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Introduction

The character Dorothea Casaubon (née Brooke), of George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch*, is an exemplary moralist. After explaining that she has no longings for herself, she says:

> "But I have a belief of my own, and it comforts me."
>
> "What is that?" said Will, rather jealous of the belief.
>
> "That by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil—widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower."
>
> "That is a beautiful mysticism—it is a—"
>
> "Please not to call it by any name," said Dorothea, putting out her hands entreatingly. "You will say it is Persian, or something else geographical. It is my life. I have found it out, and cannot part with it. I have always been finding out my religion."[1]

Kant's moral law is nothing geographical; its very identity is its universality, which stands entirely above the peculiarity of any name. Morally practical knowledge, Kant thinks, is the desire for what is perfectly good—even though knowledge of quite what perfect goodness is eludes our grasp, and we cannot (in a very specific sense) do what we would to achieve it. We cannot know quite what the highest good is, insofar as we cannot know how actual, deserved happiness can be the consequence of worthiness to be happy. Now, we *can* know the highest good *practically*, or insofar as the moral law is an incentive for us. It is practically rational to desire or aim for the highest good, which is introduced by the moral law. We cannot do what we would to achieve the highest good insofar as it is within our power to be virtuous—and to that extent to be worthy of happiness—but it is not within our power to produce deserved happiness

[1] George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Chapter XXXIX.

ourselves. We *can* do what we would insofar as moral knowledge "throws enough light everywhere for us to see what we have to do in order to remain on the path of duty" (EF 8:370).

Desiring what is perfectly good—the moral law as incentive—is something found out in the feeling of respect for the law, and it is something we cannot part with. Indeed, it is one's very life as a human being, insofar as morality informs all human predispositions.[2] That morality makes us part of the divine power against evil is decidedly not mysticism: moral knowledge does not purport to supply insight into divine agency, and we must not make the prospect of divinely dispensed punishment or reward our incentive. Kant's idea of morality is the idea of self-sufficient desiring of what is perfectly good. Dorothea's lack of longings for herself need not reflect a caricature of moralist austerity and rigor—for her longing for the perfectly good is self-sufficient, and this reflects a deeply important moment of practical mindedness.

In this dissertation, I critique Kant's idea of morality on behalf of Hegel—and I have tried never to reduce that idea to a caricature of dualistic thinking. The virtue of Mrs. Casaubon—and the virtue of more effective agents than she—is nothing to dismiss, and nothing Hegel dismisses, even though her ethical limitations, masterfully exhibited by George Eliot, point beyond morality. One of Hegel's most well-known charges against Kant is often understood to reflect this sort of dismissal—his charge that the categorical imperative is an *empty formalism* (PhR §135A). But Hegel praises Kant for having "expressly recognised the positive infinity of practical reason, specifically by ascribing to *willing* the faculty of determining itself in a universal manner, that is to say, through *thinking*" (EL §54Z). Hegel's charge that categorical imperative is an empty formalism is motivated by resounding endorsement of the positive

[2] R 6:28.

infinity of practical reason that he takes Kant to identify. In my view, the empty formalism charge expresses Hegel's conviction that the positive infinity of practical reason that Kant himself identifies is incompatible with being actual only in the will, i.e. only as an unconditional command. Indeed, Kant is right that freedom emerges through the absolute *ought* of pure reason practical of itself. But this positive infinity is the will to make itself actual in the world—that is, not in a postulated beyond, as Kant claims. Hegel thinks this is entailed by Kant's own idea of pure reason practical of itself, and he thinks it contains the resources to resolve its own contradictions in ethical life.

The alleged formality of moral law is one and the same, Hegel thinks, as the subjectivity of the will. Now, it might seem that Kant's concept of the will is precisely not subjective: the moral law is objective and universal, i.e. it is in no way peculiar to individual subjects but applies equally to all of us. Hegel denies that this constitutes the objectivity of the will. The subjectivity of the will does not consist in the peculiarity of its law alone but equally in its accomplishment being made to lie beyond its ken: "The *subjective*, as far as the will in general is concerned, denotes…one-sided form in general, in so far as that which is willed, whatever its content, is still only a content belonging to the self-consciousness, *an unaccomplished end*" (PhR §25; second italics mine). The central thesis of this dissertation is that the subjectivity of the will is its essentially imperfective aspect—and the absoluteness of form characteristic of morality does not remove this subjectivity. The central task of the dissertation is to elucidate the perfective aspect of practical knowledge—that is, what it is for the will to know its accomplishment in the world.

Now, Kant is no straightforward subjectivist about the will—and Hegel knows it. The true subjectivist about the will denies that volition constitutes *any* knowledge of its effects.

Hume is a true subjectivist in this sense: he claims that volition's influence over the movement of the body "can be known only by experience, and can never be foreseen from any apparent energy or power in the cause, which connects it with the effect…We learn the influence of our will from experience alone."[3] Kant denies this in a variety of different ways, from the self-consciousness of our possession of vital efficacy to the a priori connection of that efficacy to freedom. But he finally denies that our practical knowledge culminates in knowledge of the actual accomplishment of freedom in the world, and in this sense he remains a subjectivist.

Now, the subjectivity of the will does not pertain to moral goodness alone. Hegel also rejects the essentially imperfective aspect of technically practical knowledge. The subjectivity of technically practical knowledge consists in its accomplishment being made to lie beyond its ken —as it does when knowledge of accomplishment is made to depend on intuition and experience. Happiness is another essentially imperfective *ought* (EG §480)—and it too represents a form of subjectivity of the will that Hegel thinks must be overcome. The aim of this dissertation is to bring out the unity of Hegel's objection to the subjectivity of the will, which he thinks Kant preserves in spite of his sensitivity to many of subjectivism's underlying problems.

The dissertation begins in Chapter 1 with a presentation of true subjectivism and an attempt to elucidate its stakes and motivations. The subjectivist is fundamentally concerned about the apparent insuperability of external contingency. According to Hume, the subjective activity of volition has no way to guarantee its effects, and it contains no perception of the connection between itself and its effects. Adam Smith takes it to follow that the merit or demerit of actions lies in willing alone, i.e. not in its effects. In order to bring out the stakes of Hegel's

[3] ECHU, VII.1.

aim of restoring objectivity to the will, I argue that subjectivism eliminates tragedy by making it our normal condition.

In Chapter 2, I show that Kant rejects the subjectivist thesis according to which volition is not a power to know its effects. The self-conscious exercise of vital efficacy knows its effects through producing them in accordance with the concept of a whole. Now, this might suggest that Kant's practical knowledge can be united with Anscombe's, i.e. the knowledge of what one is doing. But this proves difficult insofar as Kant thinks technically practical knowledge must wait for intuition to know its accomplishment. We must *strive* towards the unity of technically and morally practical knowledge, which *would* encompass its own accomplishment.

In Chapter 3, I interpret the "Teleology" chapter of the *Science of Logic* as an argument against the essentially imperfective aspect of technically practical knowledge. I take Anscombe as a representative of this form of the subjectivity of the will, insofar as she understands practical knowledge to be the essentially imperfective knowledge of what one is doing—in contrast to the knowledge of accomplishment, which requires the mediation of observation and reports. Like Kant, Anscombe avows opposition to subjectivism—but, as with Kant, the *form* of intentional action alone is insufficient to overcome it. Essentially imperfective technically practical knowledge is subject to the *regress of means*. I argue that Hegel brings the accomplishment of technically practical knowledge into the practical perspective by showing that it realizes the conditions of its own activity in the use and usability of its product.

In Chapter 4, I interpret "The Idea of the Good" in the *Logic* as an argument against the essentially imperfective aspect of morally practical knowledge. I argue that the first half of Hegel's dialectic rearticulates Kant's own dialectic of pure reason practical of itself. Then I

explain why Kant thinks our morally practical knowledge cannot attain the perfective aspect. I argue that Hegel brings the accomplishment of the good into the practical perspective by turning away from the individual will to the actuality of what has been done. It is internal to the idea of pure reason practical of itself, Hegel thinks, that its actual results are not singular in the way Kant contends. Willing realizes the conditions of its own action, or, put another way, ethical action is possible only insofar as the world has already been made good by ethical action.

I conclude the dissertation in Chapter 5 by turning to the philosophy of mind. Kant preserves the pursuit of happiness as distinct from freedom—but happiness is essentially in the imperfective aspect, which means it is incompatible with the will. Happiness is overcome in the objectivity of mind as the will to actually accomplish the systematic satisfaction of the drives in the ethical world. This changes the dialectic of good and evil, which is no longer an eternal struggle within the will, the deepest descent of subjectivity into itself in the hell of self-cognition, but the actual universalization of self-interest in ethical community. Whereas the moral disposition of respect for the law is not accomplished but eternally renewed, the ethical disposition is accomplished in habitual volition. I argue that the political disposition is the speculative descendant of moral law, the actuality of freedom's accomplishment in the practical perspective. Finally, I show how Hegel transforms the postulation of just deserts—the accomplishment of which we can only imagine—into the ethical reciprocity of the state. Freedom does not entitle us to *deserved happiness* but to the knowledge that freedom is actual in the world.

Chapter 1. Antitragic action: themes of subjectivism

Oedipus gouges out his eyes after learning that it is in fact his mother whom he married all those years ago, and his father whom he slayed on the road to Thebes. All this gore might seem like an overreaction—after all, how could he have known? Adam Smith views things this way, explaining that "the whole distress of Oedipus" is due to his "fallacious sense of guilt" (TMS 2.3.3.5). As Smith sees it, the tragedy of *Oedipus Rex* is not finally the inadvertent incest or patricide—but Oedipus' overreaction to learning that those descriptions apply to his deeds. This is because Smith has an *antitragic* conception of action, I claim.[1] Oedipus is not tragic, for Smith, because our agency does not reach the heights from which it might make a tragic fall. What happens to Oedipus is simply an exaggeration of what happens to us every time we so much as lift an arm. It is our normal condition that we must wait for experience to learn the effects of volition, e.g. that one's arm actually goes up. The fallacy of Oedipus' guilt is not that he fails to see that his authorship of marriage and murder is suspended due to ignorance, but the very idea that an agent authors the effects of her will. For Smith, the province of agency ends with volition—and volition is not a power to know its effects by bringing them about. The effects of volition must be found out in experience, as Oedipus finds out about his deeds at the conclusion of the investigation he directs. In order for Oedipus to be tragic, we have to understand ourselves as the authors of our actions—and we have to understand something to be lost or perverted insofar as the truth about our deeds is only found out in experience. My aim in this chapter is to draw out the central features of *subjectivism*, according to which Oedipus is not tragic because the objectivity of action falls outside the power of agency.

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[1] I borrow the expression from Richard Halpern. See Halpern (2017), p. 31.

1.1. Some context on Hegel's conception of tragedy

Hegel does not accept subjectivism about agency—but neither does he accept the conception of agency Oedipus seems to act out, according to which he is fully responsible for incest and patricide even though he acted in ignorance. Ancient tragedy presents what Hegel considers the one-sidedly *objective* conception of action: it is not yet established that the subject has a right to count as her deed only what she knows, i.e. excluding descriptions that fall outside her awareness, such as incest and patricide do for Oedipus. That this right has not been established is exhibited in Oedipus' self-mutilation. Hegel thinks Oedipus is wrong to discount the right of subjectivity, but he rejects the subjectivist's claim that Oedipus' guilt is simply *fallacious*. The one-sidedly *subjective* conception of action characteristic of "Morality" responds to the defectiveness of Oedipus' one-sided objectivity—and "Morality" is a necessary stage of the will's development that contains truth. But the one-sidedly objective conception of agency contains truth about agency, too. Agency must be the power to author effects in the world, and to thereby know the nature of one's action.

The tragic hero incurs guilt that discords with the goodness of her will. This is most often discussed, by Hegel and by his interpreters, in terms of the collision of explicitly ethical powers, as for example Antigone's collision with Creon is the collision of family with the state. Oedipus, by contrast, seems to exercise an ethical power that comes into conflict with external contingency. Now, we do not tend to consider this to be an an ethical power—but Oedipus does. He understands his struggle to be with an ethical power, namely the will of the gods, through which his unknowing blasphemy brings about the plague. The power of the externally objective

world to resist our efforts—as the world of Oedipus seems to resist his powers of agency—must also be overcome through freedom's dialectic. This is why, as we learn from Aristotle, deeds done in ignorance also constitute a proper form of tragedy.[2] Ethical powers can come into conflict with one another—and ethical powers can come into conflict with facts that elude one's grasp and descriptions of one's deeds that elude one's awareness.

Across diverse systematic contexts, Hegel identifies this plurality of conflicts through which the one-sided good is subject to destruction. In the guiding text of this dissertation, namely "The Idea of the Good" in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel articulates the plurality as follows: "in concrete existence a good is subject to destruction not only due to external contingency and to evil, but also because of collision and conflict in the good itself" (WL 12.232). Oedipus need not have encountered his father on the road to Thebes—i.e., that his path crossed with his father's on that day is a matter of external contingency—but nonetheless, the fact that he *did* encounter his father in ignorance results in the tragedy of patricide. In *Antigone*, by contrast, the good of family comes into collision, not with external contingency, but with the good of the state. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explains that "the true and purely ethical interest of ancient tragedy" is "the triumph of the true" (PhR §140An.), by which he means the truth of a more developed ethical world in which the good does not come into conflict in the ways acted out in tragic drama —ultimately through the modern state. But the true triumphs in respect of external contingency, too. My first topic is the truth of *what has been done*—insofar as agents act in a world that they do not at the same time create, a world that is not transparent to agents in a way that rules out tragedies of error.

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[2] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1454a3-4.

Hegel describes the apparent non-transparency of finite agency in a famous passage of the *Phenomenology*. The fate that befalls Oedipus is characterized as a struggle with actuality, which is never fully available to the agent:

> As concerns the action, only one aspect of the decision itself lies open to the light of day. However, the decision is in itself the negative, which confronts an other to itself, an alien to itself, which is knowing. Hence, actuality keeps concealed within itself this other aspect which is alien to knowing and which does not show itself to consciousness as it is in and for itself—which neither shows the son that the man insulting him and whom he strikes dead is his father, nor shows him that the queen whom he takes as his wife is his mother. In this way, a power that shuns the daylight preys on ethical self-consciousness, a power which bursts forth only after the deed is done and when it has taken self-consciousness in its grip. (PhG §468)

This passage seems to say that only *after* one is done acting, *after* the power of actuality has burst forth, does one know the truth of what one has done. This seems to suggest in turn that agents do not know their actions on the basis of producing them, because the process of production does not reach all the way to the alien actuality in which and on which one acts. Agents must wait to see what bursts forth from within actuality. But this is too quick: what happens to Oedipus is *tragic*—which is to say, it is a thwarted exercise of agency, not a successful or good one, which is marked by not having to wait for actuality to burst forth in this way. Hegel explains that the tragic results of deeds done in ignorance *violate* the power that agency truly is:

> The deed consists in setting the unmoved into motion, which thereby brings forth what had been sealed off as mere possibility, and it links the unconscious to the conscious and the non-existent to being. In this truth, therefore, the deed comes to light—as that in which the conscious is combined with the unconscious and in which what is one's own is combined with what is alien. It comes to light as the estranged essence, whose other aspect consciousness also experiences as its own, as a power violated by it and thereby roused to hostility. (*ibid*.)

Agency is the power to move the unmoved, to link what lies beyond one's awareness with one's conscious purpose. The act of combining one's own purpose with what is alien results in *truth*, in *coming to light*. Now, this is not the ordinary sense of truth, i.e. the truth of judgments about what is the case—but the truth of accomplishment, which will be fleshed out in the course of the dissertation. It is nothing short of the estranged essence that comes to light, and the agent experiences nothing short of the deed's otherness as her own. Oedipus is tragic because the world in which he acts *violates* his power to objectify himself in action. If agency were defined by its subjection to the always-concealed power of actuality, the devastating facts Oedipus discovers would not constitute a violation, and Oedipus' self-mutilation would be a disturbing overreaction. If it were the normal condition for agents to discover the truth about their deeds only *after* actuality's concealed power has burst forth, Sophocles would have no subject matter for tragic drama in Oedipus.[3] This is what the subjectivist contends: the tragedy lies rather in the effect the overreaction has on the audience.

The subjectivist loses sight of "the true and purely ethical interest of ancient tragedy…the triumph of the true" (PhR §140An.). The truth is that agency is the power to combine itself with what is alien, to translate something thought into something objectively actual. Ultimately, this will mean that the actuality with which agency combines itself is not alien in the way initially supposed. The form of subjectivism I want to introduce in this chapter takes the tragedy of Oedipus to be our normal condition, and it is given forcefully clear expression by Adam Smith. I call this form of subjectivism *antitragic* action because, on this view, our agency is not

[3] There is a prominent thread in the recent scholarship on Hegel's philosophy of action that focuses on the retrospective character of intention. Robert Pippin is a leading voice in this tradition; see especially Pippin (2008), pp. 146ff. My claim that Hegel rejects the idea that agents must wait for actuality to burst forth does not imply that there is a determinate subjective item, the intention, which supplies the agent's knowledge of her actions. The latter thesis is the target of this tradition of interpretation, which is correct to insist Hegel rejects it.

substantial enough to be subject to tragedy; Oedipus is unlucky but not tragic. Agency is not the power to realize oneself objectively, and Oedipus is just a particularly bad example of what can always go wrong for finite beings like us, namely the fracture of volition and its effects.

1.2. The undisguised hypocrisy of Smithian agency

Smith understands the misguided self-mutilation of Oedipus to be an egregious example of something that is fundamental to the human condition: he calls it an *irregularity of sentiment*. We ought to appraise the merit or demerit of an action on the sole basis of "the intention or affection of the heart, from which it proceeds" (TMS 2.3.0.1). But we human beings are characterized by an irregularity of sentiment that disposes us to appraise the merit or demerit of actions based not on intention alone, as we ought to, but on its effects, too—that is, bodily movement and the consequences that follow from it. The event of action is not itself something that can be praised or blamed: only the intention, which is separate from what happens, can be praised or blamed. To this proposition, Smith says, "there is not a dissenting voice among all mankind" (TMS 2.3.0.4). Oedipus is an egregious example of the irregularity of sentiment that makes us feel responsible for the event of action in addition to the intention, even though we know better that our powers of agency are far more limited.

When we praise an action—considered by Smith to be the sum of intention, bodily movement, and further effects—what we are really praising is the intention. Praiseworthy actions arise "when to the beneficent tendency of the action is joined the propriety of the affection from which it proceeds" (TMS 2.1.4.2), blameworthy actions "when to the hurtfulness of the action is joined the impropriety of the affection from whence it proceeds" (TMS 2.1.4.4). The hurtfulness

of Oedipus' actions—the plague—is not joined with impropriety of affection, for he sought to avoid doing the very blasphemies he learns he has done. Oedipus mutilates himself from the irregular sentiment to which each of us is subject, namely the feeling that the beneficent or hurtful tendency of the action itself, in addition to the affection from which it proceeds, is the product of our agency. Put simply, we fallaciously think we are responsible for what we bring about in the world, when in fact we are only responsible for the affection of the heart from which actions proceed.

Smith claims that the external movement of the body, and to an even greater extent the further effects that follow from it, are *indifferent* to praise and blame. He writes: "He who shoots a bird, and he who shoots a man, both of them perform the same external movement: each of them draws the trigger of a gun" (TMS 2.3.0.2). The two actions differ in respect of intention, i.e. the intention to shoot a bird from the intention to shoot a man. You might have thought that the two actions differ much more strikingly in respect of their effects: assuming both shooters hit their targets, a bird has been shot in the one case, and a man in the other. Smith aims to counteract precisely this tendency of thought. External movements and their consequences lie outside the province of agency.[4] Agency lies in intending, and merit and demerit enter the scene with agency. The difference between homicide and ornicide lies in intention.

Smith espouses *volitionalism*: all we ever do, properly speaking, is intend. Bodily movement and its consequences depend on external factors, and so cannot be said to be, properly

[4] See Anton Ford (2018), "The Province of Human Agency." He argues that what Davidson calls the "bad old doctrine" of volitionalism (of which Smith is an example) is basically preserved in what Ford calls corporealism, according to which all we do is move our bodies, the rest being famously up to nature. Ford shows that corporealism is basically unquestioned in the philosophy of action, and argues that it ought to be abandoned in favor of materialism, according to which what we do extends beyond our bodies all the way to transactions with objects distinct from ourselves. Hegel, we will see in Chapter 3, is a materialist in this sense.

speaking, the work of agency. We cannot guarantee that nature and other people will cooperate with our plans. We cannot guarantee that our bodies will perform the way we want and expect them to, or that the person who stands across from us at the altar will not ultimately be revealed to be someone other than who we think she is. Who could deny it? We cannot control what is beyond our control, and sometimes the worst comes to pass. Perhaps it is the tautological character of this formulation of our finitude that makes Smith so outlandishly confident—not a dissenting voice among all mankind, etc.—that the scope of our agency is so devastatingly slim.

We regard the event of action as depending on agency, even though we know perfectly well that it does not. For the event of action to depend on agency, we would have to create the world in which we act rather than act in a world we do not create. As things stand for us, "the consequences of actions are altogether under the empire of Fortune" (TMS 2.3.1.7). Fortune comes between agency and the event, cleaving the latter from intention, which becomes the sole province of agency. But Fortune does not stop there: by another twist of her mysterious governance, she "has some influence where we should be least willing to allow her any" (TMS 2.3.3.1), namely over how we *regard* actions, and on that basis appraise them. Nature or Fortune causes us to feel irregularly responsible for events that are beyond the ken of our agency. The actuality of actions only influences our appraisal of them pathologically, under the influence of Fortune where she should most be excluded. It is not in our power to exclude Fortune from the production of the event—but it *is* in our power to exclude Fortune from our appraisal of actions, which is to say to resist the feeling to which Oedipus succumbs when he gouges out his eyes, i.e. that he is responsible for what has happened.

The actuality of bodily movement and the consequences to which it gives rise should be excluded from all moral appraisal, according to Smith. This proposition, he says, is "abundantly evident; nor has the contrary ever been asserted by any body" (TMS 2.3.0.2). He compares our agency, with its characteristic irregularity of sentiment, to the work of an architect:

> It mortifies an architect when his plans are either not executed at all, or when they are so far altered as to spoil the effect of the building. The plan, however, is all that depends upon the architect. The whole of his genius is, to good judges, as completely discovered in that as in the actual execution. But a plan does not, even to the most intelligent, give the same pleasure as a noble and magnificent building. (TMS 2.3.2.3)

The true nature of the building is completely contained in the plan, and it is only due to a deficit of pleasure that we miss the actual execution. The architect's mortification exhibits a side of himself that discords with the good judge within him; he has let his irregularity of sentiment influence how he regards his own genius. The only thing that depends upon him is the plan—and he believes this, according to Smith. If he can set aside his feeling of mortification, the proposition that the whole of his genius is discovered in the plan is undeniable. The architect is not mortified because his agency has not been realized objectively—for it has been, in the plan. In truth, the architect is mortified because the pleasure of seeing the magnificent building is withheld—and a pleasurable sight plainly has nothing to do with architectural genius.

Smith claims that we all agree that what actually happens does not depend on us but on Fortune. At the same time, however, none of us acts like it is true. He writes:

> Every body agrees to the general maxim, that as the event does not depend on the agent, it ought to have no influence upon our sentiments, with regard to the merit or propriety of his conduct. But when we come to particulars, we find that our sentiments are scarce in any one instance exactly conformable to what this equitable maxim would direct. (TMS 2.3.3.1)

It scarcely ever feels right to withhold moral appraisal from the event, Smith says. We are inclined to credit the really erected building to the architect and her team, and the saving of the patient's life to the doctors and nurses around the operating table. We feel repulsion towards Oedipus and catharsis in his self-mutilation even though we know his conduct was not aimed at abomination and so was not improper. Something explains the divergence of our appraisal from good sense when it comes to particular actions, and that is the irregularity of sentiment. But, Smith says, this is something "which every body feels, which scarce any body is sufficiently aware of, and which nobody is willing to acknowledge" (TMS 2.3.0.6). We readily say that the event of action does not depend on the agent, and therefore cannot be worthy of praise or blame, but we go around appraising actions based on the event of them anyways. We are aware of this discrepancy, but usually only dimly, and none of us will acknowledge it. Our basic condition, in other words, is hypocrisy—and Smith does not disguise it.

1.3. Hume's elimination of agency

We can make some sense of Smith's willingness to make hypocrisy so fundamental to the human condition in light of how he attempts to emend the doctrine of his good friend David Hume. Smith and Hume both espouse moral sentimentalism, i.e. the view that morality springs from patterns of affection, such as how we are sentimentally affected by good deeds. But Hume famously locates the affection of moral sense in the *utility* of actions—that is, in the *event* of action. As we have seen, Smith rejects this: he claims that we are—or at least ought to be—affected by the *intention* of actions. At the same time, however, he wholly adopts Hume's view that the event of action does not depend on the agent—indeed, as we have seen, he presents this

view as plainly undeniable by all mankind. We can thus understand Smith to use volitionalism to unite morality, which he thinks cannot be given a consequentialist account, with Hume's elimination of the efficacy of intending. Hume rejects volitionalism because he denies that *intending* is in any intelligible sense *doing* anything at all; not even intention is a province of agency for us. The combination of morality and Humean finitude induces an unfortunate hypocrisy, but it can be understood as an irregularity of our species.

Smith and Hume agree on these features of our finitude: the power of agency is not realized in the event of action, and we must learn the nature of the event in experience. Now, Hume does consider the possibility that agency is the power to realize itself objectively. However, were the activity of intending really itself a causal activity, he explains, we would know the event of action on the basis of doing it—and the fate of Oedipus would be impossible. We would know the objectivity of our actions, such as getting married, by means of our subjective intentions. We would know the identity of our bride by intending to and actually marrying her, not by learning about her through observation and hearsay.

Anyone among mankind who might wish to dissent to the thesis Smith presents as plainly undeniable, Hume thinks, would have to posit that we perceive the "power or energy in the will"[5] in virtue of which we distinguish an idle from an efficacious representation of action. On the basis of what exactly, Hume asks, are we supposed to know that some representation of ours causes, in the right way, the happening that we observe? He considers and rejects the proposal that we perceive our efficacy in the activity of moving and acting intentionally. If that were the case, he claims, our knowledge of the event of action would be impervious to errors of both

[5] All of the references to Hume in what follows can be found in ECHU VII.1.

ignorance and performance. Causes are supposed to guarantee their effects, and if intention were the awareness of being such a cause, it would likewise guarantee the event of action. Intention would have to be the perception of the power that necessitates or guarantees the event, which would be transparent. We would not have to wait and see our arm actually go up or check whether the man is really dead; we would know that already in virtue of intending. But clearly that is not our lot in life.

Hume grants to his agency-minded interlocutor that we are always aware that our intentions to move are manifested in actual movement. We can test this at any time: try to lift your pinky finger and, if you are typically abled and your pinky is unshackled, it moves just when you mean it to. "But *how* this comes about—the *energy* through which the will performs so extraordinary an operation—is something of which we are so far from being immediately conscious." There is no perception that shows us how our intentions, which we cannot see, cause the corresponding bodily movement, which we can see. Elizabeth Anscombe has more recently repudiated the idea that practical knowledge contains "a very queer and special sort of seeing eye in the middle of the acting"[6]—that is, an eye that sees not only what happens but how intending makes it happen. She and Hume part ways rather immediately, however: the madness of such an account speaks against Humean elimination. But they share the idea that we ought to call off the hunt for a special perception that shows us our own efficacy.

Hume thinks that without a queer seeing eye in the middle of action, we must eliminate efficacy from our conception of intentional action. Our ability to move our limbs intentionally is as mysterious, Hume claims, as the hypothetical ability to intentionally move mountains or

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[6] *Intention*, §32.

distant planets would be. Imagine you can move the planets by "secretly wishing" them to move. Imagine you represent some superlunary movement you wish to bring about, and, staring at the distant sky, the planets move accordingly. If celestial motion were the effect of our volition, Hume claims, that would be no less mysterious than bodily movement is as a matter of fact for us. Nothing contained in volition reveals how representing is a power to cause bodily movement, and so volition does not supply knowledge of the action that actually happens. Insofar as we have such knowledge, it is supplied by experience. We know what planetary motion is like, and we can imagine that motion being the effect of our representation of it. In just the same way, we know from experience what bodily movement is like, and we do in fact imagine that it is the effect of our representation of it. But nothing we perceive, within or without, grounds the idea that we are, by means of our representations, *agents* of any change in the world. Rather, we are accustomed to thinking of ourselves that way, because as a matter of fact successful execution so pervasively follows intending.

Hume argues that if intention were to supply knowledge of action independently of the experience of volition's effects, we would know such things as why we can wiggle our fingers but not our noses, and why we can close our eyes but not our lungs. He writes:

> We would then perceive, independently of experience, why the authority of will over the organs of the body is kept within certain limits. Being fully acquainted with the power or force by which the will operates, we would also know why its influence reaches precisely as far as it does and no further.

I can as easily represent the wiggling of my finger as the wiggling of my nose—and indeed the moving of distant planets—but I can only do the former. Were my representation of wiggling my finger itself an exercise of the power in virtue of which I actually wiggle it, then I would know

how my representation of finger-wiggling differs from nose-wiggling, such that the former and not the latter causes something actual. As it stands, I only know that I can as a matter of fact do one thing but not the other, and I know this from the experience of my effects.

Somewhat more recently, William James has defended the thesis that volition must wait for experience to learn its effects. He explains:

> [I]f, in voluntary action properly so-called, the act must be foreseen, it follows that no creature not endowed with divinatory power can perform an act voluntarily for the first time. Well, we are no more endowed with prophetic vision of what movements lie in our power, than we are endowed with prophetic vision of what sensations we are capable of receiving. As we must wait for the sensations to be given us, so we must wait for the movements to be performed involuntarily, before we can frame ideas of what either of these things are. We learn all our possibilities by the way of experience.[7]

Ideas of movements we might perform are made out of the mental material left behind by movements performed involuntarily. The latter leave behind feelings, e.g. how it feels to turn one's head in a particular way when one hears a noise, or how it feels to jump when one is startled. The idea of movements that are within one's power are composed exclusively from such feelings: "There is no other mental material out of which such an idea might be made."[8] Agents do not author the ideas of their own movements, but borrow them from movements that have already happened to them: "[F]ramed as we are, we can have no *a priori* idea of a movement, no idea of a movement which we have not already performed. Before the idea can be generated, the movement must have occurred in a blind, unexpected way, and left its idea behind."[9] The normal condition for us is to learn of our powers of agency by way of experience—that is, the condition that Sophocles makes the subject matter of tragic drama is the normal condition for us.

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[7] *Principles of Psychology*, p. 926.
[8] *ibid*., p. 946.
[9] *ibid*., p. 1095.

We saw Hume call off the hunt for the perception that shows the efficacy of representations of intention. Such a perception would show the difference between idle and efficacious wishing. James understands the difference between idleness and efficacy, between *wish* and *will*, to be something we learn in experience. This crucial difference, he claims, is "contain[ed] in miniature"[10] in the experience of getting out of bed in the morning. "We suddenly find that we *have* got up," that the intention to do so *has* gone from idleness to efficacy. There is no perception of efficacy, but only perception of effectiveness by way of experience. James writes of volition: "The whole drama is a mental drama. The whole difficulty is a mental difficulty."[11] The whole drama and difficulty is not, in other words, a struggle with the external world, as Oedipus seems to think when he gouges out his eyes. The agent's work is done entirely within the mental world: volition "is absolutely completed when the stable state of the idea is there. The supervention of motion is a supernumerary phenomenon depending on executive ganglia whose function lies outside the mind."[12] The effects of volition fall outside the power of mind, and so must be discovered in experience. The achievement of volition is a stable state of idea, not the function through which movement and transaction are produced.

