

Some Notes on the Notion of Identity in Reflexion (2)

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In the preceding paper I pursued to clarify the way in which reflexion functions in the proposition of "A is A". The logical characteristics of reflexion is most prominent in this simplest identity of "A is A", even in its apparent unreflectedness. There must develop from this simplest form of identity an extreme opposition, i.e., the contradiction of A and non-A.

As opposed to the identity in "A is A", the identity in "A is B" is quite different in that "A" is shown to be identical with something other than "A". As Hegel suggested in the passage quoted below, what is meant in the proposition of "A is B" is that A is posited as non-A. Logically, it is the greatest problem, so it seems to me, to pursue the possible reason for the absolute identity of A and non-A.

In this paper I have endeavored to make clear the logical aspects of reflexive movement of identity from "A = A" to "A is non-A".

Introduction

In thinking of the essence of a thing, we have a persistent tendency to suppose that it lies beyond the sphere of immediate beings as something substantial. To be sure, each and every immediate being can not stay as it is. In a state of constant flux and change, it is doomed to perish. Universal mortality is the inevitable fate of whatever exists in the sphere of being and time.

In this sense, nothing that can be changeable with time is worthy of the name of what we refer to as essence. But it is a mistake to think that there is a world of essence above and beyond the totality of immediate beings. It is anything but a thing which can be seen or touched by our senses.

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What, then, is the essence of a thing? It is something that makes a thing what it is. That a thing is what it is, this "is" ,i.e.,identity is what enables a thing to be itself. In this sense essential is a thing that is identical with itself.

Unlike the immediacy of beings, the way essence exists is different from the way of beings. In contrast to the sphere of external change and becoming, the sphere of essence is an internal one where inner relatedness of a thing,i.e.,reflexion prevails. Identity is the first phase of essence, from which our inquiry on the way to the clarification of essence in reflexion has started.

In the preceding paper we inquired into the nature of identity in the proposition "A=A". Some of the recognitions we gained are as follows;

- (1) Essential is a thing which is what it is. This identity of a thing with itself or reflexion in itself is what makes a thing essential.
- (2) Identity is not to be taken as an immediate being, but as immediacy posited by a sort of self-identifying motion.
- (3) This motion in identity is a motion coming to and from oneself, which is called "reflexion" in the proper sense of the word. Without this reflexion, nothing essential will ever come to be revealed.
- (4) Reflexion is an activity of essence itself, not a subjective one added from outside to the bare objects of our observation.
- (5) The sphere of essence is the inner one where only by reflexive activity is the essence of a being enabled to come out.
- (6) The identity in pure reflexion is an infinite tautology, as it were, that is, the empty infinite in which nothing other than itself is posited yet.
- (7) This negativity or emptiness is an urge of reflexion to get oneself fulfilled; the problem of identity is to be regarded as that concerning the logical possibility of self-fulfillment in the

sheer emptiness of reflexion.

Here, a brief review of the nature of reflexion we have seen.

- (A) "A is " is a bare fact of whatever exists immediately, while on the other hand in "A is A" an essential fact is expressed in the form of proposition.
- (B) By "A is A" is meant the immediate position of A and the getting-back of the posited A to the positing A itself. Reflexion which is by nature a positing force is a resilient motion back to oneself from what it has posited.
- (C) There seems to be no reflexion in identity, but there is in the notion of identity logical necessity to posit oneself. A is A, not non-A. Identity is identity, not non-identity. This is a reflexive movement of identity to confirm oneself.
- (D) Which means that identity gets posited in the reflexive relatedness to its own other. To be short, reflexion is essentially negative in identity.

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...Für den bloßen Verstand sagt $A=B$ nicht mehr aus als der erste Satz; der Verstand begreift alsdann nämlich das Gesetztsein des A als B nur als eine Wiederholung des A, d.h. er hält nur die Identität fest und abstrahiert davon, daß, indem A als B oder in B gesetzt wiederholt wird, ein Anderes, ein Nicht-A gesetzt ist, und zwar als A, also A als Nicht-A. Wenn man bloß auf das Formelle der Spekulation reflektiert und die Synthese des Wissens in analytischer Form festhält, so ist die Antinomie, der sich selbst aufhebende Widerspruch, der höchste formelle Ausdruck des Wissens und der Wahrheit.

Der Grundfehler kann so vorgestellt werden, daß in formeller Rücksicht auf die Antinomie des $A=A$ und des $A=B$ nicht reflektiert ist. ⁽¹⁾

(G.W.F.Hegel, Differenz Schrift)

II Through Contradiction onto Ground.

