider in detail in Chapter 3, he charges that Kant is not successful at explaining how the autonomous agent, abstracted completely from all of his empirically given determinations, would have any determinate reasons or principles of action left at all (*PR* §§133–5).

Considerations like these have convinced some commentators that there is a much more fundamental and comprehensive disagreement between the Hegelian and Kantian ways of understanding freedom than my observations above would suggest. Allen Wood sums this view up as follows:

> Fichte identifies the self with reason, so freedom is acting from one's own reason rather than according to the authority of someone else. Following Kant, he identifies the self more properly with *pure* reason, so mere nature is also other, including one's empirical desires and natural inclinations. To be absolutely self-active is to act solely from duty or respect for the moral law given by pure reason. British idealist ethics (especially Bradley and Bosanquet) carried on the Fichtean tradition, identifying freedom with the triumph of the active or rational self over the supine, empirical, or irrational self. Because the British idealists are supposed to be 'Hegelians', Hegel's name has sometimes been associated with such views in English-speaking philosophy. In fact, Hegel rejects this entire conception of autonomy along with the conception of self and other on which it rests.[9]

For Wood, Hegel's notion of rational self-determination treats an agent's empirically given needs and desires as constituent elements of the self that is actualized through rational self-determination. To be rationally self-determining in the Hegelian sense, an agent must strive to integrate his choices into a rational harmony with his other choices, his desires, and other aspects of his situation.[10]

This last proposal sounds a lot like Hegel's notion of happiness and to this extent, as we saw in the previous section, it is quite explicitly rejected by Hegel as a characterization of freedom. Having said this, it still seems important to try to reconcile the obviously anti-Kantian themes in Hegel's writings and lectures with the claim, being defended here, that there is an important Kantian dimension to

considerations, see Ameriks, 'The Hegelian Critique of Kantian Morality', and Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism*, 111–24.

[9] Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 44.

[10] Ibid. 49, 70.

Hegel's own conception of freedom. What is needed is a more refined formulation of Hegel's conception of freedom than I have so far offered rather than the wholesale suppression of the Kantian strands in his position. We need to interpret Hegelian freedom in a way that *both* acknowledges the opposition he sees in the free will between reason and desire *and* is consistent with the significant disagreements he took himself to have with Kant.

In formulating such an interpretation it is helpful to return to Hegel's distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' freedom as the two dimensions of full or 'concrete' freedom. An agent enjoys objective freedom, we saw earlier, if and only if his determinations are prescribed by reason and, more specifically, if and only if they have a rational content and are pursued from a motive or disposition that is appropriate, or reasonable, under the circumstances. Let us begin by asking whether this notion of objective freedom can be understood in the Kantian sense outlined above without conflicting with Hegel's objections to the Kantian position.

On the Kantian interpretation, we can say that an agent's determinations have a rational content if and only if the pursuit of those determinations by the agent *could be* fully justified by appeal to reasons that are independent of the agent's contingently given desires and inclinations. This interpretation of objective freedom, it should be clear, involves an opposition between reason and desire, since the criterion of rationality it invokes abstracts from the agent's contingently given desires and inclinations. But it does not raise the problems of motivating or explaining action that Hegel associates with the Kantian position, nor does it conflict with the idea that certain ethical feelings and dispositions have special value, since it does not say anything at all about the agent's *actual* desires, motives, intentions, and so forth, nor about the character of his actual deliberations or practical reasoning. We need not examine the agent's motives or intentions, or the character of his practical reasoning, to reach a judgement about the rationality of the content of his determination. We just need to decide whether the agent is pursuing an action or relationship that reason prescribes or not—an action or relationship that he has reason to pursue independently of what his desires and inclinations happen to be.[11]

[11] The Kantian equivalent would be acting *in conformity* with duty. See Kant, *Groundwork*, 398.