Hume and James agree: willing is not a way of knowing what happens. If we knew the event of action on the basis of intending or willing it, our agency would be transparent in a way that, for us, it simply never is. The transparency with which we can represent the idea of finger wiggling does not reach into any actual wiggling. Such a representation stands at the beginning of a long and opaque process that culminates in bodily movement—not to mention transactions

[10] *ibid*., p. 989.
[11] *ibid*., p. 1066.
[12] *ibid*., p. 1060.

with objects distinct from the subject, of which actions are actually composed.[13] To this thesis there can be no dissenting voice among all mankind, for dissent would require crediting us with divinatory power and prophetic vision that we plainly lack. The only sensible thing to do is eliminate the idea of agency as the knowledgable production of effects.

1.4. Smith's widget problem and the systematic perversion of agency

Smith accepts Hume's elimination of agency and his skeptical thesis that willing is not a way of knowing what happens—and nonetheless tries to found intention as the province of agency. But he faces a problem: he has to explain why we bother doing anything praiseworthy at all. On the one hand, we feel that "mere good inclinations and kind wishes" (TMS 2.3.3.3) are *imperfect*. That is, intentions that produce no fruit or die on the vine seem to be deficient. On the other hand, feelings that cherish the event of action are contrary to good sense, because the event of action is entirely under the empire of Fortune. We can call this the *widget problem*: if the effects of volition fall outside our power, why bother getting anything done? Smith needs to save the feeling that idle intentions are imperfect without compromising the irregularity of sentiment that makes him compatible with Hume. (Hume does not face this problem insofar as he thinks we are sentimentally affected by the utility rather than the intention of actions.) "Man was made for action," Smith says—and yet we cannot deny that the province of agency ends with intention, bodily movement and the rest being beyond its ken.

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[13] See Hume, ECHU VII.1: "The mind wills a certain event: immediately another event is produced, one that we don't know and that is totally different from the one intended; this event produces another, which is equally unknown; and finally, through a long sequence of such intermediaries, the desired event is produced." James makes a similar point: "All sorts of neuro-muscular processes come between, of course, but we know absolutely nothing of them. We think the act, and it is done." *Principles of Psychology*, p. 984.

Providence resolves Smith's widget problem. As rational animals and children of God, our vocation is to actually realize the good. The consequences of the irregularity of sentiment in our practical life are not exclusively negative, i.e. that we are often led astray in the way that Oedipus is when he mutilates himself, taking ourselves to be responsible for effects that are not our own work. The irregularity peculiar to our agency also serves a benevolent purpose and can be understood to be the work of Providence. Nature teaches us not to "be fully satisfied" with our agency "unless [we have] actually produced" the ends we intend. Nature teaches us to indulge this strain of the irregularity of our sentiment in order that we "may call forth the whole vigour of [our] soul, and strain every nerve, in order to produce those ends which it is the purpose of [our] being to advance" (TMS 2.3.3.6). Without the intervention of Providence that produces this irregularity of our sentiment, we might satisfy ourselves with idle contemplation of the good. Thanks to Providence, we actually care about getting things done.

The horrifying act of Oedipus is, as it were, collateral damage of this providential design: the flipside of caring about getting things done is caring when our intentions accidentally produce terrible consequences. The story of Oedipus is "one of the finest and most interesting" (TMS 2.3.3.6) because his struggle is our basic condition, exhibited in sharpest relief—and he fails in an unforgettably disturbing way. The event of action is more or less alien, and this can be devastating. The lesson to learn from Oedipus is that through reflection we can minimize or eliminate the devastation and mortification we feel as a result of our impotence:

> Nature has not left [man's] innocence altogether without consolation, nor his virtue altogether without reward. He then calls to his assistance that just and equitable maxim, That those events which did not depend upon our conduct, ought not to diminish the esteem that is due to us. He summons up his whole magnanimity and firmness of soul, and strives to regard himself, not in the light in which he at present appears, but in that in

> which he ought to appear, in which he would have appeared had his generous designs been crowned with success. (TMS 2.3.3.6)

Oedipus appears in a devastating light at the end of the inquiry. The object—his marriage, his killing—was not only not transparent to him but fundamentally opposed to his intention. Instead of mutilating himself, Smith suggests, he might have called to his assistance the equitable maxim that he is not after all responsible for the event, for it does not depend upon his conduct. His conduct, of course, ends with his will—the rest is up to Fortune.

You might think that Oedipus calls forth the whole vigor of his soul, and strains every nerve, in order to be a good king. He abandons the city of his birth to avoid doing the very things he now learns he has done. Having learned these terrible facts, Smith's Oedipus faces a *second* arduous task, for which he must summon "up his whole magnanimity and firmness of soul"—namely to regard himself in the light in which he *ought* to appear, and so *not* to mutilate himself. The first arduous task is making sure not to satisfy himself with less than actually producing his God-given ends. And so he does: he abandons the city of his birth. The second arduous task is regarding himself as worthy of the esteem of a king, even though the actions he turns out to have produced are an offense against the gods.

It is not just moral aims that are null in the event of action—the same goes for production, according to Smith. We tend to think that the goodness of artifacts produced with great technical skill lies in the actual pleasures they afford. We find ourselves "charmed with the beauty of that accommodation which reigns in the palaces" (TMS 4.1.9), and we take ourselves to admire it for the pleasures it affords the lucky few who get to live there. We imagine that the pleasure of living in a palace is worth the skill and effort that went into building it. But this is a

deception, Smith claims: what we actually admire is "the order, the regular and harmonious movement of the system, the machine or oeconomy by means of which it is produced" (*ibid*.). If we subtract the attractive image of the harmonious system of production, "the real satisfaction" afforded by useful and beautiful artifacts of human technical skill—including Swiss watches and royal palaces—appear "contemptible and trifling" (*ibid*.). The actual products of our skillful activity are only valuable as the appearance of something subjective, the good feeling induced by the image of harmonious production, which is actually valuable.

As we saw earlier, doing something is not, for Smith or for Hume, a way of knowing anything actual; the event of action must be learned in experience. That is why the event of action is not itself the object of praise or blame; the province of agency ends with intention, and so does merit. The event of action is *opaque*: insofar as it accords with the intention from which it proceeds, that is due to Fortune and not the agent. Production is similarly opaque. The activity of the stonemason working on the palace walls belongs to the harmonious system of builders and tools by means of which the palace is finally produced. But the individual stonemason believes she is producing something that will bring pleasure to the people who will live there when the work is done—and this belief is simply false, Smith thinks, a deception. She believes that through her extraordinary attention to detail she is contributing to the production of an accommodation that is extraordinarily satisfying to live in. But this is false: the real satisfaction of the product is nothing when we subtract the image of the harmonious system that produces it —the stonemason's contribution in the context of the worksite and supply chain—and that image, moreover, cannot be realized in any individual product; it only exists as something subjective, something the stonemason and others feel. Skillful activity is not a way of knowing

anything actual. The Swiss watchmaker masters and advances the art of horology not, in truth, for the determinate purpose of telling time—Smith cites as evidence for this that the owner of the expensive watch is no more likely than anyone else to be punctual—but for the indeterminate purpose of harmonious productive activity, which is pleasant to imagine.

The irregularity of sentiment that causes us to feel responsible for actually producing the event of action can be understood to serve the purpose of teaching us to care about getting good things done. The deception of production can likewise be understood to serve a purpose:

> It is this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind. It is this which first prompted them to cultivate the ground, to build houses, to found cities and commonwealths, and to invent and improve all the sciences and arts, which ennoble and embellish human life; which have entirely changed the whole face of the globe, have turned the rude forests of nature into agreeable and fertile plains, and made the trackless and barren ocean a new fund of subsistence, and the great high road of communication to the different nations of the earth. (TMS 4.1.10)

In truth—which is to say, in the eyes of the impartial spectator—we would be as happy with basic subsistence as with advanced agriculture. The difference is not greater happiness but *more means* of happiness (TMS 4.1.8): the ever greater diversity of ways to pursue satisfaction does not, in truth, lead to greater satisfaction. The kalette, for example, offers a delightful new means of cruciferous satisfaction, but it does not, in truth, supply *greater* satisfaction than brussels sprouts and kale. The only point of pursuing more means of happiness is the attractive image of harmonious systems of production.

Meanwhile, the harmonious systems of human industry promote human happiness of their own accord. The worldly resources for happiness have "nearly the same distribution," by means of the invisible hand, as they would have if they were equally distributed by means of deliberate human effort. Human beings engage in productive activity and, "without intending it,

without knowing it, advance the interest of society" (TMS 4.1.10). It is not in virtue of aiming for harmonious systems that we advance the interest of society, for we do not aim for that; we believe (falsely) that we are pursuing greater happiness. And it is not in virtue of aiming for greater happiness that we advance the interest of society, for that comes about without our knowing or intending it. Doing is resolutely not a way of knowing anything actual. Our intentions aim at something that is never realized, and what is realized was never what anyone aimed at in intention. Agency, in the basic case, is perverted.

1.5. Hegel's opposition to subjectivism

A baseline of perversion makes tragedy impossible. Richard Halpern has recently written that if "the law of unintended consequences is [Smith's] principal doctrine…the most unintended and unanticipated consequence of all"[14] is that the book constitutes a significant development in the history of tragic drama. The unintended consequence of pursuing greater happiness is the promotion of universal happiness; and the unintended consequence of producing ever more means of happiness is the attractive image of harmonious systems of production that induces us to remain industrious. Halpern concludes: "Smith's invisible hand itself is not merely nontragic but profoundly antitragic in its workings."[15] We do not need to worry about the fate of Oedipus, because advancing the interest of society lies beyond the province of our agency; it can only be done invisibly. Oedipus should upset us because he overreacts to the discovery of the play, not because finitude is a tragedy.

[14] Halpern (2017), p. 29.
[15] Halpern (2017), p. 31.

If tragedy is a possibility, we can understand Oedipus' action to be tragically perverted, the event of his deeds cleaved from his self-conception as king. For Smith's agent, intention is as such cleaved from the event of action—and this is not tragic but ordinary. The interest of society, which Oedipus supposes himself to promote in his capacity as king, is advanced not only *not* by means of agency but by means of the perversion of agency, as the flipside of our collective self-deception. Oedipus gouges out his eyes because he understands the province of his agency to extend all the way to the actuality of his marriage and the killing long forgotten. Oedipus understands his actions to be the objective realization of himself, the work of a king, such as can preserve as well as poison the city that he rules. Patricide, incest, and the spread of disease cannot be dismissed as unintended consequences for him, because Theban wellbeing is in his hands. He knows what he did: he killed a man, and he married a woman, and those events are the reality of his agency. In that sense, he does not learn what he has done at the end of the play; he knows what he has done all along, because his agency is an objective power and a power to realize concepts like *slaying* and *marrying*.[16] He was mistaken about the particulars of the case, and given the true identity of the particulars involved, the species of the concepts he has realized are in fact *patricide* and *incest*. The latter are not unintended consequences but the perversion of his agency—that is, of his power to realize himself objectively.

The tragedy for Smith is how Oedipus *reacts* to the perversion of his agency, for that is what is within his control. He so despises himself for what he learns he has done that he gouges out his eyes—and this shocking act marks Oedipus as an individual character. That is how he dealt with this particularly disturbing perversion of his agency. Try as we might to avoid it, each

[16] See Haase (2018), pp. 54-5.

of us must deal with this perversion. The magnanimity of our souls is measured by our individual will, in the face of challenges to our self-esteem, to regard ourselves in the light in which we *ought* to appear. And that is where tragedy takes place for the Smithian audience: within themselves, reacting as individuals, with Oedipus, to the bad feelings aroused by finitude.[17] In an attempt to make the realm of intention stand above the realm of external contingency, the subjectivist loses the objectivity of agency at the altar of which Oedipus mutilates himself.

The subjectivist contends that the province of agency ends with intention. The conduct of Oedipus consists in intending to slay the stranger (and *not* his father) and intending to marry Jocasta (and *not* his mother)—even though it turns out that those descriptions do not fit what actually happened on those occasions. But what, then, did Oedipus do when he used his sword to end a man's life, and when he made offerings at the temple with a woman in order to marry her? How can there be two objects here—his conduct and what actually happens—when there is only one slaying and one wedding? Smith rejects the question by deflating our doings to subjective action, to intending from a good heart and regulating sentimental reactions to what actually happens. There is not even one doing, for Smith, in the sense that the events of sword-using and ritual offering are not finally one's own doing, regardless of whether they come under the description of ethical marriage or incest. Hegel is committed to making sense of there being one action that is finally the realization of Oedipus the king.

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[17] Halpern gives a great account of the situation of the art form in Smith's world. Tragedy takes place for the Smithian spectator not in the perversion of agency onstage but within themselves. He writes: "[T]he main drama here is of the spectator's becoming a spectacle himself. What play is being performed, exactly? What is happening onstage? Who knows? The Smithian spectator is too busy struggling with his emotions and ashamedly hiding his own response to notice. The play has triggered a reaction but then recedes into the background of this new struggle. The tragic agon has been transported from the stage, where characters are actually doing and saying things, to the spectator's own interior stage where gushing sympathy is in pitched battle with self-control." Halpern (2017), p. 50-51.

Hegel understands the widget problem to be an unavoidable problem for subjectivism. He describes an account of ethical action according to which the good is "valid in and for itself [and] a certain particular purpose, but not one that first receives its truth by being realized; on the contrary, it is for itself already the true" (WL 12.232).[18] Oedipus' purpose to avoid committing patricide and incest by abandoning his home city is both valid in and for itself, i.e. good in itself and in such a way that Oedipus knows that it is, and determinate enough to prescribe a certain particular course of action. On the subjectivist conception of action, the good purpose is true independently of being realized—that is, independently of whatever happens on the road to Thebes. The reality of the deed is not required: on the contrary, the purpose is already truly good before realization takes place. This is just what Smith claims: it is only the intention that is truly good—that is, truly deserving of merit—not the event of action, which is indifferent to praise and blame. The good purpose does not first receive its truth by being realized: precisely not, Smith claims, for the event of action cannot be understood as the agent's own work.

For the subjectivist, the actuality of realization or the event of action is not good in a way that goes beyond the goodness of intention. The goodness of the purpose is fully realized in the intention, so realization adds nothing in respect of merit—even when we do make it all the way to completion. Hegel describes this position as follows: "The realized good is good by virtue of what it already is in the subjective purpose, in its idea; the realization gives it an external existence…which is in and for itself null" (WL 12.232). This is the widget problem: why bother with realization, if it does nothing but give the good a null external existence? Smith fully accepts this: the external existence of the action, i.e. bodily movement and the rest, is not the

[18] We will see in Chapter 4 that Hegel's subjectivist opponent is not fully in view in Smith; Hegel's opponent is distinctly post-Critical. Nonetheless, Smith exemplifies the tendency Hegel targets in "The Idea of the Good."

agent's work and is not a locus of merit or demerit. It is only thanks to the mysterious workings of Providence that we find ourselves determined to produce results which are really null.

Now, nothing I have said so far rules decisively against subjectivism: perhaps our action is as limited and subjective as Smith contends. But we should not embrace hypocrisy and finitude unless we have to—and my task in what follows is to show that we have no such obligation. In fact we can dissent to Hume's elimination of agency and reject Smith's volitionalism and its antitragic implications. In fact our agency does reach heights from which it can make a tragic fall—or so Hegel argues. The widget problem will be thematic going forward. It emerges wherever the subjective moment of intention is separated from the objectivity of the results, leaving the latter to be learned through discovery, as Oedipus learns his deeds. Hegel's next interlocutor, the formalist, purports to unite volition with its effects through the idea of formal determination. The formalist accounts put forward by Kant and Anscombe are both designed to rule out the widget problem from the beginning. Hegel will argue that formalism faces iterations of the widget problem all its own, and his speculative solution will require restoring the objectivity of agency at the altar of which Oedipus gouges out his eyes.

Chapter 2. Kant on knowing what I am doing

2.1. Tragedy and Production

Tragedy acts out the downfall of the good through conflict, and we saw Hegel consider the good coming into conflict with external contingency, with evil, and within itself in the collision of goods (WL 12.232). Kant unequivocally denies that the good can be subject to internal conflict: "a *collision of duties* and obligations is inconceivable" (MS 6:224). There is also a clear sense in which the good, for Kant, cannot be subject to conflict with evil: I must not make the conduct of others the condition of my will, i.e. I must act in accordance with my duty regardless of the possibly evil actions of others. I must be honest with the liar, for example, and kind to the ingrate. Finally, the good does not come into conflict with external contingency, insofar as the good will, as Kant famously puts it, shines like a jewel independently of its effects: "Usefulness or fruitlessness can neither add anything to this worth nor take anything away from it" (GMS 4:394). —What, then, of tragedy? —And what of our knowledge of our actions, such as Oedipus has to acquire—apparently tragically—by way of discovery?

Kant understands the production of actions to depend on *technically* practical knowledge —in contrast to the *morally* practical knowledge through which the will is self-determined. Kant says relatively little about technically practical knowledge, which he thinks belongs to theoretical philosophy as a corollary.[1] He also says relatively little—almost nothing, in fact—about tragedy. But he does say this:

> If it is a sight worthy of a divinity to see a virtuous man struggling with adversity and temptations to evil and yet holding out against them, it is a sight most unworthy, I shall

[1] MS 6:217-18; KU 172.

> not say of a divinity but even of the most common but well-disposed human being to see the human race from period to period taking steps upward toward virtue and soon after falling back just as deeply into vice and misery. To watch this tragedy for a while might be moving and instructive, but the curtain must eventually fall. For in the long run it turns into a farce; and even if the actors do not tire of it, because they are fools, the spectator does, when one or another act gives him sufficient grounds for gathering that the never-ending piece is forever the same. If it is merely a play, the punishment coming at the end can make up for his unpleasant feelings by means of the outcome. (TP 8:308)

A well-disposed human being tires of watching tragic drama because pure reason supplies practical grounds—grounds, that is, one can act on—for believing that practical life is not a never-ending piece of vice and misery that is forever the same. The highest good, in which each of us is happy in just proportion to virtue, has objective reality through the moral law.[2] Tragic drama is an unworthy sight for two reasons: watching enough of it promotes unfounded moral pessimism, weakening the resolve to be virtuous; and second, it provides comfort in an impermissible way. In real life outside the theater, Kant goes on to explain, we ought not to be comforted by the prospect of punishment, for that means tolerating the degradation of humanity in ourselves and others on the grounds that justice will be meted out later. We have practically rational grounds for faith in just deserts, but we lack insight into the mechanism of their dispensation. Tragic drama involves the feeling that we do have such insight, and this is contrary to the good disposition of a human being, who must not allow the prospect of reward or punishment to be her incentive.

The perversion of rational agency may be, as a matter of fact, a common occurrence: human beings may in fact give into temptation and prioritize self-love over morality, their most noble efforts may in fact come to nothing, and ignorance may in fact lead to unintended monstrosity. However, no amount of empirical evidence testifying to these features of human life

[2] KpV 5:115; R 6:7n.

can speak against the practical reality of morality and freedom in the will. A well-disposed human being grows tired of watching tragedy, because, in the long run, it becomes a farce: the things that can go wrong for us in action are not, in truth, grounds for moral pessimism. We ought not to believe—and we know we ought not to believe—that practical life is forever the same, vice and misery a common occurrence. The actors are fools because they take what can go wrong for us in action to be practically significant in a way that it is not. Tragedy can be instructive and moving—but the free will stands above fate:

> The tutelary god of morals does not yield to Jupiter (the god of power); for Jupiter is still subject to fate, that is, reason is not sufficiently enlightened to survey the series of predetermining causes that would allow it to predict confidently the happy or unhappy results of human actions in accordance with the mechanism of nature (though it is sufficiently enlightened to hope they will be in conformity with its wish). But it throws enough light everywhere for us to see what we have to do in order to remain on the path of duty (in accordance with rules of wisdom), and thereby do toward the final end. (EF 8:370)

Pure practical knowledge is always sufficient to determine the will—"To satisfy the categorical command of morality is within everyone's power at all times" (KpV 5:37)—but knowledge of the world is insufficient to guarantee that the results will turn out a certain way. Tragic drama such as *Oedipus Rex* seems to lament the insufficiency of our enlightenment to guarantee that the results of our actions will be in conformity with our wishes. But this insufficiency is of no consequence to the free will—it does not yield to fate—because we are enlightened enough to know our duty. Moral life is not tragic, even if human life may be devastating.

I claimed in the previous chapter that Adam Smith eliminates tragedy by making the perversion of agency by fate our normal condition. Kant rejects this: he denies Smith's volitionalist thesis that all we ever consciously do is will, and he denies that the happy or

unhappy results of volition lie totally in the hands of fate. It is not the case, for Kant, that the province of agency ends with volition. The effects of volition are not contingently but necessarily related to the representations by means of which one produces them, namely as the effect of one's vital causality. The faculty of desire, which is alive, causes the reality of the objects it represents, by means of representing them (KpV 5:9n.; MS 6:211). Kant thinks this should be presupposed in practical philosophy. But does that mean Kant thinks we know our actions in virtue of producing them, in a way that goes beyond knowing events by observation and discovery? The latter, I claimed, is at stake in the tragedy of Oedipus: he gouges out his eyes as a way to reject the perversion of his agency by fate, to preserve its status as the power to realize himself objectively—which involves knowing his actions by producing them. My aim in this chapter is to answer this question about Kant.

Technically practical knowledge is not a very important topic for Kant—and that may be one reason he ignores tragic drama. The central doctrine in practical philosophy—pure reason practical of itself—displaces concern with the production of actions. The will, Kant says, is "the faculty of desire considered not so much in relation to action (as choice is) but rather in relation to the ground determining choice to action" (MS 6:213). The primary object of investigation in practical philosophy is not so much the production of action but rather the use of reason that determines that process of production. The first question in practical philosophy is *whether* pure reason is practical of itself (KpV 5:4)—presupposing, in other words, our capacity to *produce* the event of action. —Pure reason *is* practical of itself in human beings, and the subject matter of practical philosophy is our capacity to determine the will through the thought of its form. This

capacity, Kant explains, "gives rise to expansive principles for the determination of the will" (KU 5:171), and practical philosophy comprises the systematic study of these principles.

Perhaps because Kant says relatively little on the topic, there is relatively little discussion among his interpreters concerning the question of how he understands our knowledge of the actuality of action—and where it is discussed, there is disagreement. (**2.2**) Christine Korsgaard claims that Kant accepts the subjectivist thesis that we do not know our actions on the basis of willing and producing them, but must wait for the experience of volition's effects. (**2.3**) But this cannot be right, because our agency is *alive*. (**2.4**) Sebastian Rödl argues—in apparent opposition to Korsgaard and her residual subjectivism—that Kant's conception of practical knowledge can be united with Anscombe's, allowing him to unite morality with *formal* knowledge of what one is doing. Korsgaard and Rödl turn out—surprisingly, given their other commitments—to have something significant in common. For different reasons, both excise from Kant's doctrine the logical possibility of the *merely prudentially practical reasoner* (henceforth MPPR), i.e. the finite rational agent in whom pure reason is not practical of itself, whose practical application of reason consists exclusively in calculation and the promotion of happiness. Eliminating this logical possibility is supposed to allow us to unite, in different ways, the technical and moral poles of practical reason—but I argue that Kant does not allow this in any form.

Korsgaard excises this logical possibility in order to unite morality with the subjectivist thesis that we must wait for experience to know the effects of volition. Rödl excises it in order to unite morality with the formalist thesis that we know what we are doing—not on the basis of observation but through practical reasoning. I argue, with Rödl, that Kant should be understood to reject the subjectivist thesis Korsgaard preserves. But Kant is not so easily united with

Anscombean formalism as Rödl suggests. (**2.5**) Stephen Engstrom does not try to excise Kant's logically possible MPPR, and he helpfully complicates Kant's adoption of Anscombean formalism. I conclude the chapter by showing that Engstrom's complication and resolution of technical formalism reveals a more fundamental problem with using formalism to overcome subjectivism. This will require us to turn to Hegel in the next chapter.

2.2. Kant against subjectivism

Christine Korsgaard's Kant accepts a version of the thesis defended by Hume and presupposed by Smith, namely that the event of action does not depend on the agent. She claims that, for the Kantian agent, "the relation between the content of our wills, and the effects of our willings, seems completely contingent."[3] As we saw Smith put the point, "the consequences of actions are altogether under the empire of Fortune" (TMS 2.3.1.7). According to Korsgaard, however, "it took the genius of Kant to notice the threat to our agency that comes from the causes that loom up in front of us,"[4] namely that we cannot guarantee that things will go as we hope. This threat is quite central for Hume and Smith, but perhaps she considers them not to have noticed it insofar as their skepticism about rational agency prevents them from appreciating it in the right way. If it is denied that we are, properly speaking, responsible for the effects of our volition, as Hume and Smith do, then perhaps the causes that loom up ahead will not be considered a threat. The important thing for Korsgaard is that Kant offers a novel solution to the problem of the causes that loom up ahead, which she calls the *problem of efficacy*. Korsgaard's

[3] Korsgaard (2009), p. 86.
[4] Korsgaard (2009), p. 85.

Kant uses the hypothetical imperative to disarm the threat to agency posed by the undeniable fact that the event of action does not depend on willing alone.

The genius of Kant's conception of rational agency, according to Korsgaard, is that it responds to two fundamental threats to our agency, one posed by the causes that haunt us from the past and seem to make free willing impossible, the other by the causes that loom ahead and seem to cleave intention from the event of action—as Oedipus' intentions are cleaved from the events of his action by the cause of mistaken identity. Kantian agency consists of twin "properties" that are supposed to disarm these twin threats: *efficacy* and *autonomy*, which correspond to the hypothetical and categorical imperatives, respectively. Kant's two imperatives, in other words, are understood to respond to the familiar skeptical challenge that our ends cannot be self-determined and the subjectivist challenge that volition is not a power to know the event of action. She presents some of the very same examples that Hume uses to motivate her idea of Kant's problem of efficacy:

> Does my body obey the command of my will, and if it does, is *that* my doing? Suppose that I am paralyzed or partially anesthetized or simply tied up or bound down? Then my willing the end has no tendency to bring about the end that I will. And even if I do move, in just the way that I will to move, what happens then? Normally, I cannot bring about the effect that I intend directly, but rather move to set off some causal chain, which, if all goes well, will lead to the effect that I will. But that ''if all goes well'' contains a world of assumptions.[5]

As we have seen, Smith responds to this problem by identifying the impulse to feel responsible for the event of action as an irregularity of sentiment peculiar to human beings. We can only exercise agency in the province of intention—but that is finally enough, Smith contends. Korsgaard's Kant responds to this problem with *faith*: "we who must act must cross our fingers

[5] *ibid*., p. 85. Hume considers paralysis and the vast causal chain in *Enquiry*, VII.1.

and hope that the world, starting with our own bodies, will take up our willings in the sense in which we mean them."[6] Her Kant accepts, with Smith, that our agency is fundamentally qualified by an enormous "if all goes well" clause. But unlike Smith, Kant has the idea of self-constituting rational agency, which gives agents rational resources to manage this threat and practical grounds for hoping that all can go well with the effects of volition. Our agency is rational, for we hold ourselves to the rational standard of efficacy. It is a fundamental property of our agency that we can—and indeed must, if we are to be rational agents at all—work to hold that which happens under the empire of Fortune to the rational standard of efficacy. But that we actually do so always requires *faith*.

Korsgaard acknowledges that Kant's actual arguments for faith from practical grounds pertain to autonomy and *not* to efficacy. She explains why she appeals to faith nonetheless:

> You might think that Kant's argument for religious faith isn't a response to the general problem of efficacy, for it matters to his argument that the end that he thinks we are supposed to promote is one commanded by morality, and so one that we cannot possibly give up. But I'm inclined to think the force of his argument is not limited in this way, since the essential point is that the need for faith arises only if you think that it actually *matters* that you achieve the end you are trying to achieve.[7]

This implies that without faith in efficacy, it cannot actually *matter* to the Kantian agent that she achieves her ends. Without the hypothetical imperative, we would be stuck in the widget problem that Smith calls upon Providence to correct: i.e., that it actually *matters* that we achieve our ends, that we do not content ourselves with mere good inclinations but summon the vigor of soul necessary to actually produce the ends we intend. This can only matter if we believe we are capable of changing the world in the ways that we intend, where that depends on many things

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[6] *ibid*., p. 87.
[7] *ibid*., p. 88.

besides one's immediate volitional contribution. However the latter is defined, it plainly does not support the inference that what one intends will necessarily happen. The effect of volition is a widget to the extent that it is not transparent to willing, i.e. to the extent that willing is not a power to know what happens. To the extent that we are not perfectly powerful but finite agents, we need faith to make the effect matter. Korsgaard's Kant requires the hypothetical imperative and faith with practical grounds to make the relatively alien effects of volition matter to agents.

It is hard to see, however, how Kant's idea of faith with practical grounds can be used in this way. Pure practical reason supplies grounds for faith in the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the moral authorship of the world. Faith with practical grounds is required for these objects because none of them can be given in intuition—but each is required by moral law as incentive. By contrast, the effects of willing plainly *can* be given in intuition. Consider the examples Korsgaard uses to illustrate the problem of efficacy: I am dancing for the sheer joy of dancing; I shove Tom in order to make Bernard topple over; I look in your direction and say "Kiss me." Instead of dancing, I fall on flat on my face; Bernard does not topple over; and you punch me in the stomach. All of these events are things that actually happen and which I experience. How, then, can faith be required to know them? It must be that faith is required to know the product *as* the reality of one's will. The experience of kissing you, should that come to pass, is as little the transparent effect of my volition as being punched in the stomach is: neither is known *through* my willing. After all, my will does not author the reality of kissing you—your contribution is plainly also required, and so is the physiology of our performances and other worldly things neither of us creates. The effects of volition as the transparent reality of one's will is as little given in intuition as are the free will and the other objects of practically rational faith.

For Korsgaard's Kant, in other words, the effects of willing are not known on the basis of producing them; they are rather found out in experience, as the subjectivist contends.

Her examples are of agency gone wrong: I expect to land my twirl, for Bernard to fall, and for you and I to end up kissing. That is, like Smith, it is the unfortunate and even tragic exercises of agency that exhibit the defining feature of our condition, namely that we are subject to the problem of efficacy. When you punch me in the stomach, my will is severed from the reality of its effects. Perhaps I had no way of knowing that you were angry with me, and perhaps I even did nothing wrong: in an effort to break us up, your sister told you I used to be friends with Jeffrey Epstein—after 2011—when in fact I have never met the man. For Korsgaard's Kant, this kind of tragic fracture is "a standing fact, there in every case."[8] That is, "it is always true, in *every* case," that what actually happens is beyond the ken of agency; we can only do our best to control it by applying the standard of efficacy as we go along. Since what happens does not depend on the agent alone, it must be actively governed by hypothetical imperative.

