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Hegel's *Doppelsatz*: A Neutral Reading

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IN THE PREFACE to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes one of his most well-known and frequently discussed remarks:

What is rational is actual;
and what is actual is rational

This conviction is shared by every ingenuous consciousness as well as by philosophy, and the latter takes it as its point of departure in considering both the *spiritual* and the *natural* universe. (*GPR*, 24–25; *EPR*, 20)¹

Sometimes known as the *Doppelsatz* (or “double dictum”),² this saying has been seized on by Hegel’s critics as a summation of his conservatism and quietism, whilst his defenders have argued that this is not so, and that read correctly it in fact harbors a critical dimension that allows the *Philosophy of Right* as a whole to be read in a progressive way.

It is perhaps a sign of the growing respect for Hegel and his thought that the conservative reading of the *Doppelsatz* has lost virtually all support (at least among Hegel scholars), while the critical or progressive reading holds sway.³ My aim in this paper is not to return to the conservative reading; but I want to argue that the *Doppelsatz* should not be given a critical reading either, so that the position I offer is neutral between the two. My claim will be that when Hegel identifies what is

¹ All references in the text marked *GPR* are to G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. and Index (Frankfurt am Main: 1969–71). All references in the text marked *EPR* are to G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). In cases where the translation has been modified, this is noted.

² The term was introduced by Dieter Henrich in his “Einleitung des Herausgebers: Vernunft in Verwirklichung,” in Dieter Henrich, ed., *Hegel: Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819–20 in einer Nachschrift* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983). See also Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 52.

³ For a fairly exhaustive list of references to the conservative reading, see M. W. Jackson, “Hegel: The Real and the Rational,” in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 19–21. References to some of the main progressive readings are given below, especially in note 8.

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actual with what is rational in the *Doppelsatz*, his intention is not to offer a normative assessment of what is actual (as both the conservative and progressive readings assume, differing only over what exactly is being normatively endorsed); rather, it is to suggest that genuine philosophy must be committed to reason in its methods of inquiry, if it is to properly undertake an investigation into the “spiritual universe” as well as the “natural” one. On my view, then, Hegel identifies what is actual and what is rational in the *Doppelsatz* not in order to say that the actual is right or good (to “legitimate” or “sanctify” the actual, as it is sometimes put⁴), but to remind his readers that philosophy has a basic commitment to reason as the proper way to engage with the world at a fundamental level (the level of what is actual); it is this that makes the identity of what is actual with what is rational a “point of departure” for philosophy. The *Doppelsatz* is thus a defense of philosophical rationalism, rather than a normative claim about *was ist wirklich* in either a conservative sense (as simply what is) or a progressive sense (as what is when properly realized).

I will begin (in §1) by briefly outlining the way in which the debate concerning the *Doppelsatz* has been conducted, and will then (in §§2–3) contrast this with the neutral reading I propose; finally (in §4) I will defend that reading against possible objections.

I

The conservative reading to which contemporary critical or progressive readings of the *Doppelsatz* are opposed is exemplified by Karl Popper in his *Open Society and Its Enemies*, where he claims that according to Hegel “what is, is good,”⁵ and where he takes the *Doppelsatz* as a summary of that Hegelian view:

Hegel [maintains] that everything that is reasonable must be real, and everything that is real must be reasonable, and that the development of reality is the same as that of reason. And since there can be no higher standard in existence than the latest development of Reason and of the Idea, everything that is now real or actual

⁴ See Rudolf Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit*, repr. (Georg Olms: Hildesheim, 1962), 367–68; translated by Julius Kraft in *G. W. F. Hegel: Critical Assessments*, 4 vols., ed. Robert Stern (London: Routledge, 1993), I, 221–22: “The theory of the divine right of kings and the theory of the *obedientia absoluta* are innocent and innocuous compared with the terrible doctrine which sanctifies the existing because it exists.” See also Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, 39 vols. (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1964–68), XXI, 266; *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1962), II, 361, where Engels notoriously misquotes the *Doppelsatz*: “No philosophical proposition has earned more gratitude from narrow-minded governments and wrath from equally narrow-minded liberals than Hegel’s famous statement: ‘All that is real is rational: and all that is rational is real.’ That was tangibly a sanctification of things that be, a philosophical benediction bestowed upon despotism, police-government, Star Chamber proceedings, and censorship.”

⁵ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Volume II: The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath*, 5th ed. (London: Routledge, 1966), 41. See also Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961), 702: “the identification of the real and the rational leads unavoidably to some of the complacency inseparable from the belief that ‘whatever is, is right.’”

exists by necessity, and must be reasonable as well as good. (Particularly good, as we shall see, is the actually existing Prussian state.)⁶

Thus, on Popper's reading, Hegel's *Doppelsatz* is taken to be conservative, in the sense that it claims that whatever exists (such as the Prussian state of Hegel's time) is rational and therefore good, and to be quietistic, in the sense that it claims that everything that is rational and good already exists: the *Doppelsatz* therefore rules out the possibility of normative criticism of current social arrangements (and hence is conservative), and the need to do anything to make them better since the good is already realized (and hence is quietistic). Conservative readings of this sort then characteristically link the *Doppelsatz* to Hegel's wider philosophical position (so, in Popper's case, he ties it to Hegel's supposed historicism, where Hegel is said to hold that "there can be no higher standard in existence than the latest development of Reason and of the Idea"), and to the historical background to the *Philosophy of Right* (where Hegel is seen as a spokesman for the Prussian restoration).

In response to this conservative reading of the *Doppelsatz*, defenders of Hegel have argued that it is based on a fundamental misconception of what he is saying.⁷ In particular, it is emphasised that in the *Doppelsatz*, Hegel uses the term 'actuality' (*Wirklichkeit*), and this is seen as having a technical sense for Hegel: to be "actual," something must not just exist, but must conform to its essential nature.⁸ It is argued, therefore, that Hegel is not simply claiming here that "what is, is good," if that is taken to mean "whatever happens to be, is good." For, it is only what is *actual* (in Hegel's sense) that is good, which will exclude many *existing* states—states which exist but which do not properly exemplify what an actual state should be. Given this distinction, therefore, it is argued that Hegel's *Doppelsatz* is neither conservative nor quietistic. It is not conservative, because Hegel's notion of "actuality" leaves room for a critical gap between a thing as it is (as it exists) and its essence (as it should be), in those cases where states are not actual, and therefore not rational. And the *Doppelsatz* is not quietistic, because we may intelligibly act to make an existing state more *wirklich*, by using Hegel's essentialist conception of "actuality" to make sense of the idea of working to draw the existence of

⁶ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 41.

⁷ Another response, which I will not consider in this paper, is to argue that while the *Doppelsatz* can be read conservatively, this was added (along with other material, such as the attack on Fries) in order to deceive the censor, and is in fact at odds with the real progressive intentions buried in the main body of the book. (See Karl-Heinz Iltting, "Der exoterische und der esoterische Hegel (1824–1831)," introduction to G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie (1818–1831)*, ed. Karl-Heinz Iltting, 4 vols. [Stuttgart-Bad-Canstatt: Friedrich Frommann, 1973], IV, 45–66.) On this account, it is the earlier variants on the *Doppelsatz* (which I will discuss below) that express its critical potential, rather than the *Doppelsatz* itself.

⁸ Cf. Walter A. Kaufmann, "The Hegel Myth and Its Method," *Philosophical Review* 60 (1951): 469; T. M. Knox, "Translator's Notes," in G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 302; Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 127; Paul Owen Johnson, *The Critique of Thought: A Re-examination of Hegel's Science of Logic* (Aldeshot: Avebury, 1988), 139–40; Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 223–24; Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 53–54; Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 132.

things closer to their essence, for example through social reform.⁹ Progressive readings of this sort will then characteristically go on to question conservative readings of Hegel's wider philosophical position and the conservative account of Hegel's political allegiances at the time when the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* came to be written.

I think that most would now agree that the proponents of the progressive reading of the *Doppelsatz* are right to claim that as it stands the conservative reading is misguided, and that it is a mistake to interpret it as saying that "what is, is good." It is then natural to think, if the conservative reading is false in this way, then this in itself establishes the truth of the progressive reading, so that precisely in drawing on the *Existenz/Wirklichkeit* distinction here, Hegel's aim was in fact to signal the critical implications of the *Doppelsatz*, in the way that the progressive reading suggests. However, I want to argue that if we look closely at the context of the *Doppelsatz* within the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right*, this is not so clear. That is, I will argue in the next two sections that while the proponents of the progressive reading are right to claim that the *Doppelsatz* is not saying that "what is, is good," they are wrong to suggest that instead it is saying "only what is actual, is good, and much that merely exists is bad." I will argue, rather, that the *Doppelsatz* is neutral on such normative questions, so *neither* the conservative *nor* the progressive reading is correct.

2

One assumption concerning the *Doppelsatz* that both the conservative and the progressive readings of it share is that in using the term *vernünftig* here, Hegel is (in part at least) expressing a positive normative assessment of it. As Michael Hardimon puts it: "'Rational,' as Hegel uses the term, has both an epistemic and a normative aspect; roughly speaking, it means both rationally intelligible and reasonable or good."¹⁰ This assumption concerning Hegel's use of the term 'rational' in the *Doppelsatz* is of course what gets the whole dispute between conservative and progressive readings going in the first place: Hegel is assumed to be endorsing something as right or good, so the question is, is he endorsing things as they happen to be (as on the conservative reading), or things as they would be if fully "actual" (as on the progressive reading)?

Now, the question of Hegel's understanding of the term 'rational' is of course a complex one, as it too is a technical term for Hegel, and to explain it fully would

⁹ Cf. Frederick Neuhauser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 257: "Despite Hegel's reputation as an apologist for the Prussian state, the institutions he endorses are obviously not identical to those of nineteenth-century Prussia. It is precisely here—in the disparity between real (existing) institutions and those that are actual in Hegel's technical sense—that the possibility of social criticism is to be found. For the theory of *Sittlichkeit's* idealized account of modern social institutions provides us with the resources for seeing where existing institutions do not fully measure up to what they should be and for thinking about how they can be made to conform to their own (immanent) rational principles."

¹⁰ Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 53. See also M. J. Inwood, *Hegel* (London: Routledge, 1983), 497, whom Hardimon cites in support of his view. See also Emil L. Fackenheim, "On the Actuality of the Rational and the Rationality of the Actual," in Jon Stewart, ed., *The Hegel Myths and Legends* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 42–43.

involve a detailed account of his whole philosophical position. However, the narrower suggestion I want to make here is that when Hegel comes to use the term 'rational' in the *Doppelsatz* in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, it may be wrong to assume he is using it normatively; rather, he may be using the term purely *methodologically*. On this account, that is, in stating that the actual is rational and the rational is actual, Hegel is telling us that what is actual can be investigated by reason and what reason investigates is the actual, rather than that some state of affairs is right or good. In other words, the *Doppelsatz* is simply part of his argument for having "faith in reason" as the central method of philosophical inquiry, rather than an assessment of the normative status of 'the actual,' however that term is understood.¹¹

To see that this is so, it is necessary to look in more detail than is usually done at the context of the *Doppelsatz* in the Preface.¹² I will begin by first exploring the kind of thing Hegel characteristically tries to achieve in the introductory remarks to his works, and then in the next section will use this to help me offer a detailed reading of the Preface itself along the lines I have suggested.

As is well-known, Hegel had a rather contemptuous view of the place of prefaces and introductions in philosophical works, holding that they were too often used by lazy readers to avoid getting to grips with the works themselves,¹³ while if a philosophical system could be summed up in a preface, it was surely of little value. He therefore does not use the introductory sections of his writings to attempt any real exposition of the book as a whole, or any defense of its conclusions; instead, he mainly uses them to deal with meta-level issues, concerning the nature of the work as a work of *philosophy*, and therefore with the question of what philosophy (in Hegel's view) is.

