18. I have no doubt that Davidson would resist it, since he tackles a similar charge directly in 'Actions, Reasons, and Causes'. He gives a variety of reasons why one who is capable of 'first-person knowledge of their own pains, beliefs, desires, and so on' may err, may not in fact have knowledge. Thus, for example, 'you may err about your reasons, particularly when you have two reasons for an action, one of which pleases you and one which does not. For example, you do want to save Charles pain; you also want him out of the way. You may be wrong about which motive made you do it [give him an overdose of the painkiller]' (Davidson, 1980a, p. 18). Davidson, famously, was neither empiricist nor Cartesian. I once said to him [*something like*] 'Your holistic position strikes me as Hegelian'. 'Oh God', he replied, 'Wherever I go some Hegelian pops out of the woodwork to tell me that. I haven't a clue whether you're right—and couldn't care less [*or something like that*]', which I thought was very funny.
19. 'Hegel's model wants to shift attention from the causal power of the doer as critical in my ownership of the act to what he refers to as "making the act my own," that is a recovery of it as one's own. The nature of agency will be understood in understanding the nature of this recovery; not in understanding some originary causal power' (Pippin, 2008, p. 153). And see further Pippin's footnote to this sentence (see below, Chapter 4, p. 63).
20. 'Further and above all, we must note', Hegel tells us, 'the *inadmissible application* of the relation of causality to relations of *physico-organic* and *spiritual* life' (*SL*: 562; *SW* 4: 707).
21. Note that in this passage of *SL*, '*Tat*' is translated as 'action' (in *PR* as 'deed'); and '*Handlung*' as 'deed' (in *PR* as 'action').
22. I insist, though, that foregrounding the issue of which reason actually moved the agent is not anachronistic. I agree with Pippin that '[Hegel] agrees that having an intention is a function of having reasons and being able to take up the question about which ought to be compelling, and so there must be a reason which explains why I ended up doing what I did among many other possibilities' (Pippin, 2008, p. 149; see below Chapter 4, p. 60). This follows from what Hegel says about the double indeterminacy of drives, desires etc. and the need for resolution at *PR* §12. (For discussion, see Knowles, 2002, pp. 37–40.) I disagree with Pippin's appended note: 'That there is a reason which best explains why someone did something does not, though, for Hegel show that reasons must be causes. So he is not bothered by the fact that phenomenologically it is next to impossible ever to distinguish "the" reason which could causally explain why the act was done' (ibid., n. 9). I agree that Hegel is impatient with the epistemological issue, but some correct reason had better be available if we are to describe the action sufficiently carefully to establish the agent's responsibility for it. Hegel's impatience, say at *PR* §124 R, does him no credit.
23. Pippin later suggests that this provisionality is quite universal: 'Hegel means to insist yet again on the merely *provisional* character of an agent's initial formulation of an intention, the "fact that he must learn from the deed, the developed nature of what [one] actually did"... "What I truly intended" can always only be formulated in a highly provisional, and temporally quite sensitive ways' (Pippin, 2008, p. 172).

4

Hegel's Social Theory of Agency: The 'Inner-Outer' Problem

Robert B. Pippin

I

The modern problem of agency is understood in a number of ways.[1] The most prevalent is: what distinguishes naturally occurring events from actions (if anything)? Sometimes the question is: what, if anything, distinguishes responsible human doings from what animals do? The most prominent approach has it that actions are things done intentionally by individuals, purposely, for a purpose. This is sometimes said to mean: acting from or on or because of an intention, although as we shall see this nominalization can be quite misleading. Or, of the many possible descriptions of some occurrence, it is an action if there is a true description which is intentional. If one follows Anscombe, this simply means that if you ask a person why he is doing something he can express this intention to explain himself, most often in the form of a reason. He does not (except in extraordinary circumstances) describe why he is acting in the way he might describe what caused his vision to deteriorate; instead he reveals something about his own relation to his psychological inclinations and aversions; his 'evaluative' relation to them, as it is sometimes put (see Frankfurt, 1988; Taylor, 1985b). His acting intentionally amounts to his having evaluated what he ought to do, and to be acting in the light of that resolution. (So animals act purposively but not '*for* a purpose' in this evaluatively affirmed sense.)

So far, so good. Hegel agrees with this approach. He agrees that without reference to a subject's take on what is happening and why, without reference to an inner realm, or a self-relation, we will not be able to identify the class of events that are actions. For example, Hegel explicitly makes the distinction so important in these discussions, between an action of mine and a thing done by me or because of me but not as an

action ascribable to me, and so as something done, but unintentionally. He calls this the difference between a *Handlung*, or genuine action, and a mere *Tat*, a thing done by me. (As in the familiar examples, I turned on the light and in so doing also I alerted the burglars. I intentionally turned on the light and so that is my action, but I had no knowledge (nor could I have reasonably been expected to have knowledge) that there were burglars about, so while I did alert the burglars, that is a mere thing done by me; I brought it about but only as a *Tat*. The only way to make this distinction is by appeal to the subject's view of what he is doing and why.)[2]

The next question is what is it to act intentionally, or from an intention. The question here is usually: how should the occurrence of some mental event be understood so as to explain various body movements in space? One answer is that such intentions are a special kind of cause, and their being this special kind of cause—psychological states like beliefs and desires—is what distinguishes actions. Actions are uniquely caused by beliefs and desires. Philosophers who believe this usually also believe that only causal explanation is, properly, explanation, and are usually compatibilists and believe that freedom is compatible with such causal status. Other philosophers also believe in unique causation but they insist that beliefs and desires don't cause actions; I do by 'an act of will,' a spontaneous act of resolve that can cause without being caused. This is the free will party, or incompatibilists or voluntarists or libertarians.