The problem of efficacy may be subordinate to the problem of autonomy for Korsgaard's Kant, but it is a problem for agency nonetheless. Korsgaard writes: "To act—that is, *if* such a thing is possible at all—is to insert yourself—your first-personal, deliberating self—into the causal network."[9] Inserting yourself into the causal network is, for Korsgaard, a problem for agency—a problem for practical philosophy, resolved by the hypothetical imperative and practical grounds for faith in efficacy. But this is incompatible with a feature of Kant's practical philosophy that he understands to be essential, namely its proper division as a rational science (KU 5:172; MS 6:216-17). The practical constitutes a proper division of philosophy only insofar

[8] *ibid*., 86.
[9] *ibid*., p. 86.

it treats of *morally* practical doctrines, i.e. doctrines pertaining to the *form* of the will. Practical philosophy excludes technically practical principles—that is, principles pertaining to inserting oneself into the causal network. The rational norms that govern efficacy are technically practical principles and belong to theoretical philosophy, Kant thinks. The possibility of practical philosophy as a rational science depends on this, for there is no way to reason morality and freedom "out from antecedent data of reason" (KpV 5:31)—such as the supposedly standing fact that the effects of volition are beyond the agent's ken. Morality and freedom enter the scene exclusively through the desiderative self-sufficiency of moral law in the will, which alone constitutes the domain of practical philosophy. The problem of efficacy, if it is a problem at all, belongs to theoretical philosophy or psychology.

It is important that freedom only enters the scene through morality, i.e. that "the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom" (KpV 5:4n.). This is how Kant rules out Smith's widget problem from the beginning. For Korsgaard's Kant, faith with practical grounds is supposed to bridge the gap that Smith bridges with the irregularity of sentiment. On the ground that actually getting things done matters for being an agent, we are entitled to think of ourselves as responsible for effects we know to be, in truth, under the empire of Fortune. We must have faith that we will be spared the fate of Oedipus. Korsgaard's Kant faces and resolves Smith's widget problem—but pure reason practical of itself rules it out from the beginning. The desideratively self-sufficient consciousness of moral law does not leave open whether it actually *matters* that we achieve our ends; morality does not require an additional pure synthetic principle for this. The consciousness of moral law is *sui generis*: "The thing is strange enough," Kant says, "and has nothing like it in all the rest of our practical cognition" (KpV 5:31). The widget problem is

ruled out for Kant from the beginning because moral consciousness essentially makes it actually *matter* that we achieve our ends.[10] Accepting Korsgaard's preservation of the subjectivist thesis that we must wait for the experience of success requires us to give up the *sui generis* character of the categorical imperative in virtue of which Kant thinks he can foreclose the widget problem from the beginning.

2.3. Kant's vital efficacy

Kant attributes the power to cause the reality of objects represented, by means of representing them, not just to us but to living beings in general (excluding, presumably, plants). On Korsgaard's proposal, we are distinguished from the beasts in virtue of having representational efficacy. She claims that "it makes sense to evaluate movements as effective or ineffective, that is, as governed by the hypothetical imperative, only if they are also self-determined, that is, governed by the categorical imperative."[11] When Bernard does not topple over after Christine shoves Tom at him, she learns that her will is ineffective. By contrast, my cat's intentional (but not self-determined) movements cannot be evaluated in this way. Tiny's failure to knock over the glass is not like Christine's failure to knock over Bernard. Tiny cannot be said to be ineffective, because he does not determine his will to be effective *or* autonomous. He does not hold himself to the standard contained in the representation of knocking over a glass using his paw—just as he does not hold himself to the standard of autonomy in deciding to knock over the glass in the first place. We share with the beasts that willing alone does not

[10] Put another way, hypothetical imperative is not synthetic, as Korsgaard suggests (2009, pp. 81-2), but contained in the syntheticity of categorical imperative.
[11] *ibid*., p. 84.

guarantee that what happens will be what we intend. But the beasts are not agents: we are distinguished from the beasts because we constitute ourselves as agents insofar as we hold ourselves to the norms of efficacy and autonomy.

But Kant unambiguously denies this. He writes: "without morality, there would be nothing to distinguish [man] from the beasts" (SF 7:70).[12] Autonomy but *not* efficacy distinguishes us from the beasts, Kant thinks. Our agency—and Tiny's, too—is not threatened by the causes that loom up ahead, at least not in the way that Korsgaard imagines that threat. As living beings, we have the power to act in accordance with the laws of the faculty of desire, causing the reality of objects by means of representing them. However, the ability to represent the objects the reality of which we cause with self-consciousness—i.e. rationally, in conformity with the hypothetical imperative—*does not make us free*.[13] Kant is unequivocal about this, and perhaps his most vivid statement comes towards the end of the *Analytic* of the second *Critique*: without morality, he says, a "human being would be a marionette or an automaton…built and wound up by the supreme artist; self-consciousness would indeed make him a thinking automaton" (KpV 5:101)—but self-consciousness alone would not make him free. Korsgaard claims that we can evaluate movements as effective or ineffective only if they are self-determined in the sense that requires categorical imperative. But Kant denies this: the logically possible thinking automaton—the MPPR—represents its ends self-consciously, and so presumably possesses the cognitive resources to apply the standards of efficacy to what happens when it starts to move. *This is not dancing*, it might think when it falls flat on its face. But its

[12] He makes this point in a number of places: MS 6:418, KU 449, R 6:26n.
[13] See Gobsch (2019), "Autonomy and Radical Evil: A Kantian Challenge to Constitutivism." Gobsch argues against Korsgaard's thesis that morality responds to the need for agents to constitute themselves as agents.

movements are by stipulation not self-determined, so Korsgaard's conditional does not hold. It *does* make sense to evaluate its faceplant as ineffective dancing, even though its movement is not governed by the categorical imperative.

In fact, Kant resolves the problem of efficacy outside of practical philosophy. It is not the hypothetical imperative that we need but *life*. He explains at the beginning of the second *Critique* that the only concept that needs to be borrowed from psychology is the concept of the faculty of desire—which is *alive*:

> **Life** is the faculty of a being to act in accordance with laws of the faculty of desire. The **faculty of desire** is a *being's faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations.* Pleasure is the *representation of the agreement of an object or of an action with the* subjective *conditions of life*, i.e., with the faculty of the *causality of a representation with respect to the reality of its object* (or with respect to the determination of the powers of the subject to action in order to produce the object). For the purposes of this *Critique* I have no further need of concepts borrowed from psychology; the *Critique* itself supplies the rest. (KpV 5:9n.; see also MS 6:211)

The problem of efficacy is not resolved by the hypothetical imperative but by the vitality of the faculty of desire, the efficacy of which is susceptible to pleasure. It is not because we hold ourselves to the standard of efficacy that it actually *matters* to us that we achieve our ends; the causality or efficacy of desiderative representation is the shape that this mattering takes for us as living beings. The task of the second *Critique* is to spell out the consequences of the *fact* that pure reason determines the self-conscious, vital efficacy that the practical philosopher can borrow from psychology—even though we cannot explain *how* it does.

Hegel considers it one of "Kant's greatest services to philosophy" (WL 12.157) that he reanimates the ancient idea of internal purposiveness in modern philosophy. We are *organized* and *self-organizing* beings (KU §65), Kant thinks, not mere machines operating in the causal

network. Now, this might seem to stand in tension with the "thinking automaton" just considered. If the hypothetical MPPR is a marionette, how are living beings not mere machines? The tension disappears when we notice that the concept of the faculty of desire does not specify whether it operates in accordance with concepts. The logically possible MPPR, or the specification of the faculty of desire as rational but non-moral, is a marionette because its vital capacities are made into an instrument—but for no higher end. Kant explains:

> [That man] has reason does not at all raise him in worth above mere animality if reason is to serve him only for the sake of what instinct accomplishes for animals; reason would in that case be only a particular mode nature had used to equip the human being for the same end to which it has destined animals, without destining him to a higher end. (KpV 5:61-2; see also GMS 4:395)

The automated character of the MPPR must consist in the fact that, while its ends are set for it by nature—as with mere animals—its means are up to it. In that case the understanding *serves* ends given to it by nature, making its function automatic despite the spontaneity of its self-consciousness. The *faculty of desire*, and its nonrational species that belongs to mere animals, does not function as a mere machine because living being is *organized* and *self-organizing*—even though we can frame the logical possibility that vital causality could be made into the instrument of understanding for no higher end.

Kant thinks we should appeal to *final causality* to understand the relationship between knowledgable representations and the reality they produce. He explains:

> But we can also conceive of a causal connection [*Verbindung*] in terms of a concept of reason (the concept of purposes). Such a connection, considered as a series, would carry with it dependence both as it ascends and as it descends: here we could call a thing the effect of something and still be entitled to call it, as the series ascends, the cause of that something as well. This sort of causal connection [*Verknüpfung*] is easily found in the practical sphere (namely, in art). (KU 5:372)

Consider making a watch. This process consists in various phases, such as compressing a coil and affixing a gear. The effect of this process is the product, the functional timepiece. At the same time, the functional timepiece is the cause of the process through which it is produced. I compress the coil in a particular way, and affix the gear in a certain place, in order to make the product keep time. It is in virtue of acting on the concept of watchmaking that the various phases of action unfold as they do and that the various metal parts are combined as they are.[14] The living agent is thus the final cause of the product, in the sense that its reality comes about through the subjective possession of its concept. Kant explains: "the cause that produced the watch and its form does not lie in nature (the nature of this material), but lies outside nature and in a being who can act according to the ideas of a whole that he can produce through his causality" (KU 5:374). It is not due to the nature of this sort of metal that it takes the shape of a disc with teeth. It is not due to the weight of the gear that it becomes attached to the face of the watch. Those things are due to my vital activity, which is not mechanical but organized and self-organizing, and over which I have self-conscious control. I exercise my vital efficacy according to the ideas of wholes that I can produce—no faith required.

That our kind of agency "lies outside nature" might sound like one has to insert oneself into the causal network, as Korsgaard puts it. But that is not how Kant sees it. Kant thinks we *live* in the causal network. The power to produce effects by means of representations belongs to us insofar as we are alive, and the power to produce effects through the ideas of wholes belongs to us insofar as we have understanding. Lying outside nature in the sense of having to insert oneself into the causal network means having to wait for experience to find out the limits of

[14] This should be understood to extend from the properly technical to the mundane: e.g., it is in virtue of acting on the concept of buying groceries that the phases of walking to the store and filling a basket unfold as they do.

one's efficacy—and it means that faith is required for efficacy to rationally matter to one. For Korsgaard's Kant, practical knowledge only entitles us to *hope* that we will be effective. That is, it does not contain *knowledge* of the achievability of its aims, since that depends on contingent factors external to reasoning. Without such knowledge, actions are widget-like, and we need a second synthetic a priori practical principle to make their achievement rationally matter. For Kant, I have suggested, achievement already rationally matters in virtue of the causality of representation characteristic of living beings. Hypothetical imperative is not synthetic a priori because we do not need a third thing supplied by pure reason in order to have representational efficacy. Categorical imperative is the sole synthetic a priori practical principle because it uniquely supplies its own incentive.

Now, Kant explains these features of the practical sphere of production in the context of explaining our entitlement to the concept of a natural purpose, i.e. organized and self-organizing being. That is, he does not treat the topic for its own sake in the third *Critique*, but rather only insofar as it supplies analogical insight into the concept of a natural purpose. The idea that *rational* living agency is the final cause of its product seems to follow seamlessly, for Kant, from the combination of internally purposive life and the spontaneous understanding. We might understand Kant to presuppose a conception of technically practical knowledge with roots in Aristotle and Aquinas, according to which it is the cause of what it understands. Since he does not pursue the topic directly, I will approach Kant's position through Elizabeth Anscombe's reanimation of this ancient and medieval idea in the philosophy of action, by way of two recent attempts to do just that.

2.4. The real unity of morally and technically practical knowledge

We are living beings who can act according to ideas of wholes that we can produce (KU 5:374). We do not face an efficacy problem of the kind described by Korsgaard, insofar as we have self-conscious control of our vital capacities. We do not have to wait and see what happens with our action, insofar as we are its final cause. This aligns with Aquinas' formula, taken up by Elizabeth Anscombe, that practical knowledge is the cause of what it understands. She explains that "when the description of what happens is the very thing which I should say I was doing, then there is no distinction between my doing and the thing's happening."[15] There is not a subjective doing that must wait for observation to see what happens. There is no efficacy problem, no need to cross one's fingers and hope that what happens will be the reality of one's will, because knowing what one means to do is a way of knowing what one is doing—not by observation, but by doing it. Intention is not a subjective item that triggers an efficient causal chain, but knowledge that supplies the teleological order through which what happens is an intentional action.

Sebastian Rödl argues that Anscombe's practical knowledge is not only compatible with Kant's practical knowledge, but that the "common name signifies a real unity."[16] We can with justice speak of both moral knowledge and knowledge of what I am doing as practical knowledge, according to Rödl, because together they constitute the unity of the will. Now, it might seem that Kant cannot allow practical knowledge to have as its object something actual, such as what one is doing. Rödl aims to disabuse us of the idea that Kant's famously austere distinction between knowledge of *what ought to be* and knowledge of *what is in fact* prevents

[15] *Intention*, §29.
[16] Rödl (2014), p. 213.

him from embracing the idea that knowing what one is doing is constitutive of the will. That practical knowledge in Kant's sense is knowledge of what *ought* to be and thus not knowledge of anything actual, Rödl argues, can in fact be understood to follow from the idea of the will as a power to know something actual, namely what one is doing. He explains:

> The very consideration that shows the will to be a power of knowing the actuality of the deed (namely, the insight that the material content of acts of the will depends on general knowledge how) entails that, insofar as an act of the will is knowledge of the good, it is not knowledge of anything actual.[17]

The power to act through reasoning by deploying general knowledge *how* is a power to know the actuality of what one is doing: that is Anscombe's insight. In the first *Critique*, Kant demonstrates that the objectivity of cognition is constituted by the spontaneous unity of self-consciousness. Rödl argues that we can combine these two premises and derive Kant's sense of practical knowledge as knowledge of the form of the will alone. If intentional action is a power to act through reasoning, and reasoning is spontaneous and self-determining, the validity of the first premise of a practical syllogism must be due to the will itself, and indeed to the will's own form. Practical knowledge in Kant's sense is necessitated, according to Rödl, by practical knowledge in Anscombe's sense.

The aim of uniting morally and technically practical knowledge in the will leads Rödl to excise, as Korsgaard does, the logical possibility of the MPPR. In order to temper the austerity of Kant's distinction between *ought* and *is*, Rödl is led to deny the possibility of a practical reasoner who knows what she is doing but does not know the good in itself. He explains:

> It might seem that there may be a power that yields knowledge of what one is doing, but not knowledge of what is good to do: it might seem that the first premise of practical reasoning may be provided not by a spontaneous power of desire, but by a receptive

[17] *ibid*., p. 241.

> power, a power determined to act by affection. Then the subject may reason from this first premise, using a sound second premise, and thereby have knowledge of what she is doing, without so much as possessing the idea of something good to do. However, this is incoherent. For, what the subject does is reasoning only if it exhibits the unity of reasoning: the conclusion is conscious of itself as valid on account of resting on the premises. And this is possible only if the first premise, too, is conscious of itself as valid, which means that it springs from a spontaneous—a self-conscious, self-constituting, self-determining—power.[18]

Moral knowledge, for Rödl, supplies the "ultimate first premise"[19] that is needed to render coherent the power to act through reasoning and thereby to know what one is doing. The intelligibility of technically practical knowledge requires morally practical knowledge, on Rödl's interpretation. But this thesis cannot be attributed to Kant. As we saw above in the discussion of Korsgaard, Kant unequivocally denies that the MPPR is incoherent, i.e. logically impossible. The thinking automaton—the self-conscious reasoner without moral law, all of whose ends have their source in sensible affection—cannot be ruled out. Indeed, the task of the second *Critique* is to demonstrate that pure reason *is* practical of itself,[20] i.e. to demonstrate that there *is* an ultimate first premise of practical reasoning—since that is precisely *not* required by the concept of the power to act in accordance with concepts. The latter can be framed using the resources of the first *Critique*, and, for the purposes of the second *Critique*, can be borrowed from psychology. By contrast, Rödl's Kant generates the moral law from the incoherence of the MPPR, whose first premises of practical reasoning are relatively rather than ultimately valid.

Rödl is motivated to show that Kant holds a formalist view about technically practical knowledge—that is, that he rejects the subjectivist thesis Korsgaard's Kant preserves. Rödl's Kant unites technically and morally practical knowledge in a syllogism whose conclusion is

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[18] Rödl (2014), p. 239.
[19] *ibid*., p. 240.
[20] KpV 5:3.

actually acting. According to Rödl, the first premise of the Kantian practical syllogism is an act of will. In an act of will, the subject determines an action as her end. The second premise is an act of intellect in which the subject determines the action to be within her power. The conclusion is another act of will, namely the action itself. The representation of the action that the subject has in advance is not only formally unified by self-consciousness but is the result of an act of will. The action is determined not as a possible event in general but as what is to be done by the subject herself. The subject deploys general technical knowledge, which is theoretical or a matter of intellect, in the second premise. The conclusion is the action itself, which the subject knows as what she is doing.

Rödl relies on parallels between practical and theoretical judgment to support his claim that Kant's formalist conception of technically practical knowledge can encompass knowledge of actuality and thereby avert subjectivism. Practical judgment determines a particular action to be good, and theoretical judgment determines a particular object by determining its concept. Insofar as I judge that the water bottle is full, necessarily I know that I do: being self-conscious, I cannot judge that it is full while leaving open whether or not it is. Practical knowledge in Anscombe's sense, i.e. knowledge of what I am doing, is said to be the practical correlate of the self-consciousness of judgment. If I am intentionally filling the water bottle, necessarily I know that I am. If I sleepwalk to the kitchen and fill my water bottle, it is not by an intentional action of mine that I wake up with a full bottle on the nightstand. Intentional action is known through the practical reasoning that produces it. The self-conscious validity of judgment is enough to refute Hume's thesis that we must wait for experience to know the effects of volition.

We saw in the discussion of vital efficacy that Kant does think our agency is the final or purposive cause of its effects, and so we do not have to wait for observation to know our own efficacy. But Rödl thinks this feature of rational living efficacy entails morality and freedom. He explains that it is the self-determining character of judgment—the rationality of living efficacy—that explains the need for an ultimate first premise, i.e. morality:

> We argued that a judgment, because it is conscious of its validity, originates in a self-conscious, self-constituting, self-determining power. *As the argument nowhere depended on any other character of judgment*, in particular not on any character that distinguishes it from an act of the will, *it holds generally of any act that is conscious of itself as valid*, and in particular of acts of the will.[21]

Rödl claims that we can give a *general* account of the self-conscious validity of judgment that illuminates the self-determination of its practical and theoretical guises. Kant does speak fondly of "perhaps being able some day to attain insight into the unity of the whole pure rational faculty (theoretical as well as practical) and to derive everything from one principle" (KpV 5:91). But he unequivocally denies that the self-conscious validity of moral cognition is, formally speaking, just like the rest of cognition. That is, Kant denies that there is a genus of self-consciously valid judgment the practical and theoretical species of which stand side by side. Pure reason practical of itself is not a species of self-conscious validity alongside the functions of understanding.

Moral cognition is defined by being self-sufficiently desiderative. Without desiderative self-sufficiency, there is no subject matter for practical philosophy. Desire enters the scene, as it were, noiselessly in Rödl.[22] He continues in the passage just cited: "The will, as its acts are such as to be terms of reasoning, is a self-conscious, self-constituting, self-determining power. As an

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[21] Rödl (2014), p. 236; my italics.
[22] Rödl does not mention pleasure, happiness, feeling, interest, or incentive. In fact, he cites only two passages from Kant: the famous passage from the *Groundwork* that draws the contrast between acting in accordance with laws and acting in accordance with the representation of laws (GMS 4:412), and the presentation of a priori knowledge as derived from general knowledge (KrV B2).

act of will is a desire, the will is a self-conscious, self-constituted, self-determining power of desire." Reasoning that is desire is presented as a species alongside reasoning that is speculative: both are acts of self-determining powers. The only dimension of desire that comes into view for Rödl—the "other characteristic of judgment" that distinguishes the practical species of reasoning —is that it causes what it understands. The fact that desire involves feeling and incentive plays no role in Rödl's account.

The practical use of reason is distinguished, according to Kant, by making actual what it knows. This encompasses both the morally and technically practical uses of reason, which have different objects. The former knows goodness-in-itself or freedom, which it makes actual in a practical reality, i.e. the disposition of the will to act morally. The latter knows "the possibility of things according to concepts of nature" (KU 5:172), which it makes actual in actions and artifacts one produces. For beings like us, the practical use of reason essentially involves feeling, which is determined externally by the pleasurability of things as well as autonomously in the feeling of respect for the moral law. Pure practical knowledge of freedom essentially involves "the empirical sources of cognition" (KrV A15/B29) in a way that radically distinguishes it from pure theoretical knowledge of the concept of an object as such. It is excluded from transcendental philosophy, since "everything practical, insofar as it contains incentives, refers to feelings" (*ibid*.), which are empirical. Our knowledge of freedom essentially involves the experience of the unconditional incentive that moral law supplies, and the experience of feeling respect for its command.

Kant's thesis that moral knowledge pertains to the form of the will alone and not to anything actual, Rödl claims, "transpires to be a consequence of the account we gave of the will

as a power of knowledge of what one is doing."[23] We can only know what we are doing insofar as the will is the source of the first premise of practical reasoning. Insofar as an event is caused by the understanding of it, that understanding must likewise know why causing the event in question is good. But surely the goodness of acting in pursuit of happiness can be framed by a self-conscious power of knowledge. Why is the self-conscious judgment of relative goodness an unsuitable first premise? Why should practical reasoning supply unconditional principles when theoretical reasoning considers objects in respect of their conditions, e.g. how they are caused or composed?

The self-conscious, self-determining character of the power of judgment in general cannot answer these questions. As long as practical reason is distinguished by causing what it understands, as opposed to understanding what is caused by something else, nothing speaks in favor of the unconditional character of practical principles. Pure reason is practical of itself insofar as it goes beyond transcendental philosophy and makes itself actual in a disposition of the will—that is, not insofar as it is the power to cause the reality of objects by means of representing them, but insofar as it determines such a power a priori. Reason issues in unconditional practical principles only insofar as it is an a priori incentive and the power to elicit respect and interest regardless of what happens to be desirable for the agent.

[23] Rödl (2014), p. 241.

Like Korsgaard's Kant, Rödl's Kant must distinguish us from the beasts in respect of the rationality of our vital efficacy.[24] Kant denies that this is possible, for the reason that the understanding does not supply its own content and determinacy. The ideas of reason cannot be made use of in theoretical cognition, because no corresponding intuition can be given. The understanding is entirely dependent on being given material to think. "The human being is no more responsible for his understanding than for his body" (SF 7:73)—because his contribution is exclusively formal and regulative in the theoretical use of reason. We are distinguished from the beasts only insofar as pure reason is practical of itself, for only then are the ideas of reason realized—practically, i.e. in the disposition of the will to act. Rödl's Kant claims that our self-conscious vital efficacy is really united with pure practical knowledge—but Kant rejects this. Kant rather thinks we *strive* to unify these distinct aspects of ourselves, whereas their real unity would be the holiness of will.

The austerity of Kant's distinction seems to be necessary for morally practical knowledge. The latter cannot be reasoned out from "antecedent data of reason" (KpV 5:31), such as the supposed incoherence of the agent who knows what she is doing without knowing what is good unconditionally to do. Korsgaard disallows the MPPR in order to explain why the subjectivist is wrong that the problem of efficacy eliminates rational agency: we do have rational agency, for the hypothetical imperative resolves the problem of efficacy. Rödl disallows the MPPR in order to reject the residual subjectivism of Korsgaard's Kant: there is no problem of

[24] There is a passage in the *Anthropology* that seems to speak in favor of Rödl's interpretation. Kant writes: "The fact that the human being can have the 'I' in his representations raises him infinitely above all other living beings on earth. Because of this he is a *person*, and by virtue of the unity of consciousness through all changes that happen to him, one and the same person—i.e., through rank and dignity an entirely different being from *things*, such as irrational animals, with which one can do as one likes" (A 7:127). While this does seem to suggest that the unity of self-consciousness in the 'I' distinguishes us from the beasts, the talk of *personality* suggests that the relevant persistence of identity is moral.

efficacy, because Kant's practical knowledge can encompass the actuality of what one is doing. But he loses the *sui generis* character of morally practical knowledge by making it entailed by technically practical knowledge. Is it possible to retain the idea that Kant's concept of our practical knowledge entails knowing what one is doing—thus tempering his apparent austerity—while rejecting the dependence in the other direction, i.e. that technically practical knowledge entails morally practical knowledge? Stephen Engstrom pursues an interpretation of Kant along these lines.

2.5. The reality of striving

Stephen Engstrom locates Anscombe's practical knowledge in Kant without making it entail morally practical knowledge, the desiderative self-sufficiency of which makes it *sui generis*. Engstrom insists on carefully distinguishing between between Kant's practical knowledge and Anscombe's. He calls the former *efficacious knowledge*, indicating its defining feature of desiderative self-sufficiency; the latter he calls *knowledge of efficacy*, indicating a different relationship between knowledge and efficacy. Knowing what one is doing relates one's efficacy to theoretical knowledge, while practical knowledge produces efficacy from itself. Rödl marks this difference in terms of distinct "ways in which an act of the will is knowledge as an act of the will."[25] The difference is not primarily desiderative, for Rödl, but epistemic, i.e. the difference between a valid first premise and a valid second premise. I argued that Kant would not accept this, and Engstrom's Kant does not: the difference is decisively desiderative, i.e. the

[25] Rödl (2014), p. 213.

efficacy itself is different. The efficacy of morally practical knowledge is, as we said, *sui generis*, and the knowledgable efficacy of technically practical knowledge does not entail it.

Anscombe's practical knowledge can be situated within what Engstrom identifies as Kant's broad concept of practical thinking—but he denies that it belongs to Kant's concept of practical knowledge proper. Practical thinking pertains to the faculty of desire in its relation to *theoretical* knowledge, whereas willing pertains to the faculty of desire in its relation to *practical* knowledge. The rationality of the former lies in judgments of *practicability*: an intention is rational insofar as what the subject seeks to make actual is self-consciously compatible with what she knows about the circumstances and her own power to change material reality. Even though this sort of rationality pertains to *what is* and not to *what ought to be*, the efficacy of practical thinking is nonetheless spontaneous in comparison with that of mere inclination. Mere inclination is receptively efficacious, i.e., its efficacy is derived from the object towards which the subject is inclined. Practical thinking, by contrast, is spontaneously efficacious, which means that "the self-consciousness distinctive of conceptual representation belongs to the representation's very efficacy, to the striving constituting it as desire."[26] It is only because I am conscious that I *can* get to the bakery by crossing the street that I can *intend* to do so, i.e., that my efficacy can be the efficacy of intention. If I sleepwalk to the bakery, drawn by the smell of fresh croissants, the efficacy in question (my getting myself there) is not a matter of intention. The self-consciousness distinctive of conceptual representation belongs to my efficacy insofar as my representation of the end as possible and the means as sufficient constitutes the form of the action I produce. I am efficacious in acquiring croissants only insofar as I represent them as

[26] Engstrom (2009), 29-30.

available at the bakery and crossing the street as a way of getting there. Even though I do not author my desire for croissants, my efficacy is not receptively but spontaneously determined insofar as my thinking constitutes the form of my striving.

Practical thinking may involve spontaneous efficacy, but it need not distinguish us from the beasts for Engstrom's Kant. We do not know how the male rough-skinned newt is efficacious in returning, each spring, to his ancestral waters—but it is not by means of representing the concept of returning to his ancestral waters as an effective way of reproducing. Self-conscious efficacy is distinguished from merely animal efficacy—but it is not what makes us human beings. The relation of the faculty of desire to theoretical knowledge does not constitute our humanity; its relation to *practical* knowledge does. Without morality, the self-conscious spontaneity of practical thinking might make a creature "stand at the top of [the] ladder" (SF 7:70) of the beasts, as Kant puts it. Nonetheless, receptive efficacy has a place in our practical life. We saw that the efficacy of inclination does not depend on the subject representing the practicability of its object. I might, for example, want to speed up the time between now and next Wednesday, when I will receive important test results—even though it is not in my power to do that.[27] The theoretical rationality I bring to bear on my inclinations in practical thinking stops me from trying to speed up time, though it may not stop me from calling the doctor's office before Wednesday against all odds that the results will be in early. The application of theoretical knowledge to inclination formally determines its efficacy, but it does not author it, and this is reflected in the futility of some of our desires.

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[27] The example is Kant's, and he agrees with Engstrom that impossible inclinations have efficacy: "Still their causal relation, and hence the thought of their *causality*, is contained in every *wish* and is especially noticeable when that wish is an affect, namely, *longing*" (KU 5:178 n. 18). Rödl denies that futile efficacy is intelligible: "[I]t is only true to say that I want it if I can calculate how to do it—even if, in the case at hand, I have not yet found a way" (2014, p. 229).

The spontaneity of practical thinking allows us to know what we are doing on the basis of the self-consciousness that belongs to our efficacy—but knowledge of efficacy does not entail efficacious knowledge. The MPPR is logically possible, and Engstrom explains its status:

> The practical conception of happiness would provide a basis for prudentially rational decisions, but the pursuit of this happiness would not itself be regarded as rationally supported and so would not be an object of free choice, or action specification determined by reason. Though this conception of happiness would be efficacious, it would not be efficacious *through* any practical judgment determining the pursuit of that happiness to be good.[28]

The MPPR's conception of its happiness would be efficacious, and the form of its striving would be constituted by its practical thinking. But the efficacy of its conception would not be due to its judgment that happiness is good; happiness would be given to it as good, and determined by thinking instrumentally or as a means. For us human beings, the conception of a virtuous life is efficacious *through* the judgment that it is unconditionally good. The self-conscious validity of technically practical knowledge does not entail morally practical knowledge, because it is conceivable that practical thinking could determine the form of given efficacy without reason itself being efficacious.

We saw that it might seem to follow from Kant's insistence that practical knowledge is not of anything actual that he cannot countenance (technically) practical knowledge of what one is doing.[29] It might seem that the Kantian subject has practical knowledge of her will, and theoretical knowledge of what happens, without having any practical knowledge of what she is doing. Anscombe objects to this conception of practical knowledge on the grounds that its way of

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[28] *ibid*., 92.
[29] E.g.: "Subsumption of an action possible to me in the sensible world under a *pure practical law* does not concern the possibility of the *action* as an event in the sensible world; for, it belongs to the theoretical use of reason to appraise that possibility in accordance with the law of causality." (KpV 5:68)

distinguishing practical knowledge is *ad hoc*. She explains that Aristotle's practical syllogism is "commonly supposed to be ordinary reasoning leading to such a conclusion as: 'I ought to do such-and-such.'"[30] On this view, ordinary reasoning, i.e. reasoning towards the truth of propositions, becomes practical reasoning by culminating in a term that relates to the doing of an intentional action, e.g. *Do A!* or *I shall do A*. She claims that this common supposition distinguishes the practical syllogism from ordinary reasoning in the way that the mince pie syllogism is distinguished from the cupcake syllogism—namely, in respect of their objects, which differ.[31] On such a view, the practical syllogism issues in knowledge with an exclamation point—*Do!*—and something actually happens, which of course we can see. From this reading of the practical syllogism, Anscombe says, "nothing seems to follow about doing anything."[32]

We have seen that Kant's conception of practical knowledge requires actually acting. Engstrom explains why Kant is not subject to the mince pie objection: for Kant, he says, practical and theoretical knowledge differ in respect of "the types of cognition to which they are related"[33]—and this is a formal difference, not a difference in object. Practical knowledge relates to cognition that makes its object actual (KrV Bix-x), proceeding discursively from general representations to production. Practical knowledge that health is good, for example, is knowledge of health as the effect of that very knowledge, from which it follows that "the practical knowledge of the object's goodness is the *unique* cause of the object's actuality, and this is as much as to say that practical knowledge produces the object's form."[34] When I brush my teeth or disinfect a wound, it is not simply that I deploy theoretical knowledge of plaque or

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[30] *Intention*, §33.
[31] *Intention*, §33.
[32] *ibid*.
[33] Engstrom (2002), p. 56.
[34] Engstrom (2002), p. 60.

germs for the purpose of staying healthy. My practical knowledge of the goodness of staying healthy is the unique cause of brushing my teeth, in the sense that a happening with that form only exists insofar as I think it is good to stay healthy.[35] Similarly, I am actually pumping the cistern full of poisoned water only insofar as I think it is good to take down the fascists inhabiting the house. The form of the object—preventing the buildup of plaque, poisoning the inhabitants—is produced by practical knowledge. I only do those things, and those objects only have that form, because I judge them to be good and practical knowledge makes actual what it knows. Kant's practical syllogism is not like the mince pie syllogism, because the work of making actual belongs to its form.