In Hegel's discussions of the nature of philosophy, he characteristically presents it as a discipline in crisis, held in deserved disrepute in many quarters, given the failure of contemporary philosophers to find a proper way of doing the subject. He then warns against the dangers of this disrespect for philosophy, as tantamount to a disrespect for reason and thought itself, and offers his own philosophical approach as a way of reviving the philosophical tradition, and thus as enabling us to return to a kind of rationalism that is in grave danger of being lost.

¹¹ See the famous passage from Hegel's inaugural address in Berlin: "To begin with, however, I can demand nothing but that you bring with you a confidence in *science, faith in reason, confidence and faith in yourself*. The *courage of truth, faith in the power of spirit* is the first condition of *philosophical study*; man must honour himself and *consider himself worthy of what is highest*. He cannot think highly enough of the greatness and power of the spirit; the self-contained essence of the universe *has no strength in itself* which could resist the courage of knowledge; it must open itself to knowledge, laying its riches and depth before its eyes and allowing its enjoyment" (G. W. F. Hegel, *Berliner Schriften 1818–1831*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister, [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956], XI, 8–9).

¹² One work that provides a helpful discussion of the Preface as a whole, though without hereby arriving at any particularly new insights into the *Doppelsatz*, is Adriaan Th. Peperzak, *Philosophy and Politics: A Commentary on the Preface to Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1987).

¹³ See G. W. F. Hegel, "Aphorismen aus Hegels Wastebook," in *Theorie Werkausgabe*, II, 556–57; "Aphorisms from Hegel's Wastebook," trans. S. Klein, D. L. Roochnik and G. E. Tucker, *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1979): 4: "The usual royal road in philosophy is to read prefaces and book reviews, in order to get an approximate idea of things." See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe*, III, 11–12; *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 1–2.

So, for example, in the Preface to the first edition of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel comments on the contemporary “indifference” to and “contempt” for philosophy “as a science [*Wissenschaft*],” such that philosophy has become shallow and empty, and thereby deserves to have fallen from its cultural preeminence. Nonetheless, he suggests that it is impossible for us to lose respect for “the *higher cognition*” of philosophy proper, since “the inner drive of rational insight” is what “alone gives man his dignity.” Once philosophy returns to this “*higher cognition*”—which with his own work he clearly thinks it will—philosophy will then naturally regain its place as the pinnacle of human culture, while at the same time putting that culture on the right path.¹⁴ Then, in the Preface to the second edition, Hegel focuses more on those who see philosophy as a threat to other ways of thinking, particularly religion and morality, where again he is concerned to stress the need these ways of thinking have of philosophy, if they are to retain their rational core and proper justification. Likewise, in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel considers his philosophical treatment of nature in relation to the empirical sciences, and attempts to show that there is a distinctive place for the former as a particular sort of inquiry, different from but related to the latter. Similar reflections on the nature of philosophy can be found in the introductory sections to several other works, such as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*,¹⁵ and Hegel’s lectures.¹⁶ Thus, in general, Hegel takes the opportunity of his prefaces and introductions not to summarize his position, or to outline his argument for it, but to “declare myself about the external bearing of my philosophical activity on the cultural concerns of our time,”¹⁷ where this means to stake out his view of what philosophy should be, and what role it should serve within that culture.

Now, as we have already seen, Hegel thinks that philosophy can take up its proper cultural place only if it satisfies “the continuing inner drive of rational

¹⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse: Erster Teil, Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe*, VIII, 12–13; *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), 2–3.

¹⁵ For further discussion, see Robert Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Routledge, 2002), 30–36.

¹⁶ See Hegel’s inaugural address at Heidelberg, delivered in 1816:

But the distress of our time, already mentioned, and the interest of great events in the world [i.e., the Napoleonic wars and their consequences], has repressed, even among ourselves, a profound and serious preoccupation with philosophy and frightened away more general attention to it. Thus what has happened is that, since sterling characters have turned to practical matters, superficiality and shallowness have managed to hold the floor in philosophy and make themselves at home there. We may well say that ever since philosophy began to raise its head in Germany, the outlook for this science has never been so poor as at just this present time; never have Vacuity and Conceit so endowed it with superficiality, never have they thought and acted in philosophy with such arrogance as if they ruled the roost there. To work against this superficiality, to work together in German seriousness and honesty, and to rescue philosophy from the cul-de-sac into which it is sliding—this is our task, firmly believing that we are called to it by the deeper spirit of the age. (*Vorlesungen Über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe*, XVIII, 12–13; *Hegel’s Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. T. M. Knox and A. V. Miller [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985], 2)

¹⁷ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, 14; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 4.

insight, which alone gives man his dignity."¹⁸ Hegel believes that true philosophy can be contrasted to other ways of thinking in the way it satisfies that drive, and thus a culture without a philosophy that gives us rational insight in this way is an impoverished culture. He therefore criticizes those who think philosophy cannot give us rational insight; those who think rational insight can be provided by other ways of thinking, such as the empirical sciences, or religion; and those who think we would be better off without aspiring to rational insight at all. Against the first position, he argues that while the inadequate philosophical positions of his contemporaries may indeed fail to provide us with rational insight, the classical tradition in its own terms did, and it is this tradition that he claims he can renew. Against the second position, he argues that other intellectual disciplines are not adequate in themselves to provide the kind of rational insight provided by philosophy. And against the third position, he argues that no acceptable substitute can be found for reason, in enabling human beings to make sense of the world and reach proper conclusions in their inquiries.

Thus, in general, the prefaces and introductions of Hegel's works serve as a kind of manifesto for the rationalistic programme that the works themselves are designed to fulfil. In these prefaces and introductions, Hegel can frequently be found attempting to diagnose the current lack of respect for philosophy, where that diagnosis is based on methodological issues: philosophers no longer care about conducting their inquiries in a properly "scientific" manner, as they no longer have any faith in the *more geometrico* of the early modern rationalists, so that instead they turn to less rational methods. Hegel agrees that this mathematical method had its limitations; but by turning away from any sort of "scientific" method completely, contemporary philosophers have reduced the significance of philosophy; their conclusions are seen to be purely subjective, arbitrary, and ungrounded, a matter of empty speculation. Hegel clearly believes, therefore, that by offering a new kind of rational method, he can show how philosophy can be conducted in a manner that will not lead it to becoming marginalized in this way, but which will return it to its proper place at the center of our thought.¹⁹

Seen in this context, I believe it can be shown that the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right* sets out to argue along similar lines, and to claim that philosophy must be

¹⁸ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, 13; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 3.

¹⁹ See Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, 47–48; *Phenomenology*, 28–29:

[C]urrent opinion itself has already come to view the scientific regime bequeathed by mathematics as quite *old-fashioned*—with its explanations, divisions, axioms, sets of theorems, its proofs, principles, deductions, and conclusions from them . . . But we have already pointed out that, once the necessity of the Notion has banished the slipshod style of conversational discussion, and along with it the pedantry and pomposity of science, they are not to be replaced by the sort of non-method of presentiment and inspiration, or by the arbitrariness of prophetic utterance, both of which despise not only scientific pomposity, but scientific procedures of all kinds.

As Walter Kaufmann has pointed out (in his *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts and Commentary* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966], 426), this passage contains an allusion to Fries in its talk of "presentiment" (*Ahnens*), with its reference to Fries' *Wissen, Glaube und Ahndung* of 1805 (Fries was deliberately using an archaic spelling in his title). As we shall see, Fries comes in for similar criticism on methodological grounds in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*.

conceived as a rational enterprise if it is to carry conviction, this time in its speculations about the social world. I will therefore suggest that Hegel's references to "what is rational" in the *Doppelsatz* should be seen in this light. If this is correct, then in the *Doppelsatz* Hegel should not be understood as making any normative claim about "the actual," but rather as making a claim about the relation between "the actual" and philosophy as a rationalistic discipline. Hence my suggestion is that the *Doppelsatz* is neutral on the normative issue that divides the conservative and progressive readings.

3

In this section, I will look in some detail at the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, and argue that it very much conforms to the pattern we have already identified concerning what Hegel sets out to establish in his prefaces and introductions.

At the end of the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes his usual disparaging comments on what its role has been: "But it is time to conclude this foreword; as a foreword, its function was in any case merely to make external and subjective comments on the points of view of the work to which it is prefaced" (*GPR*, 28; *EPR*, 23). We are warned, therefore, that the Preface is designed merely to orient the reader in general terms about the approach Hegel is taking, and is not itself part of the "scientific and objective treatment" (*GPR*, 28; *EPR*, 23) that will follow. As we have seen, Hegel's preferred way of orienting the reader in this manner is to offer some reflections on the current state of philosophy, and of how his work stands in relation to it.

As we should now expect, therefore, Hegel starts the Preface by remarking on "the shameful decline into which [philosophy] has fallen in our times" (*GPR*, 12; *EPR*, 10). Characteristically, Hegel accepts that part of the blame lies with philosophy itself, for philosophy has abandoned some of its previous methods, "of definition, classification, and inference" (*GPR*, 12; *EPR*, 10), and as a result has lost its intellectual rigour, "to make way for the arbitrary pronouncements of the heart, of fantasy, and of contingent intuition" (*GPR*, 12; *EPR*, 10). Hegel emphasizes that his "outline" of "natural law and political science" (the subtitle of the *Philosophy of Right*) will be conducted in a properly thought-out manner, using a more advanced philosophical method: this will show how the subject under discussion can be apprehended in a "logical spirit," as we find that there is a "logical progression" from one part of the inquiry to the next (*GPR*, 13; *EPR*, 10). Hegel is of course advertising here his method of immanent or dialectical critique, which examines the nature and limits of various positions by beginning with the most elementary, and so works up to more sophisticated positions in which the simpler ones are integrated and their problems resolved, until a stable outlook is attained. Hegel thus argues that the proper way to proceed is not to begin with any presuppositions about what right is, but to "observe the proper immanent development of the thing [*Sache*] itself" (*GPR*, §2, 30; *EPR*, 26), as conceptions of the right and freedom become more complex and less inadequate through the process of internal critique. This is Hegel's "philosophical manner of progressing from one topic to another and of conducting a scientific proof" (*GPR*, 12; *EPR*, 10) which he says he will be following as far as possible in the *Philosophy of Right*, "which

arranges and orders the essential elements" (*GPR*, 11; *EPR*, 9) of the social world into an integrated hierarchy, and so reveals their conceptual development and interconnection.²⁰

Now, Hegel acknowledges that in the intellectual climate of his time, where "it is imagined that what philosophy puts forward is as ephemeral a product as Penelope's weaving, which is begun afresh every day" (*GPR*, 12; *EPR*, 10), to make such claims about the "scientific" nature of his inquiry may seem rather unwonted; moreover, to take such methodological issues seriously may be dismissed as inconsequential, where what is taken to matter much more is the novelty of a work's *content*. So, while Hegel asks that his "treatise" should be "understood and judged" in terms of whether it is properly "logical" and "scientific" (*GPR*, 13; *EPR*, 10), he recognizes that contemporary thinkers may not think this is of much significance, where more weight is placed on whether or not the philosopher has something new to say: "It is true that we may hear it said by those who seem to adopt the most thorough approach that form is a purely external quality, indifferent to the matter [*Sache*] itself, which is alone of consequence; furthermore, the task of the writer, especially the philosophical writer, may be said to consist in the discovery of *truths*, the statement of *truths*, and the dissemination of *truths* and correct concepts" (*GPR*, 13; *EPR*, 10–11). As we shall see, Hegel believes that philosophy which focuses on "content" at the expense of "form" does so at its peril, in so far as "in science, the content is essentially inseparable from the *form*" (*GPR*, 13; *EPR*, 10).²¹

First, he argues that in practice these philosophers seldom do manage to offer any new "discoveries," so that it is rather empty to claim that what matters about their philosophy is its "content," as what we actually come to learn from them is rarely much different from what we knew already: "the same old brew is reheated again and again and served up to all and sundry" (*GPR*, 13; *EPR*, 11). The danger here, Hegel thinks, is that philosophers will be tempted to treat this "reheated brew" as if it really contained "new and unheard-of truths," and so claim for themselves qua philosophers a special kind of epistemic authority and importance "as if all that the world had hitherto lacked was these zealous disseminators of truths" (*GPR*, 13; *EPR*, 11). Second, Hegel argues that in the rush to present us with these fresh discoveries, such philosophers just add to the cacophony of competing views, while leaving us unable to settle on which of these views is really valid, because they lack a proper method: "And if, amidst this jumble of truths, there is something that is neither old nor new but enduring, how can it be extracted from these formlessly fluctuating reflections—how can it be distinguished and verified other than by *scientific* means?" (*GPR*, 13; *EPR*, 11).

