

Paul Cobben
The Nature of the Self



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The Nature of the Self

Recognition in the Form of Right and Morality

by

Paul Cobben

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The Nature of the Self. Recognition in the form of Right and Morality

Introduction

This book is about the nature of the human self; i. e., it is not focussed on sources that contributed to a specific historical reception of the self ¹, but rather, aims at a systematic, conceptual development of the self. However, it is not self-evident that the human self has a nature, nor that this nature can be systematically developed. Moreover, the turn of phrase “nature of the self” is ambiguous: It can concern a nature that is opposed to culture, or a nature that expresses an essence that transcends variations in time, i. e., a logical nature.

The first option, the nature of the human self that is opposed to culture, is the position that is represented by the gene-theory. The gene-theory conceives of the human self as a living organism that is comparable with other living organisms. In this context, the conception of the human self coincides with the insight into the specific human genes. This approach, like all scientific theories, does not satisfy as a philosophical conception of the nature of the self. The scientific framework of the gene-theory, i. e., the framework that defines the meaning of a living organism, is not, itself, subject of the gene-theory: The theory is not self-referential, it cannot explain its own existence, but is, rather, presupposed to what is accepted as existence. Since the scientific practice cannot be excluded from the nature of the human self, the problem has to be solved of how the living organism can be combined with the ability to conceptualize itself as a living organism. In other words, the philosophical conception of the nature of the self has to solve the mind/body problem: How can the human self be understood as the unity of mind and body without reducing the mind to the body, or vice versa?

In **Chapter 1**, Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*² is introduced as a systematic philosophical attempt to develop the unity between mind and

1 Therefore, this book is not meant as a replacement of Charles Taylor’s *Sources of the Self*, (Harvard University Press, 2005) but rather, as its completion.

2 Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A.V. Miller, Oxford, 1977.

body (preserving, as well, the own nature of the mind as the body). To conceptualize the immediate unity between mind and body, Hegel makes use of the metaphor of the *lordship/bondsman relation*: The lord represents the mind that also has a body; the bondsman represents the body that also has a mind. In this way, the mind/body problem is reformulated as the problem of how to contemplate the adequate unity of lord and bondsman.

The transformation of mind/body into lordship/bondsman is not just a matter of changing terms. The transformation incorporates the Aristotelian insight that the adequate unity between mind and body can only be conceived of at the level of society. For Aristotle, the human self, the *animal rationale*, essentially is a social self, a self that lives in the framework of a state. This is reflected in the metaphor of the lordship/bondsman relation that makes it clear that the body of the mind essentially is a social organism. A mind that also has a body is a mind that is objectified in a social organism. Conversely, the body that also has a mind is a body that is part of a social organism. In this respect, lordship and bondsman are Hegel's translation of the Aristotelian *logos* and *state*.

Hegel, however, transcends the Aristotelian conceptual framework when the relation between lord and bondsman is understood as a relation of recognition.³ By this move he combines the social (communitarian) freedom of Aristotle with the subjective (libertarian) freedom of Kant.⁴ If the lord is recognized by the bondsman, he not only represents the unity of the social organism (the lord represents the law of the state that is actualized by the actions of the bondsman), but also the subjective freedom of the bondsman (the bondsman is free insofar as he is the "lord" of his body: He recognizes this freedom in the lord of the social organism, i. e., he recognizes this lord as the objective reality of his own freedom).

The basic idea of recognition follows from the observation that it is impossible to conceive of the unity of mind and body at the level of the

3 Paul Ricoeur remarks in the introduction of his book, *The Course of Recognition*: "My investigation arose from a sense of perplexity having to do with the semantic status of the very term *recognition* on the plane of philosophical discourse. It is a fact that no theory of recognition worthy of the name exists in the way that one or more theories of knowledge exist." (Preface, p. ix) In fact, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a systematic theory of recognition.

4 Cf. Williams (1997): "My thesis is that the concept of recognition is crucial to Hegel's project of mediating modern individualist subjective freedom (Kant) and classical ethical substance (Plato, Aristotle)." (p. 114/5).

individual. If the mind is understood as the autonomy of the individual, this autonomy gets lost when the individual is also a corporeal individual. The individual remains dependent on his body; the death of the body implies the death of the entire individual. The autonomy of the mind is only thinkable at a social level, i. e., as the law (*logos*) of the social organism. The lord represents the autonomy of an immortal individual: the individual that is institutionalized as a social organism. In himself, the individual is not autonomous, i. e., he is not the “lord” of his body. But insofar as the individual can recognize his individual mind/body relation in the social mind/body relation, i. e., as the lord that represents the autonomy of the social organism that is actualized by the actions of the bondsmen, his autonomy is no longer an illusion.