Hegel does, however, impose some requirements on the kinds of desires and motives from which one can act in different circumstances, and, as I suggested earlier, this is probably best seen as part of his notion of objective freedom. An important doctrine expounded by Hegel is that there are particular dispositions (*Gesinnungen*), feelings, and motivations that it is appropriate for an agent to have in particular situations. 'It is required not only that we know God, right, and the like, that we have consciousness of and are convinced about them', he says, 'but also that these things should be in our feeling, in our hearts. This is a just requirement; it signifies that these interests ought to be essentially our own—that we, as subjects, are supposed to have identified ourselves with such content' (*LPR* i. 391; cf. *LPR* i. 274). Within the context of the family, for instance, it is appropriate to perform one's duties with a 'consciousness of [marriage] as a substantive end' and a sense of 'love, trust and the sharing of the whole of individual existence' (*PR* §163). The member of an estate and corporation should have dispositions such as rectitude, honour, loyalty, and fellow-feeling (*PR* §§207, 253, 255) and the citizen should be motivated by patriotism (*PR* §268) and civic virtue (*PR* §273).

Hegel's characterization of what makes these dispositions appropriate or reasonable again invites a Kantian interpretation. It is appropriate to have a certain feeling in a particular situation, he says, if the 'source' (*Quelle*) (*Enz.* iii, §471) of that feeling—that which 'justifies' (*rechtfertigen*) the feeling (*Enz.* iii, §400; cf. *LPR* i. 272, 393–5)—is not itself some feeling or inclination but thought and reason:

> It is silly [*töricht*] to regard the intellect as redundant [given the necessity of] feeling, heart and will or even as harmful to them. The truth, and, what is the same thing, the actual rationality of the heart and will, can only reside in the universality of the intellect and not in the individuality of feeling as such. When the feelings are of the right kind, it is because of their determinacy, that is, their content, and this is only the case when the content is universal, that is, when it has its source in thinking spirit. (*Enz.* iii, §471; cf. *LPR* i. 273–6, 392–6)

An agent who reflected on whether it is a good thing, in certain contexts, to be motivated by dispositions such as love, fellow feeling, and patriotism could find reasons for so being that did not appeal to his contingently given desires and inclinations but only to purely rational considerations. When it is rational for an agent to have some particular motive or disposition (for example, patriotism) in this way,

then Hegel calls that motive a *virtue*: 'We call it virtue when the passions (inclinations) are so related to reason that they do what reason commands' (*VGP* ii. 223/204).

Once again, however, the Kantian opposition between reason and desire that is central to Hegel's account of what makes a feeling or disposition appropriate in a particular situation does not conflict with the objections Hegel makes to the position he associates with Kant. Hegel clearly rejects the idea, which he attributes to Kant, that an action can be motivated by reason or duty alone rather than by some inclination or desire of the agent. As we saw earlier, Hegel thinks that the doctrine of 'duty for duty's sake' not only makes it difficult to understand how there could be any action at all but also seems to underestimate the ethical significance of certain feelings, emotions, and dispositions. But the Kantian account of what makes a desire or disposition reasonable or appropriate does not conflict with these commitments. Hegel's point is not that the objectively free agent is motivated by reason but that he is motivated by a desire or disposition that it is reasonable or appropriate for him to have in the circumstances. This point is consistent with appealing to a 'criterion' (*Kriterium*) (*Enz.* iii, §400) of appropriateness or rationality that abstracts from the agent's contingently given desires and inclinations and looks only to pure thought and reason.

So Hegel's notion of objective freedom helps us to see how he can both posit a sharp opposition between reason and desire in the free will and still make certain strong objections to Kant's apparently similar position. A conception of reason that abstracts from all desire is the criterion for determining whether an agent enjoys objective freedom, because it is the criterion for deciding whether the content of an agent's determination, and the desire or determination that motivates him to pursue that determination, is prescribed by reason or not. And nothing in this idea commits one to thinking that a free agent is motivated *by* reason or to undervaluing the significance of certain feelings and dispositions.

Things become a little more complicated when we turn to subjective freedom. Subjective freedom, as we know, is attributable to an agent who reflects on the determination he is pursuing and finds some subjective satisfaction in pursuing it. The complications arise in trying to specify the exact character of the reflection involved here and in trying to relate it to Hegel's claims about reason and desire. As should become clear, there is no real danger of a conflict between

Hegel's notion of subjective freedom and his objections to Kant. But it will be useful to set out Hegel's notion of subjective freedom as precisely as possible in order to move to a summary statement of freedom as rational self-determination.

