

THE PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES OF
CONTEMPORARY POLITICS OF IDENTITY
IN G.W. F. HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT*:
A CRITICAL READING OF CHARLES TAYLOR AND JEAN HYPPOLITE

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Thesis Abstract

Mine Yıldırım, “The Philosophical Sources of Contemporary Politics of
Identity In G.W.F Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*:
A Critical Reading of Charles Taylor and Jean Hyppolite”

This thesis addresses the question of the subject that is supposed to underline the prevalent understanding of “identity” in contemporary politics of identity and recognition. There are two aims of the thesis: First, is to trace back the philosophical sources of identity politics by opening its fundamental assumptions regarding the subject. And second, is to complicate these assumptions with the explication of the ways in which “difference” is articulated into the constitution of the subject in Hegel’s philosophy, particularly in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the light of two divergent readings of the Hegelian subject, Charles Taylor’s and Jean Hyppolite’s, this thesis at explicating the dialectical and non-dialectical thinking of the constitution of the subject in the *Phenomenology* with regard to articulation of “difference”.

The central argument of this thesis is that only one way of thinking the constitution of the subject in Hegel’s philosophy has come to dominate the contemporary political thinking on identity and difference: It is the dialectical thinking of the relation between self and other that results in the overcoming of contradiction between self and other in and through the dialectics, the “sublation” of difference in an ultimate synthesis that manifests itself in the self-realization and the unity of the subject, and finally in reducing the experience of subjectivity to the psychologically defined vicissitudes of the human subject.

The major theoretical contribution of this thesis is that, in the light of Jean Hyppolite’s reading of the Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it brings out the disregarded alternative interpretation of the differential structure underlying the constitution of the subject in Hegel’s philosophy – that puts forward a non-dialectical thinking of the relation between identity and difference. Thinking the relation between identity and difference non-dialectically is very important for thinking new forms of political subjectivity to avoid any essentialist, a-historicizing and reductionist view of difference; and rather to think difference in its absolute alterity and its irreducibility to the economy of the same.

Tez Özeti

Mine Yıldırım, “Çağdaş Kimlik Politikalarının

G.W.F. Hegel’in *Tinin Fenomenolojisi*’ndeki Felsefi Kökenleri:

Charles Taylor ve Jean Hyppolite’in Eleştirel Bir Okuması

Bu tez, çağdaş kimlik ve tanınma politikalarında varsayılan “kimlik” anlayışını temellleyen özne sorusunu ele almaktadır ve bu tezin, iki temel motivasyonu vardır: Birincisi, hakim özne varsayımlarını tartışmaya açarak kimlik politikalarının felsefi kökenlerini araştırmak; ikincisi, bu varsayımların Hegel felsefesinde, özel olarak Hegel’in *Tinin Görüngübilimi*’nde “fark”ın nasıl ve hangi yollarla öznenin kurulumu düşüncesine eklenildiğini ortaya çıkarmak. Biri Charles Taylor’a, diğeri Jean Hyppolite’e ait Hegelci özneye dair iki farklı yorumun eleştirel bir okumasını sunmayı amaçlayan bu tez, bu yorumlar ışığında *Görüngübilim*’de öznenin diyalektik ve diyalektik-olmayan kurulumunu “fark”ın eklenmesi üzerinden tartışmaktadır.

Bu tezin temel iddiası, çağdaş kimlik politikasında öne çıkarılan kimlik ve fark anlayışının Hegel felsefesinde öznelliğin kurulumuna dair yalnızca bir tür okumayı temel aldığıdır; Hegel felsefesindeki, benlik ile başkalık arasındaki ilişkinin diyalektik olarak yorumlanmasıdır. Öznelliği benlik ile başkalık arasındaki diyalektik ilişkiye indirgeyen bu yorumlamanın, kimlik ile fark arasındaki çelişkiyi görünmez kıldığı, farkın, kendini gerçekleştiren öznenin birlik ve bütünlüğünde kendini gösteren nihai bir sentezde “içerilip aşıldığı”, ve öznelliği insan-öznenin psikolojik değişimlerine indirgeyen bir yaklaşım olduğu savunulmaktadır.

Bu tezin temel katkısı, Jean Hyppolite’in Hegel’in *Tinin Görüngübilimi* yorumunun ışığında, Hegel felsefesinde öznenin kurulumunu temellleyen “fark yapısı”nın bugün kimlik temelli politik söylemde göz ardı edilmiş bir okumasını- kimlik ve fark arasındaki ilişkinin diyalektik olmayan bir okumasını- ortaya çıkarmak olacaktır. Kimlik ile fark arasındaki ilişkiyi diyalektik olmayan bir biçimde düşünmek; farkı, özcü, tarihsellik-dışı ve indirgemeci fark anlayışının ötesinde, aynı ekonomisine indirgenmeyecek mutlak başkalık olarak düşünmemize imkan sağlamayı; böylelikle de mevcut kimlik söylemlerinin dönüştürülmesine ve yeni politik öznellik düşüncesine katkı sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I aim at addressing the question of the subject that is supposed to underline the prevalent understanding of “identity” in contemporary politics of identity and recognition.