The lordship/bondsman relation is the elementary model of the free society. The lord represents the human autonomy, the human capability to transcend the (instinctual) laws of nature and replace them by the human law of the state. The bondsman represents the citizens who actualize the human autonomy by observing the human law as it positively appears. Therefore, the lordship/bondsman model combines two forms of recognition. The first form I will call the *horizontal recognition* that concerns the relation between the citizens. This first form of recognition is, in principle, symmetrical: In their observation of the same law, the citizens are free and equal. The *horizontal recognition* stands for the dimension of *right*. The second form I will call the *vertical recognition* that concerns the relation of the citizens to the lord, i. e., to the representation of their autonomy. This relation, in principle, is a-symmetrical because it is the relation in which the citizens, as corporeal individuals, are related to their absolute essence (that will be developed as their conscience). The *vertical recognition* stands for the dimension of *morality*, the dimension in which the citizens are absolutely unequal: In this dimension, they are non-exchangeable, unique individuals. Therefore, the lordship/ bondsman relation is the elementary model of the unity of *right* and *morality*, the unity of *horizontal* and *vertical recognition*.

The immediate form of the lordship/bondsman relation is not inadequate because the relation between lord and bondsman is a-symmetrical (the *vertical recognition* is fundamentally a-symmetric) but rather, because it is still characterized by a discrepancy between the inside and outside perspective. When it is possible, from an outside perspective, to describe the Aristotelian state in terms of the lordship/bondsman relation, this does not imply that it is also possible from the inside perspective. From the inside perspective, the citizens cannot make a difference be-

tween themselves and the lord because they immediately identify themselves with the lord. The lord is only real as the contingent (traditional) law of the state. Therefore, the citizens are neither aware of the *vertical recognition* (in their consciousness there is no room for other traditional laws) nor of the *horizontal recognition* (the citizens are absorbed by their social roles: These are not mediated by free choice). Only when the discrepancy between the inside and outside perspectives can be overcome does the lordship/bondsman model cease to be an external attempt to understand the unity of mind and body. The external perspective from which the model is formulated must become part of the model itself. We, i.e., the author and the readers of this book, are also human beings in which mind and body are united. Therefore, if we, from a meta point of view, design a model to understand the unity between mind and body, we must recognize in the model all the meta considerations we made about the unity of mind and body. Only under that condition, can we accept the model as a necessary one.

The process in which the inside and outside perspectives are brought together results in the development of the consciousness of the bondsman. The consciousness of the bondsman becomes more and more aware of the reality in which he is living. This process is discussed in the subsequent part of **Chapter 1**.

Since the consciousness of the bondsman is already a moment of the entirety of the social organism he is living in, the development of this consciousness can be reconstructed as a necessary process. At the moment, however, that the consciousness wants to know what is the content of the social law, it is not possible to determine this content by a necessary deduction: The content of the social organism is contingent (Aristotle's model of the state is compatible with a multitude of traditions). Insofar as the consciousness of the bondsman is already a moment of the social organism all the time, this social organism is a contingent organism, i.e. an organism that has historical existence.

Not all historical organisms can be identified as organisms in which the consciousness of the bondsman is living. The institutional differentiation of the organism must enable this consciousness to pass through the development in which it will become aware of the reality it is living in. Hegel identifies this social organism as the polis of the ancient Greek world. **Chapter 2** elaborates how the polis can be conceived of as the historical social organism in which the immediate unity of *right* and *morality*, i.e., the immediate unity of *horizontal* and *vertical recognition*, is objectified.

Since the institutions of the polis allow a learning process in which the consciousness of the polis experiences the contingent content of the law, the Greek world will, sooner or later, decline. Ultimately, the consciousness cannot recognize the social organism, precisely because it is a contingent organism, as the expression of its moral identity. What remains is a social order that is one-sidedly characterized by the *horizontal recognition of right*. Hegel identifies this order as the *Roman Empire* that derives its unity from the property right of *Roman Law*. The Roman citizens are the formal persons who recognize one another as free and equal.

Hegel calls the formal person of the *Roman Law* the *first self*. For the first time, the human self has actualized itself as an autonomous self. The actions of the person are not determined by tradition, but by the free will of the persons themselves. In the *first self*, the unity of mind and body for the first time appears as an individual. The person is the free will (cf. mind) that is embodied in the social organism of the family (cf. body). The person is the “lord” of the family whose labor is oriented to the reproduction of the family.

Although the *first self* is a necessary stage in the development of the nature of the self (the human self must transcend tradition, otherwise the independence of his mind is not done justice) the adequate unity of mind and body is not yet attained. The persons are atomized selves, that lack a common “lord” who represents their moral identity.⁵ They only practically express their moral identity in the private domain, i.e., in the labor of the family. Therefore, it remains coincidental whether or not the persons can actualize their moral identity. The *Roman Empire* has no inner harmony, a shared definition of good life, and will sooner or later decline.

