

Some Notes on the Notion of Identity in Reflexion (3)

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This paper deals with the clarification of the ground for logical possibility of identity in the proposition of "A is B". The state of affairs denoted in this identity is quite different from that in "A is A". As is seen in the preceding papers, the identity in "A is A" stands for the absolute non-identity of A with anything other than A, since the identity of A gets reflected in the negative relation to non-A, i.e., "A is A, not non-A." The essence of this identity lies, therefore, in the relative negativity of reflexion which leads inevitably to the total exclusion of every otherness.

The identity in the proposition of "A is B" means, on the other hand, the absolute identity of "A" with "non-A". To make clear what is meant by this identity is the central theme in this paper.

Brief Review

As we have seen so far, the proper sphere of essence is not to be taken to be in the immediacy of beings and becoming, but in the inner relatedness where everything essential can be posited only in the reflected identity with itself. It turns out, however, to be quite impossible for the identity to get firmly established, in so far as it is based on reflexion.

The problem of the identity in reflexion can be seen, at the same time, to be the one regarding the appearance and reality of things in relation. As compared with the immediate reality of particulars given in sense data, far more fundamental is the reflexive reality in relation. The more internal the relation is, the more essential is the reality in reflexion.

It is to be noted, however, that the reality possible only in relation is certain to vanish, precisely because the nature of all relations is in reflexive negativity, which must be reduced, at last, to its nothingness.

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Der Grundfehler kann so vorgestellt werden, daß in formeller Rücksicht auf die Antinomie des $A = A$ und des $A = B$ nicht reflektiert ist. Einen solchen analytischen Wesen liegt das Bewußtsein nicht zum Grunde, daß die rein formale Erscheinung des Absoluten der Widerspruch ist, ein Bewußtsein, das nur entstehen kann, wenn die Spekulation von der Vernunft und dem $A = A$ als absoluter Identität des Subjekts und Objekts ausgeht. (1)

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

III . On the Absolute Identity as the Ground of Reflexion

10 With the dissolution of contradiction, immediate reflexion is abolished into the ground. The ground is the graveyard, as it were, of reflexion. It is also the ground of nothingness.

10-1 The ground to which reflexion gets reduced is the empty space of pure unreflectedness where there is no immediate position of negative relation.

10-2 That reflexion has gone to the ground means that both the identity of $A = A$ and the difference of A from non- A are now in the absolute indifference, in which neither of them is yet posited. The position of A and non- A is effaced in the sheer emptiness of non-reflexion.

(We can not quite agree with those who insist that the reflexive relation should be the ultimate truth of reality. They are right, of course, in regarding the inner relatedness of things as being more fundamental than just the immediate beings of individuals. We share their view, of course, that without the inner relation of reflexivity, neither A nor non- A alone has any meaning at all, namely that only in relation with the others does a thing can get defined.

Much attention has to be paid, however, not to take this view of relation as the last stage of truth, because the logic on which reflexive relation is based is essentially the logic of exclusion by dual negation. As opposed

to the reflexive relation, the relation in which A and non-A can stand in the same identity is not the relation of reciprocal relativity, but the one of reflexive negativity.)

10-3 The identity in the proposition of "A is A" is the reflexive identity only of A, which signifies the essential non-identity of A against non-A. ($A=A \neq \text{non-A}$). While, on the other hand, the identity in the proposition of "A is B" is the identity of A with non-A, in which both A and non-A are not posited as negating each other. ($A=\text{non-A}=A$).

10-4 The ground, which is the absolute indifference, i.e., the pure negatedness of reflexion, is the ground of identity and non-identity. This means that in the ground where the identity of $A=A$ has ceased to be in pure reflexivity, the identity that can be possible is not the simple identity of A with A, but the identity of A with non-A.

10-5 The identity in the ground is, therefore, the absolute identity of identity ($A=A$) and non-identity ($A \neq \text{non-A}$).

10-6 The ground which constitutes the more fundamental sphere of reflexion is the logical ground for the possibility of the absolute identity of those two identities in $A=A$ and $A=B$ (non-A).

10-7 The ground is the integration of identity and non-identity, in which the reflexion that is the position of A as A ($A=A$) is abrogated into one moment of this integrated whole.

10-8 Identity and non-identity in reflexion, i.e., the position of A as A and the exclusion of non-A from A are both posited as the essential ingredients of the whole.

10-9 Here lies a difference from the logical contradiction in reflexion we have seen so far. (A is A, just because A stands in relation to what is not A. The position of A is only possible together with the position of non-A. At the same time, however, neither A nor non-A can sustain itself without negating its own other. But to negate the other is to simply

negate oneself.)

11 In the ground, reflexion is no longer exclusive. It has now become a moment in the absolute identity. With this recognition, the nature of reflexion or the negative relation between A and non-A has got to be changed.

