

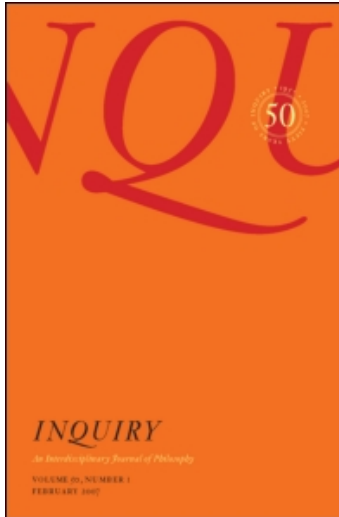
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Response to Critics

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ABSTRACT *I offer responses to criticisms about and questions concerning my book, Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life,¹ first raised at a conference at Kalamazoo College and now published in this issue of Inquiry. There are responses to Richard Peterson, James Bohman, Hans-Herbert Kögler, David Ingram and Theodore R. Schatzki.*

I am much indebted to all the commentators for their close attention to my book and for their helpful and probing questions. I hope that in the brief space I am allowed for each response I am able to do justice to the spirit and letter of their questions.²

I. Response to Richard T. Peterson

When in the Hegelian world we say that a social practice or institution is “rational”, we mean neither that it is the practice or institution that hypothetically rational individual deliberators (or communicators) would choose in some idealized situation, free from distortion or particular interests, nor that the practice or institution conforms to an objective ideal determined by pure philosophical reason. It certainly does not mean, as it does in much social science, that such a society is objectively structured so as to optimize mutual preference satisfaction. What we do mean in the Hegelian world is that the institution or practice-bound reasons offered and demanded by participants in those contexts succeed, or have reached a certain acceptable level of success, where such success is measured internally and historically. That is, we are able to say that the norms governing such exchanges in the practice

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or institution allow the participants to do *better* what they have always been trying to do in the historical life of such enterprises—justify and so reconcile themselves to each other.

As it stands, this is an unacceptably vague characterization of a pragmatic and socio-historical conception of rationality. Hegel begins to pin it down by arguing that the advent and then ever greater realization of “modernity” in world history means that we can first see that *modern* norms for such justification are not only qualitatively different from (even if resulting from) all prior norms, but represent something like the beginning of the basic realization of such a general *conatus* in society, and second, once having seen that, we can also see a way of considering prior social practices as, at least from a sufficient altitude, incomplete versions of such a realization, allowing a kind of pragmatic teleology of history to look plausible.

This is the context within which Peterson raises his interesting questions about how social *irrationality* ought to look to a Hegelian committed to something like the above. Now there are two aspects of the Hegelian position entailed by what was just said that are nowadays quite counter-intuitive. On the one hand, social irrationality is treated, as it must be, given Hegel’s overall commitments, as something like *the privation of reason*, a defect whose defectiveness manifests itself in experiential and disruptive ways. It is a mark of the breakdown of the game of giving and asking for justifications, and so itself inherently unstable. That is, on the other hand, unstable because Hegel thinks of any such state of unreason as unavoidably accompanied by a form of disruption and insecurity. The paradigmatic instance of such a claim, and it functions as something of an archetype in his account, is the impasse or failure of the Master in the Master–Slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology* to achieve the recognition without which he cannot be a Master. (By contrast, Peterson wants to draw our attention to forms of violence that are simply a-rational, if I understand him correctly, not irrational. More on that in a moment.) Part of the reason for this position is that Hegel does not believe there is much use in describing something as a mere instance of oppression, or the brute exercise of authority, or the wanton resort to violence. They are, in a sense slightly different from that of Peterson, “socially mediated” in a context at a time. Even when one understands instances of violence as the eruption of, say, a natural temptation to the indulgence of permanent, aggressively egoistic passions, such an understanding is an *understanding*, a way in which nature has come to *mean* what it means in the context of a whole host of other assumptions necessary for it to make that sense. It is both a sad and potentially redemptive feature of all human practices that “everybody always has their reasons”.

The major question Peterson raises is “how reflection that draws critically from Hegel can proceed within an unreasonable world”, and he means this on the assumption that the social world described in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* is not at all our world, and that our world cannot be understood as

some sort of logical extension and expansion of that world of 1821. He raises especially the problem of suffering, and not as a manifestation or symptom of some other sort of crisis. I understand him to mean by this, stated very broadly, that we should consider such phenomena as suffering or violence of various forms in many modern institutions not as a manifestation that something is going wrong (and so not in the “privation” sense I mentioned before) but as inherent in various aspects of the social order *going right*, succeeding, reproducing and sustaining themselves. (Peterson contrasts treating suffering as a pathological manifestation with treating it as an active part of a social process.) There is a danger of a reductionism in the former, or a tendency to a kind of holism that blinds us to the specific character of various manifestations of violence and oppression and the necessary roles they play in the very possibility of the institution or practice.