Hegel observes, moreover, that if philosophy claims that what is distinctive about it is its content, rather than its method, it will face the difficulty of finding

²⁰ See also Hegel's draft letter to Hardenberg of October 1820, in which he writes that the central aim of the *Philosophy of Right* "is scientific treatment and theoretical form" (*Briefe von und an Hegel*, trans. Johannes Hoffmeister, 4 vols. [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1953], II, 241; *Hegel: The Letters*, trans., Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984], 459).

²¹ See also *GPR*, 27; *EPR*, 22: "For *form* in its concrete significance is reason as conceptual cognition [*begreifendes Erkennen*], and *content* is reason as the substantial essence of both ethical and natural actuality; the conscious identity of the two is the philosophical Idea."

that there may not be anything very new for it to propose that is not already part of our ordinary social and ethical thinking, and hence it will make itself appear redundant: “The *truth concerning right, ethics, and the state* is at any rate *as old as its exposition and promulgation in public law and in public morality and religion*” (*GPR*, 13–14; *EPR*, 11).²² Hegel thinks that this redundancy can be avoided only by once again accepting the importance of “form” or method, for then we need no longer present philosophy as if its value lies solely in the novelty of its content regarding truth in moral matters, as it is still possible for philosophy to make a significant contribution, “in as much as the thinking mind [*Geist*] is not content to possess it [i.e., this truth] in this proximate manner” (*GPR*, 14; *EPR*, 11). The difficulty the “thinking mind” faces, Hegel suggests, is that the truths of ordinary morality lack any proper methodological framework: what is needed is that they be given a philosophical treatment, “so that the content which is already rational in itself may also be given a rational form and thereby appear justified to free thinking” (*GPR*, 14; *EPR*, 11). How is it that this philosophical treatment will enable the truths of ordinary morality to appear justified to “free thinking”? Because, according to Hegel, “free thinking” demands that thought can *derive* those truths in a way that shows they are grounded within a self-supporting system,²³ rather than based on any sort of extra-systematic *given*, for only then can reason be satisfied and “know itself as united in its innermost being with the truth” (*GPR*, 14; *EPR*, 11).²⁴

Thus, Hegel argues, reason cannot be content with any treatment of these moral truths which attempts to base them on “the external positive authority of the state or of mutual agreement among human beings, or by the authority of inner feeling and the heart and by the testimony of the spirit which immediately concurs with this” (*GPR*, 14; *EPR*, 11), because all these modes of grounding are inadequate, as the further question remains of *why* the state supports this practice rather than that, or *why* people happen to agree on this rather than that, and so on. Using his method, Hegel suggests, such questions will not arise, as no such ungrounded presuppositions remain,²⁵ so that in this respect “free thinking” can be satisfied. This, for Hegel, is the distinctive contribution philosophy can make in this area.

²² See also Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §22 Zusatz, 79; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 55: “The business of philosophy consists only in bringing into consciousness explicitly what people have held to be valid about thought from time immemorial. Thus, philosophy establishes nothing new; what we have brought forth by our reflection here is what everyone already takes for granted without reflection.”

²³ See also *GPR*, §2 Zusatz, 30–31; *EPR*, 26: “Philosophy forms a circle. It has an initial or immediate point—for it must begin somewhere—a point which is not demonstrated and is not a result. But the starting point of philosophy is immediately relative, for it must appear at another end-point as a result. Philosophy is a sequence which is not suspended in mid-air; it does not begin immediately, but is rounded off within itself.” See also Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §15.

²⁴ For further helpful discussion of this aspect of Hegel’s methodological position, and its rationale, see Stephen Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth and History: An Introduction to Hegel’s Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1991), 41–68. See also Richard Dien Winfield, *Reason and Justice* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988) and *Overcoming Foundations: Studies in Systematic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); and William Maker, *Philosophy Without Foundations: Rethinking Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

²⁵ Hegel allows, however, that the *Philosophy of Right itself* is not totally presuppositionless, as it takes for granted the preceding phases of the system of which it is part; but, he claims, taken in the context of that system, those presuppositions themselves are sufficiently grounded: see *GPR*, §2, 30; *EPR*, 26.

Against his critics, therefore, Hegel suggests that the form of a philosophical inquiry is not somehow irrelevant compared to its content, as even if philosophy does not go beyond ordinary morality in terms of its content, it is precisely by presenting its content in a “scientific” manner that philosophy can make its contribution to our ethical thinking, in showing that the content is not arbitrary, but can be given a systematic treatment that reveals its inner necessity; philosophy can therefore deepen our understanding of what makes certain positions valid, and thereby satisfy our need for rational insight, even where it cannot claim to be a special source of moral truths.

Now, it might be felt that my reading of this paragraph plays into the hands of the conservative interpretation of Hegel, and as such leaves his position open to criticism. In particular, it may seem to treat public morality as too static and homogeneous, and to give philosophy too passive a role in relation to that public morality, where philosophy ought not to give the latter any independent authority. However, with regard to the first point, nothing I have said about Hegel’s position requires him to hold that public morality is completely unchanging and uncontested: indeed, Hegel himself frequently emphasized (in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and elsewhere) that public morality can alter in different ways, and can be deeply contested. All Hegel is denying, in my view, is that the philosopher qua philosopher should take it as his primary role to guide this process.²⁶ Thus, his position is that while ethical change and development can occur, this can quite properly be brought about by changes in public morality *at large*, and not by the special inquiries of the philosopher. The danger in ranking “content” above “form” is that this will not be acknowledged, as the philosopher’s only role is then to tell us how to think on these issues in a potentially disastrous way, based on a claim to authority that is spurious because it has no real methodological grounding, where, without this, “[o]ne bare assurance is worth just as much as another.”²⁷

But, it might be felt (and this is the second objection), if the primary role of the philosopher is not to provide new “content” to our moral thinking, has not Hegel abandoned its essentially critical role, and so revealed the inherent conservatism of his position?²⁸ And, given that Hegel himself does seem to offer proposals for the reforms of at least some institutions in the *Philosophy of Right*, and so to that extent himself seems to allow himself qua philosopher to offer something by

²⁶ As Dudley Knowles has suggested recently (*Hegel and the Philosophy of Right* [London: Routledge, 2002], 70 and 346, n. 3), when Hegel famously says at the end of the Preface that “philosophy paints its grey in grey,” he means that it gives us a kind of theoretical reflection on the essential elements of the social world, where this can only be done after the dust of day-to-day debate and social change has settled and “actuality has reached maturity,” when “a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized, by the grey in grey of philosophy; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk” (*GPR*, 28; *EPR*, 23). Philosophy is therefore necessarily limited in how far it can go in claiming to be able to change the world by “issuing instructions on how the world ought to be,” because it cannot reflect on the social world from “outside,” so that in this sense philosophy “comes too late” to tell us what we ought to do (*GPR*, 28; *EPR*, 23).

²⁷ Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, 71; *Phenomenology*, 49.

²⁸ See Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit*, 366 (trans, 221): “Kant had once taught this science [of philosophical ethics] to fly higher; now returning from heaven to earth, it bears the mark of a more petty and fearful time. Face to face with reality [*Wirklichkeit*], temporal-human reality, idealism lays down its arms, believing itself able to maintain its honour and its name only in subordination to this reality.”

way of new “content,” how can my reading of Hegel be correct? I am not sure these criticisms are as forceful as they seem. For, although Hegel as I read him objects to any purely “content” driven philosophy that lacks any concern for the rationalistic demands of a *Wissenschaft*, nothing we have seen so far in the Preface (nor, I will argue, in what is to come) suggests that philosophy cannot propose any institutional reforms at all—it just must do so based on a proper method, otherwise it will have the problematic status of merely subjective opinion.

Hegel now goes on to consider arguments designed to show that subjective opinions are all we can hope for in ethical and social matters, so there is nothing wrong with philosophy proceeding in this way. The first is that because opinions on moral matters are deeply divided, there is no “publicly recognized truth” here for us to follow; instead, we are faced by “the *infinite variety of opinions*,” so that we must abandon the attempt to arrive at anything that is “universally acknowledged and valid,” where “this perplexity may easily be taken for a just and genuine concern with the matter [*Sache*] itself” (*GPR*, 14; *EPR*, 11–12). Hegel responds, however, by arguing that this stress on the variety of moral thought is exaggerated and in bad faith:

But in fact, those who pride themselves on this perplexity are in the position of not being able to see the wood for the trees, and the only perplexity and difficulty that is present is one they themselves have created; indeed, this perplexity and difficulty is rather a proof that they want something other than what is universally acknowledged and valid, something other than the substance of the right and the ethical. (*GPR*, 14; *EPR*, 12)

The second objection Hegel considers at this point centers on the idea that freedom consists in thinking for oneself about moral and political matters, where it is claimed that this means that “the only criterion of thought and the only way in which thought can know itself to be free is the extent to which it *diverges from what is universally acknowledged and valid* and manages to invent something *particular* for itself” (*GPR*, 15; *EPR*, 12). The result of this approach, Hegel argues, is that “it might seem to be the essential task of a philosophy of the state to invent and propound *yet another theory*, and specifically a new and particular theory,” in so far as “freedom of thought, and of spirit in general, can be demonstrated only by divergence from, and even hostility towards, what is publicly acknowledged” (*GPR*, 15; *EPR*, 12). The position Hegel is considering, then, argues from “the freedom of thought,” to the claim that a work is not genuinely philosophical unless its conclusions differ from all existing practices.

Hegel responds to this objection by arguing that it rests on a misconception regarding the nature of “the freedom of thought.” On the one hand, Hegel happily accepts that the right to think for oneself is “exalted” and “divine” (*GPR*, 15; *EPR*, 12; cf. *GPR*, 26–27; *EPR*, 22), and that in the modern world “in laws of right...the thing [*Sache*] is not valid because it exists; on the contrary, everyone demands that it should match his own criterion” (*GPR*, 16 *Zusatz*; *EPR*, 13 *Addition*). On the other hand, however, Hegel holds that this does *not* entail that thinking for oneself requires that we “imagine that no state or constitution had ever previously existed or were in existence today, but that we had *now* (and this ‘now’ is of indefinite duration) to start right from the beginning, and that the ethical

world had been waiting only for such intellectual constructions, discoveries, and proofs as are *now* available" (*GPR*, 15; *EPR*, 12). Hegel points out that no one would think that this is the right procedure with respect to the natural world, and yet no one thinks that here our "freedom of thought" is compromised. This is because, Hegel suggests, in the case of the natural world we expect to find some convergence on some objective truth, but "[t]he spiritual universe is supposed rather to be at the mercy of contingency and arbitrariness, to be *god-forsaken*, so that, according to this atheism of the ethical world, *truth* lies *outside* it, and at the same time, since reason is nevertheless *also* supposed to be present in it, truth is nothing but a problem" (*GPR*, 15–16; *EPR*, 14). The result, then, is that "freedom of thought" in moral and political issues is seen as a purely subjective matter, so that on this view no common ground on these issues is expected or required: "But, we are told, this very circumstance justifies, indeed obliges, every thinker to take his own initiative, though not *in search of* the philosopher's stone, for this search is made superfluous by the philosophizing of our times and everyone, whatever his condition, can be assured that he has this stone in his grasp" (*GPR*, 16; *EPR*, 14).