11-1 In pure reflexion, positing of A is quite identical with the posited A. This identity of A is always contained within the limited sphere of position and positedness, without so much as getting out of A to something other than A. Non-A is put by reflexion outside the proper sphere of exclusive identity of A.

11-2 In the ground, however, identity is what connects A and non-A, or the subject and the predicate of a proposition.

11-3 Identity in the ground is not in the reflected immediacy of subject alone, nor in the substantiated generality of predicate alone.

11-4 If the ground of identity is laid solely in the subject or in the predicate, the identity will not be a bilateral one in which A can be B and B can be A.

11-5 The ground as the ratio sufficientis of identity is the totality of the abolished reflexion, as is seen in 10. It is the ground of nothingness of pure and negative reflexion.

11-6 The posited existence of A as well as non-A is not so much a reality, but an illusion, as it were, of reflexion. In the ground where reflexion has vanished, "A" is not posited only as "A". The subject in reflexive relation loses its own definition. It is in the ground as something indefinite. It may well be something substantial, to be sure, but quite devoid of any reflexion.

11-7 How, then, can the "something" be predicated in its pure nothingness of unreflectedness ?

11-8 In contrast to sheer reflexion which is "a pure motion from nothing to nothing" , or a pure self-position and getting back to oneself, as is seen in 1-1 and 2-2, substantiality without reflexion is an undivided totality, in which reflexion is now a moment of the logic of ground.

11-9 Reflexion as a moment of totality is no longer a mere motion starting from A, and coming back to A from the posited non-A. But now, it is a reflexive motion back and forth between subject and predicate, in which the subject is posited as the predicate, or as in the predicate. In other word, the subject is in the real identity with the predicate. ($S=P$) .

12 Reflexion is the position of identity of A with non-A and non-A with A. That reflexion is in the ground means that the ideal (negative) identity of A and the reflexive opposition of A to non-A are both negated. This means that the pure negativity of reflexion, which is the principle of non-identity, has now turned into the moment in the unreflected totality of nothingness.

12-1 What does it mean that in the ground free of negative reflexion, a thing exists in its pure self identity ? If "A is in its own identity," it is not taken as something in immediate negativity against non-A, but as something in pure unreflectedness in itself.

12-2 But, can "A" be ever defined as "A" in the pure void of reflexion ? The answer is in the negative, as is already suggested in 11 . The very definition of "A" itself is quite impossible where there is neither the position nor the negation of reflexion.

12-3 A thing devoid of reflexion exists of its own accord.

12-4 Everything that exists in and for itself is in the pure identity with itself.

12-5 Everything that exists in the pure self-identity is the "nothing" for reflexion. And the identity without reflexion is the substantiality with no definition.

12-6 Identity in the ground is the real identity between the subject and the predicate. A is B , and B is A . The motion getting back and forth between the two is reflexive, but it is a real reflexion, not an ideal one.

12-7 The proposition " A is B " means nothing less than the fact that A , the subject, is posited as being identical with B , the predicate. It means at the same time that " A " is posited in " B " which is something other than " A ". It also means that " A " is in its own identity as something being posited in the identity with B . $A=B=A$. The nature of real reflexion lies in the absolute identity of A with non- A .

12-8 As has been stated a number of times, the ground for the identity is placed in the absolute nothingness, that is, in the absolute emptiness where the sheer negativity of simple reflexion has vanished.

12-9 The absolute identity of identity ($A=A$) and non-identity ($A \neq \text{non-}A$) is the real identity of immediacy and position, being and reflexion, or positivity and negativity, in which anything posited is in the immediate identity with its own other. Such a state of affairs can not be referred to as something that merely exists by itself. Nor can it be a thing that can subsist only in the posited relation with its own other. It is nothing merely reflexive, or purely relative, but something positive beyond reflexion. We can name this something as "entity".

13 Needless to say, entity in real reflexion has no such negativity as is seen in the simple or ideal identity in " A is A " that tries in vain to confirm itself only by excluding all the otherness.

13-1 Entity in real reflexion is something negated in self-positing negativity, and as such it is in immediate identity with its own other. $A = \text{non-}A = A$. Which means that A is A only as being in non- A , or as being reflected from non- A . This identity is not the identity of purely negative exclusivity, but of the absolute negativity, in which the very position of A is not restricted by the negation of non- A .

13-2 Infinite is the identity in which nothing reflected is restricted by the posited existence of the otherness.

13-3 Every entity which is in the absolute identity is free, in the sense that it is not bounded reflexively. It is something living in the free identity with its own otherness.