Practical judgments issue in formal knowledge of the production of actions as one's own work—but not in virtue of the theoretical judgments of practicability on which they immediately depend. Judgments of what is *practicable*, or within one's power to do, "are not themselves practical (efficacious), but are rather empirical theoretical judgments…marking the extent of one's powers of agency."[36] Such judgments *become* practical when they are taken up into judgments of goodness—specifically, judgments of goodness in respect of being a *means*: "the relation of being-for-the-sake-of is just the relation of efficacy practically represented,"[37] Engstrom says. Subsumption of practicability under the concept of an end is the practical deployment of otherwise theoretical knowledge of one's power to change the world.

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[35] Obviously, we need an account of *good*. This requires us to examine the faculty of desire in its receptivity and spontaneity, the relatively good that is the practical representation of the agreeable, and the unconditionally good that is the practical representation of the universally lawgiving form of the will. For the former, see Engstrom (2009), pp. 70ff.
[36] Engstrom (2009), p. 67.
[37] *ibid*., p. 74. In fact, Engstrom says the representation of the object (i.e. the event of action) as an external cause is *aufgehoben* in practical self-predication (*ibid*., p. 73).

Now, Rödl's Kant considers the subsumption of a theoretical judgment of practicability under the concept of an end to be an *act of will*. He claims that "the formal concepts of action have their source in the will…they are themselves acts of the will."[38] The formal concepts of action are teleologically articulated representations of actions such as *doing A is a way of doing B*. They are acts of the will, for Rödl, insofar as they supply form to general knowledge how, and thereby derive actually doing something in particular. Predicating *doing B* of myself practically means summoning an act of intellect in virtue of which I derive, through another act of the will, *doing A* as what I am doing. For Rödl, practical self-predication is an act of will, regardless of whether the first premise is ultimately or relatively valid.

Engstrom's Kant is more cautious: practical self-predication is not as such an act of will. The latter term should be reserved for the efficaciousness of our knowledge of the ultimately good. The subsumption of judgments of practicability under the concept of an end, or the practical deployment of otherwise theoretical knowledge, is not itself an act of will—but putting such knowledge into relation with the exercise of choice nonetheless does make it, Engstrom says, not strictly theoretical. He explains:

> Strictly speaking, the empirical theoretical judgments of practicability on which choice immediately depends are not *purely* theoretical judgments, but rather applications of the latter so far as they bear on the exercise of choice. For since they specify one's limited powers of agency, they are based on the concept of *oneself* as a subject with such powers —a concept that first arises in relation to one's *practical* self-conception…On account of this relation to choice and action, judgments of practicability are more suitably characterized as beliefs than as theoretical cognition in the strict sense.[39]

Consider the carpenter. Her exercise of choice immediately depends on her empirical theoretical judgment that she can build this sort of cabinet under present circumstances. But this judgment is

[38] Rödl (2014), p. 223.
[39] Engstrom (2009), p. 67 n. 1.

not *purely* theoretical, insofar as it is her own efficacy that she judges. Insofar as it is her own efficacy that she judges, such judgments constitute *beliefs* rather than theoretical cognition, Engstrom says. Does this return us to Korsgaard's problem of efficacy, which she resolves through faith with practical grounds? How can efficacy be self-constituted, as Engstrom claims practical thinking is, if knowledge of efficacy is qualified as *belief*?

The judgments of practicability on which choice immediately depends cannot be strictly theoretical for Engstrom's Kant, because the concept of oneself as an agent with particular powers is originally practical. But these judgments cannot be strictly practical, either—i.e., subsuming them under the concept of an end cannot be an act of the will, as Rödl claims—because the object judged is actual, namely one's actual, limited powers. On this strategy, Kant seems to navigate a narrow course away from the subjectivist, who claims, as we saw William James put it, that we "learn all our possibilities by the way of experience."[40] Kant rejects the empiricist claim that there is, as James says, "no other mental material out of which [the idea of volition] might be made,"[41] i.e., other than the *post facto* feeling of success. Our practical self-conception is not, for Kant, an idea picked up in experience or left behind by originally involuntary movements. The concept of ourselves as able to produce the wholes we represent constitutes the exercise of vital causality in intentional action. But if the deployment of this concept culminates in *belief* rather than cognition, does it constitute that exercise in a way that nonetheless has to wait for experience to know its effectiveness? Can efficacy be self-constituting if it must wait for experience to know its effectiveness, as the subjectivist contends?

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[40] William James, *Principles of Psychology*, pp. 925-6.
[41] *ibid*., p. 946. Kant does say, however, that "usually we do not come to know what forces we have in the first place except by trying them out" (KU 5:178 n. 18).

The self-constitution of efficacy pertains to practical thinking in virtue of its self-conscious rationality in general, not to its morality in particular. Engstrom seems to think that the self-constitution of efficacy can be made to wait for experience to know of its successful execution—and this distinguishes it from from the self-determination of the will, which is a practical reality that does not have to wait for intuition. Kant explains: "the practical a priori concepts in relation to the supreme principle of freedom at once become cognitions and do not have to wait for intuitions in order to receive meaning" (KpV 5:66). Efficacious knowledge depends on the real *possibility* of successful execution, Engstrom says, whereas "practical knowledge in the 'knowing what one is doing' sense depends on successful execution,"[42] i.e. it "implies the existence of an object (one's action) with which it is in agreement."[43] Engstrom is clear that the existence of the action belongs to experience and is known theoretically:

> For to understand one's practical thought as efficacious is to understand it as *capable* of making what one therein thinks *actual*, yet "actual" signifies nothing if not what one can in principle know theoretically through experience. Indeed, such knowledge of the actuality of the action represented in practical thought is the true aim of practical thought; it is only in reaching this knowledge (or at least what the subject supposes to be such) that the efficacy—the pursuing, the trying—brings itself to rest.[44]

Insofar as one knows one's actions as actual, one knows them theoretically through experience. It is *theoretical* knowledge that is the true aim of practical thought, according to Engstrom's Kant. The practicality of practical thought consists in the consciousness of *capability*, of pursuing and trying—but the perfective aspect and success are known theoretically. The practicality of practical knowledge contains the consciousness of the real possibility of successfully executing one's duty, while successful execution itself is known theoretically.

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[42] Engstrom (2002), p. 61.
[43] Engstrom (2002), p. 60. See also Engstrom (2009), p. 56.
[44] Engstrom (2009), p. 36.

The fact that success is known theoretically leads Hume to practical knowledge skepticism. We saw him claim that we "learn the influence of our will from experience alone."[45] He thinks it follows that willing itself cannot constitute knowledge of efficacy. Engstrom's Kant contends that practical thinking constitutes knowledge of efficacy insofar as it produces the form of the material reality it causes—even though the actuality of action is finally known theoretically. This seems to conflict with Anscombe's idea that the object of practical knowledge is what one is actually doing. In order to avoid this, Rödl's Kant makes the conclusion of the practical syllogism, i.e. knowing what one is doing, into an act of the will. But this was shown to be unacceptable insofar as it implies that our vital efficacy is really united with pure practical knowledge, which Kant denies. Engstrom's Kant combines the self-conscious efficacy of practical thinking with an apparently incompatible dependence on experience for knowledge of its actuality. Engstrom seems to accomplish this by making sense of our knowledge of efficacy as the development of the efficaciousness of reason, which does not have to wait for intuition or experience to have meaning.

Efficacious knowledge does not depend on the experience of successful execution to constitute knowledge. As Kant famously says: "Usefulness or fruitlessness can neither add anything to [the worth of the good will] nor take anything away from it" (GMS 4:394). Nonetheless, Engstrom explains, "as practical it works to *produce* the existence of its object," implying the real possibility of success. The dependence of efficacious knowledge on the real possibility of successful execution relates it to knowledge of efficacy, insofar as the latter belongs to the former's perfection:

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[45] ECHU, VII.1.

> Thus *efficacious knowledge* (practical knowledge in Kant's sense) can perfect itself with respect to its efficacy through developing its implicit understanding of itself as efficacious into *knowledge of its efficacy* (practical knowledge in the "knowing what one is doing" sense).[46]

The moral law is desideratively self-sufficient: it possesses original efficacy that can be perfected. The knowledge that one ought to do one's duty implicitly understands itself to be desideratively self-sufficient, and this implicit understanding can be developed into the knowledge that one is actually effectively realizing one's will. One can master the technically practical knowledge in virtue of which one is self-consciously effective in carrying out one's will —as part of the perfection of morally practical knowledge.

Whereas Rödl's Kant understands the nature of the will to be the unity of morally and technically practical knowledge, Engstrom's Kant understands the finite will to *strive* towards this unity. I think Engstrom is right about Kant here: efficacy takes distinct forms in morality and technique, in the will and in action, and this distinction is necessary if practical philosophy is to be a science. The actual unity of morally and technically practical knowledge is beyond our ken —but it nonetheless has objective reality for us insofar as it belongs to the highest good. Kant explains that in the postulated moral world, "there would be no difference between obligation and action, between a practical law that says what is possible through our doing, and the theoretical law that says what is actual through our doing" (KU 5:403-4). In the moral world, we would not need to wait for intuition to know the successful execution of our will, but could know

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[46] Engstrom (2002), p. 61 and (2009), p. 56. Rödl also discusses practical perfection, and distinguishes between perfection in respect of ends and perfection in respect of means: "The good will is the will so constituted as to give rise to knowledge of what is good to do; the perfect will is the will that, on the one hand, is good, and that, on the other hand, realizes itself through knowledge of what is other than it" (2014, p. 238). But perfecting itself in respect of means is not required to *unify* the two forms of practical knowledge, which he takes to be already unified insofar as, together, they constitute the nature of the will. Engstrom would presumably hesitate to say, as Rödl does, that "the two forms of practical knowledge spring from the same power" (2014, p. 213). Rather, he says that the two forms represent the relation of the faculty of desire to practical and theoretical knowledge, respectively.

the actuality of our doing through the knowledge of what is good in itself to do, which would thereby simply *be* done. As things stand for us, the only reality the knowledge of which need not wait for intuition is a practical reality, namely the desiderative self-sufficiency of moral law. The logical possibility of the MPPR is related to the transcendence of the unity of morally and technically practical knowledge for beings like us. We strive for rather than experience the actual unity of these two forms of efficacy, and so we cannot rule out the possibility of the MPPR. We do not know our vital efficacy through our moral knowledge, and so we do not know it to be the necessary vehicle for morality, which would rule out the MPPR.

Kant thinks pure reason supplies practical grounds for faith in objects without which finite moral willing would be unintelligible. If the highest good were impossible through efforts like ours, the moral law "must be fantastic and directed to empty imaginary ends and must therefore in itself be false" (KpV 5:114). We cannot understand ourselves to be bound by moral law if we think just deserts are impossible. Now, I claimed in opposition to Korsgaard that we cannot understand our knowledge of efficacy to work like this: we actually experience the effects of our choice, whereas we do not experience the dispensation of just deserts. But faith in the unity of morally and technically practical knowledge differs from faith in efficacy insofar as it refers to an object we do not actually experience: that is, knowing the actuality of our doing *in the same respect* in which we know our will, i.e. without having to wait for intuition and its theoretical law. According to Engstrom's Kant, we have *faith* that such a form of efficacy is possible in the highest good—whereas we know our efficacy in the actual world, not in the same respect that we know our will, but as a *belief* that aims at expected theoretical knowledge of successful execution.

The free will is essentially non-idle, ruling out the widget problem from the beginning by requiring one to actually act in the world—and yet it stands above fate and fruitfulness. It stands above fate—"The tutelary god of morals does not yield to Jupiter (the god of power); for Jupiter is still subject to fate" (EF 8:370)—while nonetheless referring itself to a vital power that *is* subject to fate and *is* affected by fruitfulness and uselessness. The free will stands above fate, and pure practical principles do not have to wait for intuition to become cognition. But our self-conscious vital efficacy *is* subject to fate, and it must wait for experience to know its effectiveness. Insofar as pure reason is practical of itself, *I do not know what I am doing*—that is, I do not experience *how* the will is free. But I do know the result, i.e. the disposition of the will or the desiderative self-sufficiency of moral law, exclusively through its being my work. Insofar as I produce effects according to theoretical knowledge of what is within my power to do, *I know what I am doing*—and the how of this production belongs to my vitality. But I do not thereby know the result exclusively through its being my work, but must wait for intuition to know the success of execution. The latter can nonetheless be understood to constitute a certain *knowledge* of efficacy, rather than being mere *belief*, insofar as efficacious knowledge secures the real possibility of successful execution and can perfect itself in respect of efficacy by striving towards unity with technically practical knowledge.

Chapter 3. The honorable means

Kant's technically practical knowledge, we have seen, must wait for intuition and experience to know its actual progress and successful execution. The practicality of this knowledge is thus essentially imperfective, insofar as progress and perfection are not known through it but rather dependently on theoretical knowledge of what actually happens. As we know, Hegel thinks the subjectivity of the will consists in excluding its own accomplishment: "The *subjective*, as far as the will in general is concerned, denotes…one-sided form in general, in so far as that which is willed, whatever its content, is still only a content belonging to the self-consciousness, *an unaccomplished end*" (PhR §25; second italics mine). In this chapter, I interpret Hegel's argument in the "Teleology" chapter of the *Logic* as an argument against the subjectivity of technically practical knowledge. This strategy immediately faces an apparent difficulty: Hegel's topic in that text is not practical knowledge. External or instrumental teleology is the dialectical *antecedent* of life and cognition; Hegel does not address *action* until the penultimate chapter of the book. Furthermore, all of the texts just mentioned belong to *logic* and not to the philosophy of mind. The logical ideas of instrumental purpose and practical cognition do not supply doctrines about minded agents.

We saw that Kant thinks technically practical knowledge belongs to theoretical philosophy as a corollary. Hegel thinks it belongs to the philosophy of subjective and objective mind, where it is articulated in terms of its concept, i.e. the concept of free, thinking, living being. The concept of instrumental teleology, however, belongs to "Objectivity" as the truth of mechanism. Instrumental teleology articulates that way of being that is the realization of subjective purposes in mechanical-chemical objectivity. The subjective possession of the concept

of an end is realized in the mechanical-chemical world: that is the topic of "Teleology." We might thus say that the subjective purpose is the logical idea of technically practical knowledge, insofar as it is the idea of the production of a mechanical-chemical product through the subjective possession of its concept.

In this chapter, I elucidate Hegel's argument in "Teleology" by putting him into conversation with Anscombe. I suggest that Anscombe articulates a version of the thesis that the perfection of practical knowledge is its imperfection—but in a way that preserves the subjectivity of practical knowledge, i.e. the exclusion of accomplishment. We saw in the previous chapter that Engstrom's Kant makes knowledge of efficacy into a *belief* that aims at expected theoretical knowledge of successful execution. We also saw Rödl's Kant make knowledge of efficacy into an act of will in which one knows what one is doing. It seems that it should follow, for Rödl's Kant, that successful execution is known through an act of will. If we know what are doing through an act of will all the way until we are done, it seems that we should know what we have done through that very act of will. But it is not obvious how that can be. In fact, the exclusion of accomplishment seems to belong to Anscombe's own idea of practical knowledge. Towards the end of *Intention*, she seems to embrace the doubling of knowledges in opposition to which she initially frames her project. Knowing that an action or phase of action has been successfully executed, she tells us, "is of course always 'speculative' as opposed to 'practical'."[1] We have practical knowledge of what we are doing, but knowledge of what we have done, or have done so far, is of course always speculative or theoretical.

[1] *Intention*, §48.

Anscombe's practical knowledge avoids the doubling of the mad subjectivist account—but only in the imperfective aspect. Practical knowledge is essentially or originally in the imperfective aspect—*I know what I am doing*—and so the accomplishment or perfection of action falls outside the practical perspective. Michael Thompson makes this explicit: "The content of Anscombe's practical knowledge is progressive, imperfective, in medias res… [T]here is practical knowledge only when the thing is precisely NOT done, not PAST; there is more to come, something is missing, and the H-bomb may hit before it does."[2] Unlike the knowledge of what one is doing, which is non-observational, the knowledge of what one has done, or has done so far, requires the mediation of observation and reports.

Anscombe thus seems to be in the same position as Engstrom's Kant: we have formal knowledge of what happens as our doing—but we must wait for intuition and experience to know progress and success. Engstrom's Kant understands this qualification to imply a reality of striving towards practical perfection—but this is supposed to make sense for Kant given the self-sufficiency of morally practical knowledge. Anscombe seems to face a similar implication: if the knowledge that we have actually made progress can never come into the practical perspective, how is practical knowledge of what one is doing so much as possible?[3] What can it mean to know what one is doing non-observationally, if one's knowledge that one has actually gotten started, made progress, and finally finished is only acquired through the mediation of observation, i.e. outside the practical perspective? How can we restore the doubling of

[2] Thompson (2014), p. 209.
[3] Haase (2018) raises this problem for Anscombe (p. 35), and more generally for the philosophy of action that he identifies as Presentist. I am much in debt to this paper, in which Haase also frames the problem with Oedipus.

knowledges when it comes to progress and completion without reverting to the madness of subjectivism?

Hegel tells us that the exposition of subjective or instrumental teleology is "doubly difficult and intricate, for such a movement is itself immediately doubled and a first is always also a second" (WL 12.171). It is no accident that Anscombe struggles with doubling: first opposing it in the guise of the subjectivist's mad account, and later embracing it when it comes to progress and completion. The difficulties of doubling are internal to instrumental teleology, Hegel thinks—and he recognizes that the formalist nobly but finally inadequately resists subjectivism. Instrumental teleology shows itself to overcome subjectivity in accomplishment, too. Technical purposiveness includes its own accomplishment—in the means. He writes: "the subjectivity of the finite concept, by contemptuously rejecting the means, has attained nothing better in its goal" (WL 12.171). The subjectivity of instrumental teleology is overcome through embracing the honorable means: the perfection of subjective purpose is its imperfection, i.e. the use and usability of its product.

(**3.1**) The dialectic of "Teleology" opposes itself to subjectivism. Initially, this opposition is shared with the formalist, who wants to bring technical reasoning out of the inner recesses of subjectivity and into the objective world—as the *form* of action. I interpret Hegel's thesis that purpose is immediately communicated to the means as aligned with Anscombe's formalist conception of practical knowledge. (**3.2**) Next, I interpret the essentially imperfective aspect of Anscombe's practical knowledge as a version of Hegel's thesis that, for the technical syllogism, perfection is imperfection. Anscombe locates perfection in the sense of accomplishment outside the practical perspective in speculative knowledge. Hegel argues that completion falling outside

the purposive perspective triggers a regress and constitutes a reversion to subjectivism. (**3.3**) The resolution of the regress of means lies in reinterpeting the thesis that the perfection of subjective purpose is imperfection. This does not imply that perfection falls outside the practical perspective. It implies that the real aim of the subjective purpose is to realize the conditions for its own activity. (**3.4**) Finally, we see that the accomplishment or perfection of the subjective purpose consists in the use and usability of the product. The power of subjective purpose springs from being the truth of mechanism, i.e. the use of the essentially usable.

3.1. The immediate communication of purpose

The subjective or instrumental purpose enters the scene in the *Logic* as the impulse to realize in external objectivity the concept of a finite purpose possessed subjectively. A purpose is finite insofar as its realization consists of mechanical and chemical processes, such as building a clock or making simple syrup. The task of the dialectic is to show how such a subjective possession—e.g., the concept of a functional timepiece or of sugar solution—can be made externally objective, when coils and gears are indifferent to keeping time and sugar is indifferent to being dissolved. The subjective purpose is the impulse to make external objectivity equal to the concept in the subject's possession—to make the metal keep time in spite of its indifference to horology, and to make the crystalline sugar into syrup in spite of its indifference to mixology. The way to do this is to take means: that is, to use objects to bring about the purpose, e.g. to compress the coil and heat the sugar. The next question is how the subjective purpose is able to determine objects in such a way that they can be made into means, and how that sort of

determination can bring about the desired result, namely external objectivity that has been made equal to the concept in the subject's possession.

The question of the means leads Hegel to the first thesis that he shares—at least initially—with the formalist. Whereas the subjectivist contends that the subjective possession of purpose is separate from the effects it produces, Hegel and the formalist argue that it animates what happens. As we have seen, the subjectivist thinks that intention is the subjective reflection of a relatively opaque and given animal machinery. There are *two* objects and *two* knowledges: the subjective doing, which is more or less transparent, and the objective happening, which is not transparent but known through the mediation of experience. As we have seen, Anscombe thinks this a mad account of intentional action. She denies that there are two objects with two knowledges, the former known in inner experience and the latter in outer experience. She thinks there is an alternative to practical knowledge skepticism that does not require positing a queer seeing eye in the middle of action that connects two separate knowledges—an eye that sees how one's representations cause, in the right way, the effects one understands. This alternative is *formalist* in character: whereas the subjectivist identifies the practical in terms of its special subjective object, intention, Anscombe identifies the practical in terms of its form, i.e. making what it knows actual in an order of means and ends. In practical knowledge there is just one object, namely what one is doing. Practical knowledge causes the form of what it understands, and constitutes the formal determination of what happens. My knowledge that I am pumping the cistern full of poisoned water in order to murder some fascists (to borrow Anscombe's famous example) constitutes the form of the mechanical and chemical processes in which water travels some distance and arteries react to poison. The pumping of the handle is connected to the

affliction of arteries in an order of means and ends. There are not two objects here: some subjective activity on the one hand, and some movement and changes on the other. I know the pumping not as something that merely happens but as part of my purpose of killing some fascists. The subjective doing *is* the objective happening, as in her famous slogan *I do what happens*.

One does not know the effects of volition through the mediation of observation and reports but immediately through the form of acting towards an end. I know the pumping of the cistern full of poisoned water by doing it in order to kill some men. I know that I am pumping to kill *non-observationally*, and this is a defining feature of practical knowledge. Now, the non-observational character of practical knowledge does not mean that it is independent of perception. I need to use my senses throughout the act: on the walk to the chemist, checking for cars before I cross the street; when I get to the well, listening for footsteps and voices before removing the bottle of poison from my pocket. I know what I am doing non-observationally not in the sense that perception is not involved in acting intentionally, but in the sense that observing myself is not how I know what I am doing. I do not learn that I am pumping to kill when I see my arm moving at the scene of the murder. That form of description—murdering some men—is supplied by my practical knowledge, and I know that I am pumping to kill by doing it.

Formalism gets something right, according to Hegel: subjective purpose is immediately communicated to objectivity in the means. As Anscombe has it, immediately, or without observation, I know what I am doing—namely, as part of attaining something wanted. What I am doing is immediately what is happening, and purpose or the A-D order supplies its form. Say I am building a clock: I do not need to observe myself to know that I am compressing the coil as

part of constructing the functional timepiece. If you enter the room and ask me what I am up to, I do not need to check whether I am in the midst of a certain phase of clockbuilding—whereas, if you walk in and ask me what time it is, I may have to check my watch. Immediately, or without observation, purpose is in the means, where this is a phase of action. Anscombe emphasizes that purpose really is in the means—that it is not separate from what actually happens, as the subjectivist claims. That is, practical knowledge does not fall short of the objective happening that is one's doing. Practical knowledge supplies the form of description under which the objective happening is what it is, namely intentional action: "without it what happens does not come under the description—execution of intentions."[4] Without knowing what one is doing, what happens is not the execution of intentions. Knowing what one is doing, i.e. the material reality of what happens, is immediately part of a teleological order one grasps.

Hegel says the object that is the means is "*immediately* subjected to purpose," and the purpose is its "subjectivity or soul" (WL 12.164). Immediately, my activity of sanding is part of clockbuilding. By immediately subjecting objectivity to purpose in the taking up of means, "the purpose is activity, no longer mere impulse and striving" (WL 12.164). Purpose is no longer something subjective—say, an impulse with some representational content—that must find a way to connect with external objectivity, as the subjectivist thinks. The means is immediately objective activity, like knowing what is happening on the table to be animated by clockbuilding. Hegel writes: "the purpose does not just keep outside the mechanical process; on the contrary, it keeps itself in it and is its determination" (WL 12.166). Hegel and the formalist agree: the mechanical process of what happens is not separate from the subjective possession of purpose.

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[4] *Intention*, §46.

Hegel emphasizes the determinability of the object subjective purpose determines. He says that the object "does not have with respect to purpose any of the power of resistance that it initially has against another immediate object. To the purpose…it is utterly penetrable…[and] has the character of being powerless and of serving it" (WL 12.164). The coil resists being compressed by the gear (thereby storing the energy necessary for timekeeping), but it does not resist being made into a clock. The object's relation to other objects has a different form than its relation to subjective purpose. The coil does not *serve* the stone insofar as the latter happens to crush it. By contrast, the coil *serves* the purpose of clockbuilding insofar it is compressed in a particular way using specialized tools. This is not a magical operation whereby mechanical operations are made conscious, as the subjectivist thinks it would need to be.

The formalist sides with Hegel against subjectivism: practical knowledge supplies knowledge of the whole material reality of clockbuilding—in respect of its form as the execution of intention. I think Anscombe would accept a version of the claim that objectivity is utterly penetrable by practical knowledge and has the character of being powerless and of serving it. She writes: "the failure to execute intentions is necessarily the rare exception."[5] The clockbuilder practices an art only insofar as this is true; if coils could revolt against compression, she could not practice any art using coils. But more importantly this is true at the level of the mundane: all our projects and activities (which themselves may not in the end be successful) depend on the powerlessness of objectivity in the face of practical knowledge. Cabbage can be made into lunch, 'action' can be written on the chalkboard, lights can be turned on. We do not have to wait and

[5] *Intention*, §46.

find out that we are in fact making dinner or writing on the board, *because* objectivity is powerless in the face of purpose.

Hegel explains that "violence" is required for the communication of purpose to objects insofar as the two are external to each other. The subjectivist claims that intending is separate from the effects it appears to produce. On such a conception, a kind of violence would be required to communicate purpose from intending to objects: intending would have to be present and in charge at every neurological moment—not to mention the transactions with objects distinct from oneself of which action is actually composed. Hume's practical knowledge skepticism eliminates the power of subjective purpose: no violence is required, for no communication of purpose to the object takes place. The immediate communication of purpose obviates the need for violence—rather than eliminating the efficacy of purpose. Hegel explains:

> There is no need, therefore, for the subjective purpose to exercise any violence to make the object into a means, no need of extra reinforcement; the *resolution*, the resolve, this determination of itself, is the *only posited* externality of the object, which is therein immediately subjected to purpose. (WL 12.170)

Again there is a sense in which Anscombe can embrace this. Violence may be needed overthrow the regime—but that sort of violence presupposes the nonviolence of practical knowledge, e.g. the nonviolence of making the pump into a means. The resolve to poison these men is the only posited externality of pumping. You could inform me later that while I was pumping I was also pumping a small amount of poisoned water into the ground due to a leak in the pipe. Being the only posited externality of the object does not require being conscious of and determining every feature or possible description of the object. The object is immediately and nonviolently subjected to purpose as its form.

We saw Adam Smith divide action into three components: intending, bodily movement, and further effects. Not only does Anscombe reject the separation of intention as something subjective, she also rejects the division between bodily movement and further effects. I do not know without observation that I am moving my arm but that I am pumping the cistern full of poisoned water. One knows what one is doing in transaction with other objects, not what one's body is doing plus some observed further effects.[6] This aligns with Hegel's characterization of the means: "The means is effective and potent against this latter object because its own is linked with the self-determining activity…Their process in this connection is none other than the mechanical or chemical one…but under the dominance of purpose" (WL 12.165). Mechanical and chemical processes beyond the means to which purpose is immediately communicated proceed under the dominance of purpose. Later the water travels from the cistern into house, and from there down the gullets of my victims. This further efficacy, mechanical and chemical though it may be, takes place under the dominance of purpose. You cannot understand what happened here if you think I am not responsible for their deaths because my active efforts ended with pumping.

Hegel and the formalist seem to agree that the subjective purpose is not separate from but immediately communicated to the objectivity of instrumental activity. They diverge insofar as Hegel thinks formal determination constitutes an inadequate account of immediate communication. In the next section, we will see Hegel object to formalism on the ground that it cannot make sense of the advance from means to completion.

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[6] See Ford (2014), "Action and Passion."

3.2. The problem of completion

In order to know that I *have* murdered some fascists, I need to make sure the men actually die. After all, they may never arrive, if rail service is disrupted; or they may drink wine and no water, if that be their fancy; or perhaps the chemist gave me a substance that is not, after all, poison. Perhaps I observe the gathering with binoculars or check the newspapers after I skip town. Determining that the men do in fact die seems to fall outside the practical perspective: there is nothing more I can do, and what I have done cannot be undone. Anscombe explains that the "mark of practical reasoning is that the thing wanted is *at a distance* from the immediate action."[7] When the thing wanted is attained, when the action is done, no more practical reasoning is required; the only way to know it is speculatively. If I succeed in poisoning the inhabitants, the only way for their corpses to be the object of my practical knowledge is insofar as I undertake to, say, remove them from the parlor—in which case, they can be the object of my practical knowledge until they are buried in the forest. Anscombe's practical knowledge, it seems, is essentially in the imperfective aspect. Hegel converges on a similar thesis: when it comes to the realization of technical purposes, *perfection is imperfection*. He puts the point this way: "The realized purpose is also a means; conversely, the truth of the means is just this, to be the real purpose itself" (WL 12.170). The means, such as walking to the store as a way to get groceries, is defined as being, by itself, *not* the completion of purpose. Yet the dialectic of teleology reveals that, when it comes to instrumental purposes, perfection is imperfection: the means or the imperfection of purpose is itself the perfection or realization of purpose.

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[7] *Intention*, §41.

Anscombe seems to understand the imperfection of practical knowledge to be complemented by perfection in the speculative perspective. Completion is excluded from practical perspective, but it is not eliminated. One can know that one *did do* something, all the way to completion, by knowing that one *was doing* that thing knowledgably back when it was underway. If my purpose was to murder a group of fascists, and I am successful, I can know the fascists dead on the parlor floor as my work—on the basis of past practical knowledge.[8] Long before they arrived, I knew that I was pumping poisoned water into the cistern in order to kill them. This practical knowledge supplies the form of description under which the completed murders are the execution of my intention. The only way the corpses can be the object of my present practical knowledge is if I take them up once again as means, as when I need to remove them from the parlor. The completion or perfection of *action* is not the perfection of practical *knowledge*, but rather refers to practical knowledge in the imperfective aspect.