Chapter 3 discusses the *Realm of Culture* that covers a period in European history that begins after the decline of the *Roman Empire*, and ends with the *French Revolution*, i.e., it is the period of the *Middle Ages*. After the *first self* has been developed in the ancient Greek and Roman world, the *second self* is developed in the *Middle Ages*. In the *second self*, the dimension of *right* is reunited with the dimension of *morality*. In the *second self*, the immediate unity of *right* and *morality* of the Greek world is transformed in the self-conscious unity of *right* and *morality*.

5 Although the Roman Emperor (the “lord and master of the world” [292/3]) is “the titanic self-consciousness that thinks of itself as being an actual living god” (293) he is a person like the others, a formal self, that has no real power over the content, i.e., over the substantial world of which he is supposed to be the ruler.

The idea of the *second self* is simple: To prevent the risk that the social law is not in harmony with the moral identity of the person, the *second self* wants to make the social law the expression of his moral identity. This attempt seems to be reasonable when the moral identity is “cultivated”: It is no longer the moral identity that is immediately given and that belongs to the private domain, but it has been socialized and rationalized and has lost its particular character. The *second self* wants to make his cultivated moral identity the content of the social law.

According to Hegel, the “absolute freedom” of the citizen of the *French Revolution* is the historical reality of the *second self*: He does not accept any tradition and demands that the social law is in absolutely accordance with his enlightened moral self. It is, however, impossible to meet the demand of the citizen, not only because all citizens want to do the same and cannot accept that the other citizens determine the content of the social law, but also because the citizens contradict themselves: Since the moral identity transcends all positive determinedness, they have to reject any positive shape of the law. Therefore, the subjectivism of the *French Revolution* necessarily ends in the revolutionary terror in which the citizens try to prevent each other’s attempt to actualize the social law.

Also, although the *second self* cannot, evidently, be the adequate actualization of the unity of *right* and *morality*, it is certainly a necessary stage in the development of the nature of the self. A free, moral self cannot tolerate a given social organism; his freedom is only real if this organism expresses his moral identity. The terror of the *French Revolution*, however, has shown what are the bloody consequences of a policy that is immediately moralized. This is understood by Jean Jacques Rousseau when he differentiates between the social law and its transcendent moral legitimation. The social law is legitimate insofar as it can be considered as the expression of the “*volonté générale*”, the general will. This concept remains transcendent because it must accurately be distinguished from the “*volonté de tous*”, the will of all, that can be positively deduced from the real will of the citizens.

Chapter 4 discusses Hegel’s reception of this Rousseauian reflection on the *French Revolution* in the Morality-Chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The problem is, on the one hand, how to preserve the transcendent character of the general will, and on the other hand, at the same time understand the existing legal order as a manifestation of the general will. Hegel rejects Kant’s solution because of his distinction between a noumenal and a phenomenal world. Since the general will is situated in the noumenal world, and the legal order in the phenomenal world, the problem

is only shifted: how to think of the relation between the noumenal and the phenomenal world. Hegel's own solution is elaborated as the *third self*, the conscientious individual.

The *third self* (as reflection on the *French Revolution*) belongs to the modern world (Hegel's own era) and pretends to express the adequate relation between *right* and *morality*. The conscientious individual is related to the transcendent dimension of the *absolute Spirit*, i. e., to the absolute essence of his freedom. This relation reflects the citizen's relation to the general will in Rousseau. At the same time, the conscientious individual tries to actualize his moral freedom in the objective world, i. e., in the social order in which he is living. Therefore, the adequate relation between *right* and *morality* is conceived of as the relation between *objective* and *absolute Spirit*.

In **Chapter 5** the three forms of the self are compared to the three forms of recognition that Axel Honneth distinguishes in "The Struggle for Recognition".⁶ The comparison is complicated because Honneth relates to the young Hegel whose concept of recognition, according to Honneth, is influenced by the "presuppositions of the metaphysical tradition" and has to be reconstructed "in the light of empirical social psychology".⁷ It is examined which meaning Honneth's arguments have for the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The conclusion is that the three forms of the self are not metaphysical in the sense of Honneth.

It took the social experience of the Ancient, the Mediaeval and the Modern world to be able to formulate the human self adequately. The insight into the *third self* presupposes the insight into the *first* and *second self*. The individual who wants to acquire adequate insight into the human self has to repeat, at an individual level, the social experience of European history. In other words, this individual must participate in a social organism whose institutions allow the repetition of this social experience. In **Chapter 6**, it is argued that it is exactly this consideration that is the basis of the project of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.⁸ The *ethical life* that is developed in this work as the unity of *Family*, *civil Society* and *State*, is an attempt to integrate the development of the *first*, *second* and *third self* in the institutional framework of one social organism. *Fam-*

6 Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1995.