The differences between our social institutions and Hegel’s lead Peterson to say that “. . . it seems unlikely that anything like an Hegelian notion of practical reason is available to us”. Our world is such that philosophers “are certainly not in a position to interpret historical experience as providing the outlines of a reasonable world in which the individual can find some kind of identification with the expectations and accomplishments of the institutions and practices in which she finds herself”.

Some of these features of modern societies do not seem to me to lead to such a conclusion. One, structural violence (where institutional practices produce harm without anyone or any agent of the collective intending harm) seem to me quite well structurally re-inscribed within a rational framework by Peterson himself. Not taking care of possible, avoidable and clearly foreseeable harm *is* imputable to an organization and its officers. It is negligence, and so such harm makes sense in a Hegelian, privative way, as a corruption of the civil responsibilities of a business, as inattentiveness for the sake of profit. (Hegel himself certainly argues this way (and so has no problem admitting structural violence), showing that modern market economies inevitably produce poverty, a rabble of poor, without intention or even neglect in the usual sense. His proposed solutions are ludicrously inadequate, but he does not treat this result as an unavoidable consequence of our finitude. It is a problem he clearly concedes must be addressed.) And symbolic violence, for example when victims of domestic violence identify themselves as responsible for the harm done to them, is also a component in the reproduction of patriarchal social relations. It does not just happen, but is sustained in various ways to the benefit of those who exercise such power. These ways can be identified and attacked as internally inconsistent with the ideals of an egalitarian liberal society, as an aspect of something much larger than the domain of domestic private relationships.

But Peterson also points to the possibility that violence might figure “most comprehensively in the articulation of agency itself”. In one sense, this too is a Hegelian idea. Since Hegel treats agency as essentially linked to

what is done for reasons, and connects possible reasons with effective exchanges in potential conflict situations that require resolution, and treats the possibility of such reasons and their effectiveness in a kind of “boot-strapping” way, as, let us say, collectively self-authorizing, then there is no possibility to appeal to some ideal resolution norm in such exchanges. We must show how such a putative situation and requirement would produce allegiance to one such norm or another, so the whole project is constantly haunted by and at the outset, inextricably linked with, violence. (This is what distinguishes Hegel’s account from Brandom’s say, or Mead’s.) Hegel counts his historical reconstruction of such a development as essentially the “learning process” that Peterson encourages. His difference with others, like Habermas, who also point to such a learning process, is that Hegel does not treat it as separable from any distinct legitimating or justifying process.

There is a large problem remaining with such Hegelian answers. It is whether Hegel (or on some “humanist” accounts Freud) has any robust theory of irrationality at all, but that is a very large topic indeed.

II. Response to James Bohman

One of the most unusual aspects of Hegel’s treatment of the problem of freedom is that he does not ask, in the manner of much modern political philosophy, what institutional structures are most consistent with the status of persons understood as self-determining individuals, whether such freedom is understood in a Humean or metaphysically compatibilist way or as the spontaneous self-determination of the voluntarists. In that conception, absent such structures persons are still free in a metaphysical sense; they just live in a structure incompatible with such freedom. In Hegel’s account, the question of freedom is reconceived in such a way that these two questions are in effect combined. People who live in oppressive, or in Hegel’s sense, less than fully rational social and political systems are, without qualification, less free. Where a potential for a greater realization of freedom is possible but not actualized, Hegel counts this as a normative deficiency.

Among all the problems this creates for Hegel, it places an enormous amount of pressure on *how* he actually describes what this situation of realized freedom looks like, and whether the great importance he places on modern *Sittlichkeit* is redeemed by what he actually says. Here, Bohman is certainly right that, given these expectations, the social conditions for the possibility of freedom “seem to require much more participation in political practices than Hegel himself proposes”. He is right that collective deliberation about the public good plays very little role in Hegel’s account, that a surprising amount of political power is left in the hands of a relatively unaccountable (politically unaccountable) civil service and that there are elements of Hegel’s view which have now become wildly counter-intuitive, like his faith

in the integrative and status-conferring power of corporations, the restriction of voting to voting qua corporate member and so on.

But I am not sure that the way to look at these limitations is that Hegel is not “republican enough”, so let me say a few things about what I think is motivating Hegel’s position and why he would not be happy with or at least would be confused by some of the republican arguments. One thing can be said right away. In its traditional form, in say a Roman or Italian context (among those who, like Skinner, read Machiavelli as a republican), the aspiration to be free of the dominating will of another and so to chart the course of one’s own life is understood as a national aspiration. Hegel is no friend of nationalism; his state is a *Rechtsstaat* not a nation state and he would regard the aspirations expressed at the end of Bohman’s paper as wildly utopian. For Hegel there are important social and historical conditions that must be satisfied before we can come to regard other communities not as threats to the exercise of our collective will but partners in the elimination of all domination or struggles for power, and he would suspect that any attempt to create or legislate such conditions would result only in a relatively anonymous mass state that would so thin out the social bonds as to leave them barely binding.