Anscombe thus seems to distinguish between the perfection of the practical syllogism, which is not falsified by interruption, and the perfection of action, which requires reaching completion. It can be true that I was going to the store even if I am knocked down in a freak accident on the way there. But it cannot be true that I went to the store if I never make it. Knowing what one is doing when interruption is still a possibility can be the conclusion of the practical syllogism, even though the purpose is only perfectly realized when no more means need to be taken. The thesis I attributed to Anscombe above—that *perfection is imperfection* for practical knowledge—is thus qualified: perfection of action is completion, even though practical knowledge is essentially imperfective. Completed actions have the form of being the execution

[8] Haase (2018) argues in §8 that this solution does not work.

of intentions, supplied by practical knowledge. Anscombe explains of a man who acts that "*what* he effects is formally characterised as subject to our question 'Why?' whose application displays the A-D order which we discovered."[9] What a person effects really is formally characterized by their practical knowledge, even after the why question is no longer efficacious because past.

Hegel rejects this way of making sense of accomplishment: he argues that excluding completion from the purposive perspective, as Anscombe seems to do in §48, leads to a bad infinity. The formalist understands the means as the immediate pervasion of the object as its form —but she has no way to understand completion as the mediated result. Completion is accordingly as immediate as the means: it is just the sum of activity that *was* immediately known in the imperfective aspect back when it was underway. Achievement or success is not known in a way that transcends the imperfective aspect: one knows what one is doing until there is nothing left to do or change—and then one knows the result to be formally characterized by one's past imperfective practical knowledge. Hegel argues that the identical immediacy of means and completion triggers a regress. He explains:

> If we consider the one *premise*, that of the immediate connection of the subjective purpose and the object that thereby becomes a means, then the purpose cannot connect with the object immediately, for the latter is just as immediate as the object of the other extreme in which the purpose is to be realized *through mediation*. Since the two are thus posited as *diverse*, a means for their connection must be interjected between this objectivity and the subjective purpose; but such a means is equally an object already determined by purpose, and between this objectivity and the teleological determination a new means is to be interjected, and so on to infinity. The *infinite progress of mediation* is thereby set in motion. (WL 12.168)

One premise is the immediate connection of practical knowledge and the object that thereby becomes a means: I know, without observation, what I am doing. The other extreme, i.e. the

[9] *Intention*, §48; my italics.

conclusion of the technical syllogism, is supposed to be the purpose realized in the object—not immediately as in the means, but *through mediation*: I know, dependently upon the mediation of observation and reports, that my purpose has been accomplished. Non-observational practical knowledge of what I am doing is thus diverse from observational speculative knowledge of what I have done—and so a means must be interjected between what I am doing and what I have done as that which connects them. But the only candidate for such a means is more imperfective practical knowledge, which has already been determined not to supply the mediation through which I know what has been done, which is of course always speculative.

Nothing explains the mediation of the object by purpose: the means that is interjected between what I am doing and what I have done is an object already determined by purpose. Insofar as I know what I am doing, I know that my purpose *is* immediately communicated to the objectivity of what I am doing—but that is not knowledge of *how* my purpose is communicated to objectivity, or of *how* what I am doing becomes the accomplishment of my purpose available to speculative knowledge. As Thompson puts it, "there is practical knowledge only when the thing is precisely NOT done, not PAST."[10] *How* subjective purpose becomes a thing past and done is not for practical knowledge to know. Hegel argues that this triggers a bad infinity: as long as the communication of purpose to the object is originally and essentially immediate, its accomplishment is impossible. The product can only be the accomplishment of subjective purpose that is external to subjective purpose. For Anscombe, this means that the accomplishment of practical knowledge can only be known as one's own work externally through the mediation of observation and reports.

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[10] Thompson (2014), p. 209.

Water does not flow in rivers in order to transport persons and their goods, but the water that flows into the cistern and down the gullets of my victims flows in order to poison the inhabitants—because I make it flow for that purpose. My purpose is in the corpses on the parlor floor because I subjected various mechanical and chemical processes to the purpose of killing. Mechanical-chemical processes and their products are immediately animated by subjective purpose; that the corpses are the final term of my A-D order is no more stamped on their surface than it is on the filling of the cistern. The products of the technical syllogism, it seems, "are not united with purpose positively, because they possess self-determination only externally and are only relative purposes, or essentially only means" (WL 12.169). Both means and product are relative purposes, according to the formalist: pumping is part of killing only relative to the description supplied by my practical knowledge. And likewise the corpses on the parlor floor are the accomplishment of my purpose to kill the inhabitants only relative to the form supplied by my practical knowledge. The means is not the whole reality of the purpose—there is still more to do, more parts to prepare—and neither is the product. The clock is not stamped with the intricate process of its production, which I grasped in its making; in fact, it might be part of my aim as a horologist to make the clock function without revealing how it does. The clock is the last term of the teleological order, but not the totality of purpose. It is thus a purpose only relative to something subjective, which grasps the whole all at once.

The only way that the purpose is in the completed action is immediately: the form of description under which what has happened is the execution of an intention is supplied by the agent's formerly immediate and imperfective knowledge of what she was doing. The formalist thus seems to be back in the subjectivism that animates practical knowledge skepticism. The

subjectivist supposes that the subjective and objective extremes of the technical syllogism are separate, and skepticism follows from the fact that there is no representation that shows how the two extremes are connected, i.e. how the intention causes the event in the right way. The formalist takes herself to oppose subjectivism: the purpose is in the means immediately as its form, and the search for the queer seeing eye in the middle of action can be called off. If my application of Hegel's objection is right, the search reappears as the regress of means: we need a queer seeing eye to show how the means connects to the completed purpose as an external object.[11] Without a way of explaining how the completed action differs from the means *in respect of its purposiveness*, we are stuck with the subjectivity of purpose: subjectivity immediately animates the object as its form, but remains external to it insofar as progress and completion can only be known through the mediation of observation and reports. Anscombe explains how the completed action differs from the means—but not in respect of its purposiveness: that is, not as the conclusion of the practical syllogism but as falling outside it, available to be known speculatively through the mediation of observation.

The conclusion of the practical syllogism "can only be imperfect" (WL 12.168), as Hegel puts it, insofar as its premises are only immediate. "It is therefore entirely a matter of indifference whether we consider an object determined by external purpose as realized purpose or only as means" (*ibid*.): the technical syllogism does not supply the resources to objectively distinguish between means and completion. The technical syllogism does not make the difference between the two: purpose animates the object immediately and imperfectively, and so something external to that knowledge is required to determine whether the purpose is

[11] Haase (2018) raises the same problem for Presentism: see pp. 41-2.

accomplished, namely the mediation of observation and reports. This result is the regress of means, the reality of striving towards accomplishment, which always falls outside the grasp of subjective purpose as an external object.

3.3. The return to the means

We saw Anscombe claim that the practical syllogism through which we reason towards action must differ *formally* from the ordinary judgment through which we reason towards the truth of a proposition—that is, not in virtue of having different objects. Hegel explains the difference between the purposive syllogism and the ordinary, subsumptive syllogism as follows:

> Such a universal that only *subsumes* is an *abstraction* that becomes *concrete* only in an *other*, in the particular. Purpose, on the contrary, is the *concrete universal* containing within itself the moment of particularity and of externality; it is therefore active and the impulse to repel itself from itself. The concept, as purpose, is of course an *objective judgment* in which one determination, the subject, namely the concrete concept, is self-determined, while the other is not only a predicate but external objectivity. (WL 12.159)

The subsumptive syllogism begins with a universal that is made concrete through another, i.e. through the particular it subsumes.[12] The purposive syllogism begins with an already concrete universal, the concreteness of which shows up as activity and as the impulsivity to realize itself. Let us take the following two examples: "Fascists should be eliminated; the inhabitants of the house are fascists; the inhabitants should be eliminated," and: "Murder the fascist inhabitants; murder them by poisoning the cistern; the inhabitants are dead." In the first syllogism, the other is the predicate that the fascist inhabitants should be eliminated. In the second, the other is the predicate that the men are dead, which is at once the external objectivity of their corpses on the

[12] Hegel refers to purpose as an objective *judgment* above, i.e. not to a syllogism. The details of this difference need not concern us here, especially insofar as "Teleology" investigates the technical *syllogism*.

parlor floor. Insofar as the predicate of the first is externally objective, that is due, not to the syllogism that determines the predicate, but to the particular in its otherness that the syllogism subsumes, in this case to the murder-worthiness of the inhabitants. The external objectivity of the purposive predicate, by contrast, is due to the syllogism that determines it.

Anscombe would rather construe the second syllogism as follows: "Murder the inhabitants; do it through this A-D order; I am murdering the inhabitants." The practical syllogism is active and its conclusion is not only a predicate but the external objectivity of what I am doing. But the externally objective predicate of the practical syllogism can never be the whole accomplished purpose, but only, as it were, a slice of it *in medias res*. Knowledge of accomplishment, however, requires subsuming observation and reports. The universality of the determination "Murder the fascist inhabitants" becomes concrete by taking the means specified in the subject's own A-D order—but the concreteness of accomplishment is not similarly in its scope. Practical knowledge cannot explain how what I am doing constitutes the accomplishment known in the subsumption of observation and reports under the concept of the whole.

Hegel argues that the technical syllogism has the external objectivity of accomplishment as its predicate. The subjective purpose *can* explain how the means constitute accomplishment, how the immediate communication of purpose to the object in the means results in a product that is the object *mediated* by purpose. We only need to reinterpret the thesis that, when it comes to instrumental teleology, *perfection is imperfection*. Anscombe interprets this to mean that the perfection of the practical syllogism is essentially imperfective, that is, essentially knowledge of what one is doing and not what one has done. Perfective knowledge of successful execution is of course always speculative, and requires the mediation of observation and reports. We saw Hegel

put the point this way: “The realized purpose is also a means; conversely, the truth of the means is just this, to be the real purpose itself” (WL 12.170). Perfection is imperfection for the subjective purpose—the realized purpose is also a means—insofar as it is realized in the *use and usability* of its product. The truth of the means is that the immediate communication of purpose to the object is in fact the real purpose itself: the true purpose of the technical syllogism is to make the immediate communication characteristic of the means possible in the first place. Both the subjectivist and the formalist think that the true purpose of such reasoning is something finally known theoretically. As we saw Engstrom put it, the “true aim of practical thought” is theoretical knowledge of “the actuality of the action”[13] represented in imperfective practical thought. Hegel reorients the dialectic, claiming instead that the true aim of technical purposiveness is to make its own activity possible in the first place.

This is most obvious in the case of tools: it is possible to have immediate knowledge that I am plowing the field because the plow was made to be used for that purpose. At the same time, I know the accomplishment of my purpose of building a plow in the use and usability of the plow I have built. But this also holds true, I think, of the phases of action: I know immediately that I am pumping the cistern full of poisoned water because I know that I went to the chemist earlier and bought poison, and because I know that I have already pumped it halfway. Being able to immediately communicate my purpose to the means is the true purpose of my earlier trips to the chemist and to the house to check the pipes and pump. Similarly, I know that I successfully poisoned the inhabitants in my knowledge that I now need to remove their corpses from the parlor and skip town. Anscombe says that, normally, someone doing or directing something “will

[13] Engstrom (2009), p. 36.

not go on to the next order, for example, until he knows that the preceding one has been executed, or, if he is the operator, his senses inform him of what is going on."[14] As we know, this knowledge is of course always speculative rather than practical. We should understand Hegel to deny this: the knowledge that the preceding order has been executed is practical, insofar as it consists in the use of that very execution. My knowledge that I am done plowing this row is the practical knowledge that it is time to plow the next row, and my knowledge that I have finished the field is the practical knowledge that the field is ready to be planted, i.e. the knowledge that, tomorrow morning, my purpose of planting seeds can be immediately communicated to the field. Perfection is imperfection for the technical syllogism insofar as its aim is to make its own activity possible, which it does.

We saw Hegel and Anscombe agree that the universality of purpose cannot be abstract and subsumptive, but must rather be concrete and active. When this is denied, Anscombe says, "nothing seems to follow about doing anything."[15] Insofar as the universality of purpose is abstract, we need a queer seeing eye to explain the connection between this universality and the actuality of what one is doing. Insofar as it is concrete, one knows what one is doing through one's practical knowledge, the predicate of which is at once external objectivity. However, that predicate and that external objectivity can always be given an account independently of the practical syllogism to which it belongs:

> Thus in any operation we really can speak of two knowledges—the account that one could give of what one was doing, without adverting to observation; and the account of exactly what is happening at a given moment (say) to the material one is working on. The one is practical, the other speculative. (*Intention*, §48)

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[14] *Intention*, §48.
[15] *Intention*, §33.

What is happening to the material one is working on can always be given a speculative account that differs from the practical account of it as what one is doing. This is because practical knowledge cannot encompass every possible description of the object. In order to be fully concrete, the universality of purpose would have to determine every possible description of the object, which is to say it would have to create the world in which it acts. Anscombe understands it to follow that, for finite beings like us, the concreteness of the universality of our purposes must be limited. Practical knowledge does not determine the object in a way that rules out its being given a different, speculative account. For us, the concreteness of universality consists in the knowledge of *how* to do what one means to do. (This should not be confused with the knowledge of *how* imperfective practical knowledge is connected to perfective speculative knowledge of progress and completion, which seems to be ruled out by §48.) Our deployment of practical knowledge *how* results in practical knowledge of what one is doing, where that can always be given a speculative account.

Hegel raises the worry that subjective purpose cannot encompass every possible description of the object—and claims that it speaks in favor of committing fully to concreteness and against reinstating the subjectivist doubling of knowledges when it comes to the perfective aspect. He writes: "The indifferent determinateness of the object is one that can *abstractly* be replaced by another just as externally; but the truth of the simple *abstraction* of the determinateness is…the concrete concept that posits the externality within itself" (WL 12.166). The determinateness of the object can be replaced: the determinateness of my poisoning the inhabitants can be replaced by the determinateness of wearing out the pump or staining the parlor floor. The determinateness of my clockbuilding can be replaced by the determinateness of

making various noises or my eyes becoming fatigued. Anscombe understands this to imply the doubling of knowledges. Hegel claims that the truth of this apparent abstraction is the power of subjective purpose to posit externality within itself—that is, I suggest, to make external objectivity into material to work on.

For Hegel, the concreteness of the universality of subjective purpose consists in the determination of objectivity as its material. The first premise of the technical syllogism articulates the purpose in subjectivity, as for example by determining to build a clock using particular methods, materials, and tools. But the subjective articulation of purpose is at once the determination of external objectivity. Hegel explains:

> [T]he *self-determination* is also the determination of an *external* object not determined by the concept; and conversely this determination is self-determination, that is, the sublated externality *posited as inner*, or the *certainty of the unessentiality* of the external object. (WL 12.171).

Framing a particular purpose involves the self-determination of the concept: roughly, grasping the function of keeping time, and particularizing that grasp through judgment, e.g. specifying timekeeping in terms of the compression of coils. This is at once the determination of an external object: subjectivity grasps the conditions under which these pieces of metal can be made to keep time, thereby determining the latency of timekeeping in the object. I do not author the ability of the coil to store energy, but by grasping the conditions through which it can be made to do that, I determine the latency of timekeeping in it. The externality of the metal is sublated and posited as inner: it is not an aggregate of properties but the capacity to store energy in a way that keeps time. Grasping how I can make this coil store energy is the certainty of its unessentiality: it

cannot resist contributing to clockbuilding. The metal has no internal purpose that can resist subjective purpose but is essentially determinable by the latter.

The problem of infinite descriptions is not resolved by making subjectivity grasp every feature and description of the external object; it is rather resolved practically. It is ruled out that the object determined by purpose can be given a different, speculative account in the activity of realization, which is the actual subjection of the object to purpose. The immediate communication of purpose to the means actualizes the determination of its latency in the first premise. The purpose is immediately communicated to the object in the second premise only insofar as external objectivity has already been posited within subjective purpose. The first premise makes the object into material, and the second premise works on that material. Say I am sewing a hem: the needle does not just happen to be sharp enough to puncture the fabric; I am using a needle and not a paperclip because the former and not the latter supplies the conditions under which the fabric is punctured and the thread drawn. The second premise is not the immediate determination of an external object by a form that remains subjective, but immediately carries out the latency of purpose posited in the first premise. The puncturing of fabric and drawing of thread that comprises sewing the hem—that very mechanical process—is not the immediate formal animation of an otherwise external object, but the actual concluding of conditions posited in the first premise. The fitness of the needle to puncture the fabric that I grasp subjectively is in the sharpness of the tool, and it concludes in actual puncturing in the means. My certainty of the unessentiality of the fabric in the face of the sharp point of the needle is the certainty that purpose can be immediately communicated to the object in the means.

The means is no longer the immediate, formal determination of an otherwise external object, but is rather "within itself the self-mediation of purpose in the object" (WL 12.171). The "procession out of itself" (WL 12.170) of purpose as soon as I get to work is immediate because it is the realization of the latency it presupposes for itself in the first premise. Purpose makes external objectivity its "own moment" (WL 12.170) in the first premise, presupposing it as determinable. I presuppose the sharpness of the needle and the penetrability of the fabric, and my purpose of sewing is already realized in the determinate reality of those latencies. The needle really puncturing the fabric and drawing the thread is the immediate communication of purpose to objectivity *because* purpose presupposes it as material, i.e. grasps the conditions under which thread can be drawn, thereby determining the object's latency for sewing. The subjective purpose is not just formally but *really* the objectivity of the means: what it is to be subjective purpose is to posit externally concrete conditions as the latency of a particular purpose, and the alteration that takes place is the externally objective unification of the conditions posited. If you ask me what I am doing, I can say without checking that I am sewing. Hegel's point is that this sort of immediacy is the vindication of subjectivity's grasp of the latency of its purpose. We might say that I know that I am sewing—that is, that thread is really being drawn and a hem formed—because I know I can make a needle do that, and indeed because needles are made to do that.

The regress of means is triggered, Hegel thinks, insofar as there is no way for the accomplishment of subjective purpose to be for it in the product. If purpose is only immediately in the means, we cannot explain how purpose is realized through mediation in the product. We have seen Hegel argue that the immediacy of the means is made possible by the subjective purpose's own activity—that is, that the true purpose of instrumental teleology is the means. The

concreteness of its universality consists in realizing the conditions for its own activity, as building a plow realizes the conditions for plowing, and affixing a gear realizes the conditions for taking the next step of clockbuilding. The next task is to elucidate the idea that the realized purpose is a means, i.e. that accomplishment is known in the practical perspective in its use and usability.

3.4. The use of the as such usable

The concept of instrumental teleology comes before the idea of life in the *Logic*, which might seem strange for a couple of reasons. Presumably it is living beings who use means to realize purposes. And why should teleology belong to "Objectivity"—that is, together with mechanism and chemism? Hegel tells us that before we even consider the difference between external and internal purposiveness—that latter of which Kant nobly restores to modern philosophy—teleology marks a decisive advance over mechanism and chemism. He explains: "Teleology possesses in general the higher principle, the concept in its concrete existence…a principle of freedom which, utterly certain of its self-determination, is absolutely withdrawn from the *external determining* of mechanism" (WL 12.157). Nonetheless, "Teleology" belongs to "Objectivity." External teleology is the truth of mechanism, but it is not yet life.

The achievement of teleology—internal and external alike—is the *extraction* of a unified content from the manifold differences found in mechanism and chemism. Hegel explains that the unified content of purpose is "extracted from the *connection* of differences and their reciprocal determinateness" (WL 12.156). Teleology is external and belongs to objectivity insofar as the self-determination of the concept just mentioned works on the connection of differences that are

"externally given to it in the manifoldness of the objective world" (WL 12.156). Purpose is external insofar as it grasps and determines the concept of mechanical or chemical processes. Hegel explains that "mechanical or chemical technique…naturally offers itself to the connection of purpose" (WL 12.160). The external guise of purposiveness is the use of mechanism that is made possible by the subjective grasp of its essential availability to be used.

The subjective purpose emerges as the grasp of the intelligible processes that individuate mechanical and chemical objects. This grasp emerges from within mechanism itself: in fact, subjective purpose is, to begin with, nothing but the truth of mechanism, i.e. that it is composed of intelligible processes. Mechanical and chemical objects refer to other objects in functional systems, and indeed that is how they get their identities—but this reference cannot be exhibited within mechanical or chemical objects themselves.[16] This necessitates purpose within "Objectivity" (i.e., before the idea and life): the subjective purpose is the objectivity that exhibits this reference of mechanical and chemical objects to the functional systems that define them but which outstrip their existence as mechanical and chemical objects. The purpose is not in the object as an external form *because* belonging to functional systems is implicit in mechanical and chemical objects, and this implicit functionality is what subjective purpose grasps. Using mechanical-chemical objectivity to realize purposes does not require violence because use exhibits mechanism's own implicit functionality.

Now, the thesis that subjective purpose objectively determines mechanical-chemical reality because the latter is objectively determinable by subjective purpose seems to attract the

[16] See WL 12.156: "Of course mechanism, at least the ordinary unfree mechanism, and chemism as well, must be regarded as an immanent principle in so far as the *externally* determining object is itself *again just another such object*, externally determined and indifferent to its being determined, or, in the case of chemism, in so far as the other object must likewise be one that is chemically determined; in general, in so far as an essential moment of the totality always lies in something external."

following worry. Why should the fact that *everything* is potentially usable for *something* prove anything special about the power of instrumental purposes? My answer is that instrumental purpose is defined by the complementarity of the infinite determining of subjective purpose and the infinite determinability of mechanism. Instrumental purpose is the power to *do anything*[17]—that is, it is defined by the externality and indeterminacy of its purpose. As we have seen, the subjective or external purpose works on the given connections of mechanism. It is the power to *do anything* in the sense that it brings about the conditions for realizing some purpose, whatever that may be, in mechanism. *What is to be done* is left undetermined in external teleology. If sticks, for example, could exclusively be used to draw regular hexagons in the sand, instrumental teleology would be impossible. If objects like sticks were already determined by a purpose, e.g. that they are to be used exclusively for geometry lessons on the beach, they would not be possible material for instrumentally purposive determination. The latter requires material that is not yet determined by purpose, but which is nonetheless infinitely open to purposive determination. I can do *anything* with sticks: I can build a trap, I can break them for fun, I can burn them for fuel. Of course, this infinity of instrumental power does not mean that I can use sticks to build a spaceship—because sticks are not fit for that purpose. Being unfit for my purpose differs from already being determined by purpose: it is not because sticks ought only be used on the beach that I cannot use them to build a flightworthy vessel. If my trap is ineffective, it is not because the sticks that comprise it refuse to catch prey. I can do *anything* with sticks that sticks can do, where the latter is not a qualification on instrumental purpose but definitional of it. Something other than instrumental purpose will have to determine what is to be done in the

[17] I am indebted to discussions with Andrew Werner for this way of understanding teleology.

world (this is the Idea, which is first of all life). Instrumental teleology is the purposive determination of that which is as such determinable by purpose, and the distinctiveness of instrumental power is precisely this reciprocal open-endedness.

The realization of subjective purpose is in the end still a means—but this no longer constitutes a bad infinity. The means are no longer regarded with contempt but properly identified as the power of subjective purpose to use the as such usable. Consider the house I have built: "the stones, the crossbeams, or the wheels, the axles, and the rest that make up the actuality of the purpose, fulfill this purpose only through the pressure which they suffer, through the chemical processes to which they are exposed with air, light, and water" (WL 12.169). The completion of the product is no longer an external object known speculatively—insofar as the product is comprised of further activity, like suffering pressure and deteriorating in the process of keeping the interior warm and dry. Similarly, the completion of simple syrup consists in further activity, such as tasting good when I drink it and changing the composition of my bloodstream. Products fulfill their vocation as the realization of purpose "only through their being used up and worn out" (*ibid*.). I do not find out by observation that the floors of my house can be walked on or that the roof keeps out rain. My knowledge that stones and beams can be used to repel water and support weight is realized in the use of the house for those purposes. When I come inside during a storm and fill the bathtub on the second floor, I experience the success of my construction. My success remains within the purposive perspective: I do not take the insane risk of falling through the ceiling below to test, as it were, whether the beams really hold weight. Rather, I know the beams hold weight because I constructed the house that way. This knowledge

is at once practical: my knowledge of my achievement is more means, namely the use and usability of what I have built or done.

The concept of housebuilding is *concrete* throughout the technical syllogism: actually resolving to build a house is not an act of self-determination in the transparent spaces of thought, but at once external determination, such as determining the site to be buildable and the materials and tools to be sufficient. Laying the crossbeams is the procession of the purpose of housebuilding out of itself: I lay the beams in this particular way—a self-determined specification of the concept—in order that they withstand weight. The laying of the crossbeams is the unification of the conditions for the realization of the product, a viable house. The formalist understands the technical syllogism to be concrete insofar as one has practical knowledge of what one is doing. Hegel's idea is that the technical syllogism is concrete insofar as it makes the implicit usability of mechanism explicit in means and ends, which come into the practical perspective as objective progress and completion.

We saw Anscombe face the following problem. How does one know what one is doing, if knowing that one has actually made progress and reached completion is only ever speculative? This seems to be a reiteration of the subjectivist's problem that no perception shows how volition produces its effects: no perception shows how knowing what one is doing constitutes actual progress towards completion. The latter remains an object external to the form supplied by subjectivity, mediated by observation and reports. On Hegel's view, the use of the object as a means is not simply the immediate communication of purpose to objectivity but the true purpose of instrumental teleology, namely that it realize the conditions for its own activity. The product is

likewise available to the subject not as an external object but within the purposive perspective, namely in its use and usability.

Chapter 4. Action and practical truth

We saw in Chapter 1 that Smith's subjectivism gets him into trouble. He accepts Hume's thesis that the subjective experience of willing does not supply knowledge of its effects, and so the actuality of action can only be known through the outer experience of what happens under the empire of Fortune. At the same time, he wants to identify willing as the locus of the merit or demerit of actions. If willing is the locus of merit and the actuality of action the work of Fortune, why do we bother getting beyond a well-wishing heart to producing actual results? I called this the widget problem: if the results of good willing add nothing to the goodness of an action considered as a whole, why bother with realization at all? Why not bask in the warmth of a good heart and leave realization for another day? Smith raises and resolves the widget problem with the irregularity of sentiment, which at once teaches us to care about realization when it comes to our God-given vocation—and misleads us to believe ourselves responsible for actual effects.

The technical formalist denies that intention is a subjective item separate from its effects, and denies that we must wait for outer experience to know the effects of volition. Practical knowledge is, for Anscombe, knowledge of what one is doing, where that is something objective, something that happens. One does not have practical knowledge insofar as one only wishes. Hume is wrong to think that there is a separable subjective event that is one and the same in wishing and willing, such that what distinguishes them is the outer experience of the result in the latter case. The widget problem thus seems to be ruled out from the beginning: willing is not separable from its objectivity as what one is doing. We do not need the irregularity of sentiment to teach us to care about realization, according to the formalist, and it is not a deception that we are responsible for the actual results, because the idea of willing something, moral or otherwise,

without actually trying to get it, is nonsense. Knowledge in intention is essentially knowledge of the actuality of what one is doing.

The widget problem is supposed to be ruled out from the beginning for Kant, too. We saw this in connection with Korsgaard, who interprets Kant not as ruling out this problem from the beginning, but facing and resolving it through practically rational faith in efficacy. For Kant, morality consists in the thought of the universally lawgiving form of will that is as such desideratively self-sufficient. It is possible to act against moral law in favor of self-love, and thus to do otherwise than as moral law commands. But it is impossible, according to Kant, that the thought of the universally lawgiving form of will is not desideratively self-sufficient for us human beings.[1] We do not need to appeal to Providence in order to explain why we care about actually getting good things done. What it is for us to be aware of things that are good in themselves to do is for us to have an interest in actually doing those things. Kant says: "The thing is strange enough, and has nothing like it in all the rest of our practical cognition" (KpV 5:31). Our awareness of goodness-in-itself is essentially and originally practical; in the consciousness of duty, reason takes "an immediate interest in an action" (GMS 4:460n.) in virtue of the universally lawgiving form of its maxim. The idea of moral consciousness that leaves open whether or not actually producing results is required is fictional, i.e. no idea of moral consciousness at all. Moral consciousness is the desideratively self-sufficient consciousness that acting a certain way is unconditionally necessary. Hegel's dialectic of the good, I argue, takes up Kant's idea of pure reason practical of itself.

[1] As we have seen, the MPPR, in whom pure reason is not practical of itself, is logically possible. Should such a creature be really possible, it would have no self-determined impulses to act.

(**4.1**) I begin by showing how Hegel rearticulates Kant's own dialectic of pure practical reason. Hegel agrees with Kant that cognition of the good is *self-determinate*, i.e. does not need to wait for intuition for its determinacy. Kant interprets self-determinate practical cognition as the desideratively self-sufficient moral *ought*, and it implies a new version of the widget problem that is resolved in the postulation of the highest good. The first half of "The Idea of the Good" thus articulates Kant's own dialectic. (**4.2**) Hegel claims that the actual fulfillment of the good, rather than its postulated fulfillment, is within our power. I explain why Kant thinks our practical cognition cannot attain actual fulfillment but is rather the essentially imperfective *ought*. (**4.3**) Next, I identify the objective implications Hegel wants to draw from Kant's own idea of self-determinate practical cognition. I explain why Hegel thinks the results of moral action, which essentially refer to the agent's happiness or misery, are incompatible with pure reason practical of itself. (**4.4**) Finally, I give an interpretation of the speculative idea of action that emerges from this dialectic: action is not a matter of making one's *will* good but of making the *world* good. The widget problem is not resolved by the postulated fulfillment of the good but by its actual fulfillment—which cannot be done alone.

4.1. Pure reason practical of itself as absolutely actual cognition

In the first half of "The Idea of the Good," I argue, Hegel rearticulates Kant's dialectic of pure practical reason. Practical and theoretical cognition are initially distinguished in respect of their determinacy. Whereas theoretical cognition must be supplied with determinacy from without, practical cognition is *self-determinate*: it supplies its own determinacy, which Kant

identifies as desiderative self-sufficiency. Kant describes the difference between the practical and theoretical categories as follows:

> The *categories of freedom*—for this is what we are going to call them in contrast to those theoretical concepts which are categories of nature—have an obvious advantage over the latter inasmuch as the latter are only forms of thought which, by means of universal concepts, designate only indeterminately objects in general for every intuition possible for us…[S]ince all precepts of pure practical reason have to do only with the *determination of the will*, not with the natural conditions (of practical ability) for *carrying out its purpose*, the practical a priori concepts in relation to the supreme principle of freedom at once become cognitions and do not have to wait for intuitions in order to receive meaning; and this happens for the noteworthy reason that they themselves produce the reality of that to which they refer (the disposition of the will), which is not the business of theoretical concepts. (KpV 5:65-6)

In order for the universal concepts deployed in the theoretical use of reason to become fully determinate, something must be given in intuition. By contrast, the pure practical concepts are at once universal and fully determinate—without needing to wait for intuition. Theoretical concepts have no business producing the reality to which they refer, for they inform material given sensibly. The business of pure practical concepts is precisely to produce the reality to which they refer, namely the disposition of the will to act according to maxims with universally lawgiving form. This desiderative cognition does not have to wait for intuition to have meaning: one does not have to wait and see how things turn out to know the goodness-in-itself of that way of acting, i.e. that acting in that way is permissible, forbidden, or obligatory.