Some of Hegel's commitments seem to suggest that the actual reflection and deliberation necessary for freedom are fairly minimal. As we have seen, freedom in Hegel's view is most fully actualized by participating in the 'ethical life' or 'customary morality' (*Sittlichkeit*) of one's community, and this, it is sometimes argued, means that freedom is compatible with unthinkingly or habitually adopting the customs and mores of one's social environment.[12] Although there is some textual evidence to support this interpretation, the preponderance of evidence suggests that Hegel would not accept it and would instead claim that freedom involves a significant degree of rational reflective awareness.[13] In the Preface to the second edition of the *Science of Logic*, for instance, he writes that,

> The broad distinction between the instinctive act and the intelligent and free act is that the latter is performed with an awareness of what is being done; when the content of the interest in which one is absorbed is drawn out of its immediate unity with oneself and becomes an independent object of one's thinking, then it is that spirit begins to be free, whereas when thinking is an instinctive activity, spirit is enmeshed in the bonds of its categories and is broken up into an infinitely varied material. (*SL* 37)

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* he asserts that 'no truly ethical existence is possible until individuals have become fully conscious of their ends' (*VG* 91/77). And throughout his discussion of *Sittlichkeit* in the *Philosophy of Right* he emphasizes again and again how 'the good' and 'the universal' (the duties and virtues of *Sittlichkeit*) are present in the agent's self-consciousness and self-awareness (e.g. *PR* §§ 142, 146–7, 152, 257–8, 260, 268). He says, for instance, that 'the ethical character knows that the end which moves it is the universal which, though itself unmoved, has developed through its determinations into actual rationality, and it recognizes that its own dignity and the whole continued existence of its particular ends are based upon and actualized within this universal' (*PR* §152; cf. *VG* 91/77).

[12] See e.g. Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, 315–16.

[13] Good discussions of this point that I have drawn upon can be found in Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 217–18; Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 32–6; and Siep, 'The *Aufhebung* of Morality in Ethical Life'. See also Schacht, 'Hegel on Freedom', 299–300, who emphasizes that Hegelian freedom consists in '*self-conscious* rational self-determination' (emphasis added).

The importance that Hegel attaches to achieving a rational reflective awareness with respect to one's determinations is perhaps most apparent in the distinction he draws between the 'immediate' or 'natural' *Sittlichkeit* (which he associates with the ancient Greeks) and modern *Sittlichkeit*.[14] In both cases, individuals are assumed to have the 'right' ends (for example, serving their state) and the 'right' motives and dispositions (for example, patriotism). The difference between the cases hinges on the degree of reflection and self-conscious awareness that individuals have with respect to their actions and motives. Whereas, according to Hegel, the Greeks stood in an essentially unthinking and unreflective relation to the customs and mores of their community, modern Europeans refuse to recognize any demand or obligation as valid that they do not perceive as rational (*Enz.* iii, §503). 'While customs and mores [*Sitte und Gewohnheit*] are', for the Greeks, 'the form in which the right is willed and done, that form is a stable one, and has not yet admitted into it the enemy of immediacy—reflection and subjectivity of will' (*VPG* 308/252). 'Of the Greeks in the first and genuine shape of their freedom, we may assert, that they had no conscience; the habit [*Gewohnheit*] of living for their fatherland without further reflection was the principle dominant among them' (*VPG* 309/253). Although Hegel often refers nostalgically to the harmony and integrity of Greek life, there is little uncertainty about which of the two forms of *Sittlichkeit* he takes to be the freer: the Greek spirit, he says, 'is not yet absolutely free and not yet completed *out* of itself, not yet stimulated by itself' (*VPG* 293/238). It is only with the advent of Christianity—with its principle of 'infinite subjectivity'—that 'absolute' or 'concrete' freedom becomes fully possible (*PR* §185, A).