Hegel argues that the danger in the model he is criticizing is that the general public will be suspicious of philosophers who thereby attempt to alter our practices radically, because those people who are broadly happy with the current arrangements will "laugh at such initiatives and assurances and regard them as an empty game, now more amusing, now more serious, now pleasing, now dangerous" (*GPR*, 16–17; *EPR*, 14). Hegel says that the "restless activity of vain reflection" adopted by philosophy, "along with the reception and response it encounters" from the general public would not matter very much "were it not that *philosophy* in general has incurred all kinds of contempt and discredit as a result of such behavior"; and, whereas previously philosophizing involved the difficult intellectual challenge of making us think about things in a rational manner, it now just involves a kind of empty moralizing, in such a way that everyone can claim to be "a philosopher," as this is something that involves no great difficulty: "No other art or science is treated with this ultimate degree of contempt, namely the assumption that one can master it straightaway" (*GPR*, 17; *EPR*, 14–15, translation modified).

Hegel therefore argues that, because of the view of philosophy he is criticizing, it has become subjectivist, as philosophers turn to inward feeling to justify the view of the state they are putting forward: "In any case, this self-styled philosophy has expressly stated that *truth cannot be arrived at by cognition* [erkannt], but that truth consists in what *wells up from each individual's heart, emotion, and enthusiasm* in relation to ethical subjects, particularly in relation to the state, government, and constitution" (*GPR*, 18; *EPR*, 15, translation modified). Hegel argues (attacking Fries in particular) that the result has been various unworkable political proposals (which "reduce this refined [*gebildeten*] structure [of the state] to a mush of 'heart, friendship, and enthusiasm'" [*GPR*, 19; *EPR*, 16]). For Hegel, therefore, this mistaken conception of philosophy has come to betray the rationalistic principles that must underlie all responsible forms of inquiry, and thus the fundamental method of philosophy itself, so that in the end it becomes a form of anti-philosophy, in which "all the trouble involved in rational insight and cognition, guided

by the thinking concept” is avoided (*GPR*, 19; *EPR*, 16). Hegel argues that this anti-rationalism leads contemporary philosophy to oppose the very idea of *laws* in ethics and social life at all, insofar as laws are universal and therefore have the form of rationality:

That right and ethics, and the actual world of right and the ethical, are grasped by means of *thoughts* and give themselves the form of rationality—namely universality and determinacy—by means of thoughts, is what constitutes *the law*, and it is this which is justifiably regarded as the main enemy by that feeling which reserves the right to do as it pleases, by that conscience which identifies right with subjective conviction. (*GPR*, 20; *EPR*, 17)

Given his view that “arbitrary sophistry has usurped the name of *philosophy*” (*GPR*, 20; *EPR*, 17), Hegel expresses himself in sympathy with those who “grow impatient as soon as they hear talk of a philosophical science of the state” (*GPR*, 20–21; *EPR*, 17), for as it is currently practiced, such a science could only lead to “superficiality” (*Seichtigkeit*) (*GPR*, 20; *EPR*, 16). He also says he can see why political authorities have become concerned by such philosophizing, insofar as it sets itself up in judgement on all existing values, in a way that can “lead to the destruction of inner ethics and the upright conscience, of love and right among private persons, as well as the destruction of public order and the laws of the state” (*GPR*, 22; *EPR*, 18). Moreover, Hegel accepts that it is understandable why other academic disciplines therefore think they have no need to take philosophy seriously, so that “in so many publications in the field of the positive sciences, as well as in works of religious edification and vague literature of other kinds, the reader encounters...contempt for philosophy” (*GPR*, 22; *EPR*, 18, translation modified). But, Hegel warns, although “[t]he declamations and presumptuous outbursts against philosophy which are so common in our time” are “in the right, by virtue of that superficiality to which philosophical science has been degraded” (*GPR*, 23; *EPR*, 19), the result is that by forsaking philosophy, these other academic disciplines have lost their intellectual direction, so that “all objects, however barren and particular [*partikular*], and all materials, however arid, are accorded the same status as what constitutes the interest of all thinking people and the bonds of the ethical world” (*GPR*, 23; *EPR*, 19).

Faced with this highly regrettable state of affairs, Hegel sees it as a “stroke of *good fortune* for science” (*GPR*, 23; *EPR*, 19) that the “*public split*” (*GPR*, 24; *EPR*, 20) between the philosophers he is criticizing and the political authorities who see them as socially dangerous has brought to a head the question: what is the proper nature of philosophy as a form of inquiry? Hegel clearly has considerable sympathy with those who have come to doubt the value of philosophy as it is currently practiced, because philosophy of this sort seems to have nothing to do with the real world in coming up with empty utopian proposals for reform. Hegel wants to claim, however, that this is not the fault of philosophy *per se*, but of philosophy that is anti-rationalistic in its methods. Hegel insists that once this rationalism is restored to its rightful place, then philosophy will no longer be empty utopian, and so will no longer be subject to this criticism:

It is *this very relation of philosophy to actuality* which is the subject of misunderstandings, and I accordingly come back to my earlier observation that, since philosophy is the

exploration of the rational, it is for that very reason the *comprehension of the present and the actual*, not the setting up of a *world beyond* which exists God knows where—or rather, of which we can very well say that we know where it exists, namely in the errors of a one-sided and empty ratiocination. (*GPR*, 24; *EPR*, 20)

Hegel thinks it is as “the *comprehension of the present and the actual*” that philosophy will regain its relevance to contemporary political thought, rather than through utopian speculation about “a *world beyond*”; and, as we have seen, he believes it has fallen into the latter because it has abandoned reason as its method of inquiry, in favour of “the subjective contingency of opinion and arbitrariness” (*GPR*, 19; *EPR*, 16). By returning to “the *exploration of the rational*,” therefore, Hegel hopes to show that philosophy can make a relevant contribution to the political world as it really is, not to what many people would see as merely idle theorizing. In a dense passage (*GPR*, 24; *EPR*, 20) he claims that even Plato—who may seem in his *Republic* to have offered a merely “*empty ideal*” not unlike that of the philosophers Hegel is criticizing, while clearly being a philosopher whom Hegel would want to classify as a rationalist—was in fact concretely related to the ethical life of his time, so that his rationalism was not a form of utopianism, and so is not a counterexample to Hegel’s position.

It is at this point in the Preface that Hegel introduces his *Doppelsatz*.²⁹ We should therefore briefly recall the context in which it occurs. As we have seen, a central feature of that context is Hegel’s concern for philosophy as an intellectual discipline, and the low regard in which it is currently held. His explanation for this crisis is that philosophy no longer takes systematic inquiry to be important, because the rules of such inquiry “have been cast aside, as if they were simply fetters, to make way for the arbitrary pronouncements of the heart, of fantasy, and of contingent intuition” (*GPR*, 12; *EPR*, 10).³⁰ The result, Hegel thinks, is that philosophers now hold forth on ethical and social issues, but without having earned the right to do so, by thinking about these issues systematically. This is because such philosophers do not think “scientific study” of the ethical world is possible,

²⁹ In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel also makes the remark that “what is actual, is rational” in the context of a discussion of Plato, where as in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel proposes that he should be seen, not as a utopian idealist, but as a rational inquirer into Greek ethical life who “shows how traditional morality [*das Sittliche*] has a living movement in itself; he demonstrates its function, its inward organism” (G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie II*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe XIX*, 110 and 115; *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane, 3 vols., repr. [Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995], II, 95 and 100). Plato thus gives rational form to traditional morality, and so “portrays the substance of ethical life in its ideal *beauty* and *truth*” (*GPR*, §185, 342; *EPR*, 222). In this sense (Hegel thinks) Plato recognizes that “what is actual, is rational,” and can be given philosophical treatment, even though to *us* that treatment may appear utopian because *we* cannot see how the state he proposes could be realized *now*, given modern sensibilities concerning individual freedom. However, at the time it was written, Hegel suggests, the *Republic* was not a “chimera,” but a philosophical investigation into the fundamental nature of Greek ethical life, and “the truth of the world [Plato] lived in” (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie II*, 111; *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, II, 96).

³⁰ See also *GPR*, §2, 32; *EPR*, 27: “But if, on the other hand, the former manner of cognition with its formal definitions, inferences, proofs, and the like has now virtually disappeared, the other mode which has replaced it is a bad substitute: that is, Ideas in general, and hence also the Idea of right and its further determinations, are taken up and asserted in immediate fashion as *facts of consciousness*, and our natural and intensified feelings, our *own heart* and *enthusiasm*, are made the source of right. If this is the most convenient method of all, it is also the least philosophical.”

because they think that here (as against the natural world) “all the trouble involved in rational insight and cognition, guided by the thinking concept, can...be avoided” (*GPR*, 19; *EPR*, 16).³¹

Thus, when Hegel comes to write, in the *Doppelsatz*, that

Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich;
und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig

the context in which it is said I think shows it should be read in a certain way, as claiming that as a *rational* enterprise, philosophy can and will engage with “the actual” and “the present,” rather than some “beyond.” As we have seen, Hegel’s purpose in making this claim is to answer those critics of philosophy who see it as little more than empty theorizing, while attacking those who think this is what philosophy *should* be. Against the latter, as we have discussed, he argues that this puts philosophy in a “vain position” (*GPR*, 25; *EPR*, 20), in the sense both of being futile, and of claiming unwarranted superiority to ordinary moral thinking. Against the former, he argues that there are no grounds to think that the results of a rational inquiry will be empty in this way, insofar as inquiry into both the natural and spiritual universe tells us about structures inherent in the world, and not just ideas in our heads: “Conversely, if the *Idea* is seen as ‘only an idea,’ a representation [*Vorstellung*] in the realm of opinion, philosophy affords the opposite insight that nothing is actual except the *Idea*” (*GPR*, 25; *EPR*, 20).³² Conducted in the right rationalistic manner, therefore, there is nothing utopian about philosophy, and so nothing idle about it either.

In the remainder of the Preface, Hegel goes on to underline the way in which “[a]s a philosophical composition,” the *Philosophy of Right* “must distance itself as far as possible from the obligation to construct a state *as it ought to be*” (*GPR*, 26; *EPR*, 21), for if a theory allows itself to become utopian and so “builds itself a world *as it ought to be*, then it certainly has an existence, but only within [a person’s] opinion—a pliant medium in which the imagination can construct anything it pleases” (*GPR*, 26; *EPR*, 22). Hegel suggests that because it attempts “to comprehend and portray the state” in rational terms, this will be avoided in what follows. Philosophy therefore brings us back to the real world, rather than taking us beyond it, as critics have supposed on the evidence of those who have philosophized without recognizing the inner call “to comprehend” (*zu begreifen*), or to think in properly conceptual terms (*GPR*, 27; *EPR*, 22); on my reading, this is what the *Doppelsatz* also claims.

³¹ Hegel makes clear the dangers he sees in such irrationalism by (mis)quoting Goethe’s *Faust* (*GPR*, 19; *EPR*, 16): “Do but despise reason and science / The highest of all human gifts— / Then you have surrendered to the devil / And must surely perish.”