The reason he would have these suspicions goes to a major point in Bohman’s criticism. It concerns an issue very difficult to discuss economically, what Hegel calls “the concrete universal”. In this case, the universal in question is equality, understood by Hegel as equal standing and mutuality of recognition. Bohman is right that Hegel limits this status to equal citizenship on the one hand (and, as noted, in a particularly thin notion of citizenship) and equal institutional standing with respect to one’s social identity as a family member or member of a corporation. But it must be a concrete form of equality and therein lies the difficulty. If liberation from domination or any form of non-reciprocal dependence requires “a capacity to stand eye to eye with your fellow citizens in the shared awareness that none of you has the power of arbitrary interference over another”,³ and this must not be limited to just equality before the law, but requires a transformation of any social system that allows arbitrary control by one or some over others, and if this requires things like government regulation of hiring practices, workplace authority, income transfers and the like, then for Hegel we will be too severely limiting the scope of the expression of concrete particularity, the results of the very differentiatedly distributed talents and capacities and the resultant achievements of citizens. The clearest example of this reasoning occurs in his discussion of property rights and the inevitable consequences of property and capital acquisition in a competitive setting: differential outcomes and so different accesses to social power. Moreover there are also forms of dependence that are not the direct exercise of actual power over others but ethically damaging nonetheless. There are demeaning forms of social and psychological dependence, the results of the different statuses

involved in the taking of income for redistribution and the receiving of such transfers. Moreover, it is not clear how far this requirement extends in Bohman's necessarily brief summary. Are we to proscribe romantic relationships that result in unequal wills, persons who willingly stand in less than eye to eye status with, submit happily to, their partners?

The ethical ideal of independence through dependence—what Hegel a few times formally baptizes as “being-oneself-in-another”—that animates Hegel's writings about ethical life from the early 1800s until the end of his career are inspired by something like ideal friendship, or the early Christian communities' understanding of love. In a friendship or familial relation of love, say between a parent and child, what might ordinarily be experienced as a deprivation or sacrifice for the sake of another is instead experienced as a more extensive realization of oneself. This is a deeper and potentially much more radical ideal than the eye-to-eye status that insures no arbitrary exercise of will, and, I would suggest, it is the extremity of this ambition that somewhat paradoxically leads Hegel to his quite modest and, one has to say, conservative social and political philosophy (conservative in that it has something of that tradition that extends from Burke through to Oakeshott, suspicious of all administrative attempts to rationalize social relations and content with a more romantic ideal of belonging and tradition that thus has to tolerate a great deal more contingency in its possible realization). The nature of modern mass consumer societies makes such aspirations seem at best quaint, but they are also animated by a wariness (which I think we would share) about what the exercise of political will alone can accomplish. Granted: if we accept such wariness and yet also believe that Hegel's aspirations are utopian in a contemporary context, that does not seem to leave us much.

Even so I still think it would be a mistake to be tempted in such a context to transform Hegel's notion of the social centrality of the struggle for recognition into a politics of recognition (remembering the inevitability of coercion in all legal remedies) or to seek the elimination of domination in all social spheres by political means, however righteous such an aspiration as an ethical aspiration is. For one thing, it is not clear where exactly the latter leads us. At some points, it was not clear to me whether Bohman believes that the harm of domination in relations between citizens and noncitizens was so great that the distinction itself should be abolished in favor of an open border policy or whether there is any way of conceiving of market capitalism at all without inherent relations of domination. At any rate these are some of the things I would be interested in hearing more about in our discussion.

III. Response to Hans-Herbert Kögler

I understand Hans-Herbert Kögler to be making four points and I'll try to respond to each briefly. There is first the question of whether I go too far in

saying that “being free does not involve any sort of causality at all”. The second concerns a comparison with Mead’s understanding of human socialization. The third concerns the relation between this and the question of a Hegelian understanding of the irreducible uniqueness of human individuals (or whether indeed Hegel has the resources to account for this at all) and the fourth has to do with how different our twenty-first century world is from Hegel’s and what anyone even vaguely sympathetic to Hegel ought to say about this fact, especially about the fact of large cultural differences in an ever more compacted, trans-national world experience.