It is tempting to think that Hegel excludes actual reasoning and deliberation from freedom and *Sittlichkeit* because there is an important sense in which he does think of reflection as a kind of illness, manifesting the 'self-will' (*Eigenwilligkeit*) (*PR* §152; *VPR18* 248–9) and 'vanity' (*Eitelkeit*) (*PR* §139; *VPR17* 91) of the individual. But he is quite careful to point out that his objection here is not to reflection

[14] Hegel also associates 'immediate *Sittlichkeit*' with the mode of living of those belonging to the 'substantial estate (*Stand*)', in which 'reflection and the will of the individual play a lesser role' and the disposition is 'based on the family relationship and on trust' (*PR* §203).

and conscience as such but to the suggestion (which he associates with philosophers such as Fries) that the criterion for determining what is good or right consists in whatever principles and convictions the individual happens to find, upon reflection, in his conscience (*PR* §§152, 137–40; *VPR19* 124). It is the subjectivist view that something is good or right just because I have deliberated about it and am convinced that it is good or right that Hegel equates with 'self-will' and 'vanity', and not reflection or deliberation more generally.[15] There is an 'ambiguity associated with conscience', Hegel thinks, which 'consists in the fact that conscience is assumed in advance to signify the identity of subjective knowledge and volition with the true good, and is thus declared and acknowledged to be sacrosanct, while it also claims, as the purely subjective reflection of self-consciousness into itself, the authority [*Berechtigung*] which belongs only to that identity itself by virtue of its rational content which is valid in and for itself' (*PR* §137). The state, he says, cannot recognize conscience as authoritative concerning what the true good consists in 'any more than science can grant any validity to subjective *opinion*, *assertion*, and the *appeal* to subjective opinion' (*PR* §137). Nevertheless, conscience—as 'the unity of subjective knowledge and that which has being in and for itself'—is 'a sanctuary which it would be *sacrilege* to violate' (*PR* §137). For Hegel, then, reflection, deliberation, and conscience are always in danger of turning into the 'self-will' and 'vanity' of a private, self-validating reason, but, so long as they recognize an objective rationality in ethics, they remain indispensable components of freedom.

So freedom, for Hegel, does involve a significant form of actual reflective awareness with respect to one's determinations. But does it require that the actual reflection and deliberation of a free agent go 'all the way down'? Does it require, in other words, that the agent reflects and deliberates to the point where he actually perceives and understands that his determinations have a justification that is independent of his contingently given desires and inclinations? Or, to put this in language introduced earlier, does it require that the agent enjoy 'infinite subjectivity' with respect to the determination (a complete or full rational awareness with respect to the determination, one which stops at nothing 'given') or is it enough that he enjoy ordinary subjective freedom with respect to his determination (where he reflects on the determination and sees that it is continuous with his particularity)?

[15] See Siep, 'The *Aufhebung* of Morality in Ethical Life', 153: 'What [Hegel] rejects is simply the veneration for the decisions of conscience as being beyond criticism'. See also Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism*, 108–9.

It seems to me that Hegel wavers on this point. (A good example of the ambiguity in his position is the curiously worded *PR* §147.) There is, I think, a genuine tension in his conception of freedom between the emphasis on thought and philosophical reflection (which he always associates with freedom), on the one hand, and the desire to attribute freedom to ordinary agents living out the customary morality of their social institutions in an only partially reflective way, on the other.[16] Most of Hegel's explicit statements on the issue, however, somewhat surprisingly lean towards a full reflective awareness requirement. In a text quoted above, for instance, in which he suggests that 'the ethical character knows that the end which moves it is the universal' (*PR* §152; cf. *VG* 91/77, 111/93), the implication seems to be that the fully free agent in *Sittlichkeit* does achieve a full reflective awareness concerning the basis of his determinations and is not *just* reflectively attracted to his determinations on the basis of his particularity. And, when Hegel characterizes the concrete freedom achieved through citizenship in a rational state, he again insists that that freedom involves a rational perception and understanding that one's activity as a citizen has its basis in a 'universal' or 'substantial' interest (*PR* §§ 260, 268).