³² See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §41 Zusatz 2, 116; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 83: “thoughts are not merely our thoughts, but at the same time the *In-itself* of things and whatever else is objective.” And see G. W. F. Hegel, *Die Philosophie des Rechts: Vorlesung von 1821/22*, ed. Hansgeorg Hoppe (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005), 37: “[Philosophie] hat nicht die äußere Existenz der Gegenstände zu betrachten . . . sondern nur die ewige, innere Idee der Sache an und für sich selbst. Diese Idee verdient allein den Namen der Wirklichkeit; sie ist nicht so etwas, wie man zu sagen pflegt, das bloße Idee sei. Sie ist nicht Theorie, so etwas, das nur sein soll, nicht etwas Ohnmächtiges, sie *ist* im intensivsten Sinne des Seins.”

It might be wondered what grounds Hegel has for thinking this will be so: what grounds does Hegel have for believing that if it is rationally conducted, philosophy will avoid empty utopianism? This is a large question, and only a brief suggestion can be made here of how to answer it. First, Hegel has *epistemic* grounds: rational inquiry involves *convergence*, rather than merely subjective opinion, so others will share its conclusions in a way that makes it realizable. Second, Hegel has *historical* grounds, in the sense that he believes that reason has already shaped the ways in which we have come to live, so that in following reason, philosophy will be going with the grain of social institutions as they have arisen.³³ Thirdly, he has *metaphysical* grounds, in that he believes that the world is structured in a way that is fundamentally intelligible to reason.³⁴ And fourthly, as we have seen, Hegel believes that once philosophers see that the best contribution philosophy can make to “free thinking” comes through its systematic method, they will be less inclined to think philosophy is only worth taking seriously if it “manages to invent something *particular* for itself” (*GPR*, 15; *EPR*, 12).

I have argued that Hegel’s aim in the *Doppelsatz*, then, was to offer a slogan designed to answer those disillusioned by the perceived emptiness of much of the social philosophy of his time, by underlining that Hegel’s return to *reason* is also meant to be a return to a form of philosophizing that is engaged with “the actual.” Hegel is thus offering us a polemical defense of his rationalistic method, where the defense is that this will enable philosophy to avoid empty utopianism, and thus regain the respect in which it deserves to be held. The *Doppelsatz* can therefore be seen as an expression of Hegel’s faith in a rationalistic conception of philosophy, rather than a claim about the normative status of “the actual,” *however* ‘the actual’ is understood. On this account, then, both the conservative *and* the progressive readings are mistaken; in linking the “rational” and the “actual” in this way, Hegel was not meaning to say anything about whether the “actual” is “right” or “good.”

4

Having outlined my neutral reading of the *Doppelsatz*, I now turn to consider certain objections to that reading.

(1) A first objection my reading must face is that I have focused exclusively on Hegel’s use of the *Doppelsatz* in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*; but Hegel uses the *Doppelsatz* and variants of it elsewhere, and (it could be claimed) the ways in which it is employed elsewhere show that it is *not* meant to be neutral, but rather to support the progressive reading. Four such other uses might be men-

³³ See *GPR*, 19; *EPR*, 16, where Hegel argues against “attributing to *feeling* what reason and its understanding have laboured to produce over several thousand years.”

³⁴ See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §24 *Zusatz* 1, 81–82; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 56–57: “This meaning of thinking and of its determinations is more precisely expressed by the Ancients when they say that *nous* governs the world, or by our own saying that there is reason in the world, by which we mean that reason is the soul of the world, inhabits it, and is immanent in it, as its own, innermost nature, its universal . . . Just as thinking constitutes the substance of external things, so it is also the universal substance of what is spiritual.”

tioned: Hegel's comment on the *Doppelsatz* in the Introduction to the *Encyclopaedia Logic*; the variants he gives of it in the lectures on the *Philosophy of Right* from 1817/18 and 1819; and the variant offered in conversation with Heinrich Heine.³⁵ Let me consider each in turn.

Of these four cases, it is the first that has been most discussed by proponents of the progressive reading. For, it is here that Hegel underlines that for him 'actuality' is a technical term, and that this should be remembered in reading the *Doppelsatz*; and as we have seen, proponents of the progressive reading criticize proponents of the conservative readings for neglecting this fact. But, although Hegel does indeed here emphasize that "when I speak of actuality, one should, of course, think about the sense in which I use this expression,"³⁶ the question still remains from my point of view, whether in distinguishing "the actual" from "the existent," and identifying the former and not the latter with the rational, Hegel in so doing wants to draw a *normative* distinction between them, by claiming that the former is "right" or "good" in the way the latter is not. In fact, I will argue, Hegel's aim in drawing this distinction is still methodological, to suggest that while reason may make the "actual" intelligible and explicable, it may not be able to incorporate everything that is merely "existent" into a rational science; thus, on this account, Hegel's position remains normatively neutral.

In the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, Hegel's reference to the *Doppelsatz* again occurs in introductory material, and as we have learned to expect, a central concern of that material is with the status of philosophy and what is special about it as a form of inquiry. So, for example, Hegel claims that some think that philosophy is too hard and esoteric, because it seems unintelligible to them, while others think it is too easy, because they treat it as superficial;³⁷ and, in general, philosophy has a difficult time "placing" itself as distinctive with respect to other ways of thinking. Then, in §6, he turns to consider the *content* of philosophical knowledge, what it is philosophy inquires into. His answer is "the *world*, the outer and inner world of consciousness," immediately going on to say "in other words, the content of philosophy is *actuality*."³⁸ At first, Hegel observes, we come to know about the world through experience; but we then come to recognize that experience does not really get to the bottom of things, but is confined to the level of "*appearance*, [the] transient and insignificant [*bedeutungslos*],"³⁹ which we learn to distinguish from "that which truly and in itself merits the name of *actuality*,"⁴⁰ because (presumably) it is *not* so "transient and insignificant." Now, philosophy, Hegel argues, must be in accord with the world as "appearance" and as "actuality," so that its "universal touchstone" is how well it "fits the phenomena at the level of givenness," while its "supreme and ultimate purpose" is "to bring about the reconciliation of the

³⁵ Other variants and discussions that could be mentioned can be found in Hegel, *Die Philosophie des Rechts: Vorlesung von 1821/22*, e.g., 37 and 234. But I do not believe these raise any new difficulties, and can be handled in a way that is similar to the cases I deal with in what follows; I have therefore not given any extended separate discussion to this text.

³⁶ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §6, 48; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 29.

³⁷ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik* §5, 46; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 28.

³⁸ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik* §6, 47; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

reason that is conscious of itself with the reason that *is*, or actuality, through the cognition of this accord."⁴¹

Hegel thus seems to be claiming that philosophy can find reason in the world by taking us further than the "transient and insignificant," putting us in touch with "actuality," but not in a way that takes us into any sort of transcendent "beyond," since this "actuality" must also be part of the world as it first appears in experience. Whereas that world seemed chaotic and structureless, it is now shown to have a rational order, so that reconciliation between us qua rational subjects ("the reason that is conscious of itself") and the world qua rational entity ("the reason that *is*") can be achieved. So far, therefore, the text of this paragraph reads like a fairly straightforward statement of Hegel's epistemological rationalism, according to which the world may initially present itself to us as a confused array of phenomena, which we then make intelligible using reason, to gain a sense of how the world contains certain necessary structures which give it order.⁴² For Hegel, it is this kind of rational insight that gives us as inquirers a particular kind of satisfaction in relation to the world, a sense of reconciliation with it, as it now no longer appears to be a disorderly mass of contingencies, but a well-ordered system.⁴³

It is at this point that Hegel makes reference to the *Doppelsatz*, in his "remark" to the main paragraph we have just considered. The normal function of these "remarks" is not to take the argument further forward, but to broaden out the discussion of the main paragraph somewhat, and in a slightly less compressed way. It is therefore natural, having introduced the idea of "actuality" in the main paragraph, and having offered his rationalistic conception of it in relation to philosophy, that Hegel should mention the *Doppelsatz*. But again, I think, this shows that the *Doppelsatz* itself should be understood in this rationalistic way.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §21 Zusatz, 77–78; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 53, where Hegel suggests that this is the sort of insight we acquire when we find that nature behaves in a law-governed way, or when individuals fall under universal genera:

Nature offers us an infinite mass of singular shapes and appearances. We feel the need to bring unity into this manifold; therefore, we compare them and seek to [re]cognize what is universal in each of them. Individuals are born and pass away; in them their kind is what abides, what recurs in all of them; and it is only present for us when we think about them. This is where laws, e.g., the laws of the motion of heavenly bodies, belong too. We see the stars in one place today and in another tomorrow; this disorder is for the spirit something incongruous, and not to be trusted, since the spirit believes in an order, a simple, constant, and universal determination [of things]. This is the faith in which the spirit has directed its [reflective] thinking upon the phenomena, and has come to know their laws, establishing the motion of the heavenly bodies in a universal manner, so that every change of position can be determined and [re]cognised on the basis of this law.

⁴³ See G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe* XII, 521; *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree, (New York: Dover, 1956), 439 (translation modified): "The human being is not free when he does not think, for then he relates himself to an other. This comprehension, the grasping of the other with the most inward self-certainty directly contains the reconciliation: the unity of thinking with the other is present *in itself*, since reason is just as much the substantial basis of consciousness as of what is external and natural. Thus the object is no longer a beyond with a different substantial nature."

Hegel observes that the “simple propositions” that make up the *Doppelsatz* “have seemed shocking to many and they have been attacked.”⁴⁴ Hegel does not tell us whom he has in mind here, but it is reasonable to assume that he has in view those who took him to be a political reactionary on the strength of the *Doppelsatz*.⁴⁵ But of course, even if this is the case, it does not follow (as the progressive reading claims) that Hegel is here responding to those critics by emphasising that it offers a normative endorsement not of the status quo, but of something more ideal. For, another way to respond to those who take it to be normatively conservative is just to show it is simply a philosophical platitude, rather than some sort of normative assessment of “the actual.” And this, I would argue, is the strategy Hegel does in fact adopt. For, Hegel expresses himself surprised that people have reacted to the *Doppelsatz* in a hostile way, and seen it as somehow outrageous, even though they think of themselves as committed to religion or philosophy: “These simple propositions...have been attacked, even by those who are not ready to renounce the possession of philosophy, and certainly not of religion.”⁴⁶ This suggests that the critics he has in mind are those who think of themselves as philosophers or religious people, but who think the *Doppelsatz* is problematic; but for Hegel, this position is incoherent, because he thinks that the *Doppelsatz* in fact forms the fundamental presupposition for religion and philosophy, and it is remarkable that those who attack it do not see that in fact they themselves must be committed to it.

What is that presupposition to which these critics must be committed? In religious terms, it is that there is “divine governance of the world,” and in philosophical terms it is “what is there is partly *appearance* and partly actuality.”⁴⁷ In other words, Hegel thinks that what is distinctive of any philosophical or religious way of thinking is a move he outlined in the main paragraph, which does not just accept that the world is nothing but contingency and appearance, but sees in it some sort of deeper explanation and grounding; so, Hegel thinks, to anyone with a religious or philosophical outlook, his “simple propositions” should seem unproblematic, since all they are claiming is that we can come to find that “actuality” is in accord with reason, in the sense of being open to systematic inquiry, in a way that “appearance” is not. Hegel therefore suggests that as long as the religious person thinks that behind the world there is a divine order, or the philosopher accepts that there is more to the world than transient phenomena, he or she should find nothing outrageous in the “simple propositions” of the *Doppelsatz*. But this is not because these propositions are in fact meant progressively rather than conservatively, but because they summarize a basic metaphysical assumption common to all religious and philosophical thought (as Hegel conceives them).