Self-determinacy and the desideratively self-sufficient demand are the key features of pure reason practical of itself that Hegel takes up in "The Idea of the Good."[2] In contrast to

[2] It should be noted that Hegel differs from Kant from the beginning: Hegel thinks practicality of itself is the dialectical result of theoretical cognition, which Kant denies. For Kant, the incommensurability of the ideas of reason with our intuition gives us no grounds to infer that pure reason is practical of itself. Pure reason is practical of itself as a fact of reason, and without it, transcendental illusion and metaphysics could only be understood as a kind of sickness. Theoretical philosophy can make room for freedom, but it cannot derive it. Hegel thinks the idea of the good is the logical result of theoretical cognition's contradiction, but this difference can be set aside for present purposes.

theoretical cognition, which is supplied with determinacy from without, practical cognition is *self*-determinate: it supplies its own determinacy in the form of a demand. Hegel writes:

> This determinateness which is in the concept, is equal to the concept, and entails a demand for singular external actuality, is the *good*. It comes on the scene with the dignity of being absolute, because it is intrinsically the totality of the concept, the *objective* which is at the same time in the form of free unity and subjectivity. This idea is superior to the idea of cognition just considered, for it has not only the value of the universal but also of the absolutely actual. (WL 12.231)

The practical idea is superior to the theoretical idea because the latter "derives determinate content and filling" (*ibid*.) from the objective world. Theoretical cognition's concepts become determinate through an encounter with the objective world. Practical cognition gives *itself* determinacy—specifically, the determinacy of a demand for singular external actuality, i.e. for a fully determinate action. The good is intrinsically the totality of the concept, that is, the concept in its subjectivity and in its objectivity, insofar as it is at once the free self-determination of reason *and* the demand for singular external actuality. Practical cognition is *absolutely actual*: its universality provides for its own singularity, in that knowledge of the good is the very will to produce it.

We might say that Kant's pure practical concepts are *absolutely actual* in this sense—specifically, in a practical reality, i.e. the desiderative self-sufficiency of moral law. The disposition of the will to act according to maxims with universally lawgiving form refers the will to singular external actuality, i.e. to acting the way that law prescribes. The good will is essentially non-idle, "the summoning of all means insofar as they are in our control" (GMS 4:394). The desiderative self-sufficiency of moral cognition supplies for its own determinacy—all the way to the production of a fully determinate action. Hegel formulates this character of

practical cognition: "it is the *impulse* to realize itself, the purpose that *on its own* wants to give itself objectivity in the objective world and realize itself" (WL 12.231). The self-determinate cognition of the good is the self-originated impulse to realize itself, to actually act from the knowledge of the goodness-in-itself of that way of acting.

Now, Hegel claims that self-determinacy so understood implies the *non-actuality* of the world. He writes: "the certainty of itself that the subject possesses in being determined in and for itself is a certainty of its actuality and of the *non-actuality* of the world" (WL 12.231). This too can be understood to track Kant, who thinks the practicality of pure reason utterly distinguishes it from the theoretical use of reason. Pure practicality constitutes the domain of freedom, which is separated by "an immense gulf" (KU 5:175) from the domain of nature. Practical principles "form such a special part [of philosophy] when and if their principle is in no way borrowed from the concept of nature" (KU 5:173). The domain of freedom or self-determination is defined by its opposition to the domain of nature or external determination. Pure practical principles are defined by their genesis through reason's own act as opposed to being borrowed from nature, as technically practical principles are. We should understand Hegel's claim about the non-actuality of the world in this light: the subject's certainty of the good is initially the certainty that the actuality of its will is derived completely independently of the world—the certainty that its will and *not* the world is the source of goodness-in-itself.

The absolute self-determination of freedom[3] cannot belong to nature, according to Kant —"and yet [freedom] *is* to have an influence" (KU 5:176) on nature in our power of choice. The desiderative self-sufficiency of moral law supplies the solution, and it constitutes the *practical* reality of freedom: "the only reality we can provide for these ideas…is practical reality" (KU 5:175). Freedom has reality for us in the will to act according to universally lawgiving maxims—in the feeling of respect the law commands and in the interest it elicits. Practical reality is the sole reality of freedom for us insofar as nature provides no material from which to infer freedom: no *transition* can be made from one domain to the other. *How* it is possible that absolute self-determination has practical reality for us, *how* it is possible that we take an interest in actually acting morally, "is for human reason an insoluble problem and identical with that of how a free will is possible" (KpV 5:72). That *how* would require a *transition* between the domains of freedom and nature, whereas the practical reality of freedom is not a transition, i.e. an explanation of how freedom is possible, but the practical reality that it *is* possible. The reality of freedom is the reality that unites us as human beings—the reality that moral consciousness is always desideratively self-sufficient: "To satisfy the categorical command of morality is within everyone's power at all times" (KpV 5:37). Knowledge of the good is essentially practical and desiderative, essentially the consciousness of one's possibility and power, and not the knowledge of external actuality, whose *how* is in principle knowable.

[3] I say *absolute* self-determination to distinguish pure reason practical of itself from the self-determination of self-consciousness in judgment, which is not absolute but depends on intuition for material. Our moral cognition also requires sensible material insofar as positive freedom is "the subjection of the maxim of every action to the condition of its qualifying as universal law…[and] the maxims of human beings…[are] based on subjective causes" (MS 6:214). The absoluteness of moral self-determination lies in desiderative self-sufficiency, which does not require any sensible material. That is, the maxims contain sensible material but the interest in acting morally does not originate sensibly.

The non-actuality of the world—which I claim Hegel shares with Kant, at least initially—presents the widget problem. Of absolutely actual practical cognition, Hegel writes: "its impulse to realize itself is not, strictly speaking, to give itself objectivity, for this it possesses within itself, but to give itself only this empty form of immediacy" (WL 12.231). Insofar as the world is determined as the non-actuality of the good—what can be given in intuition excludes freedom—the impulse to realize the good through action seems to be the attainment of an empty form, a widget added to the absolute goodness of the will. Insofar as the absolute actuality of practical cognition is determined in opposition to the non-actuality of the world, the realization of the good seems unintelligible. What is realized through action is a worldly existence that is not the good-in-itself, since the good-in-itself resides in the self-determinacy of willing alone. Hegel explains:

> The realized good is good by virtue of what it already is in the subjective purpose, in its idea; the realization gives it an external existence, but since this existence has only the status of an externality which is in and for itself null, what is good in it has attained only an accidental, fragile existence, not a realization corresponding to the idea. (WL 12.232)

Insofar as goodness springs from the self-determinacy of the demand in opposition to the world, its realization seems to be an external existence that is not good in itself but subject to destruction like any other. Such a good is subject to tragic destruction, Hegel says: its realization in external existence can come into conflict with external contingency, evil, and with other goods (*ibid*.). Insofar as the goodness of realization springs from willing alone, its worldly existence seems not to live up to its idea, i.e. to its absolute actuality.

Desiderative self-sufficiency resolves this problem, Kant thinks. A lifetime of virtue is not a widget, and the realization of the good in the will is not subject to external contingency,

evil, or internal collision. As we saw in Chapter 2, the worth of the good will stands above fruitfulness and uselessness, the evildoing of others must not be a condition of my will, and duties cannot collide. Indeed, it is only by standing above fate in this way that moral cognition rules out the widget problem from the beginning: the desiderative self-sufficiency of moral law simultaneously rules out idleness, referring of itself to the singular external actuality of action, and completes its worth independently of worldly factors that may interfere with its realization. The impulse to act morally is not *unintelligible*, even though it is *necessarily incomprehensible*. It is necessarily beyond our comprehension *how* we take an interest in acting morally: that would constitute a *transition* between domains and would require intuition that is not in fact available to us. That is, the explanation of our interest in acting morally would require the intuition of the mechanism through which deserved happiness is dispensed. But it is not *unintelligible* that absolutely actual practical cognition is the impulse to give itself an external existence that is not goodness-in-itself but mere appearance—because we *are* interested, through reason, in moral action. The intelligibility of moral willing is *practical*: it lies in the feeling of respect the law commands and the interest in actually producing results that it elicits—not in the goodness of results in experience. Our duty is to *cultivate* moral feeling "through wonder at its inscrutable source" (MS 6:399).

However, the impulse to act morally *would* be unintelligible, Kant thinks, if the results in experience—which are not good in themselves but good as a way of willing—were the sole supra-practical actuality of the good (i.e., the sole actuality of the good beyond its practical reality in the will). There *would* be a contradiction between the absolute actuality of practical cognition and the non-actuality of the external results—if the latter were the only form of

realization within the will's power. But it is not: the highest good, i.e. deserved happiness, is the supra-practical actuality of the good in which the results of good willing are good in themselves. We *would* have a widget problem if the highest good were impossible through efforts like ours—then, Kant says, the moral law "must be fantastic and directed to empty imaginary ends" (KpV 5:114). We *would* have a widget problem—but we do not, because the end of the highest good, which encompasses happiness, "is introduced by the moral law itself, and yet through it practical reason reaches beyond the law" (R 6:7n.). The apparent contradiction between the absolute actuality of practical cognition and the non-actuality of the external results is dialectically resolved in the postulation of the highest good.

In his most explicit reference to Kant in the chapter, Hegel articulates this strategy for overcoming the contradiction of practical cognition. He writes:

> The good thus remains an *ought*; it exists *in and for itself*, but *being*, as the ultimate abstract immediacy, remains over against it *also* determined as a *non-being*. The idea of the fulfilled good is indeed an *absolute postulate*, but no more than a postulate, that is, the absolute encumbered with the determinateness of subjectivity. (WL 12.233)[4]

The absolute being of the *ought* stands opposed to the non-being of the *is*: the practical reality of the good is absolute, but the singular external actuality to which it desideratively refers belongs to nature. The actual product of our moral willing cannot itself be the fulfillment of the good. The fulfilled good is not actual for us in the form of external actuality, but is rather postulated on the basis of the good's absolute practical reality in the will. The highest good has practical reality

[4] The reference to Kant continues later in the passage: "There still are two worlds in opposition, one a realm of subjectivity in the pure spaces of transparent thought, the other a realm of objectivity in the element of an externally manifold actuality, an impervious realm of darkness" (WL 12.233). This clearly echoes Kant: "Hence an immense gulf is fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, the supersensible, so that no transition from the sensible to the supersensible (and hence by means of the theoretical use of reason) is possible, *just as if they were two different worlds*, the first of which cannot have any influence on the second; and yet the second *is* to have an influence on the first, i.e., the concept of freedom is to actualize in the world of sense the purpose enjoined by its laws" (KU 5:175-6; first italics mine).

in the will, and so the fact that absolutely actual practical cognition produces only external existence as its result is not unintelligible but necessarily incomprehensible for finite beings like us. The fulfilled good cannot be given in our experience, i.e. it cannot be actual for us beyond the will—but it nonetheless has intelligible desiderative self-sufficiency, i.e. the objectivity of the highest good is necessitated by the moral law as a determining ground of the will.[5]

On my reading, Hegel presents Kant's own dialectic in the first half of "The Idea of the Good." The self-determinacy of practical cognition and its desideratively self-sufficient demand, as well as the purported resolution of the contradiction of practical cognition in the absolute postulate are all, on my reading, faithful and sympathetic rearticulations of Kant's own dialectic of freedom as morality. The non-actuality of the world, the widget problem, and the apparent impossibility of the fulfilled good are not by themselves objections to Kant but the articulation of finite practical cognition's true contradiction and dialectic.

As we have seen, Kant understands the contradiction and dialectic of practical reason to be intelligible in light of our finitude: the good is an imperative and a constraint because we are finite creatures with desires that do not of themselves conform to moral law but can conflict with it. We do not know actuality through the exercise of pure reason alone but dependently upon sensible intuition—and so the practical reality of freedom is a *sui generis* moment of our cognition. Hegel agrees that the contradiction and dialectic so far belongs to the finitude of cognition, which he thinks consists in the disunity of practical and theoretical cognition (EL

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[5] See KpV 5:56: "But this objective reality of a pure concept of the understanding in the field of the supersensible, once introduced, gives all the other categories objective reality as well, though only insofar as they stand in *necessary* connection with the determining ground of the pure will (the moral law)." The highest good is not itself a determining ground of the will—"It suffices for [human beings] that they do their duty, even if everything were to end with life in this world, and in this life too happiness and desert perhaps never converge" (R 6:7n.)—but it stands in necessary connection with moral law as a determining ground of the will.

§224)—and it is, as it were, self-overcoming. The second half of the dialectic articulates the self-overcoming of cognition's finitude, i.e. the unity of practical and theoretical cognition. Hegel thinks the idea of pure reason practical of itself shows the way to the perfection or fulfillment of willing, i.e. the external actuality of the good. Kant thinks that our practical knowledge is essentially imperfective, that its perfection in the external actuality of the good-in-itself is beyond our ken—and that thinking otherwise must destroy freedom, which borrows nothing from nature. The contention is thus not so much about the nature of finite practical cognition but about what it means for mind to overcome finitude and for the perfective realization of the good-in-itself to be within our power.

4.2. The essentially imperfective ought

So far we have seen Hegel rearticulate the dialectic of pure practical reason, culminating in the absolute postulate of the fulfilled good. Hegel now claims that perfection is possible:

> But what the practical idea still lacks is the moment of real consciousness itself, namely that the moment of actuality in the concept would have attained for itself the determination of *external being*…The idea of the good can therefore find its completion only in the idea of the true. (WL 12.233)

Absolutely actual practical cognition initially appears to be opposed to theoretical cognition, which is not absolutely actual but needs to be supplied with determinacy from without. And yet it is the impulse to realize itself in external actuality, which appears to be knowable only in the theoretical perspective. But cognition resolves this contradiction for itself. Practical cognition culminates in knowledge of the true goodness-in-itself of externally actual action. It does this by reuniting with the theoretical idea and bringing achievement into the practical perspective as that

which makes its own activity possible. Kant thinks this contradiction is resolved, for us, only in striving. The absolute postulate of the fulfilled good is supposed to render absolutely actual practical cognition intelligible as an eternally imperfective *ought*.

We saw in Chapter 2 that finite beings like us must strive towards the unity of morally and technically practical knowledge, the actuality of which is beyond our ken. For Kant, the perfection of practical cognition implies knowing the actuality of one's action through one's knowledge of the goodness-in-itself of that way of acting. That is not our lot: we do not know the progress and successful execution of our action in the same way that we know our will to be determined by pure reason. We do not know what we are doing in virtue of knowing what we ought unconditionally to do. In that case, the actual perfection of our practical capacity would be such that we do not have to wait for intuition and experience to know what we have done—and Oedipus' fate would be impossible. We would have to intuit the moral world to know actuality through the practical law that says what is possible through our will (KU 5:404). For us, knowledge of actuality, including the actuality of our own action, is mediated by intuition and its theoretical law. Our practical knowledge is thus essentially imperfective and imperative, while knowledge of successful execution is theoretical.

Theoretical knowledge of successful execution is not knowledge of the goodness-in-itself of any external existence. That is, the intuition of successful execution is not the intuition of the free will. This shows up in our cognitive relation to the successful execution of morally good action: our awareness of its goodness lies in *approval*, i.e. the attitude that one *ought* to act that way.[6] It is the form of the will, and not the external existence of action, that is good in itself, and

[6] See Engstrom (2009), p. 59: "[J]udgments of approval do constitute the culmination of practical judgments, the consummation of their efficacy."

our consciousness of this goodness is the consciousness of the command—not of external being, as Hegel suggests. Consciousness of the external actuality of moral action is not a matter of truth, as Hegel suggests, but once again of possibility. The upright conduct of "a humble common man," Kant explains, makes my *spirit bow* to the extent that my own conduct is less admirable. My knowledge of the goodness-in-itself of his conduct does not concern *truth* but *possibility*: "His example holds before me a law that strikes down my self-conceit when I compare it with my conduct, and I see observance of that law and hence *its practicability* proved before me in fact" (KpV 5:77). Virtuous conduct proves the real possibility of one's own moral efficacy, not the truth of freedom in the world. Our knowledge of goodness-in-itself affords us knowledge of the real possibility of successful execution, as well as the postulated possibility of the fulfilled good—but it does not afford us knowledge of the goodness-in-itself of action insofar as it comes under any theoretical law.

The theoretical law that covers the external actuality of action includes the relation of the faculty of desire to pleasure, and this brings us to another dimension of imperfection and striving. Actions are always more or less enjoyable for one, and they typically further or hinder one's other ends. One is always affected somehow or other by what happens when one acts. Now, an action's actual measure of happiness or misery is not as a matter of fact determined by its virtue. The goodness-in-itself of an actual action belongs to the form of its maxim and not to its actual results, which may be pain for everyone involved. The *moral results* of the deed thus differ from the *actual results* of the deed. Moral cognition that culminates in knowledge of the goodness-in-itself of actual actions, such as Hegel proposes, would be the production of moral results and the experience of deserved happiness or misery. That, of course, is not our lot.

The perfective aspect of practical knowledge, in other words, necessarily involves the contingency of feeling. Kant explains that this aspect is only available to us insofar as the moral results of our actions are determined by an inner judge:

> A human being who accuses and judges himself in conscience must think of a dual personality in himself, a doubled self which, on the one hand, has to stand trembling at the bar of a court that is yet entrusted to him, but which, on the other hand, itself administers the office of judge that it holds by innate authority…The first is the prosecutor, against whom the accused is granted a legal adviser (defense counsel). When the proceedings are concluded the internal judge, as a person *having power*, pronounces the sentence of happiness or misery, as the moral results of the deed. Our reason cannot pursue further his power (as ruler of the world) in this function; we can only revere his unconditional [*I command* and *I forbid*]. (MS 6:438n.; my underlining)

The moral results of the deed consist in the *deserved* happiness or misery that *ought* to follow for the agent. The actual results of the deed consist in the happiness or misery that *happens* to follow for the agent—as well as the agent's *worthiness* to be happy, which is determined in the court of conscience by oneself in the capacity of judge. The internal judge does not have the power to actually produce the happiness or misery specified in its sentence. It does not prescribe gouging out one's eyes when one has done wrong and a vacation when one has acted well. But it is nonetheless a person having power insofar pure practical reason postulates the moral results of action in the highest good. The practical law through which actions are commanded or forbidden in the will relates those same actions to *deserved* happiness or misery in the highest good, while a theoretical law relates them to *actual* happiness or misery. We know this relation practically, i.e. in the highest good, introduced by the moral law as incentive.

The doubled self and the internal judge are not new with Kant. In fact, Adam Smith makes a strikingly similar claim about conscience:

> When I endeavour to examine my own conduct, when I endeavour to pass sentence upon it…it is evident that…I divide myself, as it were, into two persons; and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of. The first is the spectator…The second is the agent, the person whom I properly call myself. (TMS 3.1.6)

Perceiving the goodness of one's own conduct requires dividing oneself into two persons: an impartial spectator of one's action, and oneself as an agent with peculiar desires and aversions at play in one's action. For Smith, the first-personal agentive perspective is not where we perceive the goodness of conduct. That perception is essentially third-personal or observational: we perceive other people's conduct to be praiseworthy or blameworthy, and we imagine other people perceiving our own conduct. It is in the latter imagination that we perceive the merit of our conduct. Now, the two persons into which Kantian conscience divides are both decisively first-personal agentive—because Kant thinks our own will is lawgiving. We do not need to imagine being judged by other people in order to have desideratively self-sufficient knowledge of what is required by moral law; the first-personal agentive perspective is the source of moral consciousness. Moreover, the self of peculiar desires and aversions is not one of Kant's persons; there is no such separable self for Kant, insofar as all our predispositions are united by morality (R 6:28). But Kant nonetheless seems to learn something from Smith here.

Smith claims that the goodness of one's conduct cannot be perceived in the perspective of agency but rather requires adopting the perspective of the judge. Hegel must therefore be wrong to claim that practical cognition culminates in knowledge of the goodness of externally actual action—because the perception of the latter belongs to the perspective of the judge, not the perspective of agency. Smith goes on in the same passage: "But that the judge should, in every respect, be the same with the person judged of, is as impossible, as that the cause should, in

every respect, be the same with the effect." It is impossible that volition perfectly coincides with its effects, which take place under the empire of Fortune. This impossibility is as decisive for us, Smith says, as the impossibility that the perspective of agency should perfectly coincide with the perspective through which we judge actual conduct. The perspective of agency is the perspective of efficacy, which operates through the relatively opaque mechanism of peculiar desire and aversion. The judge observes conduct as an effect. If the judge were the same, in every respect, with the person judged of, the agent would perceive her effects in the same way that she perceives her efficacy. Her efficacy would operate impartially rather than through the relatively opaque mechanism of peculiar desire and aversion. But that is as impossible as the coincidence of volition and effect, which implies complete neurological transparency such as we can only imagine. As a matter of fact, we perceive our efficacy partially and peculiarly, and learn our effects in experience.

What Kant seems to inherit from Smith is the division of the perspectives of efficacy and effects.[7] The two persons into which Kantian conscience divides take up the perspectives of *perfection* and *imperfection*: the accused is the person considered insofar as she *has acted*, while the judge is the person considered insofar as she possesses *sentencing power*. The accused is the person insofar as she *has navigated* a plurality of incentives, which can conflict with moral law.[8] Action in the perfective aspect can only be known by doubling oneself into defendant and judge,

[7] Surprisingly little has been written by Kantians concerning his connection to Smith, despite the striking parallels. Fleischacker (1991) gives an account of Kant's approving reading of Smith.

[8] The reader might wonder about the function of conscience before one acts. I think it is plausibly action in the perfective aspect that is considered in this function, too. When one consults one's conscience in the face of decision, one considers what it would be to actually have done the thing. "Can I do this in good conscience?" imagines the actuality of having done it, and one considers whether that actuality is acceptable. This is supported by Kant's metaphor of the courtroom: one does not stand accused in court for having thought about doing something (concrete preparations are of course different), but for (allegedly) having done something in fact.

where the judge's knowledge is once again the imperfective *ought* that prescribes moral results. Insofar as one *is navigating* a plurality of incentives, one's practical knowledge is absolute and imperfective: *I ought unconditionally to do X*. Insofar as one *has acted*, one's knowledge of what one has done is absolute only insofar as one prescribes possible deserved happiness—that is, *not* insofar as one considers the more or less enjoyable experience of the action.

Moral cognition supplies us with knowledge of the real *possibility* of acting from the moral disposition alone—but we can only *strive* to know the actuality of acting that way. The categorical imperative allows us to infer the "autocracy" of the will, or the *capacity* to master inclination (MS 6:383)—but we do not experience the will's successful exercise directly. The object of the judge's knowledge is thus not the act of actually making the law one's maxim. Indeed, it cannot be, since "we cannot observe maxims" (R 6:20). The judge, in our case, is not endowed with miraculous transparent self-knowledge on the basis of moral self-intuition: "In the case of any deed," Kant explains, "it remains hidden from the agent himself how much pure moral content there has been in his disposition" (MS 6:393). We therefore have an imperfect duty to take up the role of judge, who is "a scrutinizer of hearts" (MS 6:439). We must pursue self-knowledge of the will, which is not as such transparent for us:

> This command is "*know* (scrutinize, fathom) *yourself*,"…in terms of your moral perfection in relation to your duty. That is, know your heart—whether it is good or evil, whether the source of your actions is pure or impure…(Only the descent into the hell of self-cognition can pave the way to godliness.) (MS 6:441)

Knowledge of one's own moral perfection is not as such known in the process of adopting maxims. On the one hand, it is only once a man "*has incorporated* [*an incentive*] *into his maxim*" (R 6:24) that his free power of choice is determined to action. That is, the perfective aspect of

incorporation is required for the actuality of human action—but this aspect is only known imperfectively, i.e. insofar as one pursues moral self-knowledge. In other words, the judge's knowledge is imperfective not only insofar as it prescribes postulated moral results, but also insofar as we must strive to know our own will and disposition.

But there is a difficulty: the "depths of the human heart are unfathomable" (MS 6:447). Moral cognition encompasses its perfection in the disposition of the will only to the extent that it has achieved moral self-cognition. But the hell of self-cognition is endless for beings like us. Our moral self-cognition "can never adequately tell us whether [our virtue] is complete or deficient [and so it] can be the basis only of an imperfect duty to be perfect" (MS 6:447). Perfection, for us, is imperfection—specifically, the imperfection of duty that follows from the inadequacy of our finite moral self-cognition. Our lot may be striving, but the actual moral perfection of a person, their actual worthiness to be happy, is nonetheless not supposed to be fictitious, since the highest good has objectivity through moral law.

This dialectic resembles the dialectic, in the previous chapter, with Anscombe, who claims that the perfection of our practical knowledge is imperfection, insofar as the perfective aspect falls outside of the practical perspective. The resemblance is not accidental but internal to the formalist idea of practical knowledge. We can now spell out Kant's version of the thesis that, for us, perfection is imperfection as a guise of his formalism:

> Hence the difference, whether the human being is good or evil, must not lie in the difference between the incentives that he incorporates into his maxim (not in the material of the maxim) but in their *subordination* (in the form of the maxim): *which of the two he makes the condition of the other*. (R 6:36)

We can put this in Anscombe's terms of two knowledges with two objects: the difference between goodness and evil cannot lie in the material of the maxim, i.e. the actual pleasurability or harmfulness of the prospective action. The difference must rather be formal: it must be the difference between the supremacy of moral law or self-love in the maxim. It is not the desirability of sex, for example, that makes a particular instance of sexual activity morally worthy or not. Its moral worth is rather determined by whether or not the command to cherish the humanity of other persons is placed above the desirability of sex, as Kant thinks it is under certain conditions in marriage.[9] The material of the maxim cannot be known in respect of its goodness-in-itself—only the form of the maxim can be known in this way. And so the perfective aspect of willing can only be known imperfectively in a further command, including the prescription of moral results in the beyond and unending self-scrutiny in this life. In order to have perfective knowledge of the perfective aspect of willing, we would have to be able to know the material of maxims in respect of its goodness-in-itself. Hegel tries to make sense of this possibility and recover the accomplishment of goodness-in-itself in the world.

4.3. The worldliness of absolute willing

We have seen Kant contend that truth cannot be restored to our practical cognition unless we imagine ourselves to have fantastic powers of perfect efficacy and volitional transparency. The practical reality of freedom does not allow us to make the *transition* between the domains of freedom and nature: we know practically that there is reason to strive, but we cannot know *how* we have an interest in acting morally or *how* the fulfilled good is possible (i.e. we cannot know

[9] See MS 6:277-9.

the *how* of moral authorship of the world). Hegel says: "But [cognition] makes this transition through itself" (WL 12.233). The very resources supplied by the idea of absolutely actual practical cognition show us how truth can be restored to the will—and indeed how mind is the truth of finite cognition and its disunity of practical and theoretical idea. Action can be known as the truth of the will. Fantastic powers of self-creation and self-knowledge do not need to be fictitiously attributed to us as individuals—but such powers do belong to mind. When we bring the objective world into view, we no longer need to imagine perfect happiness or transparent motives as the fulfillment of the good.

We saw that, following Kant, the absolute actuality of practical cognition is initially articulated in opposition to the non-actuality of the world. Insofar as practical cognition supplies its own determinacy, as opposed to being supplied determinacy from without, the world seems non-actual in comparison with the will. The world seems to be "an insuperable restriction" on the fulfillment of the good: insofar as the realization of the good in action is only an external existence and not the existence of the good-in-itself, it seems that the fulfilled good can only be postulated. Hegel argues that pure practical reason dissolves this appearance on its own:

> [A]ctuality confronts it in existence as an insuperable restriction…But this abstract being that confronts the good in the second premise has already been sublated by the practical idea itself; the first premise of this idea's action is the *immediate objectivity* of the concept, according to which purpose is communicated to actuality without any resistance and is in the simple connection of identity with it. (WL 12.234)

The first premise of Kant's moral action is the immediate objectivity of the concept, insofar as moral law is communicated without resistance to the will, constituting the practical reality of freedom. Sensible incentives can compete with the moral incentive, but this does not constitute resistance in the relevant sense: moral law is always and ineliminably desideratively self-

sufficient, even if it is always possible to prioritize self-love. Hegel thinks the idea of desiderative self-sufficiency entails the taking of means as a manner of realizing that which is thus self-sufficient.

We saw that the defining feature of absolutely actual practical cognition is that it supplies for its own singularity, insofar as its demand refers to the production of a singular external actuality. Kant makes sense of this through desiderative self-sufficiency: the consciousness of what one ought to do is sufficient to support the production of a fully determinate action. Hegel thinks this brings the objective world into view:

> [T]he second premise is already immediately present in the first *in itself*, except that this immediacy is not sufficient and the second premise is for the first already postulated—the realization of the good in the face of another actuality confronting it is the mediation which is essentially necessary for the immediate connection and consummation of the good. (WL 12.234)

The taking of means through which cognition realizes the good is already present in the self-determination of purpose in the first premise. The demand for a singular external actuality is the demand to actually act, to face the actuality that confronts one in action and to work on it as means. Pure reason practical of itself is the conception of what is good to do that is essentially impulsive, essentially non-idle. The immediacy of the good's demand in the will is thus explicitly insufficient: it is the demand to get to work by taking means. Actually working on objectivity is necessary for the consummation of the good: the immediate connection of the conception of what is good to do with the impulse to actually do it requires the mediation of the second premise. What it is to be the essentially impulsive conception of the good is to require a second premise in which objectivity is mediated.

Kant agrees that taking means is required by moral cognition, but he denies that we take means *in order to* consummate goodness-in-itself—because the product is not, for us, the consummation of goodness-in-itself. He understands the insufficiency of the consciousness of duty that does not actually act to reflect the syntheticity of categorical imperative, which connects the law with incentive a priori. The latency of the means in the will, however, reflects the analyticity of hypothetical imperative. The necessitation of the second premise appears in parenthesis in reference to the good will: "(not, of course, as a mere wish but as the summoning of all means insofar as they are in our control)" (GMS 4:394).[10] The good will is essentially distinguished from merely wishing, ruling out Smith's widget problem from the beginning. But the determination of means is not the work of pure practical reason: technically practical knowledge belongs to theoretical philosophy as a corollary. Summoning all means in one's power is thus essentially necessary for the immediate connection and consummation of the good, as Hegel puts it—*but only in the will*, according to Kant. The good is only properly realized *in a practical reality* insofar as one actually acts, which requires taking means. But actually taking means is not the immediate connection and consummation of the good *in the world*, because we do not observe maxims and we produce actual results rather than moral results. The realization of the good in the face of another actuality confronting it is not, for Kant, a technical confrontation

[10] The self-determinacy of Kant's *ought* needs to do a lot of work to avoid a problem Anscombe raises concerning the summoning of means. Considering the first premise 'Do everything conducive to not having a car crash,' she writes: "For there are usually a hundred different and incompatible things conducive to not having a car crash; such as, perhaps, driving into the private gateway immediately on your left and abandoning your car there, and driving into the private gateway immediately on your right and abandoning the car there" (*Intention*, §33). Hegel's self-determinate practical cognition handles this problem much more plausibly, insofar as he thinks the pure syntheticity of ethical cognition encompasses worldly means, as we will see below.

with the world but a moral confrontation within the will, i.e. the struggle to maintain the supremacy of moral law in one's choice.[11]

The affirmation that taking means is required by moral cognition is coupled, for Kant, with the denial that the product is the consummation of goodness-in-itself. Hegel describes this as a *relapse*: "If it is now claimed that the purpose of the good is thereby still not realized," i.e. after taking means, "what we have is a relapse of the concept to the standpoint that it assumes prior to its activity, when the actual is determined as worthless and yet presupposed as real" (WL 12.234). Moral goodness is not something subjective or contingent, such as the sentiment elicited by the appearance of good willing, or the path to creaturely happiness. The good is *objective*, the thought of rational agency as it is in itself, unconditioned by the subjective effect of external objects. Hegel thinks that if the necessity of taking means is posited by pure reason, actually taking means should remove the worthlessness of actuality. The absolute actuality of practical cognition in the guise of desiderative self-sufficiency should overcome subjectivism about the good. But subjectivism wins out as long as the worldly realization of the good is ruled to be beyond our ken:

> This repetition of the presupposition of the unrealized purpose after the actual realization of the purpose also means that *the subjective attitude* of the objective concept is reproduced and perpetuated, with the result that…its actualization always [appears] as only a *singular*, never *universal*, act. (WL 12.234-5)

The act of finite practical cognition is always singular rather than universal—always the production of a certain measure of happiness or misery that is not determined by the goodness-in-itself of action. A universal act of practical cognition would have to supply for its own

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[11] This has echoes in the William James we saw in Chapter 1: "The whole drama is a mental drama. The whole difficulty is a mental difficulty." *Principles of Psychology*, p. 1066.

happiness and wellbeing and guarantee its own successful execution, on Kant's view. Such an act is not within the power of creatures like us, for we do not author our own happiness and we act in a world we do not at the same time create. Subjectivism can nonetheless be refuted through absolute postulation, which renders our absolute willing of singular results intelligible.