Things get very interesting at this point because Hegel is neither a compatibilist nor an incompatibilist in *these* senses because he does not believe that the relation between inner state and outer deed is a causal one at all, whether natural causal or could-have-done-otherwise causal. He agrees that the subject's attitude is crucial in distinguishing actions as such, and that the attitude at issue is an intention. He agrees that having an intention is a function of having reasons and being able to deliberate about which ought to be compelling, and so that there must be 'the' reason which explains why I ended up doing what I did among many possibilities.[3] The capacity to manage this deliberation about practical reasons in this way is the self-relation crucial to agency, an ability, as Hegel says, both to have and to stand above considerations experienced as inclining one towards and away from possible actions.

The thesis is that it is this self-relation (the self-relation that is supposed to explain actions as unique types of events) that cannot be understood apart from social relations; my relation to myself is mediated by my relation to others. What does mediated mean here? One sense meant by Hegel is fairly obvious. Practical reasoning is a norm-bound

activity (one wants to get the right answer about what one ought to do), and the norms in question are not themselves simply 'up to me'; they reflect social proprieties, already widely shared, proprieties functioning as individually inherited standards for such deliberation. Kant thought that there was at least one norm not so inherited and socially mediated: the form of pure practical reason as such, accessible to anyone by abstracting from and putting out of play contingently desired ends and attending only to such a form. It is well known that Hegel denied that such a norm could be either action-guiding or motivating, and thought that by contrast practical reasoning involved a responsiveness to social norms; that one deliberated qua 'ethical being' (*sittliches Wesen*), not qua rational agent, full stop.[4]

Secondly all agency requires the assumption of some act-description and some self-ascribing of intentions, and Hegel insists that we must treat the agent's own description and ascription as merely provisional. This is the most unusual and original aspect of his account. Hegel takes very seriously the fact that people can be wrong about their self-descriptions (wrong about what doing *that* 'among us' would be) and even wrong in their self-ascriptions, wrong about their own intentions, and he orients a good deal of his position from this fact. Both aspects are said to be subject to some sort of social 'negotiation,' some distinct form of social responsiveness and mediation before the initially indeterminate can become determinate, all such that you would not be doing that among us if the act, let us say, were not received as that, and you have not executed your intention successfully if others do not ascribe to you both the act description and the intention you ascribe to yourself.

It is in these senses that Hegel wants to tie together a self and other relation, and it is the latter set of concerns, the inner-outer problem, that I want to discuss in the following.

II

One obvious condition necessary for me to be able to act as a free agent, to recognize my deeds as my own, is that I must be able to 'know my own mind,' know my own standing attitudes, commitments, dispositions, preferences, and so forth, and be able to engage in some sort of reflection about the relative weight of various considerations, assess the degree of my commitment, understand which consideration ought to be acted on in any given situation, and so forth. Hegel may not accept the standard picture of individuals exercising an exclusively intra-mental deliberative faculty, but he clearly means to claim that there must be

some significant 'independence' of the subject from what she is merely inclined to do, that there is no causal or straightforward link between the experience of some such motivating inclination and an action. If actions are a distinct class of events, then explanations of why the action occurred must appeal to such psychological items *and* the agent's relation to them, and among the many things that happen because of me, if there are some that I can be held responsible for (i.e. if there are actions), it must be in virtue of such an appeal to the at least initially divided 'inner' life of the agent and the manifestations of these items in the 'outer,' publicly accessible world.

Now the unique features of all forms of self-knowledge have been an enduring theme in modern philosophy, and have been taken by many to lead easily into paradox and aporia. The situation is no easier in Hegel and is made even more difficult by some extremely unusual things said about self-knowledge and by what he claims about the inseparability of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world and other agents, even what he insists is a 'speculative identity' between the 'inner' and the 'outer' in action. (In his *Encyclopaedia Logic's* treatment of 'inner' and 'outer,' Hegel's predictable formula is simply: 'Hence what is only something inner, is also thereby external, and what is only external is also only something inner' (*EL* §140).)

As we shall also see, Hegel is going to make much of a theme quite prominent in much contemporary writing on the subject: self-ascriptions of intentions are not to be understood as based on observation; they are not reports of mental items. Such self-ascriptions must be understood to express a resolve; they do not report a mental episode or item that could then function as a discrete cause of a body movement. When I express an intention, even to myself, I am *avowing* a pledge to act, the content and credibility of which remains, in a way, suspended until I begin to fulfill the pledge. But at this familiar point (an asymmetry between first- and third-person claims, or common cause with Anscombe (2000, pp. 13–15) on 'non-observational knowledge'), Hegel veers off on his own.

In the first place it is clear that Hegel is out to re-conceive how we should understand the *temporality* or temporal extension of actions, how to understand their beginning and their realization, how to frame properly what is relevant to the beginning and what to the end or completion of actions. That is, he is asking that we in effect widen our focus when considering what a rational and thereby free agent looks like, widening it so as to include in the picture of agency itself a contextual and temporal field stretching out backwards from or prior to, one might say,