- 6-1 The basic difference that lies between the two types of proposition is that there is in "A=A" a negative urge to expel from A anything other than A, while in "A=B" A is posited as being identical with what is not A. "A=A" shows a simple identity where nothing other than A is posited ($A=A \neq \text{non-A}$), whereas what A=B means is the identity in which A is at one with something other than A ($A=\text{non-A}$).
- 6-2 Here again, let us be clear, before our inquiry, about the fact that the identity in "A=B" is not to be taken as a subjective statement we make in observing the two particulars that exist separately. It is not human observers that put the identity between the two objects, A and B.
- 6-3 What is shown in the identity of "A=B" is precisely the fact that the subject A is posited in the predicate B. Obviously, B stands for anything other than A. That A is posited as B or in B means that something quite different from A is posited as A, namely that A is posited as non-A. Hegel says in the above passage that "indem A als B oder in B gesetzt wiederholt wird, ein Anderes, ein Nicht-A gesetzt ist und zwar als A, also A als Nicht-A."
- 6-4 Now we get confronted with a great problem. What on earth does it mean that A is what is not A? A is non-A. This is exactly what "A is B" means. If reflexive identity in "A is A" is taken to be the true notion of identity, the identity in "A is B" will be the last thing that would be accepted as true.
- 6-5 For reflexive Understanding, it is quite impossible that A should ever be non-A. That A is non-A would be an absolute contradiction, an antinomy, if both "A is A" and "A is non-A" are held to be equally true.
- 6-6 Logically, "A=A \neq B" is incompatible with "A=B=A"; for reflexive Understanding only the identity that is free from any contradiction is the true identity, and the identity in "A=B" would not be anything but

contradiction.

Can contradiction be a true criterion of falsity ? And can non-contradiction be a true sign of truth ?

6-7 " *Contradictio est regula veri, non contradictio falsi.*"⁽²⁾ But just the opposite is the case with the principle of truth and falsehood in reflexive Understanding, which is " *Non-contradictio est regula veri, contradictio falsi.*"

6-8 As it turned out through our inquiry into the nature of identity in the preceding paper, the identity in "A is A" can not be without any contradiction. In order for A to be A itself, A has to be posited in negative relation to its own other, non-A. " A is A, not non-A." ; only in this reflexive negativity can " A" sustain itself. The more firmly A insists on the freedom to be itself, the more inextricably it gets stuck in the reflexive negativity. That a thing in reflexion is in the inner relation to its own other, the negation of which means the simultaneous negation of the thing itself, this is the very nature of contradiction in reflexion.

6-9 Free as it may appear from any contradiction, identity has logical necessity to develop into its own contradiction.

7 The truth of reflexive identity is contradiction, and contradiction means the abolition of reflexive relation.

7-1 Contradiction is the very product of identity in reflexion, which is a negative force to divide one original unity into difference, opposition and so on. It is quite out of the question to think of identity as something devoid of any reflexion. (If it were not for reflexion, i.e., the relation in which the otherness is posited as something to be negated ,nothing essential could ever have the least moment of becoming evident.)

7-2 Therefore we can say for certain that " *contradictio est regula veri, non-contradictio falsi.*"

- 7-3 What it amounted to is that the essential identity which stands in reflexive relation must be compelled to its own contradiction. No matter how exclusively true it may claim to be, identity can not arrive at its self-identity.
- 7-4 "Logica reflexiva" which is the logic of essence turns out to be a failure to attain what is aimed at, that is, to get the pure self-identity firmly established. The whole reason lies, as stated above, in the essential negativity of the reflexive identity. It is the essential character of negativity that a thing needs to have the other which it has to negate for the sake of its own sustenance, but with the negation of which the thing itself has to be put out of existence at the same time.
- 7-5 Everything that can not exist for itself except in so far as it stands in negative relation does not deserve to be called essential.
- 7-6 Just as the development of contradiction out of identity is inevitable, so is the dissolution of contradiction. The contradiction in negative identity must be led to dissolve into nothing, as long as it is based solely on the logic of reflexion.
- 7-7 Whatever stands in identity is essentially reflexive and from whatever stands in reflexive relation must come out the destruction of the relation itself.
- 7-8 Reflexive is the reality which stands in relation, and the end of the relation is, of course, the end of reflexive reality.
- 7-9 Here arises one question. As is already shown, nothing that gets posited by reflexion as being in essential identity can exist in the sphere of essence. However, nothing that stands in the essential identity in reflexion can escape being posited in the negative relation with its own other. Which means that through the reflexion by which essential identity of a thing is made possible, the identity must be

led to its own contradiction.

8 Identity is the proper way in which a thing is reflected in itself, but at the same time the reflexion is responsible for the logical incompatibility of "A" with "non-A" .

8-1 Out of the immediacy of reflexion, i.e., identity emerges the contradiction . The driving force of reflexion from identity to contradiction is quite inevitable.

8-2 To be logical is to be inevitable; this is just the case with logica reflexiva.

8-3 In negative reflexion of " $A=A \neq \text{non-A}$ " , identity is forced to contradiction. It is an urge toward self-identification through the negation of all that is not itself.