Hegel then goes on to suggest that this religious or philosophical way of drawing a distinction between “appearance” and “actuality,” treating the latter only as “rational” is in fact also a part of ordinary thinking. For, although “[i]n common life” people may not seem to draw this distinction, because they “call every brain wave, error, evil, and suchlike ‘actuality’ as well as every existence, however wilted

⁴⁴ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §6, 47; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 29.

⁴⁵ See Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 458–59.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §6, 47; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

[*verkümmerte*] and transient it may be,” after a little thought “even for our ordinary feeling, a contingent existence does not deserve to be called something-actual in the emphatic sense of the word; what contingently exists has no greater value than that which something-possible has; it is an existence itself which (although it is) can just as well *not be*.”⁴⁸ Now, Hegel does here mention one normative category, that of evil, in relation to what is not actual. But I believe the overwhelming force of the full statement is not to mark a normative distinction between, on the one hand, “things that ‘live up to their own underlying norm or end,’”⁴⁹ and thus that are as they ought to be (the actual), and, on the other hand, those that do not, and hence are not as they ought to be (the existent). Rather, it is to make a more purely metaphysical distinction, between the contingency and transitoriness of the merely existent on the one hand, and the more necessary and permanent qua actual on the other (where Hegel seems just to mention evil here as one example of what is contingent and transitory in this way, in the sense that it could have not existed).⁵⁰ So, in saying that “what is rational, is actual, and what is actual, is rational,” Hegel does not seem to be claiming rationality of what is “as it ought to be” as against what merely exists, but of what is in some sense fundamental as against what is merely apparent; he therefore seems to be making an epistemological rather than a normative point, that rational comprehension is to be found in the actual, rather than in appearances, where these are too contingent and transitory to be incorporated fully within a rational system of inquiry.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 56.

⁵⁰ Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie II*, 111; *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, II: 95–96, where Hegel mentions “evil” alongside “an external existence [*Dasein*], which displays arbitrariness and contingency, such as a tree, a house, a plant,” and where he observes “in common life all is real [*wirklich*], but there is a difference between the phenomenal world and reality,” on the grounds that the former is “arbitrary and contingent” and the latter is not.

⁵¹ In relation to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes this point about some of the questions that might arise about some of the less significant aspects of social life:

For what matters is to recognize in the semblance of the temporal and transient the substance which is immanent and the eternal which is present. For since the rational, which is synonymous with the Idea, becomes actual by entering into external existence [*Existenz*], it emerges in an infinite wealth of forms, appearances, and shapes and surrounds its core with a brightly coloured covering in which consciousness at first resides, but which only the concept can penetrate in order to find the inner pulse, and detect its continued beat even within external shapes. But the infinitely varied circumstances which take shape within this externality as the essence manifests itself within it, this infinite material and its organization, are not the subject-matter of philosophy. To deal with them would be to interfere in things [*Dinge*] with which philosophy has no concern, and it can save itself the trouble of giving good advice on the subject. Plato could well have refrained from recommending nurses never to stand still with children but to keep rocking them in their arms; and Fichte likewise need not have perfected his *passport regulations* to the point of ‘constructing,’ as the expression ran, the requirement that the passports of suspect persons should carry not only their personal description but also their painted likeness. In deliberations of this kind, no trace of philosophy remains. (*GPR*, 25; *EPR*, 20–21)

See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe XIII*, 19; *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), I, 6, where Hegel considers the objection (which he rejects) that art is not a suitable topic for scientific inquiry, because it is nothing more than a “mass of details,” lacking in any necessary principles: “science is occupied with what is inherently *necessary* But in the sphere of the spirit in general, especially in the imagination, what seems, in comparison with nature, to be peculiarly at home is caprice and the absence of law, and this is automatically incapable of any scientific explanation.”

In the next sentence, Hegel stresses that understanding the proper meaning of the *Doppelsatz* requires grasping the notion of “actuality” he has developed elsewhere, in the *Science of Logic*:

But when I speak of actuality, one should, of course, think about the sense in which I use this expression, given the fact that I dealt with actuality too in a quite elaborate *Logic*, and I distinguish it quite clearly and directly, not just from what is contingent, even though it has existence too, but also, more precisely, from being there [*Dasein*], from existence, and from other determinations.⁵²

As we have seen, proponents of the progressive reading have followed Hegel’s lead, which has taken them to remarks of this sort: “Actuality is the *unity of essence and Existence*.”⁵³ They have then put this sort of remark together with comments by Hegel that suggest that something is good only if it properly realizes its nature,⁵⁴ and have concluded from this that Hegel’s aim here was to circumscribe the normative force of the *Doppelsatz*, in making clear that he only meant to endorse “the actual,” not the merely existent.⁵⁵

Now, two things should perhaps give us pause straightaway. The first is that in reminding us here that he has discussed “actuality” as a category in the *Logic*, Hegel contrasts it not *just* with “existence,” but with all the other “determinations” discussed in the *Logic* up to that point. It thus seems too narrow to suggest that the contrast he wants to draw is based merely on how these two categories correspond to the category of essence. The second worry is that when Hegel does want to draw a contrast between something that properly realizes its nature and something that does not, he normally characterizes the former as “true” rather than “actual,” as in the following passage:

In the philosophical sense...“truth,” expressed abstractly and in general, means the agreement of a content with itself...[This] (philosophical) meaning of “truth” is also partly found in ordinary linguistic usage already. We speak, for instance, of a “true” friend, and by that we understand one whose way of acting conforms with the concept of friendship; and in the same way we speak also of a “true” work of art. To

⁵² Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §6, 48; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 29–30.

⁵³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe VI*, 186; *The Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 529.

⁵⁴ Cf. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §171 *Zusatz*, 322; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 249: “[T]o say of a work of art that it is beautiful, or an action that it is good, the objects in question must be compared to what they ought to be, i.e., with their concept.”

⁵⁵ See, for example, Avineri, *Hegel’s Theory of the Modern State*, 127:

Hegel became aware quite clearly that by its sheer force, his epigram was apt to lead him into being very clearly misrepresented. Hence in a lengthy footnote in the 1830 edition of his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, he makes it a point to emphasize that actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) is not identical with all that exists. Hegel distinguishes here between *Dasein* (Existence) and *Wirklichkeit*. *Dasein* encompasses everything which exists, whereas *Wirklichkeit* is only that part of *Dasein* in which essence and existence coincide, and it is because of this that one can say that it is rational. Whatever the philosophical difficulties which arise out of this explanation (they seem to make the couplet into something like a tautology), it clearly indicates that Hegel himself did not intend in any way whatsoever to mean it as an overall legitimization of everything which exists.

Other commentators, who are rightly more careful than Avineri at distinguishing *Dasein* from *Existenz* usually make the latter the central contrast with *Wirklichkeit*; however, the overall strategy is the same.

say of something that it is “untrue” is as much as to say that it is bad, that it involves an inner inadequacy. A bad State, in this sense, is an “untrue” State; and what is bad and untrue consists always in a contradiction between an object’s determination or concept and its existence.⁵⁶

Thus, if Hegel is saying what the progressive reading thinks he is in the *Doppelsatz*, he should perhaps more properly have said “what is rational, is true; and what is true, is rational.”⁵⁷

More significantly, perhaps, when one looks at the way proponents of progressive readings of the *Doppelsatz* have taken Hegel’s account of “actuality” in the *Logic*, it seems that they have misunderstood what he means by saying that “Actuality is the unity of essence and Existence.” As we have seen, they take Hegel to be saying that something is actual when it is an existent thing which properly realizes its essence, and so is a “unity of essence and Existence” in this sense. But, when Hegel says in the *Logic* that a category is the unity of two preceding categories, he simply means that we have reached a category that combines elements of each. So, for example, he says that “measure” is “the unity of quality and quantity,”⁵⁸ by which he means that it involves aspects of both qualitative and quantitative determination, whereby quantity effects quality (for example, losing a certain number of hairs makes someone bald who was previously hirsute). Likewise, I would argue, when Hegel says that “Actuality is the unity of essence and Existence,” he means that it is the kind of category which involves aspects of “essence” and “existence.” What might Hegel mean by this? The category of existence, Hegel has argued, characterizes things which have their grounding in other things, and so need to be explained through the determination of what is outside them. With the category of essence, by contrast, entities are seen as determined by a nature that belongs to them, but which is hidden and mysterious. So, to say that the category of actuality is the unity of these preceding categories is to say that something is actual insofar as we have an explanation for it (as with what exists), but where what does the explaining is the nature of the entity itself (as when we think in terms of essences), *not* some external thing which determines it, although here the determination is transparent rather than hidden (as with existence but not

⁵⁶ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik* §24 *Zusatz* 2, 86; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 60. See also *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §172 *Zusatz*, 323–24; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 249–50; and *Enzyklopädie Logik* §213 *Zusatz*, 369–70; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 287–88; and *GPR*, §21 *Zusatz*, 73–74; *EPR*, 53. For further discussion see Robert Stern, “Did Hegel Hold an Identity Theory of Truth?,” *Mind* 102 (1993): 645–47.

⁵⁷ I have found only two examples where Hegel uses a term other than ‘true’ to characterize something that properly realizes its nature. The first is Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik* §91; *Zusatz*, 196; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 147–48; but even here Hegel does not characterise it as “actual” (*wirklich*), but as “real” (*reelle*): “[W]e often speak of ‘reality’ in still another sense, understanding by it that which behaves in accordance with its essential determination or its concept. For example, someone may say: ‘This is a real occupation,’ or: ‘This is a real person.’ Here it is not a question of what is immediately and externally there, but rather the correspondence between what is there and its concept.” The second example is *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I*, 151; *Lectures on Aesthetics*, I, 111, where again Hegel uses the terminology of *Realität* rather than *Wirklichkeit*: “Thus it is only the reality which is adequate to the Concept which is the true reality [*Realität*], true indeed because in it the Idea brings itself into existence.”

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §107; *Zusatz*, 224; *Encyclopedia Logic*, 170. See also Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik I*, in *Theorie Werkausgabe*, V, 387; *Science of Logic*, 327: “Abstractly expressed, in measure quality and quantity are united.”

essence). Thus, something is “actual” for Hegel if it is a self-maintaining system which can be understood in its own terms, without being seen as grounded in something else:

Real actuality *as such* is in the first instance the thing of many properties, the existent world; but it is not the Existence that resolves itself into Appearance, but, as actuality, it is at the same time the in-itself and reflection-into-self; it preserves itself in the manifoldness of mere Existence; its externality is an inner relationship *to itself* alone. What is actual *can act*; something manifests its actuality through that which it produces. Its relationship to another something is the manifestation *of itself*; neither a transition—the relation between something and an other in the sphere of being—nor an appearing—where the thing is only in relation to others and, though a self-subsistent, has its reflection-into-self, its determinate essentiality, in another self-subsistent.⁵⁹

It seems, then, that Hegel characterizes “actuality” as “the unity of essence and Existence” because he thinks it involves elements of both categories, not because “the actual” is an existent thing that is as it ought to be, which is what the normative reading of the *Doppelsatz* assumes.