the familiar resolving and acting subject, and stretching forward, one might also say, such that the unfolding of the deed and the reception and reaction to the deed are considered a constitutive element of the deed, of what fixes ultimately what was done and what turned out to be a subject's intention. (The ultimate goal is to break the hold altogether of the notion of a moment of resolve or a moment of causal efficacy.) It sounds a bit strange to try to say that all of that should somehow be considered as more properly 'the subject acting on reasons,' the socially and temporally embedded subject-who-acts, but that is the position Hegel is advancing and that I would like to understand better. This is all connected with a feature often described as distinctive of Hegel's account of agency, but not yet, I think, well understood. Actions are *expressive*, not merely the unique result's of an agent's executive powers. What is displayed in what results (and the initial difficulty in, the social complexity of, determining just what is displayed) is thus as important to Hegel as any putatively unique causal path to those results. Actions both disclose what an agent takes herself to be doing (sometimes to the agent, and often obscurely and partially, never immediately) and manifest some normative claim to entitlement so to act, all in a way that raises to prominence an interpretive question in any action, even for the agent: *what* was done and *how* could it have appeared justifiable?[5] The answers to such questions do not lie in the mind of the agent anymore than answers to similar questions about what was made reside in the psychological states of the artist. Hegel's model wants to shift attention from the causal power of the doer as critical in my ownership of the act to what he refers to as 'making the act my own,' that is a recovery of it as one's own.[6] The nature of agency will be understood in understanding the nature of this recovery; not in understanding some originary causal power. Hence the famous Hegelian *Nachträglichkeit*, belatedness, in any account of both individual and historical meaningfulness.

Such a social picture is playing a major role in Hegel's objections to a causal or voluntarist theory of acting on reasons since the claim is that no individually conceived agent can be said to have a proprietary relation to what she has done, that she does not have clear title to just what it was that was done; the proper act-description partly depends on the established context of deliberation and action (what having this or that practical reason could mean in such a context) and partly on what intention and what act-description are attributed to you by others. If that is so, then no trumping priority can be given to the agent's own expression of intention; the true content of that intention can only be properly identified by relation to an act description that will involve

many pre-volitional conditions and it will have to be provisional and temporally fluid, unstable across time and experience, as it were.

This latter is probably the most counter-intuitive claim yet, because Hegel will not treat intentions as discrete states that can play the requisite causal roles in a standard causal model of explanation, but anyone who agrees with Hegel that there is something misleading in trying to understand freedom by attention to some unique *ex ante* causal power of a singular subject seems led into such a thicket. By the 'true content' of the intention, I mean to refer to the most complicating factor in Hegel's account, one already noted and to which we shall return in detail. That is, Hegel's account of intentions is oriented from the fact that any treatment of the subject's expression of her own intention must acknowledge that, however privileged first-person authority might turn out to be, agents can still greatly exaggerate both the degree of their own ownership of the intention (an experience of making up one's own mind could be evidence of the success of some interested group's efforts to control the way you view the issue) and they can exaggerate the degree of the commitment expressed in an intention; their self-avowal can be as much a fantasy-of-an-intention, rather than a genuine expression of resolve, even though the expression may be sincere. The best authority to ask when you are interested in what someone intends to do may indeed be that person. But being the best authority does not mean being an always reliable authority. I can also sincerely claim that I in fact executed the intention when that is not the case, and I can describe what I did in ways countered by everyone else in my social community. But the first 'individuality-qualifying' condition (the factors said to be relevant in what precedes the resolution and action) is also controversial on its own.

The relevance of the actual social world that precedes any individual resolution to any proper explanation of an action is a much better known aspect of Hegel's position. Partly this depends on claims in Hegel's ontology that contest, in extremely controversial ways, our usual intuitions about the ultimacy and self-sufficiently of the individual human agent and her isolatable, discrete psychological states. Partly this claim about the explanatory bearing of a range of prior social factors on the possibility of agency itself stems from the fact that Hegel has not separated what he considers the objective and subjective dimensions of practical reason, and so has posed the question as: what could actually count as reasons for a subject at a time in a given community to do or forbear from doing something? And this has the historical implication

already noted, although certainly not the relativist implications it might seem to have. What could count for Antigone as a reason to act could not *be* what would count in the same way for Cordelia in Shakespeare's play, however sincere and reflectively sophisticated both might be. And subjectively, it is also important to note the possibility of the consideration actually counting to a subject as justificatory, something we have to stand behind, not just cite or invoke (not just 'how we go on'). It is relatively uncontroversial that the degree of justificatory force possessed by some consideration is not something an individual subject grants or discovers by reflective activity alone. So to say that practical reasons must be 'actual' to count as reasons is not only to make reference to the objective, historical condition; it is also to say that the considerations must be able to be motivating or 'internal' reasons for a subject and cannot be merely or exclusively 'external' reasons. They can be said to become such internal reasons only by means of a process of complex socialization.

Indeed, Hegel's position is even stronger than this, although exploring its full dimensions would be a longer story. This is because being a subject or an agent is not treated by Hegel as an ontological or strictly philosophical question, but as an achieved social status such as, let us say, being a citizen or being a professor, a product or result of mutually recognitive attitudes.[7] This means just what it seems to: that different historical communities establish this status in different ways, and there is no truth-maker or fact of the matter they are getting wrong or more and more right. So for Hegel, the explanation of the fact that ancient authors do not seem to have what Christian metaphysicians call the will, or that British philosophy of the eighteenth century ties normative distinctions so much to the influence of the passions, or that Kantian moral psychology describes agency as paradigmatically the capacity to obey the dictates of pure practical reason, will all have to be explained in a way that is profoundly historical. This is so even though it is *also* the case that the attribution of such a status can, according to Hegel, be more or less successful or more or less complete. Various elements of the attributed status can involve internal incompatibilities and internally conflicting ideals that must still be overcome. As we shall see, Hegel thinks that there is such a defect at the core of a modern notion of agency *based on ontologically distinct individual centers of unique intramental causal powers*. He is especially concerned about the deep logic behind the notion of: inner intentions or resolutions causing external, publicly observable body movements.