In positive reflexion of " $A=B=A$ " , reflexion starts with the position of the absolute identity of "A" with "B" . "B" which is something other than "A" is posited as being just the same with "A" .

8-4 "A is B" means that "A is non-A" .

This is the absolute contradiction from the standpoint of reflexive Understanding, to which the possible identity itself of A with non-A would simply be an impossibility, such as an assertion that being alive is being dead. For reflexion, life is life, and death is death. Life is life, precisely because it is not death. "A is A, not non-A" . Without this negative reflexion of "non-A" , "A" would not be posited as "A" . But, as long as there is "non-A" posited which will immediately deny the existence of "A" , it must be negated in order that "A" can be "A" itself. But, as we have already seen in 5-1, the identity of "A" has simply to vanish, like a rainbow, with the negation of "non-A" . This is a logical necessity of everything that is grounded only on the logic of exclusion. If life is to be life, it should be free of any shadow of death, but life without death would not be life. This means that the

very notion of life is possible only in reflexive relatedness to its own other, i.e., the notion of death.

8-5 Everything that exists only in relation to the other will inevitably cease to exist if the other is negated in the relation. The necessary dependence of one on the other and the absolute inconsistency with each other.

8-6 The principle of reflexion is the absolute difference between "A" and "B". Moreover, it is the absolute difference between "A is A" and "A is B". Contradiction is inherent deep in the principle. "If one is true, the other must be false." ; the unavoidable logical sequence in the reflexive logic of exclusion.

8-7 In contrast to the identity in "A=A", the identity in "A=B" is no longer to be regarded as being merely in negative relation of reflexion

8-8 Logically, "A=B" means "A=non-A". It means that A is posited as being non-A. The position of A is the negation of A, i.e., the position of non-A.

8-9 The position of identity in "A=B" begins where the identity in "A=A" has run its course, namely, where contradiction has come at naught, or rather reflexion has gone to the ground through contradiction.

9 What, then, is the logical ground for reflexive identity of A with non-A? How is it possible that something can be identical with what it is not? We are now seeking the logical way in which what is absolutely contradictory is in the absolute identity. The true identity brought forth from the negative reflexion in "A is A, not non-A" is the identity in which "A is non-A".

9-1 This absolute identity of the absolute contradiction can rightly be called speculative identity.

In the speculative identity the position of A only as A is abolished. "A is not only A , but non-A" . "A=B=A" . A is reflected not only as A, but as something other than A.

9-2 What is it that makes the identity of A with non-A truly possible? Is it to be found in A, the subject, on which, as Leibnitz said, the predicates ought to be sufficiently grounded ? If the sufficient reason of the identity of the subject with the predicate is considered to be in the subject, what is the nature of the relation between the one and the other? If the subject is the sufficient reason of the predicates, is the relation not the causal one ?

That the predicates are sufficiently grounded on the subject, what does it mean ? It means that the predicates are predestined in the subject. Can we not say that Leibnitz' logic of sufficient reason proves to be the logic of absolute necessity against his intention ?

9-3 The vector or the movement of reflexion in the proposition "A is B" is contrary to that of Leibnitz' logic. What is really denoted in the proposition is that the subject is posited as the predicate or in the subject. The movement of position is clearly in the direction from subject to predicate.

9-4 Which means that the essence of A is posited as B or as in B. If so, are we justified in thinking that in the proposition "A is B" the predicate, B ,is the ground on which A, the subject, is posited? Whether the so-called sufficient reason of the proposition "A=B" is in the predicate or in the subject, either relation is essentially of causal nature. What we are pursuing is the logic of the absolute identity or the logic of the absolute ground of the identity itself, neither the logic of subject, nor the logic of predicate.

9-5 Where is the ground of the identity of A and B thought to lie, if not in subject nor in predicate ? It is, and has to be, where the negative position of the identity of A against non-A has ended in the contra-

diction and the reflexive relation itself has been done away with.

- 9-6 The absolute identity of A with B is the ground on which the reflexive relation of non-identity of A and non-A does not work any more merely as an excluding force. This non-identity of reflexive relation is lost in the absolute identity of A and non-A. That means that reflexion has become the moment of the latter identity, the ground.
- 9-7 The ground in which the contradiction of reflexion got dissolved is the place where the two of the absolute contradictory are in the absolute identity.
- 9-8 Every reality posited in reflexive relation is more apparent than real. It will evaporate as evanescently as an illusion.
- 9-9 Out of the absolute nothingness of pure reflexion, there must emerge a new aspect of the logic of the absolute identity.

(to be continued)

References

- (1) Differenz der Fichteschen und Schellingschen System der Philosophie (BD.2. der Theorie Werkausgabe, Suhrkamp) P.41
- (2) Hegels Habilitationsthesen in 1801

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