There are two motivations of the thesis: First, is to trace back the philosophical sources of identity politics by opening its fundamental assumptions regarding the subject. And second, is to complicate these assumptions with the explication of the ways in which difference is articulated into the constitution of the subject in Hegel’s philosophy.

Within the scope of this thesis, the question concerning the constitution of the subject is addressed with reference to Hegel’s philosophy, particularly to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This is mostly because of the widely accepted idea that it is the Hegel’s philosophy with which the subject has reached the point of its ultimate synthesis, its self-realization.¹

In Hegel’s philosophy of the subject, all the problems, tensions, paradoxes, contradictions and inconsistencies that the modern subject strives to overcome (thing-in-itself in Kant, “doubt” in Descartes, the problem of self-posting of consciousness in Fichte, to name few), have been appropriated as the *moments* of the subject – the moments that are incorporated, and finally sublated, within the historical development and culmination of the subject.

¹Jean-Luc Nancy, *Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative*, University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p.4; Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p.583; Tom Rockmore, *Before and After Hegel: A Historical Introduction to Hegel’s thought*, University of California Press, 1993, p. 1973.

This is also why Hegel's philosophy has still been considered by some as the harbinger of the "end of history". In Hegel's philosophy, the absolute, for the first time in history of philosophy, has been thought in terms of subjectivity. In other words, the subject has come to be thought in terms of its attainment of absolute knowledge, the knowledge of the Absolute in the *telos* of historical development. Hegel is the philosopher of the "end", unity of reason, historical culmination, transformation, development and closure. Ironically, there is no end to Hegel today. The philosopher of subjective Absolute, of the end of history is largely considered as the primary index of an epoch that refuses to think the end as closure. Hegel's philosophy is the "battlefield" upon which the possibility of the closure of the modern epoch is fought out.² It is a philosophy of both the pinnacle and the death of the modern subject, and passage from the modern to the postmodern view of the subject, of the world and history.

This is because Hegel's philosophy of the subject encompasses two possibilities at the same time: It is both the subject of ultimate unity, synthesis self-presence and self-realization. But it is also simultaneously the subject of fragmentation, dispersion, self-losing, internal contradiction and irreducible difference. Accordingly, there have been two major ways and possibilities of reading the subject in Hegel's philosophy: Either in terms of dialectical unity in which difference is sublated; or in terms of infinite "work of the negative" that manifests itself in internal contradiction within the constitution of the self, as well as the relation between self and the other.

It is this simultaneity of these two possible thinking of the subject in Hegel's philosophy that enables contemporary political theorists, those thinking on identity

² Stuart Barnett, "Introduction" in Hegel after Derrida, ed. Stuart Barnett, Routledge Press, 1998, p.5.

and difference, return to: Either to stress the violence against the difference in Hegel's "dialectics of subjectivity" or to read Hegel against the grain, in order to highlight how Hegel's theory of desire and recognition grants ultimate irreducibility and visibility to difference. Hegel's philosophy enables these two divergent, if not totally opposite, views on the subject.

This thesis aims at discussing these two divergent thinking of the constitution of the subject in Hegel's philosophy in the light of two divergent readings of the Hegel's subject. In this regard, I am explicating Charles Taylor's and Jean Hyppolite's readings of the Hegelian subjectivity.

Here, it is necessary to note that this thesis does not propose a close reading of the original text, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Due to the constraints of the present study, I could only provide a critical discussion of two readings of the *Phenomenology*.

The fundamental argument of this thesis is that only one way of reading the constitution of the subject in Hegel's philosophy has come to dominate the contemporary political thinking on identity and difference. And I claim that it is the dialectical thinking of the relation between self and other, between identity and difference that is put forward in today's political theory that has enabled the revival of Hegel as the philosopher of identity.

It is Charles Taylor's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* that stands as the ultimate Hegelian reference in today's political debates on identity and difference.

Therefore in my first chapter, I aim at explicating Charles Taylor's interpretation of the constitution of Hegel's subject. Among the various political theorists that reflect upon identity politics, I choose to explicate Charles Taylor's

works - mostly because it is Taylor's interpretation of the Hegel's notion of the subject that informs the predominant paradigm of our political imaginary on identity and difference. Particularly I am addressing the themes and the issues around which Taylor developed his distinct interpretation of the difference and identity Hegel's philosophy. I argued that Taylor's interpretation of the Hegel's subject in terms of its overcoming of contradiction between self and other in and through the dialectics, the "sublation" of difference in an ultimate synthesis that manifests itself in the self-realization and the unity of the subject, defining the experience of subjectivity in terms of the psychologically defined vicissitudes of the human subject, have provided the predominant paradigm for current thinking of identity and difference.