III

But besides these reflections on ontology, on what counts as a satisfactory explanation, and on the objective dimension of practical reasons, Hegel also offers a basic critique of a common modern picture of agency itself, or how he wants us to understand the distinct logical structure of agency, what we have come to understand, he claims, as the 'inner-outer' relation. This introduces the issue of how the 'unfolding' of a deed in time and for others, *'after'* an agent has begun to act, is as essential a dimension of what makes agency agency as what 'precedes' the putative moment of decision. His richest discussion of the issue is in the second half of Chapter 5, on practical reason, in the Jena *Phenomenology*. There he argues that our conventional modern understanding of agency makes a distorting error by clumsily separating the inner intention from the outer manifestation of the inner, and so in trying to explain the action by reference to the isolated separate intention as prior cause, and it is that case I would like to examine for the remainder of this discussion.

The core claim in this critique is that we cannot determine what actually was a subject's intention or motivating reason by relying on some sort of introspection, by somehow looking more deeply into the agent's soul, or by some sincerity test. 'By their fruits shall ye know them,' Hegel often quotes, and he might well have added *'only* by their fruits or deeds.' Only as manifested or expressed can one (*even* the subject herself) retrospectively determine what must have been intended. And of course it seems a bit paradoxical to claim that we can only know what we intended to do after we have actually acted.[8] But there is little doubt that Hegel holds something like such a position. Consider, 'Ethical Self-consciousness now learns *from its deed* the developed nature of what it actually did...' (*PhG* ¶469); or, 'an individual cannot know what he is until he has made himself a reality through action' (*PhG* ¶401).

Or consider formulations, again from the *Encyclopaedia*, that go a bit farther:

> We are accustomed to say of human beings that everything depends on their essence [*Wesen*] and not on their deeds and conduct. Now in this lies the correct thought that what a human being does should be considered not in its immediacy, but only as mediated through his inwardness [*Inneres*] and as a manifestation of that inwardness. But with that thought we must not overlook the point that the essence and also the inward only prove themselves [*sich bewähren*] as such by stepping forth into appearance. On the other hand, the appeal which human beings make to inwardness as an essence distinct from the content of their deeds often has the intention of validating their mere subjectivity and in this way of escaping what is valid in and for itself.
>
> (*EL* §112A, translation altered)

However, as noted, the most concentrated and richest discussion occurs in the Jena *Phenomenology*. In the two last sections of Chapter 5 of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel attempts a sweeping, internal and quite unusual 'phenomenological' critique of the voluntarist position. He proposes to show various ways in which the relation between what the deed means to me, inwardly, as I intend it and given the reasons I take to justify it, can easily come to be experienced by such a subject as in some tension with the way the actual deed plays out, within the external, social world. This tension is also shown to be heightened by the way the deed might be construed by others or resisted by them (resisted interpretively, contesting the claim by the agent about what was done). Since all of this stems from an abstract and, he thinks, ultimately unsustainable strict separation between inner motive and external manifestation, Hegel goes on to investigate how this opposition might be resolved. And he engages in a wide-ranging exploration of literary and historical types used as phenomenological evidence, all unlike anything attempted before in the history of philosophy.

The relevant discussion begins towards the end of 'Observing Reason' when Hegel begins to introduce sweeping claims about agent and action that anticipate the rest of the chapter. The clearest early sign of what he is after occurs after his approval of Lichtenberg's joke about physiognomy, that the right retort to anyone who says, 'You certainly act like an honest man, but I see from your face that you are forcing yourself to do so and are a rogue at heart,' is a 'box on the ears.' He goes on,

> The true being [*wahre Seyn*] of man is rather his deed; in this individuality is actual [*wirklich*], and it is the deed that does away with both aspects of what is merely intended [*Gemeinte*]: in the one aspect where what is "intended" has the form of a corporeal passive being, the individuality, in the deed, exhibits itself rather as the negative essence, which only is in so far as it supersedes being. Then

> too the deed equally does away with the inexpressibility of what is 'intended,' in respect of the self-conscious individuality.
>
> (*PhG* ¶322, translation altered)

Hegel means here that the actual deed 'negates' and transcends that aspect of the intention understood as separable subjective cause, understood as the mere occurrence of a somatic desire or passion or inclination to act, as well as the idea that one's real intention can only ever be partly expressed in a deed, and so remains in itself inexpressible, '*unaussprechlich*.' Contrary to both views: 'the individual human being *is what the deed is*.' All such that if a person's deed, also called her '*Werk*,' is contrasted with the 'inner possibility' then it is the work or deed that 'must be regarded as his true actuality, even if he deceives himself on this point, and turning away from his action into himself, fancies that in this inner sense he is something else than what he is in the deed (*That*)' (*PhG* ¶322).

Finally, there is an implication about this position that Hegel eagerly accepts, but that raises a number of difficult questions, most prominently in the '*die Sache selbst*' section. For if there is *no* way fully to determine what an agent intended prior to and separate from the deed, if it's only and wholly 'in the deed' that we can make such a determination, then not only are we faced with an unusual retrospective test of the true intention, even for the agent, it also follows that we cannot specify the action wholly by reference to such a separate intention. What *I* take the act to be, its point, purpose, and implication, now has none of the trumping authority we intuitively attribute to the agent. In such an account I don't exercise any kind of proprietary ownership of the deed, cannot unilaterally determine 'what was done.'[9] This is, as it were, subject to contestation within some concrete social community, the participants of which must determine what sort of deed '*that*' *would be* in our practices, how our rules apply. My intention is thus doubly 'real': it is out there 'in' the deed, and the deed is essentially out there 'for others.' In describing agents who pride themselves on 'not caring what people think,' and for 'having integrity' and for 'believing in themselves no matter what the critics say,' and so forth, who believe that there is what Hegel calls a *Sache selbst* (an inner essence, inner fact of the matter, true meaning of what was done) determined by my subjective take, Hegel notes,