As evidence that the normative reading of Hegel’s view of “actuality” goes awry, consider the following passage from the *Philosophy of Right*:

The state is actual, and its actuality consists in the fact that the interest of the whole realizes itself through the particular ends. Actuality is always the unity of universality and particularity, the resolution of universality into particularity; the latter then appears to be self-sufficient, although it is sustained and supported only by the whole. If this unity is not present, nothing can be *actual*, even if it may be assumed to have *existence* [*Existenz*]. A bad state is one that merely exists; a sick body also exists, but it has no true reality. A hand which has been cut off still looks like a hand and exists, but it has no actuality. True actuality is necessity: what is actual is necessary in itself. Necessity consists [*besteht*] in the division of the whole into the distinctions within the concept, and in the fact that this divided whole exhibits a fixed and enduring determinacy which is not dead and unchanging but continues to produce itself in its dissolution. (*GPR*, §270 *Zusatz*, 428–29; *EPR*, 302)

Hegel is here telling us why as an institution, the state deserves to be called “actual,” where the answer is that it is a self-maintaining and complex system, a coincidence of parts with the whole that enables it to persist through change; and a

⁵⁹ Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik II*, 208; *Science of Logic*, 546–47. See also *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §142, 279–80; *Encyclopaedia Logica*, 213–14, where Hegel says that, “The actual . . . is exempted from *passing-over* and its *externality* is its energy; in that externality it is inwardly reflected; its being-there is only the *manifestation of itself*, not of an other.” Josiah Royce provides a helpful gloss on Hegel’s conception of “actuality” along these lines in his article “Hegel’s Terminology,” in *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, ed. J. M. Baldwin, 3 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1925), I, 462:

Wirklichkeit is a still higher category [than *Existenz*]. What has *Existenz* is a relatively immediate fact, but appears as the result of conditions, and as related to an environment. But what has *Wirklichkeit* not only has a basis, or is explicitly the expression of a principle, but contains this basis within itself, so that it is relatively (in the complete case wholly) independent of any environment. It is, then, a higher instance both of *Fürsichsein* [being-for-itself] and of *An-und-fürsichsein* [being-in-and-for-itself]. If a physical thing with qualities has *Existenz*, an organism, a commonwealth, a solar system, or any such relative *totality* (*Totalität*), possesses *Wirklichkeit*. In the most genuine sense, only the absolute would be *wirklich*, but the term is often employed for finite but relatively organic beings.

state is no longer actual but merely exists when it loses this capacity to “produce itself in its dissolution,” through the breakdown of the whole into merely externally related parts (as when a body becomes sick and can no longer maintain itself, or a hand is removed from an arm). Thus, when Hegel says in the *Encyclopedia Logic* §6 that it is only the actual that is rational, and not what is merely existent, he would appear to be differentiating certain kinds of entities (such as states and bodies) from others (such as tables and pens), rather than differentiating “things that are as they ought to be” from “things that are not.”

However, if Hegel thinks that “Actuality is the unity of essence and Existence” in the sense I have suggested, what is the connection between this and reason, as laid down in the *Doppelsatz*? As we have seen, proponents of the progressive reading argue that something is actual if it properly realizes its essence; if it properly realizes its essence it is good; and if it is good it is rational (in this normative sense). But I have argued that this is based on a mistaken view of Hegel’s conception of “actuality”; and yet, it might be felt, my preferred view leaves the link with “reason” obscure.

To see that this is not so, consider another passage from the *Philosophy of Right* that comes shortly after the one we have just discussed:

The constitution [of a state] is rational in so far as the state *differentiates* and determines its activity within itself *in accordance with the nature of the concept*. It does so in such a way that *each* of the *powers* in question is in itself the *totality*, since each contains the other moments and has them active within it, and since all of them, as expressions of the differentiation [*Unterschied*] of the concept, remain wholly within its ideality and constitute nothing but *a single individual whole*.

In recent times, we have heard an endless amount of empty talk both about the constitution and about reason itself. The most vapid of this has come from those in Germany who have persuaded themselves that they have a better understanding than anyone else—especially governments—of what a constitution is, and who believe that all their superficialities are irrefutably justified because they are allegedly based on religion and piety. It is no wonder that such talk has made reasonable men [*Männer*] sick of the words ‘reason,’ ‘enlightenment,’ ‘right,’ etc., and likewise of the words ‘constitution’ and ‘freedom,’ and that one is almost ashamed to enter into further discussion of political constitutions. But it may at least be hoped that such excesses will lead to a more widespread conviction that philosophical *cognition* of such subjects cannot come from ratiocination or from [the consideration of] ends, grounds, and utilities—let alone from emotionality, love, and enthusiasm—but only from the concept; and it is also to be hoped that those who believe that the divine is incomprehensible and that cognition of the truth is a futile [*nichtiges*] enterprise will take no further part in the discussion. At any rate, neither the undigested chatter nor the edifying sentiments which their emotions and enthusiasm generate can claim to merit the attention of philosophy. (*GPR*, §272, 432–33; *EPR*, 305–6)

Here, clearly, Hegel is returning to some of the themes and targets of the Preface, arguing again that reason is required in order to determine the nature of the constitution of a state, and not “emotionality, love, and enthusiasm,” where because the latter have taken over in philosophy “reasonable men” have despaired of the subject (see *GPR*, 17–19; *EPR*, 15–16). But now Hegel can be seen as providing grounds for holding that because the state is something “actual,” this anti-rationalism is such a mistake: for, insofar as it is actual, the state is a unified system of elements, which can be properly understood only in terms of “the concept”

(*der Begriff*) which reason alone is capable of grasping. The state, then, is suitable for rational investigation, insofar as it is actual; and it is actual insofar as it is open to rational investigation, in precisely the way the *Doppelsatz* claims. Thus, I would argue, Hegel's aim in this section of the *Encyclopedia* is not to circumscribe his normative endorsement of things to what is "actual" rather than merely "existent," but to circumscribe the range of rational philosophical inquiry (of "science") to what has the self-determining unity of the "actual," as opposed to what has the structure of merely "determinate being," "existence" and the other determinations discussed earlier in the *Logic*.

Finally, then, on my account it is no surprise that in the final paragraph of §6, Hegel makes clear that the targets of the *Doppelsatz* are those who have a certain view of philosophical inquiry, who either criticise it as no more than empty theorizing, or who argue that this is what it should be: for, as we saw on my account of the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, this is Hegel's main target there too: "The notion that ideas and ideals are nothing but chimeras, and that philosophy is a system of pure phantasms, sets itself at once against the *actuality of what is rational*; but, conversely, the notion that ideas and ideals are something far too excellent to have actuality, or equally something far too impotent to achieve actuality, is opposed to it as well."⁶⁰ Hegel accepts that one may quite properly feel that we may never be philosophically satisfied with how things are at a certain level, the level of "trivial, external, and perishable objects, institutions, etc."; but philosophy does not deal with things at this level, but with "an actuality of which these objects, institutions and structures are only the superficial outer rind"—and at *that* level, Hegel claims, "science deals only with the Idea—which is not so impotent that it merely ought to be."⁶¹ As in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, therefore, Hegel's principal aim is to identify what is rational and what is actual in order to show that "the content of philosophy is *actuality*" as its object of investigation,⁶² not to claim anything about the normative status of "the actual" as what is "right" or "good."

Having looked at some length at how the reference to the *Doppelsatz* in §6 of the *Encyclopaedia Logic* can be fitted into my account of its meaning in the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right*, let me now look rather more briefly at the other three cases, where Hegel offers variants of it. From my point of view, the difficulty with these variants is that Hegel may seem to be bringing out the latent critical potential of the *Doppelsatz* by using "rational" in a normative sense, and so they may seem to show that the progressive reading is correct.⁶³

The first of these variants is from the Heidelberg lectures of 1817/18, where Hegel says that "What is rational must happen." Defenders of the progressive reading of the *Doppelsatz* have argued that this shows that he wanted to use the *Doppelsatz*, not in order to say that the existing political order is for the best, but that this

⁶⁰ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §6, 48; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 30.

⁶¹ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §6, 48–49; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 30.

⁶² Hegel, *Enzyklopädie Logik*, §6, 47; *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 29.

⁶³ See Shlomo Avineri, "The Discovery of Hegel's Early Lectures on the Philosophy of Right," *The Owl of Minerva*, 16 (1985), 202–3; Henrich, "Vernunft in Verwirklichung," 13–17; Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 13.

political order must inevitably evolve into one that is ideal, so that this remark should be seen in line with Hegel's providential philosophy of history.⁶⁴ However, I would argue that this again takes Hegel's remark out of context. When Hegel comments that "What is rational must happen," he is not talking about any preferred constitutional arrangement, which he is claiming will come to pass, and so is not making a providential point about history; rather, he is talking about constitutions *in general*, where his focus is on the question: "Who is to make the constitution—the people or someone else?"⁶⁵ Hegel, however, thinks that this is "a wholly abstract, empty question," because the constitution is nothing other than the reflection of the national spirit of the people, and so cannot be "made" by anyone, for it already belongs to them: "The constitution is the foundation, the basis on which everything transpires. It must therefore be viewed as an eternal foundation, not as an artifact."⁶⁶ It is with reference to this national spirit and its relation to the constitution that Hegel makes his remark about the rational: "The national spirit [*Volksgeist*] is the substance. What is rational must happen, since on the whole the constitution is its development."⁶⁷ Taken in context, this would appear to mean that Hegel is claiming that the constitution is rational in the sense that it does not arise arbitrarily, since its relation to the national spirit means it must be realized, and so can be explained as more than just the contingent product of any individual (such as a legislator), or individuals (as on the social contract model).⁶⁸ Once again, therefore, nothing here seems to imply that we should interpret the *Doppelsatz* in either a progressive or a conservative manner.

Now, against this interpretation, it could be pointed out that at the end of this paragraph, the text reads: "But the rational must always find a way, for it possesses truth, and we must cease to fear that bad constitutions can be made."⁶⁹ It could

⁶⁴ See Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 13.

⁶⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, eds. C. Becker et al., (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983), §134, 189; *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right: Heidelberg 1817–1818*, trans. J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 239.

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, §134, 190; *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, 240. Cf. *GPR*, §273, 439; *EPR*, 311–12.

⁶⁷ The two recent German editions of these lecture notes in fact give different versions of the text. The version given here is from *Die Philosophie des Rechts: Die Mitschriften Wannemann (Heidelberg 1817/18) und Homeyer (Berlin 1818/19)*, ed. Karl-Heinz Ilting (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1983), 157. In the edition edited by C. Becker et al., which forms the basis for the *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science* translation, the text is given as follows: "The national spirit is the substance; what is rational must happen. Since in principle the constitution is a development, the individual moments acquire the form of something won by struggle, either by one side or the other, people or prince, by contractual means or force" (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft* §134, 192; *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, 242). By reading "seine" as "eine" before "Entwicklung," this version makes it even less clear that Hegel took the constitution to be the development of reason, as the progressive reading has it.

⁶⁸ Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, §134, 190–91; *Lectures on Natural Right*, 240–41, where Hegel argues that in the cases of Moses, Solon and Louis XVIII, these figures merely made the national spirit concrete and explicit in the form of their respective constitutions, but did not devise them as individuals (where Hegel suggests that this is reflected in the fact that Moses thought of his constitution as coming from God, and Solon as coming from an oracle).

⁶⁹ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft*, §134, 192; *Lectures on Natural Right*, 242.

then be argued that when Hegel says “What is rational must happen,” he must be talking about some preferred constitutional arrangement; otherwise, how can he say that once we see that “the rational must always find a way,” then “we must cease to fear that bad constitutions can be made”? However, this again misunderstands the context of Hegel’s remark concerning our fear of bad constitutions. For, his claim is that we should lose this fear, not because the good or rational constitution must come about and so surpass any bad ones, but because we have seen that constitutions are the expression of the national spirit, and as such “[e]ach nation accordingly has the constitution appropriate and proper to it,”⁷⁰ and so a good constitution in *this* sense. When Hegel claims that “What is rational must happen,” therefore, he does not seem to be talking about “the right” or “the good,” and so is not using ‘rational’ here in a normative sense.