7 Ibidem, p. 68.

8 Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, translated by T.M. Knox, Oxford University Press 1967.

ily, *Corporation* and *State* are presented as the adequate institutional embodiment of the *first*, *second* and *third self*.

Chapter 7, 8 and 9 consist of a detailed survey of the way in which the development of, respectively, the *first*, *second* and *third self* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, returns in the development of, respectively, *family*, *civil society* and *state* in the *Philosophy of Right*. My thesis is that the logical structure of the *Philosophy of Right* cannot be understood if one does not acknowledge that it has been Hegel's intention to resume the three periods of European history (Antiquity, Middle Ages and Modernity) with the three corresponding forms of the self as the constituting logical moments of ethical life. From Hegel's viewpoint, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Right* do not represent different positions. The historical order is only transformed into a systematic order.

Curiously enough, however, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is not only a criterion for the positive understanding of the *Philosophy of Right's* composition, but at the same time, a criterion to criticize this composition. In the *Philosophy of Right*, the concept of conscience is reduced in comparison with the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: Since the *Philosophy of Right* discusses the *objective Spirit*, the dimension of the *religious conscience* is explicitly excluded. The content of conscience is reduced to what can be actualized at the (historical) level of *objective Spirit*. This reduction has huge consequences for all three domains of ethical life. The ethical life of the family is reduced to natural life in the form of freedom; the freedom of civil society is reduced to economic freedom; the ethical life of the state is reduced to the mono-cultural nation state.

Chapter 7, 8 and 9 not only reconstruct Hegel's composition of the *Philosophy of Right*, but also the version that would result from a position in which conscience is not reduced. In this version, consequently, also the three domains of ethical life are not reduced: It offers room to multi-culturality, to moral and political freedom and to states that are embedded in a system of international law. In this version, the relation between *absolute* and *objective Spirit* is conceived of as the relation between human rights and democracy. My thesis is that this alternative version of the *Philosophy of Right*, based on the full consequences of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, elaborates a conceptual framework that is better suitable for the understanding of contemporary multi-cultural and globalized society than other proposals, especially the popular theories of Jürgen Habermas⁹ and John Rawls.¹⁰

9 Jürgen Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung*, Frankfurt/M., 1992.

My interpretation of the *Philosophy of Right* is in accordance with Robert Williams when he brings to the light “the concept of recognition as crucial to the systematic unity of the book” (p.27).¹¹ I also agree with R. Williams when he states that “Hegel does not fundamentally change his position concerning recognition ...” (p.2) and observes in this respect a continuity between the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Right*. The distinction that Williams makes between a self-subverting form of recognition (“clearly demonstrated in the case of master and slave”) and an “affirmative mutual recognition in the other that is central to ethical life” (characterizing the “mature” Hegel), however, has to be re-futed.

Williams illustrates his distinction between two forms of recognition in his criticism of Alexandre Kojève: “although Kojève made the struggle for recognition central to his interpretation of Hegel, the irony is that Kojève’s work obscures and distorts Hegel’s concept of recognition. However, for Hegel, recognition is a general concept of intersubjectivity, wider than master and slave. [...] In contrast to Kojève, Hegel’s master and slave is but an important first phase of unequal recognition that *must* and *can* be transcended.” (p.10) Williams is certainly right that Kojève’s concept of recognition is distorted (“Kojève thinks the concept of recognition primarily on the basis of an ontology of negation and finitude” (p.11) and that the recognition that is expressed in the metaphor of master and slave has to be developed. But he is mistaken if he thinks that this development ultimately implies the overcoming of “unequality” in the concept of recognition. As mentioned before, recognition remains characterized by its two (“horizontal” and “vertical”) dimensions. Ultimately, the “unequality” remains preserved in the a-symmetry between *absolute* and *objective Spirit*.