> ...in doing something, and thus bringing themselves out into the light of day, they directly contradict by their deed their pretence of wanting to exclude the glare of publicity and participation by all and sundry. Actualization is, on the contrary, a display [*Ausstellung*] of what is one's own in the element of universality whereby it becomes and should become the affair [*Sache*] of everyone.
>
> (*PhG* ¶417)

From the view point of such a Mr. Integrity, Hegel reports, this (the involvement of others) would look like 'flies' hurrying along to 'freshly poured milk,' busying themselves with another's business, but Hegel rejects this attitude and insists that with all action 'something has been opened up that is for others as well, or is a subject-matter on its own account.' Said another way, you may possess first-person authority about whether you have resolved to do something and about what you take yourself to have resolved; but that does not settle the issue of what you have resolved. Avowing what you intend to do still leaves the matter of whether you have truly resolved (or are only fantasizing), the degree of your actual commitment, and what you have in fact decided to do wide open. Practical attitudes about the future (intentions) require such a distinction and a way of resolving the issue.

In his discussion of moral consciousness, especially moral, subjective self-certainty in the chapter on spirit, Hegel, in a clear attempt simply to recall what he takes himself to have established in this chapter, remarks,

> The action is thus only the translation of its individual content into the objective element, in which it is universal and recognized, and *it is just the fact that it is recognized that makes the deed a reality*.
>
> (*PhG* ¶640, my emphasis)

He then recalls the discussion of *die Sache selbst* and distinguishes the difference between the naïve attitude of 'the honest consciousness' and the more reflective self-certainty of conscience.

(I note that Hegel has not claimed (and will not claim) that some consideration literally 'becomes' one's intention after one has acted, as if a mental episode 'comes to *exist*' after the deed, or that others 'determine' an agent's intention in this existential sense, all as if there is backwards causation. In the vast majority of cases, one's prior, determinately formulated intention unfolds and is expressed in actions taken to be just those actions by other agents. It is the possibility of this not happening in this way (or the possibility of an exaggerated avowal of some degree of commitment or some self-serving insistence on a socially rejected act-description) that interests Hegel and which suggests to him that this is

an ever present even if rarely relevant possibility and which he takes to show that there is no privileged role for the agent's formulation.)[10]

Further, if it counts as a condition of the successful execution of an intention that others apply the act description to the deed and attribute the intention to me that I attribute to the deed and to myself, what should we say about cases where the two come apart, cases where, say, the socially authoritative view of some deed is 'terrorist act,' but it is a massively unjust society, an apartheid state say, and many agents want to count the act as the legitimate resistance of freedom fighters? There are two Hegelian things to say about this but they are both book-length topics (at least), so I can just mention them. First, Hegel's picture of the conditions for such successful execution of an intention presumes a social dependence that has objectively come to embody the right relation between such dependence and independence. That is, his account assumes such a realization of mutually recognitive attitudes among agents, not the continuation of some version of the Master–Slave dialectic. (In his terms, the philosophy of objective spirit presented in the *Encyclopaedia* presumes the historical narrative that legitimates the claim to count distinctly modern institutions as the decisive (if still not fully complete) 'realization of freedom.') Secondly, Hegel wants to argue that in cases like the apartheid one, the unequal positions of the participants can be expected to result ultimately in the normative principles involved losing their hold, creating a kind of crisis, requiring incompatible and so untenable commitments over time, that unreason manifests itself in a unique kind of human suffering, visible in examples that range from Antigone, to Rameau's nephew, to the beautiful soul. It is part of the task of the *Phenomenology* to demonstrate this ambitious claim, but I cannot pursue that track in this context.

While there is a fairly standard sense in which you can be said to learn later aspects of what you intended to do that you did not know ex ante—as when you learn later that doing X unavoidably requires doing Y—the sense of revelation (often of self-deceit) and even surprise stressed by Hegel goes far beyond that. Correspondingly, he is not here just pointing to cases where a complex plan of action requires alterations in what had been planned as effective means, cases where one can say the basic intention remains constant or is reformulated in response to empirical discoveries and new, unexpected turns of events. There is nothing in any of the passages that indicates that Hegel wants to challenge any such commonsensical qualification on 'what I intended.' When Hegel says that it is the public deed that realizes and reveals what you intended, he leaves open the possibility that you may have been ignorant of what

that gesture or expression would mean in this context, may have been ignorant of what was necessary to realize the intention, how much more difficult than intended it turned out to be, and so on, and so in such cases you really did *intend* something that was *not realized*. What he is most interested in are not cases where ignorance of various relevant facts or unforeseeable contingencies explain why what was done ends up not being what was intended, but cases where I find out that, while I sincerely tell myself that I intend to achieve Y, I come to see that such an intention was 'empty,' cannot really count as my intention.[11]

IV

Clearly the most difficult problem Hegel needs to address is whether he can make any clearer what he means by such an *inner*-outer speculative 'identity' claim, whether he can especially preserve some intuitive sense of the 'inner' in this claim. What would it mean *not* to separate clumsily inner intention as cause and external deed as effect, and yet not wholly to absorb the former into the latter. (And all of this is not yet to mention the considerations advanced in the first part of this discussion: that what Hegel means by 'inner' is not intended to localize such possible grounds for acting in isolatable mental states, but also means to tie what becomes salient for an agent to the actualities of the social world in which he or she lives and not simply to the results of individual, reflective deliberation.) What would it mean, given all we have seen about inseparability, to remain true to the 'thought that what a human being does should be considered not in its immediacy, but only as mediated through his inwardness [*Inneres*] and as a manifestation of that inwardness'? (*EL* 112A, translation altered). (And this insistence on what Hegel calls the 'right of intention,' my right to have attributed to me only a limited range of the things that happen, where that range is essentially determined by my subjective take on what I intend to do, could be multiplied. All of this is so even if 'my subjective take' cannot refer to temporally prior already determinate intentions, conceived as states causally responsible for actions.)