Yes, that formulation about freedom is misleadingly put; guilty as charged. I meant to say: being free does not require any special metaphysical theory about causality, does not hinge on a question about causality. But in the sense Kögler means to introduce the issue, I don’t think Hegel himself has any problem. Hegel’s claim is that causal models of agency are inadequate (that for the causalist the central question about the possibility of freedom is: did I cause or could I have caused the relevant bodily movements). But that—that the causal account is inadequate, as if establishing the power to effect change in the world alone establishes whether we are free or not—does not mean that this capability is in no sense relevant. First, there certainly is a sense of forensic causality fully conceded by Hegel without inconsistency, and it is the crucial one. That is, in a legal context, we want to know, say, who caused the death of the butler, who fired the gun that brought about the butler’s death. What the law wants to know is simply, did Colonel Mustard fire the gun (cause the gun to discharge) and did Colonel Mustard know what he was doing (shooting at the butler, say and not thinking he was surprising a burglar, not knowing that it was his butler there in the dark). The law is not concerned with the issue of: given initial conditions at the creation of the universe and all the relevant true laws of physics, could the Colonel have done otherwise at that moment of time; or: is the only way to actually tie the deed to the Colonel the compatibilist case that the shooting flowed causally if also necessarily from “who Colonel Mustard was”, and so forth. All we want to know is who fired the gun, and were there any mitigating circumstances. In that sense: “Colonel Mustard caused the death of the butler in a way that counts as murder” invokes a notion of causal responsibility that is of no concern for and raises no problems for, Hegel. This is the sense in which it might be relevant to note that an artist caused a statue to be made and if she didn’t we cannot “tie” it to her. (That is: *she* did, no one else did.) One level deeper than this concern, we might say that there is the question of whether an uncaused or spontaneous mental state or attitude of the Colonel’s brought about the bodily movement (the basic action by means of which the killing was done, the trigger-pulling) or whether the Colonel’s trigger pulling was no more up to him that it was up to the trigger whether to respond to the pressure applied by moving or not. And here it is correct to say that while Hegel’s account is compatible with the legal account of causal

responsibility, and compatible with a physicalist account of “what happened”, it bypasses rather than addresses these voluntarist and determinist alternatives. It seeks to re-formulate the question and show why it should be reformulated.

Secondly there is much of value in Mead’s account of the psychology of socialization, and there is definitely a Hegelian flavor to the empirical claim that I come to have a sense of myself by learning to adopt the perspective of another on me and by thereby establishing the I-me relationship as Kögler describes it. But Hegel is asking a set of questions for which, I think, this sort of account is not relevant. These processes essentially explain how certain capacities essential to selfhood can be said to develop from an inchoate and immature state to full adult self-awareness, all through a dynamical social process that Mead has sketched with great insight and compellingness. But the *realization* of these capacities in adulthood, in situations of conflict and uncertainty especially, is under-described in such a theory. This is true for two issues. First, Hegel’s account of practical self-knowledge has much in common with what would later be Wittgenstein’s and Ancombe’s account. Such “practical knowledge”—essentially knowledge of what I am doing—is not observational or introspectionist. In reporting what I am doing I am essentially avowing a commitment or pledging what I will do in order to do something else. But what Hegel introduces is something not prominent in the contemporary tradition but essential in such practical knowledge being knowledge – that it can fail, that I can claim something about myself that is not the case, but not false to some fact of the matter. To make sense of this we need Hegel’s account of intentions being “in” the deed and “for others” in normatively contestable ways that I don’t think are covered by Mead’s account, which in this sense must be counted as preliminary.

What does all this say about the question of whether Hegel has made true (and that means irreducible) individuality too much or even exclusively a function of this social negotiation (an echo here of Dieter Henrich’s famous debate with Habermas and the complaints of the romantic philosopher Manfred Frank against all later German philosophy). Partly Hegel’s account is materialist in an odd sort of way, given his reputation. Whatever can be experienced by me as uniquely mine, consistent with much of what Hegel wants to say (and with his opposition to all romantic ineffability), can be so only in an “externalization” and so in a way that confronts another as uniquely identifiable with me, and so is reflected back to me in that sense as objectively me. A piece of uniquely worked property, unique manifestation of singing talent, or unique visible “accent in living”, one might say. Such uniqueness is visible in something like the style or way of my participation in the social practice of giving and asking for reasons. (This position is also consistent with the outcome that in some sorts of societies, given a profoundly restricted social space, there could be only minimally expressible individuality, perhaps merely the possibility of such a realization, held in

check by repressive social forces. And so there would only be minimal individuality. But that seems to me a strength of the position.) Moreover a good deal of Hegel's account of the experience of irreducible subjectivity is tied to his general theory of "negation" and "negativity". The breakdown of some practice or institution heightens the experience of the growing *unsharability* of the considerations I offer in defense of what I am doing and so "leaves" me bereft of the dialectical social cohesion Hegel construes as the realization of ethical life. Within such cohesion, I effect change in the legal sense noted above and experience the change as uniquely mine in the "materialist" sense noted above.