IV. The Notion of Freedom in Reflexion and Ground

13-4 This gives us a clue to the logical ground for freedom that consists in the way in which real reflexion is in the absolute identity. To put it another way, nothing in the relation of negative reflexion can ever become free, since, as has often been pointed out, the negation of the reflected other is the immediate abolition of the identity posited in reflexion.

13-5 To be free means being infinite, not in the sense that there exists nothing finite there, but in the sense that the identity is preserved in and with the finite, i.e., the negative.

(By freedom is usually meant a state free of any necessity. It is so obvious a fact that there seems to be no need for further consideration. That which is free is free, not otherwise. But how would the freedom as such be possible but for the necessity that is the essential other of freedom ? Needless to say, freedom is anything but a thing that exists by itself. It is, first of all, a state posited in reflexion. Freedom is the notion which is possible only in the internal relation with non-freedom, i.e., necessity. But the relation of the former to the latter is, by nature, the relation of non-identity, as has already been explained in detail. $A = A \neq \text{non-}A$. This is just the kind of truth peculiar to formal logic, according to which we are too apt to take it for granted that freedom is freedom, not necessity. If this is how we think of freedom, it can not but be conceived to be a state of ideal reality, the logical essence of which lies in the negative identity of freedom excluding necessity. Freedom supposed in this form of ideal identity is, therefore, more apparent than real.

No one would doubt the truth of a statement, for instance, that a man who is free is free. The statement is true at least from a logical point

of view. Regardless of any contents, the form of a statement is to be held true. "A which is B is B." "If it is true that A is B, it must be necessarily false that A is not B." But, what, on earth, does it mean by saying that A is B ? On what ground can we say that the subject A is the same with the predicate B ? Unless the logical ground for the true identity of A with B is made clear, the assumed truth in any analytical proposition will remain only provisional. Of more fundamental importance, therefore, than the assumption of this formal truth is the recognition of logical ground for the absolute identity of subject and predicate.)

13-6 The notion of freedom, if it is a true one, has to be sufficiently grounded on the absolute identity of freedom with necessity.

13-7 Just as the notion of freedom without necessity is only ideal, so is the notion of necessity as opposed to freedom only real. To be free without necessity means being arbitrary, unreal, only subjective, while to be really free means being free in necessity.

(The notion of necessity is the very product of our formal thinking. If we stick to the rules of thought, following them faithfully, the whole of our universe will come to appear to be completely under the strictest control of natural necessity. And, what we call "Nature" , as the object of formal thinking, will inevitably become the entire system of objective necessity, where it seems quite impossible that there should exist anything that can possibly be indeterminated or free.

We are so much accustomed to regarding freedom as something indeterminated that we find it quite hard to discern any sign of objective freedom in nature. But, if indetermination is meant by freedom, then it follows that determination is not freedom, but necessity. We often hear it said that we are, by nature, quite free to do or not to do something. Indeed, it may be asserted that freedom consists in our being free to do or not to do a thing, but, once the choice is made, doing something simply means being immediately thrown into a state of determination, and then we will no longer be free.)

13-8 The contrary notions of freedom and necessity or indetermination and determination are quite incompatible with each other, as long as there

underlies the logic of reflexion.

13-9 The simple identity of $A=A$ as opposed to non- A is negative and ideal, while the essential identity of $A=B$ (non- A) $=A$ is positive and real.

14 Every notion posited in reflexive relation do not stand in free unison with the other, while what is really (essentially) identical is in free identity with the other.

14-1 A state of affairs that deserves to be called truly free is a state which is really identical with itself in necessity.

14-2 The notion of necessity will lose its own definition of determination, if unposited (unreflected) by the other notion of freedom.

Likewise, the notion of freedom will lose its own definition of indetermination, if unposited by the other notion of necessity.

(It stands to reason that what has gained its own definition solely by relation is bound to lose the definition as such, if and when the reflexion has ceased to be at play. But, we should not be mistaken in thinking like this; that is why reflexion, or the position of relation, is the only means by which the essence of a thing can ever be revealed. It is, one might assert, only by reflexion that a thing can get defined in its proper essentiality. Needless to say, by a sharp distinction in reflexion can a thing be set in clear contrast against the others. But far more important is the recognition that the definition of a thing by reflexion is essentially negative, which means that the more uncompromising the opposition is made by reflexion, the more precarious the relation is forced to become. The end of the reflexion is the birth of the absolute ground of the real relatedness in essence.)

14 3 Every entity in reflexion rests ultimately on its own nothingness, when placed in its absolute (not relative) ground of reflexion.

14-4 Seen from this viewpoint, freedom and necessity can not be thought of as being apart; freedom without necessity is only imaginary, and necessity without freedom is deadly blind. The truth is in one living identity with each other.

(to be continued)

References

- (1) Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen System der Philosophie
(BD.2.der Theorie-Werkausgabe, Suhrkamp) s.41

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