Given these issues, we need to note that it is precisely this subjective side of things that Hegel most emphasizes in the *Moralität* section of the *Philosophy of Right*. That is, as already noted, it is here that Hegel most clearly recognizes there that there is a difference between an action, '*Handlung*,' a deed that can be attributed to me, and a mere deed, '*Tat*,' something that happened because of me (especially something I may have done voluntarily but not knowingly), but which cannot be

attributed to me as something for which I bear responsibility or *Schuld* (see *PR* §118, 118A). Further, this discussion also clearly shows that Hegel freely concedes that in the execution of some plan, any number of unforeseen and genuinely unforeseeable contingencies may intervene, and what actually happens and what I intended may come apart, and Hegel clearly does not want to hold me accountable, as if this outer contingent event necessarily manifested what I truly, in fact, intended.

That is, as we have already seen, in passages cited previously about the speculative identity of inner and outer, Hegel has no intention of collapsing inner into outer. That would be in his terms a non-speculative identity claim. More broadly, this subjective dimension is what Hegel calls 'the right of the subject to find its satisfaction in its action' (*PR* §121). This principle is of the utmost importance in Hegel's philosophy, since it amounts to his interpretation of the philosophical significance of Christianity, and therewith it is the foundation for his whole theory of the modern world. So, most famously, for the Greeks, 'customs and habits are the form in which the right is willed and done' (*VPG* 308, *PH* 252, translation altered) and 'we may assert' of the Greeks 'that they had no conscience; the habit of living for their fatherland without further reflection was the principle dominant among them' (*VPG* 309, *PH* 253, translation altered),[12] and therefore Greek ethical life 'is not yet absolutely free and not yet completed out of itself, not yet stimulated by itself' (*VPG* 293, *PH* 238, translation altered).

It is this dimension of action, what the subject takes himself to be doing and why he considers that he ought to act in such a way, that Hegel calls the 'subjectivity that makes up the determinateness of the concept of right,' and so establishes what he calls the Standpoint or Sphere of Morality. In a way typical of Hegel, he clearly wants to do justice to this element of actions (as opposed to mere events), and to try to understand the normative significance of attention to this (partial but still crucial) aspect in our evaluation of action. Within certain conditions, a moral standpoint, a heightened attention to the subject's view of what she is doing, is appropriate and required. These conditions include the very general and broad entitlement of all to be treated with the dignity appropriate to free beings, beings with such an inner life, their own 'right of subjectivity' (we ought not to murder or rob anyone for our own gain, whether that person is a member of our *Sittlichkeit* or not; we are not entitled to ignore their claim to lead their own life as they determine it should be led). And the conditions under which such considerations ought to be attended to also include certain objective historical conditions. That is, by contrast with the usual claims for the

priority of a common ethical life and one's social roles within it, 'in periods when the historical actuality amounts to a spiritless and rudderless existence, the individual is justified in fleeing from this actuality into his inner life' (*PR* §138Z). Of course Hegel also clearly wants to understand the limitations of this context and these conditions. This means understanding what goes on when this one dimension of a properly described action is over-emphasized or relied on too exclusively, as in both his famous appeals to and yet intense criticism of the rule of conscience, '*Gewissen*'. (Already in the *Zusatz* to §108, he had noted the limitations of an *exclusively* moral standpoint; in §121 he reminds us not to forget the true identity of 'human self-consciousness' and 'the objectivity of the deed' and in §124 he both repeats the *Phenomenology*'s doctrine and alternate emphasis—'what the subject is, is the series of his actions,' and refers us directly to that book. In fact, read carefully, throughout *Moralität*, Hegel is constantly reminding his audience not to think that the *content* of the intention, however important and ineliminable such a subjective attitude is, can be determined apart from reliance on what was actually manifested in the public social world.)

Hegel then proceeds to spell out the dimensions of this indispensable but still limited point of view, the moral point of view on agency. I have the 'moral right' to expect that an action be attributed to me (that I be deemed 'responsible') only in so far 'one recognizes as the existence of this moral will only what amounts inwardly to a purpose' (*PR* §114A, translation modified). And he goes on to analyze the relation between purpose and responsibility, Intention and Welfare, and the Good and Conscience. (I don't have the space to follow him into this particular jungle, but Hegel's position can be very easily misunderstood if this distinction between a genuine action and something merely done by me is not stressed. We all know that a coerced action should not be counted as a proper action of mine; it is not even done voluntarily, much less intentionally, even if I, technically, produced it. If we live in an extremely repressive society, we might also discount an agent's degree of responsibility, concede that his public actions may not reflect his true 'inner' commitments because the public world is objectively such that she is not allowed such genuine expression. On Hegel's account however, it must also be said that an agent denied such scope for expression may not ever be able to know the 'truth' of his subjectively 'certain' view of what his commitments/intentions are. Like many of us, he must live in a state of suspension about whether he is actually the potential hero he might take himself to be. But our intuitions can then waver on this point. Direct coercion is one thing and is clearly

exculpatory; harsh repression and expected penalties are another and clearly diminish the degree of responsiblity; mere social discomfort yet another, until we reach what is simply the unavoidable cost of integrity, when the lack of fit between avowed intentions and action must count as evidence that the avowed commitments are mere wishful fantasies, not intentions exogenously denied expression.)