I share Williams’ criticism of Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth when he remarks: “Unfortunately, in Honneth’s and Habermas’s interpretation, the early Hegel is sharply distinguished from the mature Hegel. [...] Honneth repeats Habermas’s line that in Hegel’s mature thought, the concept of recognition is displaced by a monological conception of self-reflective subjectivity” (p.15).¹² He rightly supports Ludwig Siep’s

10 John Rawls, *Laws of Peoples*, Harvard University Press, 1999.

11 Robert Williams, *Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition*, University of California Press, 1997.

12 Honneth (1995) remarks: “In this sense, the new (and, methodologically speaking, certainly superior), conception found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* repre-

reading of Hegel: "Siep believes recognition is important for Hegel's practical philosophy because it allows Hegel to renew the classical tradition of practical philosophy on a postmodern, postliberal, intersubjective-social basis" (p.21). But, I think that his conclusion needs some specification: "This reading supports Habermas's contention that recognition is an important counter-discourse of modernity" (p.21) Hegel's concept of recognition is superior to the concept of recognition as it is elaborated in Habermas's *Theory of communicative Action*. Habermas has never succeeded in the reconciliation between the domain of recognition and the domain of nature. His new paradigm remains characterized by a Kantian dichotomy: the dichotomy between truth and objectivity, the "object of knowledge" and the "object of experience", intersubjectivity and nature.¹³

Also Williams's criticism of Michael Theunissen needs some specification and correction. Theunissen "does attempt to show that intersubjectivity is derivative from a pre-social, or transcendental monological subject, and that objective *Geist*, while supposedly the consciousness of individuals, nevertheless comes to have self-consciousness and self-relation, thereby creating an asymmetry and a heteronomous relation between objective *Geist*, ethical substance and independent individuals. This asymmetry finds expression in a pantheistic conception of the substance/accidents scheme: Self-conscious, self-relating objective *Geist*, is identified with absolute *Geist*, the ultimate subject that is, at the same time, ethical substance. In this scheme, individuals are reduced from independent free beings to mere accidents of substance" (p.16).

Williams is right when he defends the intersubjectivity of Hegel's project against Theunissen ("I will show that Hegel by no means restricts recognition to abstract right and property, but clearly indicates that the concept of recognition is the general structure of ethical life", p.17).

sents, in effect, a fundamental turning-point in the course of Hegel's thought. As a result, the possibility of returning to the most compelling of his earlier intuitions, the still incomplete model of the 'struggle for recognition', is blocked." (p. 63) Later on he adds: "Neither in Hegel nor in Mead does one find a systematic consideration of those forms of disrespect that, as negative equivalents for the corresponding relations of recognition, could enable social actors to realize that they are being denied recognition." (p. 93) I will show that, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the 'denied recognition' appears in the form of the *Unhappy Consciousness*. The *Unhappy Consciousness* is not overcome by a 'struggle for recognition', but rather by a process of experience in which the consciousness becomes aware of the social source of his unhappiness.

- 13 Jürgen Habermas, "Wahrheitstheorien", in: *Vorstudien und Ergänzungen zur Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, Frankfurt/M., 1984, pp. 127–186.

But, in my opinion, the central point is that Theunissen identifies *objective* and *absolute Spirit*. Precisely because Hegel wants to solve the problem of how to devise a community of independent individuals, he has to introduce the *absolute Spirit* in distinction from the *objective Spirit*. The a-symmetrical relation between the individuals and the *absolute Spirit* grounds the intersubjectivity between individuals that have a symmetrical relation to one another at the level of the *objective Spirit*. The identification of *objective* and *absolute Spirit* totally ignores Hegel's project.

The revised *Philosophy of Right* raises the same questions as Rawls's *Political Liberalism*¹⁴: how to think of a community of persons with different moral opinions. It shows, however, that Rawls's conception of the moral person remains unreflected. The concept of the moral person already presupposes a structure of basic institutions all the time. An atomized moral person is a contradiction in itself; the attempt to construct an "overlapping consensus" between atomized moral persons is totally superfluous. The fundamental failure in Rawls's and Habermas's theory converge: neither of them has developed an adequate conception of the unity between mind and body. They conceptualize a human self without identity.

The revision of the *Philosophy of Right* makes it possible to give an answer to the justified criticism of the *Philosophy of Right*, itself. In reading Hegel's analysis of *civil society*, for example, Marx's criticism of Hegel and his alleged alliance with capitalism becomes obvious. The revision, however, will clarify that Hegel, especially in his analysis of the *System of Needs*, betrays his own principles and is too much impressed by the contingent reality he is confronted with. Also Siep's criticism that Hegel one-sidedly remains committed to the primacy of the general and the Christian culture is overcome in the revised version in which the moral individual transcends the labor system, and in which multi-culturality gets the room it deserves.¹⁵

14 John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Columbia University Press, 1993: "... how is it possible for there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens, who remain profoundly divided by reasonable religious, philosophical and moral doctrines?". (p. 4).

15 Ludwig Siep, "Recognition between Individuals and Cultures", [manuscript].

Chapter 1

The Human Self as the Unity of Mind and Body

Introduction

From a philosophical point of view, a scientific fact cannot entirely express what makes a man into a man. Scientific facts depend on scientific theories: It is only in the framework of scientific theory that facts are defined. Theory gives facts their scientific value. Therefore, if man is scientifically defined as a specific organism with a specific genome, he does not coincide with his existence as an organism. To his existence also belongs the scientific theory that he develops in order to represent his specific organism. In this chapter, it is discussed what it means to conceive of man both as an organism and as the scientific reason for whom this organism exists.