The last question Kögler raises is the most difficult to deal with economically. I only have time to simply assert, as a prelude to discussion, that I find it highly implausible that a dialogue with inegalitarian, sexist, racist, theocratic, anti-Semitic or homophobic societies will lead to any reflexive assessment of our *Lebenswelt*. At least I hope it wouldn't. I see no reason to be apologetic or embarrassed by such a view, but I also do not think it warrants any paternalistic interference with any such societies. But that just leaves the larger question still unanswered. It is undeniably true that modern ethical life or *Sittlichkeit* is in our time extraordinarily thin, if it exists at all. There are some vestiges of corporate or guild identity left, but the game of giving and asking for reasons has on the public stage clearly degenerated into a formalized exchange of interest-based self-promotions; the state and almost all politics is a tool of moneyed interests; the family bears very little relation to what Hegel understood; public culture is largely a swamp; and so on and so on. One thing that one can say, although it is an academic comment, is that the relentless attack on subjects as even possibly expressive authors of their deeds, the attack that began with the nineteenth century Masters of Suspicion, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, and continued with Heidegger, systems theory, structuralism and then deconstruction, Foucault and all the rest (now evolutionary biology and neuroscience), all mistakenly took themselves to be unmasking pretensions to agency that were simply false. From a Hegelian point of view we might better say that such accounts were *responsive* instead to the deteriorating conditions of modern *Sittlichkeit* and so would be much better understood as symptoms rather than the enlighteners of the counter-enlightenment. If that is so, then there is no reason to believe that the conditions which in effect produced them are the permanent fate of humankind and that the pathologies we are suffering always leave open the hope that they will motivate a structural transformation of the public sphere.

IV. Response to David Ingram

Most of what I want to say in response to David's remarks involve questions of emphasis, matters of greater or lesser significance, and issues in the formulation of problems. Perhaps we have a larger disagreement about the

relevance of counterfactual reasoning for ideal political philosophy, but I am not sure.

First, I take the Hegelian criticism of contemporary recognitional politics to concern almost exclusively the question of modern *politics*, not any doubts about the *importance* of recognition in its social or ethical dimensions. David notes this, but I want to emphasize something. The problem is not so much that any insistence that any rights claim must involve a commitment to the real social conditions necessary for any realization of such a claim potentially involves a regress problem, but that it involves a violation of a distinction that amounts to Hegel's most important contribution to modern political philosophy: the state—civil society distinction. The normative fact, let us say, that the realization of human freedom inevitably and unavoidably must involve a mutually recognitive status, is indeed a political issue for Hegel, but only in a very limited sense. In that limited sense, it involves equality before the law and equal status as a citizen, assured by the state's monopoly on legitimate coercion. Hegel's objection is to the notion of an *entitlement* to substantive recognitive status, not to the inescapable importance of such a status (as if such a status were only a matter of what he calls "abstract right"). The problem is simple: legally enforced recognition is not recognition. (Just as we cannot legislatively require friendship or solidarity or that everyone value each other.) As noted, this does not mean that *substantive* social recognition is not crucially important in Hegel's broad theory of what the realization of freedom requires. His theory of the importance of romantic love in modern societies, the nature and importance of the organization of modern labor, his defense of the modern bourgeois family, his suggestions about the importance of trust in market economies are all central elements in his theory of modern civil society. But just as something would be going wrong if we were to think of familial relations as at bottom rights claims of children against parents and parents against other family members, there is something of that kind going wrong in the very idea of a recognitional politics. The call for such a politics is a symptom of what we have lost in modern civil societies, and its loss is an explanation for much of the pathology of late capitalist societies. But, however frustrating this is, the loss cannot be corrected by politics, by what Hegel understood as *der Staat*, although the persistence and deepening of such pathologies raise difficult problems for Hegel's reliance on a historical phenomenology.

Secondly, David raises the interesting question of whether a Hegelian criticism of Kantian or "quasi-transcendental" theories of freedom and its realization, like Habermas's, is consistent with the broadly logical point that the mutuality of recognition is, for Hegel and for me, a necessary *telos* of any coherent struggle to realize human freedom. Does not such a *telos* seem to function as a kind of transcendental, necessary condition? If not, doesn't the position unreasonably limit disputes about what we owe and require of each other to institutionally bound limits in a way ultimately much too conservative?