But I should also note one of Hegel's most important and controversial claims—both the priority and superiority of the standpoint of 'ethical life' to that of either 'abstract right' or 'morality.' What I have tried to emphasize is that nothing in Hegel's treatment of the moral standpoint suggests any tension with the *Phenomenology's* position on the impossibility of 'separating' 'inner' from 'outer' in understanding a deed. The *Moralität* chapter certainly cannot be used as an independent discussion of 'Hegel's theory of agency.'[13] If it were, Hegel's position would be misunderstood. Hegel is certainly conceding that it does not 'correspond to right' to attribute a deed and an intention to someone on the basis simply of what happens and a person's causal role in bringing it about. The moral insistence on the right of knowledge, the right of the 'satisfaction of subjectivity' (*Befriedigung der Subjektivität*) and so forth, must be accepted, and that means qualifying both the act description and the attribution of responsibility in the light of the 'mediation of the inner.' But there is no tension between the *Phenomenology* account and the *Philosophy of Right*, because Hegel is clearly separating two distinct questions: what role should the expressions of intention (and an agent's act description) play in a final determination of what was done and who was responsible and to what extent, and, secondly, how can we determine the content of any such intention? The latter involves not only the interpretive task of knowing what doing this or that would mean in our community, but how to understand the relation between what you actually did and what was thereby expressed as your real intention, regardless of your own avowals. These are obviously not easy tasks and they are subject to much abuse.

If this is correct, it means that something like the presence of the subject in the deed must be understood carefully in order to grasp Hegel's full position. Obviously in this account, sustaining a purposeful activity over time, reacting in ways considered appropriate to obstacles, challenges, unforeseen circumstances, and so on is being treated here as a norm-bound or rule-following activity. Individuals are not formulating intentions (in consideration of such norms) in some solipsistic way, and they are clearly circumscribed in such formulations by a variety of

social conventions, proprieties, and so forth. One aspect of the successful execution of an intention has to involve having attributed to you by others the intention that you take yourself to have, and, given the role of the intention in any act-description, by an agreement about what it is you did.[14] And this criterion presupposes, as the execution of intention unfolds over time, an intentionally sustained sensitivity to such shared understanding and normative appropriateness. You may intend to signal in a meeting that you wish to speak and so raise your hand. But if in that society, raising one's hand expresses that one is communing with one's ancestors and wishes to be left alone, then you did not signal anything and so cannot be said to have realized the intention of signaling. (If an intention is a subjective resolution that can be manifested in a deed, then you cannot successfully intend what cannot be expressed in a deed in that context, although you can imagine what it would be to realize such an expression and in a self-deluded fantasy take yourself to have done so. But you cannot *intend* to become Napoleon. You cannot intend to float three feet in the air, and then blame gravity for thwarting what you truly intended.)[15] And as these passages about the right of subjectivity indicate, *you* also cannot be said to have 'actually' manifested a communion with your ancestors. (You didn't know that such a gesture would mean that in such a context.) Or so Hegel wants his inner-outer dialectic to work.

Put one final way, Hegel is clearly embracing the common-sense position that intentions matter a great deal in what may be properly attributable to another as his or her deed and in our evaluations. And he has no problem with the view that such intentions could be beliefs about what outcome will occur if an agent acts a certain way, desires about what outcomes should occur, and perhaps even desire-independent beliefs about what ought to occur. But within the fabulations and fantasies and wish-fulfillments of daily life, we often do not know what we really believe and desire in any of these senses, and won't really know until called on to act.

V

I turn finally, and too briefly, to an underlying issue: the right way to express the 'persistence of subjectivity' in the account I have ascribed to Hegel. The subjective dimensions of Hegel's account of objective *Geist* that we have seen so far are not manifestations of individual beliefs readily available to conscious inspection, although they can be. They can just as well be and mostly are, deeply implicit, habitual and

largely unchallengeable. But they are not *wholly* unchallengeable, and so the clearest manifestations of the kind of subjectivity manifest in such commitments occur when Hegel discusses the actual or imminent breakdown of such proprieties, challenges within normative practices that cannot be resolved in terms of such norms. So Antigone does not just mindlessly 'act out' the role of what a sister does. When that role must be integrated with the ethical life of the polis, when she is challenged on that basis, Antigone's being a sister has to become 'a view' that she *holds* against other possible views, the prudence of Ismene, and the opposition of Creon. It would be easy to imagine a confused Antigone, absolutely certain she must do what a sister must, but bewildered by the opposition of Creon and the hesitance of Ismene, acting only 'on faith.' But this not what Antigone's near-fanatical *assertion* of her role involves. So, it is in such moments of crisis and breakdown that the character of these roles as commitments can come into view and can require addressing as norms. This doesn't mean that there is always available to subjects a kind of Socratic independence, that a form of 'reflective endorsement' is always on offer in a way we can be said to be responsible for not taking up. The subjective and the objective are far more tightly linked than that in Hegel, and is fair enough already to say that the emergence of such a dimension of subjectivity is itself, also, an essentially objective, historical phenomenon. (As is well known, Hegel treats Socrates himself as a manifestation of an *objective* crisis in the Greek polis.)

And we would need a consideration of any number of other examples in Hegel's attempt to form a typological and narrative account of such experiences of dissatisfaction, before his understanding of how this phenomenon of 'negation,' not finding anymore that the external circumstances, roles, and events provide the reasons they once did, is supposed to work. That would require among other things a re-reading of the *Phenomenology* with such a question in mind, but at least we would then be on the way towards understanding a number of Hegel's most influential and important claims: that history (what has been done and what is expressed in what has been done) is not merely illustrative but essential in human self-knowledge; that the principles of a regime, perhaps its constitutional principles, are only provisional expressions of commitments, its actual commitments are expressed in what is actually done (the beginning here of 'ideology critique'); the otherwise mysterious but much-cited claim by Hegel that we can only understand human doings and makings when they are over, that philosophy comes on the scene too late, that the Owl of Minerva takes flight only at dusk; and perhaps above all, why Hegel finds both an ethics of intention and

an ethics of consequences so one-sided and unsatisfactory,[16] and how he proposes to defend a concept of freedom that involves neither the inevitable unfolding of who one happens to be nor the spontaneous initiation of who one wills to be.