The problem to be solved is the age-old problem of the relation between mind and body. This problem cannot be solved by reduction, as it is done by David Hume and René Descartes. While Hume reduces mind to body when he maintains that all ideas must be reduced to impressions, Descartes reduces body to mind when he assumes that the *res extensa* essentially is a clear and distinct idea. In this reduction, either the mode of being of the mind, or the mode of being of the body disappears, so that the relation between two modes of being is revealed as a problem that does not comply with reality. But neither can the problem be solved in Kant's way. Although Kant has understood the one-sidedness of Hume's empiricism and Descartes's rationalism, and was in search of a synthesis of both approaches, his solution does not escape from repeating the problems of a scientific definition of man. Although Kant's project essentially is an anti-reductionist one because, in his view, mind and body have their own domain (namely in the noumenal and the phenomenal world), his criteria for the synthesis of mind and body remain external to these domains. Kant's definition of man as a unity of mind and body does not elucidate its own necessity.

For a philosopher, it is not sufficient to propose a scientific model of the relation between mind and body. A scientific model is "subjective" in the sense that it is not unconditional. This is not only because alternative

models are possible, but also because the criterion of its verification (experimental perception) embodies a specific (conditional) view on the relation between (the world of the) mind and (the world of the) body. This subjectivity can only be overcome if it has been proven that the model is not one of the many possible models, but is exclusive. The being that is modeled as a unity of mind and body must, at the same time, be able to accept the model that constitutes his unity as a necessary one. The conception of the unity between mind and body has to be unconditional.

Of course, it is not evident that an unconditional model of the unity of mind and body is possible. All candidate models have to be tested. But what guarantee have we that the process of testing will ever end? I think that this dilemma can be overcome by a methodological approach that allows the systematic construction of the unconditional model. I will summarize the central steps of this systematic construction:

1. The unity of mind and body must (hypothetically) be determined as an immediate unity. In that case, the model of the unity between mind and body necessarily has to be accepted by the mind that is constituted by the model. Because this mind is by definition immediately unified with the body, it has no room for another interpretation;
2. From an outside perspective, however, the immediate unity of mind and body is a contradiction (between form and content). Insofar as it concerns a relation between mind and body, the terms of the relation are (formally) distinguished. Insofar as it concerns an immediate relation, however, this distinction disappears because, in regard to their content, mind and body are immediately identical. As a matter of fact, an *immediate* relation is no relation;
3. The process of construction consists of the steps that mediate between the inside perspective in which mind and body are immediately one, and the outside perspective in which mind and body have domains that are explicitly distinguished. Each stage of the process is a revision of the model that conceptualizes the unity of mind and body. The distinction between mind and body that is implicitly presupposed in the model of their immediate unity is, step by step, made more explicit;
4. If the stages in the process are logically interconnected, i.e., if each stage is logically deduced from the preceding one, the process can result in an unconditional model of the unity between mind and body: a model that combines the unity of mind and body with their distinction, and a model that has a necessary status for the mind that is conceptualized by the model itself.

In this chapter, I will discuss how Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* can be interpreted as the systematic development of the unity between mind and body based on the aforementioned methodological assumptions.¹⁶ This means that this development has a necessary nature, i.e., all stages of the mind/body unity can be logically deduced.¹⁷ Of course, Hegel illustrates these stages with historical examples. But even when it has become clear that the body of the mind has to be understood as a social organism and, consequently, can be unambiguously related to a specific period in (European) history, history remains only an illustration. Hegel reconstructs which stages the (European) reader of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has to pass through to develop an adequate insight into the unity of mind and body.¹⁸ But these stages are logical stages that have appeared in a spe-

16 Wildt (1984) rightly remarks that "the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has to be understood beforehand as a theory of the Self and of Self-Experience." ["die *Phänomenologie des Geistes* von vornherein als Theorie des Selbst und der Selbsterfahrung zu verstehen [ist]."] (p. 374).

17 This logical deduction is a "dialectical deduction". What this dialectical logic precisely means, will become clear in the next section. Anyhow, the dialectical logic does not come down to a violation of the law of non-contradiction, as Popper seems to think. On the contrary, Hegel has developed his dialectics to overcome contradictory relations and to safeguard the law of non-contradiction.