The moral interpretation of absolutely actual practical cognition cannot decisively break with the subjectivism it purports to oppose because it retains a view of itself that is inherited from subjectivism. Hegel explains:

> As a matter of fact this state has already sublated itself in the realization of the good; what still *limits* the objective concept is its own *view* of itself, and this view vanishes in the reflection on what its realization is *in itself*. By this view the concept only stands in its own way, and all that it has to do about it is to turn, not against an external actuality, but against itself. (WL 12.235)

Morality retains a subjectivist view of agency that prevents it from overcoming finitude.[12] In morality, Hegel says, the concept only stands in its own way. Kant bears this out: "it is the human being *himself who* puts these obstacles in the way of his maxims" (MS 6:394), where the obstacles in question are one's natural inclinations, which do not as such conform to moral law but may conflict with it. On account of our dual source of incentive, i.e. moral and sensible, we stand in the way of our own realization of goodness-in-itself. The reality of our freedom consists in *strength of will*, i.e. in the continual overcoming of obstacles we put in our own way in virtue of having natural inclinations.[13]

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[12] "Morality" and "moral" refer to the conception of the good according to which it is realized in the will and not the world.

[13] Kant does not think it follows that natural inclinations are evil: "*Considered in themselves* natural inclinations are *good*, i.e. not reprehensible, and to want to extirpate them would not only be futile but harmful and blameworthy as well; we must rather only curb them" (R 6:58). It is not natural inclinations that are evil but the failure to curb them to the extent that they conflict with moral law, which is always in our power to do. As we saw above, categorical imperative allows us to infer the *capacity* to curb the inclinations, even though we only experience the practical effect of the will's autocracy and not its act, which is not an item in inner sense.

The alternative, Hegel says, is for practical cognition to turn against itself instead of turning against an external actuality. Moral cognition turns against an external actuality: that is, against the world and the inclinations that pure reason does not author itself. The alternative is to turn against against the reality of its own action. The idea of absolutely actual practical cognition —introduced by morality—overcomes the subjectivist view of itself according to which the perspective of agency excludes accomplishment. Reflection on what realization is in itself reveals that practical cognition's act cannot be singular. Realization cannot add to the goodness-in-itself of willing a mere quantum of actual happiness or misery. This sort of singularity of act is incompatible with the absoluteness of practical cognition. This is true of the postulated highest good, too: a *deserved* quantum of happiness or misery is likewise an incompatible singularity of act. Practical cognition's absolute demand for a singular external actuality must therefore be the demand for the realization of its universality in a singular external actuality—for the singular external actuality of universality, as it were. Pure reason practical of itself overcomes the appearance of paradox by being self-determinate cognition and the immediate objectivity of the concept. *Mere* singularity cannot be the product of absolutely actual practical cognition.

4.4. The goodness of the world

We saw at the beginning of the previous section that Hegel thinks the desideratively self-sufficient *ought* is self-sublating. We saw him say: "the first premise of this idea's action is the *immediate objectivity* of the concept, according to which purpose is communicated to actuality without any resistance and is in the simple connection of identity with it" (WL 12.234). Kant interprets this as the practical reality of freedom, which stands opposed to and borrows nothing

from nature. Hegel thinks this guise of absolutely actual practical cognition sublates its own presupposition, i.e. the non-actuality of the world. In truth, the immediate objectivity of the concept in the first premise is not the determination of a disposition in the subject but the determination that *there is something good-in-itself to do in the world*. Absolutely actual practical cognition does not just author its own impulsivity; it authors objective possibility, i.e. things to do in the world that are good in themselves.

The self-determination of the first premise is immediately objective as the goodness-in-itself of a particular doing. The activity of taking means should thus be understood to posit "the *implicit* identity of the objective concept and the immediate actuality" (WL 12.235). The first premise founds the implicit goodness-in-itself of immediate actuality that taking means makes explicit in a worldly doing. The self-determination of what is good-in-itself to do is the determination that there *is* something good-in-itself to do. What it is to summon all the means in one's power is to determine that *by taking means*, the world can be made good-in-itself. Now, this is not like grasping the hardness of wood as implicitly sheltering, as the subjective purpose does when it builds a house. The possibility ethical purpose grasps in the first premise is implicitly in objectivity—but only because cognition authors that very possibility. Subjective purpose does not author the capacity of wooden beams to withstand weight, even though it unites that capacity with the capacity of tiles to repel water and of screws to bind in the realized concept of a house. The good is latent in the world in a different way than withstanding weight is latent in wood, i.e. than dispositions are latent in mechanism. This is the speculative truth of pure reason practical of itself: reason being practical of itself, supplying its own cognitive determinacy, authors the latency of the good that action realizes. The self-authorship of impulsivity need not

be incomprehensible insofar as what it authors is its own objective possibility, which it realizes objectively in action. For example, the ethical institution of the family authors the possibility of marriage that subjects can realize objectively in action. Necessarily, agents can actualize their ethical desire for special forms of intimacy and shared feeling in the institution developed through human action for that very purpose. This is neither utopian nor uncritical. The development of the institution of the family is the process of thinking over the relatively natural desire for sexual and familial intimacy. This does not mean that thinking conforms to the given actuality of desire, which would be uncritical. Thinking over the urges and desires re-authors them in the guise of freedom, as we will see in the next chapter.

We saw Kant deny that the perfection of willing can be known in the practical perspective —except imperfectively, as when one's personality is doubled and the imperfective aspect reinstated in the judge, a scrutinizer of hearts. The perfection of willing would be the production of the moral world and the experience of deserved happiness. Hegel thinks perfection *can* be known in the practical perspective—insofar as it is through the work of agency that there are good things to do in the world in the first place, and through the work of agency that realization is made possible in the first place. The reality that Kant postulates absolutely Hegel makes immanent: not the *moral* world in which each individual will is actually determined by moral law, but the *ethical* world in which agency has made the world into the world of freedom. Freedom does not entitle us to deserved happiness but to the knowledge of freedom's actuality in the world. Its fulfillment is not a quantum of happiness that is at once known to be deserved, but the world known to have been made good by agency.

It is through the work of agency that external actuality is made into ethical actuality. Hegel explains: "As the external actuality is altered by the activity of the objective concept and its determination is consequently sublated, the merely apparent reality, the external determinability and worthlessness, are by that very fact removed from it" (WL 12.235). The alteration of external actuality by absolutely actual practical cognition is not itself an external actuality, e.g. a quantum of actual happiness or misery, but the knowledge of removing external actuality's worthlessness, i.e. of making it good. What is grasped in thought is the goodness-in-itself of making external actuality the world of freedom. Practical cognition's work on external actuality is the work of making the world of freedom, which is known by making it. This brings the dialectic of the good to its finale:

> In this the presupposition itself is sublated, namely the determination of the good as a merely subjective purpose restricted in content, the necessity of first realizing it by subjective activity, and this activity itself…The idea of the concept that is determined in and for itself is thereby posited, no longer just in the active subject but equally as an immediate actuality; and conversely, this actuality is posited as it is in cognition, as an objectivity that truly exists. (WL 12.235)

The moral purpose is merely subjective and restricted in content insofar as it is only a practical reality, the desiderative self-sufficiency of a way of acting that excludes reference to actual results. The moral purpose must first be realized through subjective activity, namely mastering one's natural inclinations. But reflection on what its realization is in itself has shown absolutely actual practical cognition to sublate its presupposition of the non-actuality of the world. Its work and realization cannot be the production of a quantum of happiness or misery, actual or deserved. The actuality of the good cannot be restricted to the subject actively exercising strength of will. The thinking grasp of the good is rather externalized in the immediate actuality of what has been

done—not in the unfathomable depths of the heart but in the objectivity known to be, in truth, freedom's realization. The hell of self-cognition does not pave the way to godliness: altering external actuality does. The truth of action's goodness does not lie in one's own motives or in one's deserved happiness; it lies in the knowledge that the world has been made good.

Now, the worthlessness of external actuality is only removed from the world through the activity of removing it. But the first premise of action grasps the goodness of a worldly doing, which implies that the world is already good. This is precisely why Kant thinks the practical reality of freedom cannot constitute a transition between the domains of freedom and nature. If freedom were something worldly, it would have to be an object related to the pleasure and pain of the faculty of desire by a theoretical law—but then it would not be freedom, which authors its own relation to its object. As things stand for us, the worldliness of freedom is limited to the practical reality in which we know that inclination *can* be mastered in one's exercise of choice. The activity of removing the worthlessness of the world is not similarly limited to capacity, but encompasses the actuality of accomplishment. Knowing the *ought* of such removal must be *knowing*, Hegel thinks—not *belief*, not practically rational *faith*. Hegel explains: "The good ought to be realised; we have to work at this, to bring it forth, and the will is simply the good that is self-activating. But then if the world were as it ought to be, the result would be that the activity of willing would disappear" (EL §234Z). Indeed, Kant conceives the perfection of willing to be its disappearance—at least in any guise we finite beings can recognize as willing: in the moral world, as we have seen, "there would be no difference between obligation and action, between a practical law that says what is possible through our doing, and the theoretical law that says what is actual through our doing" (KU 5:403-4). From the vantage point of our finitude, i.e. being

unable to grasp the *how* of perfect freedom, such suprafinite willing can only appear automatic, something miraculous in contrast to the autonomy of our practical lives, exhibited in strength of will in the face of unruly natural inclinations.

Hegel thinks the formalist "correctly expresses" the contradiction of practical finitude—but he thinks mind is not finite but the self-overcoming of finitude. He explains the advance from the finitude of cognition to the infinitude of mind:

> In the sphere of the finite we can neither experience nor see that the purpose is genuinely attained. The accomplishing of the infinite purpose consists therefore only in sublating the illusion [*Täuschung*] that it has not yet been accomplished. The good, the absolute good, fulfills itself eternally in the world, and the result is that it is already fulfilled in and for itself, and does not need to wait upon us for this to happen. This is the illusion in which we live, and at the same time it is this illusion alone that is the activating element upon which our interest in the world rests. It is within its own process that the Idea produces that illusion for itself; it posits an other confronting itself, and its action consists in sublating that illusion. (EL §212Z)

In the sphere of the finite, the perfection of the good is beyond our ken—for we cannot produce the moral world. The alternative to finitude, Hegel says, is to overcome the illusion that the good has not already been perfected or accomplished. But then he seems to reinstate a version of the subjectivist resolution of the widget problem: it is only due to *illusion* [*Täuschung*] that our wills are activated and our interest in the world aroused—whereas Kant's desideratively self-sufficient morality resolves the widget problem through absolute postulation, which is not an illusion but a practical reality. A strange speculative Smith seems to emerge, echoing his statement that it is "deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind" (TMS 4.1.10). The deception (in Hegel's case) is that the world requires our action in order to be good, and this keeps us acting ethically. We think we need to act because we think the world waits upon us to become good, but in fact the absolute good is always already fulfilled—as Smith puts it,

"without [our] intending it, without knowing it" (*ibid*.). Hegel seems to get the immanence of willing only at the cost of making our self-conscious possession of the good into a mere accident of the eternally unfolding Idea, which seems to be beyond our individual self-conscious powers. It seems like Hegel only restores truth to the will at the cost of making the ethical world into an authority external to individual self-consciousness, whereas Kant precisely denies that the laws of freedom can be due to any external authority. We think the essentially impulsive authority of our will is due to us, but really, Hegel seems to say, it is due to the eternal unfolding of the Idea.

I think we should rather understand Hegel to make the contradiction of finite practical cognition immanent. The widget problem is not an accident or a distraction—and not for Kant either, who I argued responds to it with practically intelligible but necessarily incomprehensible desiderative self-sufficiency. The self-authored impulse to realize the ethical world contains the contradiction that only agency can make the world good—and yet the world must already *be* good for ethical action to be possible. It is only because we think it is up to us to make the world good that we have an interest in acting in it. But the world does not depend on us to be made good—because it has already been made good. This contradiction is rendered immanent, I suggest, in cognition's return to life: "As a result the *truth* of the good is *posited*…This life, which has returned to itself from the difference and finitude of cognition…is the *speculative or absolute Idea*" (EL §235). The reunification of practical and theoretical cognition is also the reunification of cognition with life. Nothing in the logical idea of cognition refers to the existence of other cognizers—but living beings are necessarily multiple (WL 12.190). The contradiction between the goodness of the world depending on us and our action depending on

the world already being good is rendered immanent in the return to life insofar as we do not make the world good alone.

The finitude of cognition consists in the difference of practical and theoretical idea, which are immediately united in life (EL §224). The *truth* of the good, or the ethical world, reunites practical and theoretical cognition, thereby overcoming the finitude of cognition and becoming absolute idea. "The absolute idea…[is] a turning back to *life*" (WL 12.236) insofar as it returns to the unity of practical and theoretical idea that is characteristic of life. But this unity is no longer immediate, as it is in life. Life's immediacy brings it into contradiction that is overcome in the absolute idea. The living individual has the impulse to realize itself not just as an individual but in the universality of its species, which it grasps in the libidinous recognition of another living being of the same species. But copulation and propagation cannot achieve the realization of the living individual in its universality. The individual rather dies, and species-reproduction continues *ad infinitum*: its species reproduction is "only the repetition and the infinite process in which it does not step outside the finitude of its immediacy" (WL 12.191). Universality is realized in the genus process but *not* in living individuals, which have no purpose *qua* individuals except to reproduce, after which they may as well die. Universality must be realized in individuality to avoid the bad infinity of species reproduction. Now, the immediacy with which practical and theoretical idea are united in life shows up in the libidinous recognition of another living being of the same species. The recognition of the other as alive and as the same is immediately practical as sexual desire, and its consummation is the fleeting satisfaction of copulation. The result of generational reproduction is not for it, insofar as it only grasps the life and sameness of other members of the species in the impulse to copulate, the satisfaction of

which immediately disappears. The living individual does not copulate for the sake of generational reproduction, which it does not grasp, but for the sake of satisfying its longing for union with the other, which it grasps only libidinously.

The return to life in the absolute idea encompasses the multiplicity of beings like oneself —not by being grasped in sexual desire but insofar as it is transparently necessitated by the contradiction of practical cognition. We cannot make the world good alone: the goodness of the world rests on us, and indeed on us as individuals, but it is at the same time already fulfilled, namely in what has been done by others. The first premise of ethical action can be at once the self-authored impulse to realize the good and the identification of the world as already good—without the latter being the apprehension of an external authority. The identification of the goodness of the world is cognition of actuality—and yet it is not cognition with given determinacy, because it identifies what has been done essentially through its being the realization of the self-authored impulse one shares with other free beings like oneself. Willing is not consummated in immediate satisfaction, such as copulation or happiness, and its universality is not realized in a genus process that excludes its individuality. The eternal unfolding of the Idea, in other words, is not like the genus process to which individuals stand as mere accidents. It does not fall outside individual self-consciousness but is, and is known to be, the universal realization of individual wills. Practical cognition's act is universal, the realization of universality in singularity (i.e. individuality or *Einzelheit*) such as life cannot attain. The reproduction of mind is grasped in its essential goodness, and the product is for it: the actual reproduction of mind is known in its essential goodness as the world of freedom. The highest end of the individual is the reproduction of mind and its ethical world—but precisely not by losing individuality, as living

beings do in species-reproduction. The ethical world unites individuals in their universality or freedom, for it provides the conditions under which alone individual freedom is possible, which no longer requires bridging an impossibly immense gulf. Individual freedom can be realized in action insofar as freedom has already been realized in the action of one's fellows.

We began, back in Chapter 1, with the *anti-tragedy* of subjectivist action. The subjectivist eliminates tragedy by making it our normal condition, I argued. Must not overcoming the antitragic subjectivist conception of action require actually making room for tragedy—for its affront to reason, for its miserable unintelligibility? Has Hegel not eliminated tragedy, too—not by making it our normal condition, but by dogmatic assertion?[14] Hegel would be guilty of dogmatic assertion along the lines that *nous* rules the world—if he dismissed the widget problem as philosophical error. The subjectivist responds to something real when she identifies the effects of volition as alien to willing. Hegel contests what implications follow from this: specifically, he denies that the alienation of purpose involved in action and production implies that goodness-in-itself can belong to willing but not to the world, or that instrumental activity is a power to know the mechanical-chemical world.

The aim of production is to make the alienation of subjective purpose into the realization of subjective purpose. It does not do this by achieving miraculous insight into and control over the contingent circumstances in which it works. Rather, it rejects the premise that its work is a matter of impossible domination of insuperably manifold nature. Production aims to make its own activity possible—to determine the conditions to be those through which the realization of subjective purpose is possible. I cannot make a watch just like that, but I can work on various

[14] I thank Robert Pippin for pressing me on this.

pieces of metal so that making a watch becomes possible. Instrumental activity is not a matter of subjective purpose inserting itself into the causal network, as Korsgaard puts it, but making the causal network into the site of production. And so making the watch is truly my work, insofar as my work is to use what I have already done or made to achieve instrumental success. "Teleology" does not dogmatically assert the achievability of products that are truly the realization of subjective purpose—it exposes the dogmatism of one-sided subjectivism. The fact that production involves alienation does not rule out that this alienation constitutes the basis for the realization of subjective purpose; the subjectivist dogmatically supposes that it does.

The subjectivist contends that we cannot know goodness-in-itself to belong to the world —only to willing. Kant gives a formalist rearticulation of this thesis: on the basis of the moral law as incentive, we know the *possibility* of achieving goodness-in-itself in the will, i.e. the *possibility* of achieving the supremacy of moral law in one's choice—and the *possibility* of achieving goodness-in-itself in the highest good. The speculative idea of willing exposes the dogmatism of one-sided subjectivism: the fact that action involves the alienation of the subjective grasp of goodness-in-itself in external objectivity (which in the realm of mind includes *feeling*) does not rule out that this alienation constitutes the basis for the worldly realization of goodness-in-itself. The subjectivist and the formalist respond to something real in their identification of alienation in action, but they dogmatically suppose that alienation cannot be the necessary medium for ethical action. Hegel thinks it is: "another actuality confronting it is the mediation which is essentially necessary for the immediate connection and consummation of the good" (WL 12.234). Hegel does not dogmatically assert that practical cognition eliminates alienation; he argues that it is defined by confronting and overcoming alienation. The

achievability of goodness-in-itself in the world is thus not simply asserted against a genuinely tragic conception of action, according to which we have no reason to think we can rule out simply irresolvable conflict. It cannot be, if the reality of tragic conflict is essential to the realization of the good. Its being ruled out—worthlessness being removed from the world—is therefore not something known theoretically. The elimination of conflict must be a matter of practical truth, i.e. known essentially as one's own achievement. Tragedy does not simply disappear, for its reality is what practical cognition knows itself to have overcome. This is possible as *objective mind*, the topic of the next and final chapter.

Chapter 5. The objectivity of mind

According to the subjectivism with which we began, we know the effects of our will insofar as we learn about them in experience. Willing is not a way of knowing worldly events and products. What happened to Oedipus is liable to happen to any of us, anytime we act, because just like Oedipus, we always learn our effects through experience. The fracture he suffers is wider and more shocking that what ordinarily happens when we act—but our effects always lie on the other side of a fracture, even if it is ordinarily so tight as to be imperceptible. Willing is not a way of knowing the world. We have seen Hegel reject this thesis in two different ways. In Chapter 3, we saw that Hegel thinks technical activity grasps its mechanical-chemical product. The subjective purpose grasps the usability of mechanism, and realizes that grasp in the usability of its product. The subject's grasp of the product is thus not acquired in the experience of its effects, as the subjectivist claims, but through its production and use. In Chapter 4, we saw that Hegel thinks willing or action is a way of knowing the world—specifically, knowing the realization of one's will to be the ethical world.

The subjectivist conception of action is *antitragic*, I claimed, insofar as the fracture of the tragic hero's agency is made our normal condition. Our agency is always subject to external contingency, the evildoing of others, and internal collision—and there is nothing we can do about it. Kant's conception of action is also somewhat antitragic: the actual results of our will are always subject to external contingency and the evildoing of others—but the free will does not yield to Jupiter or allow the conduct of others to be its condition, and a conflict of duty is impossible. Tragedy's significance for action, on Hegel's view, is the self-overcoming of finitude discussed in the previous chapter. The will frees itself from subjection to external contingency,

evil, and internal conflict. Now, this does not mean that once the ethical world has been realized, we are holy wills who cannot be mistaken about the particulars of the situation or suffer lapses in courage and defects in performance. But it does mean the conflicts acted out in tragedy are genuine conflicts. We cannot say that moral life is nontragic, even though human life may be devastating. Tragedy is not merely *instructive*, exhibiting the strength of will that may be required of us, but not acting out anything finally practically significant insofar as the free will stands above fate. Tragedy rather acts out finitude's own self-overcoming, coming into and overcoming collision:

> The tragic downfall of figures of the highest ethical worth can interest us, elevate us, and reconcile us to its occurrence only in so far as such figures appear in mutual opposition, with equally justified but distinct ethical powers which have unfortunately come into *collision*…As a result of this opposition to an ethical principle, they incur *guilt*, from which the right and wrong of both parties emerges, and with it the true ethical Idea which, purified and triumphing over this *one-sidedness*, is thereby reconciled in us. Accordingly, it is not the *highest* thing in us which perishes, and we are *elevated* not *by the downfall of the best* but, on the contrary, by the triumph of the true. This is the true and purely ethical interest of ancient tragedy…But the ethical Idea, *without such unfortunate collisions* and the downfall of the individuals caught up in this misfortune, is *actual* and *present* in the ethical world; and that this highest of things should *not appear insignificant in its actuality* is what the real ethical existence, the state, takes as its end and puts into effect, and what the ethical self-consciousness possesses, intuits, and knows, and thinking cognition comprehends, in *the state*. (PhR §140A n.)

The interest of tragedy is the interest that the highest ethical worth should be significant in its actuality. Antigone's struggle against Creon is the struggle for the ethical worth of family ties to be significant in its actuality; that she can only accomplish this in her own death is the truth of the ethical worth of family ties. That Creon can only accomplish the actuality of the ethical worth of the state by sentencing his own niece to death is likewise the truth of the ethical worth of the

state. This conflict between justified ethical powers finds its truth in ethical life, where the state is the substantial basis of family and civil society, which both have their rightful actuality.

As we have seen, Oedipus' struggle with external contingency is not a struggle with a justified ethical power in the same sense. He understands his struggle to be with an ethical power, namely the will of the gods, through which his unknowing blasphemy brings about the plague. The triumph of the true can nonetheless be understood to have application: Oedipus has not established his right of subjectivity—because his objective world does not accommodate it. He can only be an agent by being responsible for the whole objectivity of his deeds. The truth of his struggle and conflict should thus be understood to reveal the need for a way to make sense of being responsible for the whole objectivity of our deeds—in truth, not by giving up the right to subjectivity, which is equally justified, but in the administration of law. It is the work of the courts of law to determine "whether the *substantial*, criminal character of the deed was determined by premeditation" (PhR §225). We cannot be responsible for the whole objectivity of our actions if (among many other features of ethical life) faultless ignorance of crucial facts has not been eliminated as a threat to our agency through legal institutions.

The state, Hegel says, has as its end and puts into effect our will that the highest ethical worth should not be insignificant in its actuality. The state has as its end that Antigone should not have to sacrifice her life for the actuality of the ethical worth of family ties. It puts this end into effect in the ethical institution of the family, which cannot stand on its own as the realization of freedom, but is reciprocally dependent on civil society and the state. The state has as its end that Oedipus should not have to gouge out his eyes in order to determine the actuality of his deeds as non-criminal and yet nonetheless substantial. We free ourselves from the conflict with external

contingency not by making our individual powers of efficacy fictitiously powerful but by making it an objective reality that the knowledgable and effective exercise of our efficacy is the normal condition for us. Defective exercises due to ignorance and other factors are *objectively* defective insofar as they are not similarly subject to criminal prosecution.

The subjectivist reading of Oedipus understands his guilt to be *fallacious*, since he did not will patricide or incest. The speculative reading of Oedipus understands his guilt to be intelligible: in his world, where external contingency is the manifestation of the will of the gods, his right of subjectivity cannot be established objectively. It is not enough to say that Oedipus ought to recognize his own right of subjectivity—that right must rather have actuality in his world. The subjectivity of will characteristic of "Morality" is defined by the non-actuality of its idea of the good: "The *subjective*, as far as the will in general is concerned, denotes…one-sided form in general, in so far as that which is willed, whatever its content, is still only a content belonging to the self-consciousness, *an unaccomplished end*" (PhR §25; second italics mine). Whatever its content, whether it be moral or self-interested, the subjective will is defined by the non-actuality of its accomplishment. We have focused on three forms of destruction to which the accomplishment of the finite good is subject: external contingency, evil, and internal collision. In this chapter I draw out the concrete accomplishment of the speculative idea of the good that is not subject to destruction by these means—once again, mostly in conversation with Kant.

As we know, Kant thinks internal collision is impossible—and that action but not the will is subject to destruction by external contingency and evil. (**5.1**) Moral action's liability to destruction by external contingency concerns happiness: the happiness or misery of actual results is determined by external contingency, not virtue. We would have to author our own happiness to

accomplish goodness-in-itself in the world. Hegel argues that we do indeed author our own happiness. (**5.2**) This changes the dialectic of good and evil: it is not an endless internal struggle, the hell of self-cognition, but the objectivity of universalized self-interest. (**5.3**) The moral disposition, or the feeling of respect, has an inscrutable source and is not accomplished but eternally renewed in the will. The ethical disposition is rather the *political disposition*, and it is transparent and accomplished in the universal product of the will, namely ethical community with other free beings, which Kant thinks can only be accomplished by Providence. (**5.4**) Moral action is liable to destruction by the evildoing of others insofar as we can coerce others to act rightfully but not to act morally. The ethical will is united with other wills internally in the reciprocity of duty and right.

5.1. The self-authorship of happiness

We saw in Chapter 2 that the merely prudentially practical reasoner (MPPR) is logically possible for Kant. We saw that this logical possibility goes together with the disunity of moral and technical efficacy: finite beings like us do not know what we are doing on the basis of knowing what is good unconditionally to do. Ruling out the possibility of the MPPR would require knowing our technical efficacy on the basis of knowing our moral efficacy, i.e. knowing our technical efficacy through its being the necessary vehicle for morality. We do not know our technical efficacy that way, so we cannot rule out the possibility of a creature with technical efficacy like ours but without morality. The concept of our technical efficacy is empirical, even though it is connected a priori with the idea of freedom. It is logically possible that the highest end of a creature with our kind of technical efficacy is its happiness.

Hegel denies this. In the *Logic*, practical cognition is the truth of theoretical cognition's contradiction. The logical idea of cognition or mind thus rules out the MPPR, insofar as theoretical cognition cannot stand on its own. In the *Philosophy of Mind* and again in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argues that happiness cannot be the highest end of a thinking living being. Necessarily, happiness as the highest end comes into contradiction and gives way to freedom. The self-overcoming of happiness is a precondition for a proper understanding of *right* as the existence of freedom. Hegel thinks Kant cannot get right properly into view in part because he holds onto our happiness as a pursuit that could be shared between us and the MPPR. Hegel explains:

> [Kant's definition of right] embodies the view, especially prevalent since Rousseau, according to which the substantial basis and primary factor is supposed to be not the will as rational will which has being in and for itself…but will and spirit as the *particular* individual, as the will of the single person [*des Einzelnen*] in his distinctive arbitrariness. Once this principle is accepted, the rational can of course appear only as a limitation on the freedom in question, and not as an immanent rationality, but only as an external and formal universal. (PhR §29A)

Moral law can only be a constraint, and right can only be non-infringement, as long as the free will is considered in the aspect of the particular individual in his peculiar self-interest. Happiness or the particularity of the subject must therefore be overcome before taking up right, i.e. in "Subjective Mind" and the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*. The existence of freedom as right presupposes that happiness such as could be shared with the MPPR has been overcome. The free will is not the will of the single person in his distinctive arbitrariness, but the rational will, or the will whose highest end is freedom, which she moreover knows to be actual.

The subjective pursuit of happiness, or that which could be shared with the MPPR, is, like the rest of subjective practical cognition, essentially imperfective. Happiness, Hegel

explains, is "a universality which only *ought* to be" (EG §480). Happiness is not a universality that can be realized objectively—and this is incompatible with the idea of "*thought asserting itself* in the will" (PhR §21A). What it is for thought to assert itself in the will is for thought to try to realize itself in the world. Insofar as happiness is an essentially imperfective universal, or essentially cannot be realized in the world, it is a contradiction as a possible determination of the will. Kant would of course deny that making happiness one's highest end is thought asserting itself in the will. Technically practical knowledge is not the efficacy of thought but the application of thought to efficacy.

Hegel argues against precisely this thesis: he argues that the idea of thought applying itself to efficacy must be the assertion of thought in the will. He writes:

> When reflection applies itself to the drives, representing them, estimating them, and comparing them with one another and then with the means they employ, their consequences etc., and with a sum total of satisfaction—i.e. with *happiness*—it confers *formal universality* upon this material and purifies it, in this external manner, of its crudity and barbarity…But this process whereby the particular is superseded and raised to the universal is what is called the activity of *thought*. The self-consciousness which purifies and raises its object, content, and end to this universality does so as *thought asserting itself* in the will. (PhR §§21-21A)

The MPPR purifies its efficacy through the thinking consideration of its drives and their possibilities of satisfaction. The formal universality of happiness is not the contemplation of a sum total of satisfaction but the desire to *achieve* a sum total of satisfaction. The thought of happiness is essentially the thought of *accomplishing* happiness. There is not a given drive for happiness, but a manifold of drives that are united, through reflection, in the desire for happiness. Happiness cannot be the application of thought to efficacy but must be the assertion of thought in the will insofar as it determines its efficacy to achieve happiness.

But the MPPR is a contradiction. On the one hand, thought asserts itself in the will as the desire for happiness. On the other hand, "happiness has *affirmative* content in the urges alone, the decision lies with them" (EG §479). Happiness is the formal universality of the drives, but "a drive is merely the simple direction of its own determinacy" (PhR §17). Happiness is only a formal universality, and so it does not determine the drives internally but only unites them as they are given in the reflective determination of a sum total. Nothing in the drives themselves entails that they can be mutually satisfied in a way that achieves happiness. This is a contradiction insofar as thought asserts itself as the will to achieve happiness, but it has no way of determining its drives to actually achieve happiness. The MPPR is not a logical possibility that, if realized, would reflect a lapse in foresight and wisdom on the part of nature. Nature, Kant thinks, would have done better to take "care that reason should not break forth into *practical use* and have the presumption, with its weak insight, to think out for itself a plan for happiness and for the means of attaining it" (GMS 4:395). The (technically) practical use of reason, or thought's assertion of itself in its efficacy, would, without morality, belong to an unfortunate creature indeed. Hegel sees things differently: the practical use of thought in determining its efficacy to achieve happiness is a contradiction that thinking cannot tolerate. It is the contradiction of the will to achieve happiness that yet cannot determine itself to achieve happiness, because the drives in their immediacy are not in themselves a rational unity, but only a given unity subsumed under a formal universal.