This issue involves the heart of the heartland of Hegelianism, the relationship between his “science of logic” in particular and his systematic *Encyclopedia* in general, and on the other hand his *Phenomenology* and what he called his *Realphilosophie*, his philosophical histories of religion, philosophy, art, and world history. The basic position is that while we can distinguish what Hegel called the concept (*der Begriff*, some norm, say, like freedom) and its actualization (*Verwirklichung*), the content of the former is fixed only very minimally by its inferential relation with other concepts, and that its “actual” content is only accessible by the proper interpretation of what it is like “in use”, historically. (So it is a “meaning is use” inferentialism, but it requires much more detailed attention to historical actuality and especially to historical change than Wittgenstein’s or Brandom’s theories). We know as little from a purely philosophical point of view about what actually counts as mutuality of recognition as Kantians know about what exactly counts as treating others with respect, if we foreswear such historical analysis. And, in contrast to Rawls, especially to Rawls II, we cannot be content to accept that our actual intuitions are just ours, handed down as the legacy of the wars of religion and the development of market capitalism. (The analogue to this in Brandom, as Ingram is implying, is his infamous “queen’s shilling” example, where, according to Brandom, the poor sailor who unknowingly accepted the shilling can *rightly* be regarded as “being committed” to service in the queen’s navy.)

But again does this bind us too strictly to a requirement that all criticism be internal to a particular practice of giving and asking for reasons? Is not the Rawlsean idealizing counter-factual reasoning at home in “our modern ethos”? Not surprisingly, the Hegelian answer (very much in the spirit of his great hero, Aristotle) is: in one sense, yes; in another no. Yes, because *morality* as such is an actual modern institution. There are things we owe each other *as such*, every other, anywhere. The scope of the claim is not limited to members of our ethical community, although it, morality, is an institution of a distinctly modern ethical life. Its claim on us is not deducible from the requirements of communication, especially, as Ingram notes, its *motivational* hold on us. In another sense, however, no, because any such historically uninflected claim for justice is either empty (and can eagerly be agreed to by anybody) or moralistic in a way that confuses morality and politics and was for Hegel perfectly embodied by the Jacobins and the Terror. People always say that this is accommodationism and I think Habermas himself thinks that *any* step “down” from a quasi-transcendental position based on the claims of rationality as such “into” what any such claim could mean in a time and a place is either such an accommodationism or must rely on a philosophy of history that can have no modern credibility. But Habermas himself is committed to what Bernard Williams called the necessity of an error theory in liberalism—an account of why it is that such putatively universal requirements emerged as politically and socially decisive just when they did and not

before. (He used to sketch this theory in terms of developmental psychology but has since abandoned that model.) And the question of whether an interpretation of the possible is unduly accommodationist has no formal or methodological solution. It requires what it always requires and what no philosophy can provide: *phronesis* or practical wisdom “on the ground”, as it were.

Finally, Hegel himself noted that modern institutions in general have become, are in the process of becoming, more and more “philosophical”. He means by this everything from the development of modern Protestantism into a secular humanism and the transformation of modern art into a reflexive self-thematization. (He did not know how right he was about the latter.) But this also means that the somewhat quietistic picture of philosophers as a “priestly sect” of retrospective rationalizers must be significantly revised, and much of the history of post-Hegelian thought has been an attempt to think through such a revision, a process we are still engaged in.

V. Response to Theodore R. Schatzki

Schatzki’s objections could be summarized this way: if a non-causal account of agency is what you want, there are better accounts on offer than Hegel’s. Heidegger’s (and Bergson’s) handle much better the unusual temporal dimensions of agency as an event, and so the sort of indeterminacy of such events, and Wittgenstein’s account handles the “social context” issue much better. Along the way, Hegel’s theory (or my Hegel’s anyway) is charged with making far too much of unusual situations that often have several more plausible explanations (e.g., not doing what I avowed that I intended to do), Hegel’s stress on social agreement and possible contestation is an exaggeration of a much simpler situation (wherein agency as a kind of accomplishment is much easier and quite unproblematic to achieve), and Hegel’s account of practical reasons as distinctive of agency too narrowly focuses on the issue of mutual justification when there are several broader, non-justificatory ways I can be said to give an account of myself to others.