18 This remark seems to correspond to Terry Pinkard's opinion: "Accordingly, the *Phenomenology* is supposed to take its readers, the participants in the modern European community's form of life, through the past "formations of consciousness" of the European "spirit" – the ways in which that "spirit" has both taken the "essence" of things to be, and the ways in which it has taken agents to be cognitively related to that "essence" – and demonstrate to them that *they require* the kind of account which the *Phenomenology* as a whole provides, that the *Phenomenology's* project is therefore not optional for them but intrinsic to their sense of who they are." (Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology. The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge 1994, p. 17). The topic of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, however, is not the adequate understanding of European history, but rather the adequate understanding of "substance" (what, for Hegel, equals the adequate understanding of the unity of mind and body). Although this understanding is actualized in European history, this history remains an illustration (i.e., a contingent manifestation form) of the fundamental (logical) structures of substance. Therefore, I cannot agree to his thesis that "the three introductory sections" show that "a kind of knowledge that would be independent of social practice" is impossible. (p. 21).

Also Philip Kain (*Hegel and the Other*, New York, 2005) seems to be the victim of the same misunderstanding when he writes: "What sense does it make to call the absolute of one era "absolute" if it differs from the absolute of another era? The answer requires us to see that for Hegel reality *itself* is actually constructed by culture." (p. 19).

cific (contingent) manner in European history. Principally these stages can also be experienced in other cultures. Actually, in the contemporary globalized world, the experiences of European culture are more or less shared by all other cultures.

The immediate unity of mind and body

Gene theory determines the organism as a differentiated life process, that is ultimately directed by the genes. For the time being, I will abstract from these differentiations and determine the organism as a kind of black box of which it is only relevant that it is something naturally given. Unlike the gene theorist's view, however, I consider this 'something' not to be an object of scientific reason, but rather the object of a mind that forms an immediate and natural unity with it, i.e., with the body that is conceived of as black box. I want to know under what conditions this relation between mind and body can be determined as a necessary one.¹⁹

This unity cannot be obtained by a scheme that functions as an external link between mind and body. The connection by an external scheme remains accidental. Mind and body must be defined in a way in which they have only existence if they are taken together. They must be conceived of in a complementary relationship, in the relative opposition between form and content.²⁰ The mind has to be conceptualized as the form of the body. The body has to be conceived of as something

Robert Pippin (*Hegel's Idealism. The Satisfactions of Self-consciousness*, Cambridge, 1989) elaborates an opposite interpretation. According to him, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has to be read as a "direct variation on a crucial Kantian theme, the 'transcendental unity of apperception'." (p. 6). As a consequence, Hegel's project would be totally *a priori*: "As we have also seen, now in great detail, Hegel rejects the possibility of such reliance on pure intuitions, the possibility of considering the characteristics of a pure intuited manifold." (p.133). We will see, however, that the concept of life is central in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Its central theme can be formulated as the unity of mind and body.

Good introductions in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* are, for example, Ludwig Siep (2000) and Stephen Houlgate (2006).

- 19 Insofar as the relation between mind and body is not yet understood as a necessary one, I will indicate this relation as a form of the *natural consciousness*.
- 20 In a relative opposition, the terms of the opposition are internally related and cannot be determined without the other. Examples are: general/particular, parents/child.

that borrows its unity from the mind that functions as its form. The mind is the form that is only real because the body is its content. In this way, mind and body relate to one another in a non-relation: Distinct from one another, both terms have no meaning. This relation can be illustrated by Berkeley's *esse est percipi*. The body only exists insofar as it is perceived by the mind. Outside its perception, the mind has no existence. This relation is an epistemological relation that is in no way distinguished from the object that is known. It is about a knowledge that is totally immersed in its object. Just because of its immediacy, this relation cannot be understood as an interpretation (for example by means of some scientific model). It is about a knowledge that is completely in unity with its object and that knows its object absolutely.

If the unity of mind and body is determined in this way, the conclusion is justified that, from a subjective point of view, i. e., from the mind's view, mind and body are a necessary unity. Without one another, mind and body do not exist at all. But this mind is a very poor one. If it could express itself, it could not even say "I" (let alone: "I am I"). The relation between mind and body expresses a pure existence that lacks any determination. The immediacy of the mind/body relation would be disturbed by any closer determination. In its unity with the body, the mind is totally undetermined for itself.

The inside and outside perspective are still distinguished. From an outside perspective, the independence of the mind/body unity is clear. The unity is distinct from other unities. From an inside perspective, however, the unity has no independence because it cannot make any distinction. On the other hand, only from the inside perspective is the mind/body unity a necessary one. The subjectivity of this necessity can only be overcome if the mind/body unity is closely specified and has the opportunity to internalize what, from the outside perspective, has become clear: The mind/body unity must not only be determined as pure existence, but also as determined existence, i. e., as an independent one.