Happiness is essentially imperfective, "a universality which only *ought* to be" (EG §480). But this is incompatible with the will to be actual, which the assertion of thought in the will essentially is. Happiness as the sum total of our peculiar satisfaction is a self-sublating

contradiction, as it were, and it is overcome in the free will. Hegel explains: "But the truth of the *particular* determinacy…and of the *abstract individuality*…is the *universal* determinacy of the will in the will itself, i.e. its very self-determination, *freedom*" (EG §480). The practical use of reason that is thought asserting itself in the will in the guise of the drives not, in truth, the formal universality of happiness. Thought's will to be actual is not the will to actualize the particular determinacy and abstract individuality of its drives; it is the will to actualize freedom or the thinking that asserts itself in the will. This is the truth of the purification of drives that happiness tries to achieve:

> Underlying the demand for the *purification of the drives* is the general idea that they should be freed from the *form* of their natural determinacy and from the subjectivity and contingency of their *content*, and restored to their substantial essence. The truth behind this indeterminate demand is that the drives should become the rational system of the will's determination; to grasp them thus in terms of the concept is the content of the science of right. (PhR §19)

Thought's will to be actual is not the will to subdue the natural inclinations (when necessary) but to make the drives into a rational system. Moreover, it is the will to make that rational system objective "in the sense that this system becomes immediate actuality" (PhR §27). The sexual drive, for example, is *made ethical* in the immediate actuality of the institution of the family. One's peculiar needs and desires as a particular individual are *made ethical* in the immediate actuality of the institution of the system of needs.

In fact, Hegel says that the system of needs is "the only occasion on which we shall refer to *the human being* in this sense" (PhR §190A). By contrast, the peculiar human being appears constantly in Smith and in Kant—in the irregularity of sentiment, in the need to double oneself as judge in order to appraise the merit of one's conduct. Kant explains that "the characteristic of

the human species is this: that nature has planted in it the seed of *discord*, and has willed that its own reason bring *concord* out of this, or at least the constant approximation to it" (A 7:322). We can will the latter, while the perfection of concord is necessitated by the moral determining ground of the will, which supplies practical grounds for faith in its actuality. The struggle of freedom is essentially the struggle to make one's will perfectly virtuous—that is, not the struggle to make the drives into the immediately actual institutions of freedom. Hegel argues that the contest of good and evil in the will proves itself to be the will to unite with others in ethical community.

5.2. From the hell of self-cognition to ethical community

I argued in the previous chapter that the contradiction of finite practical cognition is the return to life in the absolute idea. This is borne out in the philosophy of mind in the contradiction of good and evil that results in ethical life. The contradiction of good and evil is the contradiction of the non-actuality of the world in opposition to the absolutely actual cognition of the good, and it is overcome through the restoration of the world's actuality. Hegel explains how the opposition of the absolutely actual will to the non-actual external world requires the postulation of the highest good beyond its ken:

> External objectivity…[is] independent of the internal determinations of the will, a peculiar world for itself. It is therefore contingent whether it harmonizes with the subjective aims, whether the *good* realizes itself in it, while *evil*, the aim that is in and for itself null, is null in it; —contingent too whether the subject finds in it his well-being, and more precisely whether in it the *good* subject becomes *happy* and the *evil* subject *unhappy*. But at the same time the world *ought* to let what is essential, the good action, be carried out in it, as it *ought* to grant the *good* subject the satisfaction of his particular interest, but refuse it to the *evil* subject, just as it *ought* to nullify evil itself. (EG §510)

The moral will understands itself to face a *peculiar* world, i.e. one it does not author itself. In a peculiar world, it is contingent whether the will achieves successful execution: disfavors of fortune or a stepmotherly nature may get in the way (GMS 4:394). It is also contingent, from the subject's perspective, whether other wills are evil. And finally, it is contingent whether the virtuous person is blessed with happiness. At the same time, the moral will is the thought that its good ought to be really actual, i.e. its execution actually successful and its results the moral dispensation of happiness and misery. The world-directed aspect of the moral *ought* is thus one and the same as the *ought* of the will to eradicate its own evil and let moral law reign supreme: as we have seen, the actual results can only be the object of practical knowledge insofar as the imperfective aspect is reinstated in the judge. The moral will only determines the good in the essentially imperfective *ought*, in willing as in its results.

By determining the good as the absolutely actual will in opposition to the non-actual world, the moral will makes the deepest descent into subjectivity—which for the moral will is hellish, insofar as therein lies evil. Hegel writes:

> The all-round contradiction, which this multiple *ought*, the absolute being which yet at the same time is not, expresses, contains the most abstract analysis of the mind within itself, its deepest descent into itself…Conscience is the will of the *good*, which, however, in this pure subjectivity is the *non-objective*, non-universal, the indescribable, and over which the subject is aware that *he* in his *individuality* has the decision. (EG §511)

The moral *ought* is multiple in the following sense: one *ought* to be good—and moral results *ought* to follow. Goodness is absolutely actual in the will—but the world is peculiar, the non-actuality and contingency of goodness. The moral will is non-objective and non-universal insofar as the good does not perfectly determine the will: the subject has another source of incentive that he can choose to act on. The moral will is indescribable insofar as the desiderative self-

sufficiency of the good is practically intelligible but necessarily incomprehensible. The moral will is thus essentially the consciousness that one *can* defy the moral law. The hell of moral self-cognition is the deepest descent of mind into its own subjectivity, i.e. its subjective power to make its will good or evil. Hegel thinks this constitutes the self-annihilation of morality:

> *Evil*, as the most intimate reflection of subjectivity into itself in opposition to the objective and universal (which is, for subjectivity, only semblance), is the same as the *good disposition* towards the *abstract* good, which leaves the determination of the good up to subjectivity: —the utterly abstract *semblance*, the immediate perversion and annihilation of itself. (EG §512)

The evil subject opposes her individuality to the objectivity and universality of the good, which is a mere semblance for subjectivity insofar as moral results are only postulated. The determination of the moral good is left up to subjectivity insofar as it is up to the subject to choose to be good or evil. Choosing good over evil is thus the same opposition as choosing evil over good: both are the opposition of universality and individuality. This is the perversion and annihilation of moral willing, which is supposed to be the supremacy of the good.

The autocracy of the will as the *capacity* to master inclination implies the possibility of making self-love reign supreme in one's will. Hegel claims that evil is self-determinate in the way of absolutely actual practical cognition: "But *evil* is this very awareness of his individuality as the decision-maker, in so far as his individuality does not remain in this abstraction, but gives itself the content of a subjective interest contrary to the good" (EG §511). The moral will is self-determinate insofar as it gives itself desiderative self-sufficiency. The evil will is likewise self-determinate: it does not simply posit its self-interest, but posits its self-interest as *contrary* to the good. The MPPR cannot be evil, even though it is essentially self-interested. The evil will is not only self-interested but posits its self-interest as supreme in defiance of the good. Both the good

will and the evil will are self-determinate, but there is an important difference between their respective forms of self-determinacy: the good will is *abstract*. Whereas the good will is not fulfilled in actual results but multiples itself as the *ought* of moral results, the evil will fulfills itself in evildoing. The fulfillment of the evil will does not require a second *ought*: the evil will does not think unhappiness ought to follow for it, as the good will does; the evil will is fulfilled in the satisfaction of its self-determinate self-interest.

The evil will and the descent into the hell of moral self-cognition overcomes morality and founds ethical life. The result of the contradiction of good and evil, Hegel says, is "the absolute nullity of this willing, that is supposed to be *for itself* in contrast to the good, and the absolute nullity of the good, that is supposed to be only abstract" (*ibid*.). Moral willing and the moral good are overcome: the moral will is essentially conscious of itself as having individuality that stands in contrast to the moral good, which is abstract insofar as it excludes actual results. The ethical will identifies its individuality with the good, which is not abstract but actual. The absolute power of will does not lie in being able to choose good or evil but in being able to make its individuality universal. It does this by making itself stand opposed to an ethical world rather than a *peculiar* world that is the contingency and non-actuality of the good. Whereas a peculiar world supplies happiness or misery independently of the goodness or evil of will, an ethical world satisfies the will's individuality through its universality. The evil will does not belong to the truth or objectivity of freedom, but to its subjectivity in the will and the corresponding non-actuality of the world. For Kant, the truth of our kind of will is an ongoing subjective process: "the harmony of a being's will with its final end, requires him first to remove the obstacle within (an evil will actually present in him)" (MS 6:441). The evil will rejects the will's essential

imperfection, the non-actuality of the good in its actual results. Removing the evil will actually present in oneself is not achieved through the deepest descent into subjectivity but in working on external actuality to make it good. The truth of the evil will is the insistence that freedom be actual in its results.

Freedom is actual in the will's results in the return to life. We cannot make the world good alone: "the absolute *ought* is *being* as well, [it] has actuality as the mind of a *people*" (EG §514). Whereas the evil will makes its individuality self-determinate by opposing it to the good, ethical life makes individuality self-determinate by supplying the context in which one can care for oneself as an individual through the realization of one's universality or freedom. That context is ethical community with others:

> Because the substance is the absolute unity of individuality and the universality of freedom, the *actuality* and *activity* of each *individual*, *in being for himself* and caring *for himself*, is conditioned by the presupposed whole in the context of which alone it occurs, but is also a transition into a universal product. (EG §515)

The individual is conditioned by the ethical world, insofar as it makes ethical action possible. But this condition is in fact no condition, insofar it is authored by freedom. The universality of the will's product is the very whole that makes ethical action possible in the first place. As a member of a people, the goodness of the world is one's own individual aim and universal product.

5.3. From the feeling of respect to the political disposition

Morality is defined by the essentially imperfective ought—by being knowledge of possibility, capacity, and power—and *not* of external actuality. Moral knowledge produces its

own object, the disposition of the will to act morally. The moral law's absoluteness is revealed to us in the feeling of respect it commands, which is desideratively self-sufficient for the production of the action prescribed. *How* this is possible we cannot know, but we have a duty to "to strengthen it through wonder at its inscrutable source" (MS 6:399). The contest between good and evil cannot be resolved except by the individual will to make moral law reign supreme over self-love in one's will, rather than the other way around. Hegel claims that "the genuine, ethical disposition" (EG §515) has a transparent source and does not stand in contest with the supremacy of self-interest: it is *trust* in the ethical world. The moral disposition and respect for the law contains *faith* but not *trust*: the moral will has faith that the highest good is possible, but it cannot trust *this* world to fulfill it. Precisely not: the proposition "that a virtuous disposition necessarily produces happiness, is false *not absolutely* but only insofar as this disposition is regarded as the form of causality in the sensible world" (KpV 5:114). In the actual, sensible world, goodness of will cannot guarantee goodness of outcome, which falls back into the imperfective aspect of moral results.

The contradiction of good and evil culminates in a universal product, a shared life of freedom. Whereas the moral will cannot guarantee moral results or the satisfaction of individuality, the ethical will *trusts* the ethical world to unite individuality and universality:

> This disposition is in general one of *trust* (which may pass over into more or less educated insight), or the consciousness that my substantial and particular interest is preserved and contained in the interest and end of an other (in this case, the state), and in the latter's relation to me as an individual. As a result, this other immediately ceases to be an other for me, and in my consciousness of this, I am free. (PhR §268)

The evil will asserts the supremacy of its self-interest over the moral good, which can preserve and contain self-interest only in a postulated moral world. The ethical will trusts the state, which

unites family and civil society, to preserve and contain its interest as free and as an individual. Trust in the state overcomes the non-actuality of the world, its otherness to freedom insofar as the latter is only contained in the will. I am free not only insofar as my cognition of goodness is self-authored and self-determinate, but insofar as I know the world as the site of its fulfillment.

The ethical disposition of *trust* differs from the moral disposition of *respect* insofar as it essentially encompasses the perfective aspect. The *political disposition* is at once practical and a disposition—and *truthful*: it is a mode of volition that grasps and expresses the truth of freedom's realization in the state. Hegel explains:

> The political *disposition*, i.e. *patriotism* in general, is certainty based on *truth*…and a volition which has become *habitual*. As such, it is merely a consequence of the institutions within the state, a consequence in which rationality is *actually* present, just as rationality receives its practical application through action in conformity with the state's institutions. (PhR §268)

The political disposition is at once knowledge and efficacy. It is knowledge insofar as the state is actually the realization of freedom, i.e. knowledge that its institutions actually supply the conditions for individuals to be free. It is efficacy insofar as this very certainty is habitual volition: that is, living one's life as a free individual in the trust that one lives in a world where that can actually happen. This rational disposition is merely a *consequence* of the state's institutions insofar as the political disposition apprehends those institutions as actually constituting the ethical world. But rationality is actually present in this consequence: the knowledge that freedom is already actual in the world is knowledge that the world has already been made good through the self-authored impulse one shares with the other members of the state. Moreover, this consequence is a volitional determination, namely the habitual volition of acting in conformity with the institutions one knows to be the self-reproduction of freedom. The

actuality of freedom one apprehends in the state is likewise only what it is insofar as it has practical application in individual action in conformity with it, since its function is essentially to enable the realization of freedom.

Moral volition cannot be habitual, according to Kant. Moral volition is essentially opposed to habit, which "deprives even good actions of their moral worth because it impairs the freedom of the mind" (A 7:149). Exercising moral strength in doing one's duty "should always emerge entirely new and original from one's way of thinking" (A 7:147). Freedom is actual, for us, only in a practical reality. For virtue to be a habitual way of going on, we would have to be holy wills whose natural inclinations conform of themselves to moral law. But even the most virtuous among us cannot guarantee that self-love has not snuck into one's maxim. Whereas the moral will is essentially neurotic, the ethical will is confident—not in the holiness of one's will but in the power of ethical community.

For the same reason, institutions of right cannot unite individuality and universality for Kant. Such a condition could only be realized in a community through divine orchestration. The discord between moral law and self-love can only be resolved through individual moral strength —and only divine wisdom could systematically unify them in a community of persons. Such orchestration, Kant says, "the human being expects only from *Providence*; that is, from a wisdom that is not *his*" (A 7:328). *Our* wisdom lies in the hell of moral self-cognition, the contest and adjudication of good and evil in the will. The wisdom required for an ethical community that unites individuality and universality can only be divine. Such a community *might* be possible— but "the people, as a people, cannot itself be regarded as legislator" (R 6:98). Such a community

could only be a *religious* community, in which the laws spring timelessly from moral consciousness.

Hegel claims that relegating the community of persons to religion, to a condition that is not actual and which we do not know to be really possible, goes together with thinking that, in the actual world, the "sole function [of the state] is to protect and secure the life, property, and arbitrary will of everyone, in so far as the latter does not infringe the life, property, and arbitrary will of others; in this view, the state is merely an arrangement dictated by need [*Not*]" (PhR §270A). In this view, the state organizes an aggregate of individuals striving to unify their individuality and universality. The true function of the state, Hegel thinks, is the actual unification of individuality and universality. The separateness of persons in their arbitrariness belongs to "Abstract Right," and the pure self-consciousness of the good belongs to "Morality." Ethical life unifies these one-sided moments of the will, and the state unifies members of an ethical community such that individuals are satisfied through the universal reproduction of their community.

5.4. From just deserts to ethical reciprocity

Our humanity is defined by the discord between reason and feeling, our universality and our individuality. Beings defined in this way cannot be ethically united with one another in a system because the supremacy of self-love can only be overcome through individual moral strength. The result is that the *Metaphysics of Morals* contains the diverse spheres of right and virtue. Duty and right cannot be united in a living unity:

> To every duty there corresponds *a* right in the sense of an *authorization* to do something (*facultas moralis generatim*); but it is not the case that to every duty there correspond *rights* of another to coerce someone (*facultas iuridica*). Instead, such duties are called, specifically, *duties of right*. (MS 6:383)

I always have a right to do what duty requires of me: that is, you cannot rightfully coerce me *not* to do my duty (that would imply what Hegel calls a *collision* of goods). This truth is analytic: my duties consist in duties of right and duties of virtue, and the former prohibit me from infringing on the lawful action of all others. I am authorized to do whatever does not infringe on the lawful action of all others. I am therefore always authorized to do what duty requires of me, or, to every duty of mine there corresponds a right.

Kant does not address the reverse, namely whether to every right of mine there corresponds a duty. He rather addresses the question whether to every duty of mine there correspond rights of *others* to coerce me, and he answers in the negative. You can coerce me to act rightfully, but you cannot coerce me to act morally. You can coerce me to do the subset of my duties that pertain to your ability to act rightfully. You cannot coerce me to make your welfare my end, even though I have a duty of virtue to do so, as well as a duty of right not to infringe upon your rightful pursuit of your own welfare. Moreover, making right one's end is itself a duty of virtue (MS 6:394), i.e. an *obligation* rather than something that has actuality in being able to be externally coerced.

It is not the case, for Kant, that to every right of mine there corresponds a duty. I have the right for my lawful pursuit of ends not to be infringed upon by others. But my duty to be moral and virtuous goes well beyond the lawful pursuit of ends. I am authorized to pursue my particularity in any way that is externally lawful. But there is no sense to the idea of having the

right to be moral and virtuous: my pursuit of virtue simply falls within the scope of the authorization to do what I please insofar as it is compatible with everyone doing what she pleases. Hegel attacks precisely this result:

> In the realms of civil law and morality, the relation [between right and duty] lacks *actual* necessity, so that only an *abstract* equality of content is present; in these abstract spheres, *what* is right for one person ought also to be right for another, and *what* is one person's duty ought also to be another person's duty. That absolute identity of duty and right [referred to above] occurs here only as an equivalent identity of *content*, in that the determination of the content is itself wholly universal; that is, there is a single principle for both duty and right, namely the personal freedom of human beings. (PhR §261A)

What is right for me to do, according to Kant, is abstractly identical to what is right for you to do: we both have the right to pursue our particularity in externally lawful ways. What you do with your right is up to you, for after all it is your particularity. What I do with mine is likewise up to me. Right can say nothing about the concrete content of what you or I do. We both ought only to act in such a way that our action can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law—no matter what in particular we do. What is my duty ought also to be your duty: besides duties of right, which have already been covered, I have my duty in the same way that you have yours, namely through moral law. I ought always to subject my pursuit of my particularity—my subjective maxims—to categorical imperative, and I ought to improve myself and to promote the welfare of others. And so ought you: you and I are subject to one and the same moral law; we share in moral personality.

Hegel claims that on such a view, right and duty share the single principle of personal freedom, or, roughly, individual agency. This is relatively plain in the case of Kantian right, which is the lawful coexistence of personal freedoms. My morality and virtue, however, seem to

concern not personal freedom but freedom as such, or the form of pure practical reason. Kant explains the sense in which here too we are within the perspective of the individual subject:

> Ethics adds [to right] only that this principle [the categorical imperative] is to be thought as the law of *your* own will and not of will in general, which could also be the will of others; in the latter case the law would provide a duty of right, which lies outside the sphere of ethics. (MS 6:389)

The way in which I think the ultimate principle of freedom is as the law of my own will and *not* as the will of others. I must not think this principle as the law of anyone's will but my own—for that would mean that the consideration whether others do their duty enters into my will to do my duty. But the free will stands above the evildoing of others. If I only did my duty through the thought that others also do their duty, categorical imperative would cease to be categorical and would thus disappear. Categorical imperative would be hypothetical: I do my duty only insofar as others do theirs. Insofar as I consider the will of others, I can only consider them in the perspective of right and *not* duty: namely, as doing whatever they please so long as it is lawful.

In other words, I cannot coerce you to make my welfare your end, even though I know you to have a duty of virtue to do so. Whether or not you will do so is contingent; indeed, whether or not I shall be happy in my steadfast pursuit of virtue is contingent. Recall Hegel's characterization of political disposition as the knowledge that "my substantial and particular interest is preserved and contained in the interest and end of an other" (PhR §268). In this knowledge, the other ceases to be alien and I am free. The state is the *actual* necessity that an other makes my welfare its end—and this is freedom. This is not the moral world and the dispensation of just deserts, but the ethical world and the absolute value of the members of the state insofar as they are free individuals.

Hegel says above that in morality and civil law, right and duty only *ought* to be reciprocal. You only *ought* to make my welfare your end. It is not my actual right that you do so. In ethical life and the state, by contrast, I have the right that my pursuit of *freedom*, which includes my welfare and particularity within it, be another's end—my wife's end, my family's end, my corporation's end, the end of the police (i.e., institutions of welfare), the end of the state. And I have duties reciprocally: I have a duty to make my wife's freedom my end, my fellow workers' freedom my end, and to make the reproduction of the ethical world of the state my end. Hegel explains:

> *Duty* is primarily an attitude *towards* something which, for me, is *substantial* and universal in and for itself. Right, on the other hand, is in general the *existence* of this substantial element, and is consequently the latter's *particular* aspect and that of my own *particular* freedom. Thus, on a formal level, right and duty appear to belong to different aspects or persons. In the state, as an ethical entity and as the interpenetration of the substantial and the particular, my obligation towards the substantial is at the same time the existence of my particular freedom; that is, duty and right are *united* within the state *in one and the same relation*. (PhR §261A)

The last clause refers us to Kant, who says that we "can think of the relation of end to duty in two ways" (MS 6:382), and these two distinct relations correspond to the separate doctrines of right and virtue (duty). In the former, the content of action springs from pure reason and duty is its own end. When content is given from elsewhere, namely from my living particularity, duty is not its own end. There is some subset of ends that spring from pure reason. All other ends are living, even though there are morally permissible and obligatory ways to pursue them. The pursuit of the former is the topic of the doctrine of virtue. The pursuit of the rest is the topic of the doctrine of right.

Duty seems to concern universality, while right seems to concern particularity. I have a right that my body and my lawful action not be infringed upon by others. My duty rather seems to concern what lies beyond my particularity, that which I do for the sake of itself, independently of my own particular interest. In the state, Hegel says, my right to my particularity is one and the same relation as my obligation to serve that which lies beyond my particularity. My obligation to serve the self-reproduction of the ethical community is the obligation to serve the very institutions that cherish my particularity. My obligation to be a good family member is one and the same as my right to be loved in the intimacy of individuality. My obligation to be a good member of a profession is one and the same as my right to satisfy my particularity in my work. And my obligation to be a good citizen is one and the same as my right to live in a community of free people.

I am free insofar as my will is thinking—that is, insofar as I determine myself in my universality, or in respect of what I know to be good-in-itself in a way that goes beyond my particularity. My freedom does not entitle me to *just deserts*, i.e. to happiness that is at once known to be deserved, such as can only be imagined. My freedom entitles me to something I can not only imagine but that I know to have been accomplished by mind: namely, to live in a free world, where this encompasses in a system the particularity of its members. Happiness, after all, is only an *ought*; it cannot be realized, and indeed that is why its deserved attainment can only be imagined. My freedom entitles me to satisfy my particularity in spheres that articulate its concept: in sexual love and family life, in professional life and leisure, in civic life and public engagement. The satisfaction of particularity in ethical life is not the formal universality of happiness but the concrete universality of freedom—and my freedom entitles me to know my

own life and action to contribute to the self-reproduction of the ethical world that makes this possible in the first place.

Conclusion

Jeanne Morefield frames the project of her recent book on the ideology of imperialism in decline with a piece of rhetoric that is rampant in recent American politics: *This is not who we are*. She compiles a long, bipartisan list of such statements from American politicians in response to the 2012 massacre of sixteen Afghan civilians by an American soldier.[1] She argues that this rhetoric belongs to a narrative designed "to deflect responsibility for imperial violence…in an ongoing, systematic way."[2] The reality of massacre and other forms of violence inflicted by our military apparatus is not who we Americans are, it is said—even though that reality is caused by our own operations, again and again and again. We are lovers of freedom, and so such realities must be unintended consequences of noble pursuits in difficult circumstances. That is to say, we *can* be lovers of freedom, despite the ugly realities we produce. Being lovers of freedom stands above the violence inflicted in the process of developing and maintaining the so-called rules-based liberal order.

This is not who we are as a piece of political rhetoric embodies subjectivism on the level of institutions, and its purpose, if Morefield is right, is to deflect responsibility for the consequences of institutional operations. A subjectivist rather than an ancient Greek Oedipus might respond to the revelation of those infamous facts about his deeds by saying *This is not who*

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[1] She begins with Obama: "It's not who we are as a country." Her list continues: "Hillary Clinton: 'This is not who we are and the United States is committed to seeing that those responsible are held accountable.' 'Clinton Expresses Shock, Regret at Afghan Massacre,' *Reuters*, March 12, 2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/12/ us-aghanistan-usa-clinton-idUSBRE82B10I20120312; Leon Panetta: 'This is not who we are and it's certainly not what we represent when it comes to the great majority of men and women in uniform.' 'The American Way of War,' *Huffington Post*, May 6, 2012, http:// www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-jay-lifton/war-atrocity_b_1490147.htm; General John Allen: 'We send our condolences to families who have lost their loved ones and to the people of Afghanistan. This is not who we are.' *CNN.com*, March 12, 2012, http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/ 1203/12/sitroom.01.html." Morefield (2014), p. 243 n. 2. Of course, this rhetoric is frequently used domestically, too, perhaps most strikingly in connection with mass shootings.
[2] Morefield (2014), p. 1.

I am—and then seek to remain king rather than gouge out his eyes. Such an Oedipus deflects responsibility insofar as his fate exhibits an ineliminable feature of agency like ours, namely that it cannot guarantee the reality of its effects, which can of course get ugly. It is in a similar fashion that the American politician suggests that the United States can deflect responsibility for the shooting rampage in Kandahar. It is an eliminable feature of statecraft and global stewardship that it cannot guarantee the reality of its effects. After all, it involves factors beyond its control, such as individual soldiers who might choose to act criminally—not to mention the barbarians at the gate.

Hegel's idea of the state is sharply at odds with this picture. Hegel thinks it belongs to the idea of the state that the discrepancy between self-conception and reality expressed by *This is not who we are* has been ruled out. He writes: "The state is…*manifest* and clear to itself, [it] thinks and knows itself and implements what it knows in so far as it knows it" (PhR §257). The idea of the state is incompatible with the deflection of responsibility expressed by *This is not who we are*: that is, knowing the rules-based liberal order to be the truth of freedom, on the one hand, while implementing a reality of devastation and unfreedom, on the other. The state achieves the objectivity of agency at the altar of which Oedipus gouges out his eyes: its activity is transparent, and its self-knowledge coincides with its efficacy.

Now, it is true that Oedipus should not be held responsible for patricide and incest. His self-mutilation contradicts his right of subjectivity, according to which he is responsible for his deeds only insofar as he knows them. But the subjectivist misses the point that Sophocles' Oedipus might express by saying *This is not who I am*: namely, that the objectivity of his agency has been *perverted*. He takes himself to incur *guilt* insofar as he understands the patricide and

incest that took place to be the destruction of his own agency. This presupposes that the unperverted exercise of his agency is the power to realize himself objectively—that is, not to find out what he has done later but to know his objectivity by making it. By gouging out his eyes, he seeks to atone for the destruction of his agency—and to restore its objectivity. He is not a man who would knowingly look upon his mother in the embraces of love or his father in death by his hand. He thus gives objective existence to the previously hidden blindness in virtue of which he failed to see his mother in Jocasta and his father in the stranger. The subjectivist erases Oedipus' struggle with objectivity.

Hegel preserves the will's struggle with external contingency, evil, and internal collision —and he thinks it is overcome in the state, which is the truth of freedom's accomplishment. In the state, mind attains the objective and transparent efficacy for the sake of which tragic heroes sacrifice themselves. This resolution of tragic struggle in the triumph of the true might seem to betray "a decidedly comic reading of tragedy,"[3] as Richard Halpern has recently put it. We are reconciled to the devastation of Oedipus and Antigone in the recognition that the ethical world emerges from conflict such as theirs. Everything turns out well in the end, for the struggle was for the sake of a higher end. Indeed, the achievements described in the previous chapter might seem triumphant to the point of being fantastic. Is it really plausible that evil is overcome in a benevolent, trustworthy state? Can we sanely believe that the state's efficacy is our very own, and that it is moreover perfectly knowledgeable, effective, and transparent?

I want to conclude the dissertation by suggesting a source of intuitive plausibility for Hegel's rather remarkable ambitions in restoring objectivity to the will. The subjectivist political

[3] Halpern (2017), p. 193.

rhetoric of *This is not who we are* stands opposed to another piece of recently ascendant political rhetoric: *We make us free*. *This is not who we are* deflects the state's responsibility: the actuality of political life may be weekly mass shootings and enormous imperial violence, but the truth of freedom lies in the rules-based liberal order. *We make us free* identifies us as individuals with the reality of the institutions through which we organize our freedom. The truth of our freedom is not subjective, as the commitment to a liberal order is. The truth of our freedom is our freedom, which is to say its reality—where poverty and mass incarceration at home and violent subjugation and murder outside the imperial core is not the reality of freedom. The only way we can say *This is not who we are* honestly is by altering external actuality so that those things do not happen. Where life is precious, life is precious[4]—and this is not a tautology but a rejection of the one-sided subjectivity of the will. Freedom cannot lie in a liberal order that excludes freedom as an accomplished end; it must lie in the immediate actuality of free peoples. It is not fantastic or naive to think it is up to us to make the world of freedom, because freedom that is only subjective is no freedom at all. We *must* think it is up to us, if we are to think of ourselves as free at all.

In fact, Hegel tempers the decidedly comic character of tragedy as the triumph of the true and the perfect efficacy of the state that emerges from the wreckage. We saw that the political disposition apprehends the institutions of the state as truly the actuality of freedom in the habitual volition of acting in conformity with those institutions. I contrasted the neurosis of the moral will with the confidence of the ethical will. But the ethical will is not a static achievement of perfect harmony. Habit, in fact, can be deadly:

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[4] This slogan is due to Ruth Wilson Gilmore.

> Human beings even die as a result of habit…For they are active only in so far as they have not yet attained something and wish to assert themselves and show what they can do in pursuit of it. Once this is accomplished, their activity and vitality disappear, and the loss of interest which ensues is mental or physical death. (PhR §151Z)

This expresses the same contradiction we saw in Chapter 4: our interest in the world is only activated insofar as we think it is up to us to realize the good, but the world is already good and does not depend on us to make it so. The immanent self-overcoming of this contradiction is not the stable achievement of ethical community, a kind of spiritual analogue of the infinite genus process that occurs in life. The restoration of objectivity to the will is not the elimination of contradiction; it is rather the truth that freedom possesses the resources to overcome its own contradictions, which do not cease to appear. Indeed, Hegel was aware of the emerging contradictions of the ethical world of his time—specifically, the unfreedom of the rabble and the unfreedom perpetuated by intensifying imperialism. These contradictions do not speak against the necessary objectivity of freedom that Hegel defends, for that objectivity consists in being able to overcome its own contradictions. As Hegel famously says, philosophy grasps its own time in thought: the contradiction of happiness may be resolved in Hegel's time through the family and the market, but that does not imply the finality of those resolutions. The objectivity of freedom still stands, for freedom makes itself free.

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