I don’t recognize in Schatzki’s summaries very much of what I wanted to attribute to Hegel, so much of the following will be an attempt at a reformulation of the position in the light of what seem to me Schatzki’s misunderstandings. But a general comment at the outset is in order. Just as there are many varieties of causal accounts of the relation between a subject’s mindedness and the bodily movements that somehow result from that mindedness (Davidson’s for the modern naturalist, Kant’s noumenal causality for the “practical point of view” Kantians and virtually all of Christian apologetics on absolute individual responsibility), there are a wide variety of non-causal accounts, many of which (but not all) have been called “expressivist” accounts. But any of the latter have to face and deal with two large issues. One concerns the nature of the mindedness at issue; the other concerns the

specification of the nature of the expressive relation at issue. The first is especially difficult since it involves the right account of the possibility of the self-understanding or, usually, the putative self-knowledge taken to be necessary for an event to count as an action. The problem is that it is highly unlikely that any such self-knowledge is in any way observational or “inspectionist”, to use Finkelstein’s phrase.⁴ And it is also unlikely that it is wholly “self-constituting”, as if my avowing what I take myself to desire, want, need and pledge to do is *all there is* to such desiring, pledging, etc. (Schatzki seems to agree with the anti-observational point.) This means that we need to say something about the possibility of such self-regarding attitudes, and several chapters of my book are devoted to following the thread of Hegel’s reflections on this issue. I argued that for Hegel, the formation of intentions and even self-reports are much more like provisional commitments than self-descriptions, and that the “actualization” of these commitments extends over time and in a way that has to involve the acknowledgement of others. (I don’t think there is any ambiguity in the book about these attitudes being provisional resolutions or commitments, not “beliefs” or “hopes”.) The philosophical dimensions of the “possibility of self-knowledge” issue, and the problems with alternative accounts, are the issues driving that account, not a phenomenology of what one might say everyday mindedness “looks like.” It is of course true that in everyday contexts one experiences such issues as unproblematic. One seems to oneself to identify effortlessly what one wants, to resolve to achieve it and to do so. But left at this level, we would sound like characters in a Platonic dialogue complaining to Socrates that we all know what justice or courage or piety is; we certainly don’t need philosophers muddying the waters.

Secondly, what *is* the relation between whatever this mindedness amounts to and the bodily movements that are supposed to be connected to it, especially if we agree that it is not causal? I attributed to Hegel the view that relation is expressive and mutable over time. (I conceded several times that there can be multiple reasons why I do not end up doing what I avowed I would do: discovery of unforeseen obstacles, intervening contingencies that render the accomplishment impossible, genuine ignorance on the part of the agent about social customs and so forth.) The difficulty emerges in cases where none of these sorts of factors are involved, but a person ends up not doing what she sincerely avowed she would do. These are not at all that rare; they involve cases of what we are tempted to call “weakness of the will” that we encounter virtually every day. I argued against the “weakness” view in favor of something like self-deceit, and tried to show how the right analysis of such cases tells us something about the structure of agency itself, especially about the difficulty of separating a punctuated intention (even one which changes from A to B) from the unfolding of the actual deed. Whatever view we have of the possibility of such agency has to account for such cases, and so they can be valuable guides.

Schatzki's versions of his preferred accounts in Bergson, Heidegger and life-philosophies are so telegraphic that I don't know what to say about them except for the autobiographical note that Schatzki prefers them. I have no idea what this means: "indeterminacy is the idea that the flow of life precedes and always outstrips whatever forms and structures it assumes". His long summation of Heidegger on the ecstatic unity of action are irrelevant to the points at issue. As he notes, Hegel also understands action to involve a form of temporality other than "objective time" and in much the way Heidegger does (as teleologically structured), but the whole point at issue between them comes down to what simply amounts to a counter-assertion by Schatzki: "Once the person commences to act, however, both what he is doing and what determines this are definite". They could be, but why must they be? It is often only in actualizing an intention (after one "commences to act") that one comes to realize that one was not quite so committed to a project as one took oneself to be (or was not committed at all) and it can remain pretty unclear or indeterminate, *as* one continues, just what one is willing to do. Moreover, the agent's act-description could be just as self-servingly self-deceived—not at all what others count the deed as – in the action's unfolding as before it. Considerations like these do not seem to me countered by an assertion that Heidegger thinks otherwise. Moreover, it is certainly not the case that Hegel's account "problematizes and decertifies people's knowledge of what they are doing". Of course, for Hegel, for anyone, people normally do what they avow to themselves and to others that they will do and normally what they take themselves to be doing is what others take them to be doing. That is simply Hegel's way of correctly formulating what goes on in unproblematic cases, the right way for what both Hegel and Schatzki would agree is the majority of cases. He only wants to problematize what *is* problematic—cases where what one takes oneself to be doing do not fit what one actually does—and to offer an account that fits the category of agency. (And such a critique by Schatzki, coming from a Heideggerean perspective—for whom everyday life is inauthentic, falling, full of mindless chatter and conformism to "the They"—is odd.)

Schatzki then notes, "there are two prominent conceptions of what an intentional action is: an action that an actor means to do and an action done for a reason. The former is due to Austin, the latter to Anscombe." I don't see any either-or here at all; just a both-and. No one can intelligibly articulate what they mean to do without some regard for the "why" question, and no one can offer such a reason except as relevant to what they mean to do, what they intend. If there were such a dichotomy, someone might say "what I meant to do was to stand up and shake", and when pressed on why, he could say "No reason; that's just what I meant to do." This is as unintelligible as the exchange, "Why did that fire start?" "No reason, it just started." We wouldn't have been given an explanation if we were only given something as narrowly conceived as "just what I meant to do".