Notes

1. This paper is a revised form of what now appears as Chapter 7 in (Pippin, 2008).
2. This distinction is made late in Hegel's career, later than the Jena *Phenomenology* anyway, in *PR* §118A. But even here, having made the *Handlung/Tat* distinction, Hegel does not strictly observe it and uses both *Handlung* and *Tat* to refer to what properly are actions. I will follow him in this imprecision, referring unsystematically either to actions or deeds, delineating *mere* 'things brought about by me' only when necessary.
3. That there is a reason which best explains why someone did something does not, though, for Hegel, show that reasons must be causes. So he is not bothered by the fact that phenomenologically it is next to impossible ever to distinguish 'the' reason which could causally explain why the act was done.
4. What Hegel calls a *sittliches Wesen* has much in common with what has come to be called (after Margaret Gilbert, 1989) a 'plural subject.' See also (Laden, 2005).
5. Understanding Hegel on action as an 'expressivist' account obviously owes a great deal to Charles Taylor's path-breaking article, 'Hegel's Philosophy of Mind.' (Taylor, 1985a; reprinted here as Chapter 2). But Taylor links his interpretation to a Hegelian theory of 'cosmic spirit' and so understands human actions as partly *vehicles* for the self-expression of Cosmic Spirit (pp. 83, 87). I have disagreed with this account in Pippin, 1989. I also have a much different account of the sociality of action than Taylor's. And most importantly, nowhere in Taylor's treatment does he link the possibility of 'recovering' an action as mine with the problems of rationality, legitimacy and normativity, all of which, I am arguing, are crucial to Hegel's case. Taylor treats the problem more as a question of hermeneutics, a restriction I don't think fits Hegel's texts.
6. The relation between an agent and a deed is not like that between the foot and a soccer ball when the ball is kicked; the intending agent does not cause bodily motion (à la Davidson) in the way the foot causes the ball to move, but is rather to be understood on the model of an artist's somewhat provisional and somewhat indeterminate 'plan' unfolding over time as the art object takes shape.
7. One drifts here easily into the language of Robert Brandom's 'semantic externalism' since it compresses and makes clear so many of the issues.
8. But compare here Hare (1952) and Davidson (1980b). Cavell (1976) is also quite right to point to phenomenon where someone interprets what I meant, but I am dissatisfied with the way he puts something, but have as yet 'for myself' no determinate alternative until someone puts it another new way and I can *now* (and only now) say, yes that's what I meant, what I intended. Cf. Cavell's remark, '...it may still seem, for example, that no present or

future revelation can show what an earlier intention was' (Cavell, 1976, p. 233). Cavell believes that this counter-intuition can be countered, and so do I. It is what I tried to show in (Pippin, 2000c).

9. Cf. 'A man's intention in acting is not so private and interior a thing that he has absolute authority in saying what it is—as he has absolute authority in saying what he dreamt' (Anscombe, 2000, p. 36).
10. So no retrospective creation of intentions is at issue, and Laitinen (2004) is, I think, wrong to suggest that might be an implication of what I am arguing.
11. See (Cavell, 1976, p. 230), on the case of La Strada and whether Fellini can be said to have 'intended' the allusion to the Philomel myth.
12. See also Hegel's handwritten notes to *PR* §147, where Hegel again says (astonishingly given characters like, say, Orestes) that '... the Greeks had no conscience' (*VPR* 2: 553).
13. This is my disagreement with (Quante, 1993)—an otherwise very helpful book.
14. By 'successful' here I mean more than that various events actually occurred that an individual can interpret as consistent with and corresponding to that individual's 'take' on what ought to happen and what was intended. If this description and ascription are wildly at odds with the way the act is acknowledged and responded to, we approach an alienation that borders on schizophrenia.
15. Again, this is a potentially confusing aspect of Hegel's position. A person can certainly take herself to have formulated and to be acting on the intention to become Napoleon. But because there is nothing she could do to realize such an intention, she can't actually have intended it.
16. See *PR* §118A. See also Bennett (1995).

5

Towards a Reading of Hegel on Action in the 'Reason' Chapter of the *Phenomenology*

John McDowell

1. Human individuality is not just biological, not exhausted by the singleness of a particular human animal. A fully-fledged human individual is a *free agent*. A free human agent is not simply a human being who moves in determinate ways. And it is not enough to add that the movements are exercises of bodily control; that is something ordinary animals also have. Freedom is responsiveness to reasons. It is not a natural endowment, not something we are born with, or acquire in the sort of biological maturation by which an ordinary animal comes to be able to control movements of its body and thereby to effect alterations in its environment. Rational agency is a normative status. Understanding it requires a social context.

That may be vague enough for nearly everyone to agree that it is Hegelian. (Of course not everyone would agree that it is correct.) But Robert Pippin's reading of Hegel gives a distinctive twist to a position with this shape. In Pippin's reading, 'being a free agent—an actual or successful agent—is said to depend on being recognized as one by others whose free bestowal of this recognition depends in turn on their being recognized as such free bestowers' (Pippin, 2004b, p. 128). Again, 'A priest, a knight, a statesman, a citizen, are not... natural kinds. One exists as [a member of] such a kind by being treated as one, according to the rules of [some] community. And the radicality of Hegel's suggestion is that we treat being a concrete subject of a life, a free being, the same way' (Pippin, 2004b, p. 133).

Pippin emphasizes how unconventional this is: 'It sounds quite counter intuitive to suggest that one counts as a practically responsible subject by being taken to be one (clearly a cart before the horse problem), but that is Hegel's position' (Pippin, 2004a, p. 302).[1] He