So let us now try to bring together some of these different observations and specify what the conditions are under which Hegel takes an agent to be rationally self-determining and free. By doing so, it should become clear just how Hegel can insist on an important opposition between reason and desire in the free will without running foul of his own objections to the position he associates with Kant. From what we have seen, Hegel seems to hold that the following conditions must be satisfied for some subject *S* to be rationally self-determining in pursuing some end *E* from a desire *D*:

(1) *E* must be prescribed by reason: there must be reasons for *S* to have *E* as his end that are independent of *S*'s contingently given desires and inclinations.
(2) *D* must be the desire that it is appropriate for *S* to have in the situation: there must be reasons to think it is appropriate for *S*

[16] For texts in which Hegel seems to play down the role of reflection in *Sittlichkeit*, see e.g. *Enz.* iii, §514 and *VPR17* 90–1.

to be motivated by *D* that are independent of *S*'s contingently given desires and inclinations.

(3) *S* must perceive and understand the rationality of pursuing *E* from *D*: he must be aware of the reasons for having *E* as his end and *D* as his motivation that are independent of his contingently given desires and inclinations.

Consider, for instance, the case of a husband who performs one of the duties of his position out of love for his family. Barring unusual circumstances, Hegel would, I think, hold that conditions (1) and (2) are satisfied in this case: the man would be performing an action prescribed by reason with the desire that it is appropriate for him to have in the situation. Whether or not he can be judged fully free would then rest on condition (3). If he performs his duties unreflectively, or with only a limited awareness of the rationality of what he is doing, then Hegel would rule that he is not fully free. But if, in addition to performing the right action with the right disposition, he has an awareness of the rationality of his activity—an awareness that does not appeal to any contingently given desire—then Hegel would judge that he is rationally self-determining and free.

Note that, although this account of rational self-determination does assert an important opposition between freedom and reason, on the one hand, and an agent's given set of desires and inclinations, on the other, it does not conflict with Hegel's rejection of the idea that an agent can be moved to action by reason. In the example just mentioned, for instance, there is no claim that the man is motivated by reason rather than his contingently given desires and inclinations: to the contrary, he is motivated by love. But this does not mean that Hegel is retreating to a very weak conception of rational self-determination requiring only that the agent pursue the ends prescribed by reason. Freedom as rational self-determination also requires that the agent have an appropriate or reasonable motive and that he have an awareness of the rationality of his determination: an awareness that he has a reason to act as he does, with the desire that he has, that is independent of his given desires and inclinations. Nor does Hegel's notion of rational self-determination conflict with his thesis that certain feelings and dispositions have ethical significance. Far from undervaluing such feelings and dispositions, or requiring agents to struggle against them, Hegel's idea of rational freedom positively requires agents to have them in certain situations. In some

contexts, enjoying freedom as rational self-determination means acting from a particular disposition such as love or patriotism that is reasonable or appropriate in the circumstances.

The problem with attributing a thoroughly anti-Kantian position to Hegel on the basis of his criticisms of Kant is that such a line of argument fails adequately to distinguish between the motivational conditions of freedom (where Hegel does take what he thinks is an anti-Kantian position) and the question of what the 'criterion' or 'justifying' consideration is in assessing the rationality of an action or motive and in deliberating and reasoning about what to do or believe. With respect to the latter question, Hegel clearly does endorse the Kantian view that rational self-determination requires an independence of one's contingently given desires and inclinations and an appeal only to one's own thought and reason.

2.4. *Freedom, Authority, and Desire*

My main objective so far has been to formulate the conditions under which Hegel is willing to grant that an agent is 'with himself', and therefore free, in engaging in some particular action or relationship. The upshot of the discussion is that freedom, for Hegel, entails a complex set of conditions involving both subjective and objective requirements. The agent's activity must be grounded in a process of justification that does not *stop* at his given desires and inclinations (even if it is *necessary* that he find satisfaction in his activity) but seeks a basis in pure reason alone, where this is taken to mean that his determinations need to be (*a*) prescribed by reason, (*b*) done from a motivation prescribed by reason, and (*c*) performed with a consciousness of their reasonableness.

In the remainder of this chapter I want to explore why Hegel thinks that this is a correct understanding of freedom and to argue that his account is more plausible than it might look. This task will have two main parts. In the present section the focus will be on showing how Hegel's conception of freedom as rational self-determination is connected with an everyday intuition we have about freedom: the idea that freedom and authority are opposed to one another. I begin by investigating and analysing Hegel's views on the relationship between freedom and authority and then proceed to argue that agreeing with Hegel about this relationship commits one to accepting at least a