Shatzki claims that Hegel's account of sociality suffers from a "subject-object" duality that supposedly plagues the German Idealist tradition. In this case, he thinks this means that one must decide, with regard to the question of an authoritative act-description, either that the agent's view trumps, or "society's". Perhaps he means this ironically. No one worked harder to disabuse us of such either-or positions in epistemology or in accounts of agency than Hegel, so if his position is subject to this criticism, then it is a devastating charge. But it is not, and it is precisely the nature of the dialectical tension in such a practice of acknowledgement that makes up the bulk of Hegel's account.

For one thing, Hegel himself is probably most famous for pointing out how challenges to some authoritative set of norms can *neither* be effectively countered by representatives of such authority, *nor* can such an authority simply integrate in a reformist way such challenges. Tragedies occur, and a form of life itself can fail. So of course it is true that in "normal times" (something like periods of "normal science"), "actors know the contexts in which they act and share the understandings carried in their practices". Just this sort of dependence on and potential independence from the "community" is what Hegel himself points to. But he has an account of a phenomenon not acknowledged well by Wittgensteinians: not how a form of life gets a grip, but how it loses its grip and a breakdown in such shared understandings takes place; in tragic situations, for example. So while it is true that, for the most part, the achievement of the status of agent is seamless and unproblematic, a full theory of the conditions for such possibility must take into account what happens when this consensus breaks down, as in the cases that interest Hegel—Greek political life, the reformation, the French Revolution—as well as cases we have had to face, such as the ever more problematic authority of modernity.

So for Hegel on such a theory there can be degrees in the "realization of freedom", and the boundary between agent and non-agent or diminished agent can be drawn and re-drawn in all sorts of ways. He emphasizes that our practical success in being able to justify ourselves to each other plays a leading role in such success or failure in the mutual acknowledgement necessary for the establishment of this status. Shatzki thinks he has a disagreement about whether reasons should be understood to be so restricted to justificatory contexts and he insists that the contexts of our explaining ourselves to each other is much broader.

It is hard, though, to imagine a context broader than Hegel's, for whom simple appeals like "because I am her father" or "because I am his brother" are paradigmatic examples of such reasons. So I find remarks like the following quite puzzling. "Reasons disclose the 'favorable light'⁵ in which an actor saw an action: they are dispositive, not about what the actor ought to do, but about what makes sense to her to do." Why this dichotomy? Schatzki has just himself claimed that what it "makes sense" to someone to

do must involve showing how she sees the action in a “favorable light”. What could “favorable” mean except something like: better to do this than that, or better than not doing anything? Some considerations count *for* the action; they are “pro” considerations. And it is hard to imagine how one could claim that whatever puts some potential deed in a favorable light is essentially private, unshareable. There can no more be private reasons as there can be a private language. I can certainly have a preference for something you find unintelligible (for raw liver, say), but we understand what it is for people to have different tastes and that we don’t regard this context as one that requires any further justification (“each to his own taste”). But sometimes you find yourself favorably disposed to do what affects what others would otherwise have been able to do and this places a much higher cost on the agent who proposes the deed and so places a greater claim on anyone who acts under such favorable light.⁶

None of this involves any great idealization of what is required in daily life; just the opposite. No one paid more attention to what we actually require of each other in order for collective practices to succeed or was more interested in actual cases of their failure. No one, that is, was more attentive to a spectacularly obvious fact that philosophers constantly have difficulty properly acknowledging: that the rules for these games change, sometimes in revolutionary, wholesale ways. He was more than entitled to the summary of his own approach found in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, that philosophy “must distance itself as far as possible from the obligation to construct a state as it ought to be.”⁷

Notes

1. Pippin, R. (2008) *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
2. I am especially indebted to Chris Latiolais for organizing the conference at Kalamazoo College at which these papers were first presented.
3. Bohman’s quote comes from Pettit, P. (1999) *Republicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 5.
4. Finkelstein, D. (2003) *Expression and the Inner* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
5. McDowell, J. (1982) “Reason and Action”, *Philosophical Investigations*, 5(4), pp. 301–05.
6. Further discussion of the issues raised by many of the critics can be found on the on-line forum sponsored by the National Humanities Center, “On the Human”, and the exchanges there between me and several commentators on the article by me posted there, “Participants and Spectators”. See http://onthehuman.org/2010/04/participants_and_spectators/
7. Hegel, G.W.F. [1807] (1991) *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 21.