The second of these variants on the *Doppelsatz* is from the Berlin lectures of 1819, where Hegel says that “What is actual becomes rational, and the rational becomes actual.”⁷¹ This variant has in fact caused difficulties for those who propose a progressive reading of the *Doppelsatz*; for, if Hegel means by ‘the actual’ whatever properly realizes its essence, then it is not clear he can speak of it as *becoming* rational, since if it is “actual” in this sense it presumably already *is* rational, and it is odd to speak of it as becoming so. In the face of this difficulty, Hardimon suggests that here Hegel “is using the word ‘actual’ to mean ‘existent,’ and hence violating his self-imposed linguistic strictures, but he is *not* identifying the existent with the actual.”⁷² As a solution, however, this seems rather awkward; and I would suggest that my neutral reading offers a better way of taking this variant.

As with the first variant, the immediate context of this second variant is a reference to the constitution of the state, which Hegel says is “the arrangement of [the] inner spirit” of an age, and so “certainly happens and is necessary,” because against this inner spirit “there is no power in heaven or earth.”⁷³ As we have seen, Hegel holds that something can be determined by reason if it is necessary or must obtain. He therefore says that “the right of spirit” of which the constitution is the arrangement is not a product of “reflection and imagination, which one can bring forth at will out of abstract thinking or out of the goodness of one’s heart”; rather, it is something rational insofar as “what is rational becomes actual, and what is actual becomes rational,” whereas the products of “reflection and imagination” do not relate to actuality in this way, but may or may not obtain. So, once again, Hegel is not talking about some particular ideal (rational) constitution that must

⁷⁰ GPR, §274, 440; EPR, 312.

⁷¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819/20 in einer Nachschrift*, ed. Dieter Henrich (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), 50. It is perhaps also worth remarking that in the notes of the lectures taken by Johann Ringier from the same period, a version equivalent to the standard form of the *Doppelsatz* is given: “was vernünftig ist, ist wirklich und umgekehrt”; see G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts: Berlin 1819/20, Nachgeschrieben von Johann Rudolf Ringier*, eds. Emil Anghern, Martin Bondeli and Hoo Nam Seelmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2000), 8; and see also the editors, comments in *ibid.*, xx–xxiii.

⁷² Hardimon, *Hegel’s Social Philosophy*, 64. See also Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 98.

⁷³ Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesung von 1819/20*, 51.

be realized, but about what gives “the right of spirit” the status of being rational (as something that “certainly happens and is necessary”), in contrast to the products of “reflection and imagination.”

The third variant on the *Doppelsatz* which has been discussed is one Hegel reportedly offered in conversation to the poet and philosopher Heinrich Heine, in an incident which Heine recounts as follows:

At times I saw him [Hegel] looking around anxiously as if in fear he might be understood. He was very fond of me, for he was sure I would never betray him. At that time, I actually thought that he was very obsequious. Once when I complained about the phrase: “All that is, is rational,” he smiled strangely and remarked, “It could also be formulated as all that is rational must be.” Then he looked about him hastily; but he was quickly reassured, for only Heinrich Beer had heard his words.⁷⁴

In this exchange, it could be argued, Hegel is clearly using the term ‘rational’ in a normative sense (and so by implication is doing so in the *Doppelsatz*), for he seems to be saying to Heine that he believes not that the world as it *is* is right or good, but the world as it *will be*. Thus, the exchange with Heine would seem to lend support to the progressive reading of the *Doppelsatz*, that here Hegel is not endorsing the existing political order by calling it rational, but one that is yet to come. This is Hegel’s response to Heine’s challenge of “obsequiousness,” while the reformist outlook it implies explains his fear of being “understood.”

Now, clearly, Hegel in this exchange is addressing a worry about his apparent conservatism and quietism. The question is, however, whether this is a worry raised by the *Doppelsatz* as a normative endorsement of what is (as on the standard reading), or the *Doppelsatz* as a statement of Hegel’s anti-utopian rationalism (as on my reading). The latter seems to me as plausible as the former, where the worry would be this. I have argued that the aim of the *Doppelsatz* is to make a methodological point: that in so far as it is rational, philosophy is not an inquiry into what merely ought to be as some unrealisable ideal, but that it reaches conclusions which engage with the real world. It is therefore a statement of Hegel’s anti-utopianism, rather than a normative claim about “the actual.” On my account, therefore, the concern Hegel is addressing in his reply to Heine is the worry that this anti-utopianism means that philosophy can theorize about the state only in line with how things are, with the result that the philosopher’s position becomes “obsequious.” In response to this worry, Hegel tries to suggest to Heine that his anti-utopianism is also consistent with a rather more radical position: for the results of his inquiry can avoid being merely ideal if they engage not just with how the world *is* but also with how it *will be*, as a matter of necessity. So, once again, I would argue that we can interpret Hegel’s use of the term ‘rational’ here in a neutral sense, while explaining the exchange with Heine.

(2) I now turn to a second objection to my reading of the *Doppelsatz*, which is that I have failed to recognize its full normative weight, because I have failed to set it in the context of his “social theodicy” or “project of reconciliation,” but instead have

⁷⁴ *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, ed. Günther Nicolin, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1970), §363, 235; Heinrich Heine, *Self-Portrait and Other Prose Writings*, trans. F. Ewen, (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1948), 254–55 (translation modified).

set it in the context of his defense of philosophical rationalism. The aim of Hegel's social theodicy, it is argued, is "to reconcile people to the social world" by "showing that the social world is ultimately good."⁷⁵ Once this context is recognized, it could be argued, it becomes obvious that when Hegel uses the term 'rational' in the *Doppelsatz*, he is doing so in a normative sense, because he is hereby expressing his conviction that the social world qua actual is good in this way. So, once "the large themes of theodicy and of the actuality of the rational"⁷⁶ are put together, it may seem indisputable that the *Doppelsatz* should be understood normatively, as asserting the fundamental goodness of the actual. Moreover, it could be argued that Hegel himself clearly makes this link between his social theodicy and the *Doppelsatz* in subsequent parts of the Preface, for example when he talks about "the reconciliation with actuality" which comes once one is able to "recognize the rose in the cross of the present" (*GPR*, 26; *EPR*, 22), where this suggests that by finding that the rational is actual and the actual is rational, one will come to see goodness where before the world appeared to contain only what was wrong.

Now, clearly, my account of the *Doppelsatz* must give some explanation of this talk of "reconciliation" in the later part of the Preface, and how this links with the *Doppelsatz*. However, I think this can be done without reading the *Doppelsatz* itself in normative terms. For, as we have seen, on my more methodological reading, Hegel's claim is that philosophy as a rational inquiry will avoid "the setting up of a world beyond," so that in this sense it will prevent us yearning after some unrealizable ideal, and so will overcome our social alienation in this sense. Hegel holds that by relying on reason, rather than "his opinion—a pliant medium in which the imagination can construct anything he pleases" (*GPR*, 26; *EPR*, 22), the theorist will arrive at an account of the social world that relates to the here and now. So, it is by receiving the "inner call to comprehend"—to think rationally, in accordance with the concept—that philosophy brings about "reconciliation with actuality"; this avoids the empty utopianism which comes to those who fail to philosophize properly, where "reason is arraigned, belittled, and condemned" (*GPR*, 22; *EPR*, 18). Hence, Hegel confidently claims that when properly conducted, when free of "the fetter of some abstraction or other which has not been liberated into [the form of] the concept [*zum Begriffe*]" (*GPR*, 26; *EPR*, 22), philosophy becomes properly this-worldly, and so can take as its motto "*Here is the rose, dance here*" (*GPR*, 26; *EPR*, 22). It is in the sense of being "this-worldly" that Hegel speaks of philosophy as a rational exercise reconciling us to the present and leading us to "delight" in it—not in the sense of accepting whatever political institutions we happen to have got.

To explain Hegel's talk of reconciliation in the later part of the Preface, therefore, it is not necessary to take the *Doppelsatz* itself as a statement of his social theodicy, in a way that would make it clearly normative: my methodological reading can also explain this talk of reconciliation. Moreover, I would argue that my methodological reading better fits elements that are awkward for the social theodicy reading to explain. To take a general example: On the social theodicy account,

⁷⁵ Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*, 20. See also Raymond Geuss, "Art and Theodicy," in his *Morality, Culture, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 78–115.

⁷⁶ McCaurney, *Hegel on History*, 214.

the aim is to show people through philosophy that the world is fundamentally good, where it is said that this is what the *Doppelsatz* is claiming through its identification of the rational and the actual. But Hegel himself says in the Preface that most people “who live within the actuality of the state” recognize that they “are able to satisfy their knowledge and volition within it” (*GPR*, 16; *EPR*, 14), so this makes it hard to see how philosophy can help bring about reconciliation to people in general, where for Hegel they would appear to be reconciled already. It would seem, then, that it is the misguided *philosophical theorist* (not to mention those who follow him) who suffers from alienation, where the cure is to adopt reason as his method (as on my methodological account), rather than to see what is “actual” as “good” rather than “bad” (as on the social theodicy account), for it is with respect to the former rather than the latter that he makes his mistake *qua* philosopher. Secondly, to take a more specific example: Hegel says of the *Doppelsatz* that, “This conviction is shared by every ingenuous consciousness as well as by philosophy” (*GPR*, 25; *EPR*, 20). Now, here Hegel seems to be commenting on philosophy as such; but it seems curious to say that philosophy as such has a commitment to social theodicy, but much more natural to think that philosophy has a commitment to reason and rational methods, and that these methods must be used if we are to uncover the truth about the world at its most fundamental level.⁷⁷ Here again, then, what Hegel says seems to fit my methodological reading better than the social theodicy account does, and thus lends support to my neutral interpretation of the *Doppelsatz*.

5

For generations of commentators, the *Doppelsatz* has acted as a focus for contrasting interpretations of Hegel's position on ethical and social issues. As such, it has been treated as a one-sentence summary of Hegel's political philosophy, which is the way both the conservative and progressive readings take it. In contrast to both these accounts, my reading treats the *Doppelsatz* as more of a prefatory remark than as a summary of the political outlook propounded in the *Philosophy of Right* as a whole. That is, on my view it is simply designed to tell the reader that Hegel's approach in that work will involve a certain sort of rationalism with respect to its inquiry, where Hegel's main aim in the Preface is to defend the importance of being committed to such rationalism as a method in philosophy in general, and in political theory in particular. On my account, then, the *Doppelsatz* should no longer be seen as a summary of the political conclusions of the *Philosophy of Right*, but rather as a comment on the rationalistic spirit in which it is written, where its investigations are based on “the development of thought and the concept,” and

⁷⁷ See Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik I*, 44–45; *Science of Logic*, 50–51:

Anaxagoras is praised as the man who first declared that *Nous*, thought, is the principle of the world, that the essence of the world is to be defined as thought . . . *Thought* is an expression which attributes the determination contained therein primarily to consciousness. But inasmuch as it is said that understanding, reason, is in the objective world, that mind and nature have universal laws to which their life and changes conform, then it is conceded that the determinations of thought equally have objective value and existence.

not on “immediate perception and contingent imagination” (*GPR*, 18–19; *EPR*, 15), which can take us only to a superficial level, and not to a proper grasp of what is “actual.” Hegel was perhaps correct to be puzzled by the furor surrounding his “simple sentences,” once (as I recommend) they come to be understood in this light.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Earlier versions of this paper were given at departmental seminars at Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Sussex; I am grateful to those who provided helpful criticisms on those occasions. I am also grateful to the following people for comments on earlier drafts: Henk de Berg, Thom Brooks, Andrew Chitty, Gordon Finlayson, Fabian Freyenhagen, Raymond Geuss, Joseph McCarney, Kristina Mussnug-Barratt, Robert Pippin, Leif Wenar, and two anonymous referees for this journal. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for funding the research leave during which this paper was written.