The mind/body unity that is for itself an independent unity, can be identified with the result of development that Hegel discusses in the first part of the subjective Spirit: *Anthropology or the Soul*. The soul is Hegel's *terminus technicus* to indicate the immediate unity between mind and body.²¹ At the level of the soul, however, it is not yet possible to distin-

21 Hegel defines the soul as the "allgemeine Immaterialität der Natur, deren einfaches ideelles Leben" [as nature's "universal immaterialism, its simple 'ideal' life".] (Enz. § 389), i. e., the soul is the form in which nature has its unity.

guish mind and body. The soul is determined by the natural processes in which its body is involved. At this level, it makes no sense to describe the mind/body unity as a black-box, because the soul only exists insofar as it is naturally determined, i. e., the mind has no ability to abstract from the particular content in which it is involved. This inability has been overcome when the soul is fully developed. At that level, the soul has emancipated itself from its being-submerged-in-nature. The soul is transformed into a mind that can abstract from particular determinations and has an abstract unity for itself. This abstract unity is expressed in the distinction that can be made between an inner and outer world. The soul that has freed itself from nature is for itself insofar as it can distinguish itself from the outside world. The soul has been transformed into the “subject of the judgement” “in which the ego excludes from itself the sum total of its merely natural features as an object, a world external to it – but with such respect to that object that in it it is immediately reflected into itself. Thus soul rises to become Consciousness”. (*Enz.* § 412)²² Therefore, “consciousness” is the mind in an immediate unity with its body. But in this relation, as the mind is undetermined, its body is, so to speak, a black-box. The mind, however, is determined in its relation to the outside world; for itself, the mind/body unity is independent. In the second part of the *subjective Spirit*, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Enz.*, § 413 ff.), Hegel examines whether the outside and inside perspective of consciousness are compatible. In the next sections, however, I will not refer to this second part of the *subjective Spirit*, but to the elaborated version of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, i. e., to the book that has the same title as this second part.

Consciousness: looking for the independence of the outside world

In its independence, the mind/body unity is related to the outside world. It is exactly this relation that threatens the mind/body unity. Insofar as the unity only exists by excluding an outside world, it is dependent on this outside world and, consequently, loses its independence. In that case, the immediacy of the inside perspective can also get lost. If the mind per-

22 “in welchem es die natürliche Totalität seiner Bestimmungen als ein Object, eine ihm äußere Welt, von sich ausschließt und sich darauf bezieht, so daß es in derselben unmittelbar in sich reflectirt ist, das Bewußtseyn.” (*Enz.* § 412).

ceives the determinedness of its body (because of any interaction between the body and the outside world) it becomes aware of the distinction between the body and itself, so that their immediate unity is broken down. Therefore, the problem that has to be solved is: How can the mind/body unity relate to an outside world without threatening the unity of mind and body from an inside perspective?

A living organism is related to the outside world because of its needs. In its attempt to satisfy its needs and to reproduce itself, it is involved in the outside world. In contrast to a lifeless thing, the organism is actively related to the outside world. While the lifeless thing passively undergoes the working of external forces of nature and loses its unity by an ongoing process of erosion, the living organism actively preserves the boundaries between the outside world and itself. This time the outside world does not appear as a force of nature that is undergone by the organism, but as a stimulus to which it actively reacts. The reactions of the organism can be interpreted in the framework of its striving for self-conservation.

The model to conceive of the organism's relation to the outside world cannot be maintained if the organism also has a mind at its disposal. We defined the mind as the form from which the organism borrows its conscious unity, i. e., its undetermined existence as it is understood from an inside perspective. If the organism also has a mind, the stimuli that are received by the organism can be interpreted as immediate determinations of the mind, as are the simple *ideas* of *impressions* in the sense of Hume.²³ The mind, however, that exists in a multitude of determinations loses its

23 Hume's definition of "impression" is not unproblematic. (Cf. *An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 17 ff). Hume distinguishes between an impression (for example, the impression red) and the simple idea of an impression (for example, the idea red). An idea is a determination of the mind and, therefore, something that has a general way of existence. The idea red is related to the impression red. The impression red is something "real", i. e., something that exists in space and time and has, therefore, a particular way of existence. But at the same time the impression is experienced and, in that sense, also a determination of the mind. This time, however, the determination of the mind is "immediate": In its experience of the impression, the mind is in an immediate unity with reality. As a consequence, the experienced expression has a higher intensity than the simple idea. The problem is, however, how it is possible to discern qualitative different impressions (red, blue, pain etc.). An immediate relation excludes qualitative differences. A relation is immediate and, by implication, qualitatively undetermined; or a relation is qualitatively determined and, by implication, not immediate. A relation that is immediate, and at the same time qualitatively determined, is logically impossible.