In his interpretation of the Hegel's subject, Taylor highlights the final accomplishment and realization of the subject as a result of its dialectical relation with otherness. By explicating the appropriation of difference into the dialectics of the subjectivity in Taylor's account, I claim that identity politics, has exhausted its transformative potential and democratic aspirations as it has ended up with a non-democratic and a non-tolerant relation to the being of the other, insofar it aims "ultimate accomplishment" of identity by canceling the irreducible experience of difference.

Moreover I argue that Taylor's interpretation of the Hegelian "intersubjective recognition" in terms of "peaceful" mutuality implies a certain disregard of the *paradoxical* constitution of the intersubjectivity and the multiplicity. The logical conclusion of such an understanding of intersubjectivity is the society of reconciliation where difference is no longer expressed in its conflicting structure, rather it is a society where the marking of difference erased in the name of social harmony and moral interaction.

In other words, in Taylor's interpretation, the contradiction between different identities is disregarded; and instead the dialectical relation of "mutual recognition" between two self-defined, essential subjects, is framed as the condition of non-hostility, tolerant and democratic relation to the otherness. And yet I claim that today, unless we think of the social, or "the common" in terms of the irreducible tension between singularity of the subject and the necessary articulation of singularity into plurality of differences – we end up reproducing a conservative and authoritarian understanding of the society in which singular experience of difference is suppressed under the majority; as well as a "pluralistic" consumer society composed of individual preferences, interests and desires.

In my second chapter, I move to explicate Jean Hyppolite's interpretation of the constitution of the subject in Hegel's philosophy. In his interpretation of the relation between identity and difference, Hyppolite highlights the impossibility of appropriation of difference into the dialectical unity of the subject, as claimed by Taylor. What is put forward in Hyppolite's interpretation, is not unitary, but a fragmentary structure of the subject. For Hyppolite, any anthropocentric interpretation of the constitution of the subjectivity in the *Phenomenology* that prioritizes the experience of the human subject implies a teleological understanding of the history and dialectical movement of consciousness at the end of which the self-realized subject appears as Absolute.

One of the fundamental stakes of Hyppolite's interpretation is that, Hegel's Absolute is not subject, but it is Time. And it is subject's relation to Time that is what infinitely defers the appropriation of difference into a dialectical unity and self-realization of the subject. Hyppolite highlights that Hegel's subject cannot be thought in terms of its historical culmination, ultimate synthesis and self-realization; insofar as

history is the infinite articulation of the negativity.

The Hegelian notion of “negativity” is the operational term by means of which Hyppolite discusses the articulation of difference into the constitution of the subject in the *Phenomenology*. Negativity is articulated in Hyppolite’s interpretation of constitution of the subject as infinite movement of differentiation and as the “internal contradiction” that cannot be overcome by means of dialectical sublation of otherness. By concentrating on the articulation of the negativity in Hyppolite’s interpretation of the relation between self and other, I aimed at exposing a radical interpretation of relation between identity and difference – that rearticulates the question of difference into the very ground of identity without reducing it to an already defined attribute of the subject - and consequently shows us that appropriation of difference into identity is ultimately impossible.

Jean Hyppolite’s interpretation of the Hegel’s subject in terms of the inalienable articulation of the difference enables us to reconsider the question of difference beyond its dialectical overcoming and resolution within the unity of identity. This reconsideration, I claim, is necessary for us today to think new forms of political subjectivity in a democratic way.

Hyppolite’s interpretation of the differential structure underlying the subject in terms of non-dialectical relation to otherness is very important for us today to think the subject in its historicity, in its relation to Time; specifically at a time when political subjects are represented as if they are not historically determined; but rather they are fixed and given entities.

I claim that thinking the subject in its constitutive relation to Time and History may enable us to rethink the subject beyond its representations and essentializing self-expressions– and to consider the subject-structure that is prevalent in a certain

political context. This thinking of subject-structure, I claim, is what we need today in order to think about the future forms of political subjectivity.

The major theoretical contribution of this thesis is that, in the light of Jean Hyppolite's reading of the Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it brings out the disregarded alternative interpretation of the differential structure underlying the constitution of the subject in Hegel's philosophy – that puts forward a non-dialectical thinking of the relation between identity and difference.

Thinking the relation between identity and difference non-dialectically is very important for the contemporary politics of identity if any essentialist, a-historicizing and reductionist view of difference is to be avoided. Moreover, I claim that Hyppolite's interpretation of difference in the constitution of the Hegel's subject is politically very significant mostly because it reminds us the fundamental tension between the necessity of representing the difference and the impossibility of representing the originally non-representable difference – the source of our unique singularity as subjects.

Jean Hyppolite's non-dialectical thinking of the relation between identity and difference in Hegel's philosophy may enable us to think a new articulation of political relation – in which we no longer reduce the otherness to a necessary medium for our own self-realization. Rather I believe that unique democratic relation would be possible when we disregard essentialist view of the subject and of the otherness: When we do not take the appropriation of otherness by the self for granted; rather when we think of the self in terms of its constitutive self-relation and when we grant the otherness its irreducible and absolute otherness.

In order to democratize the political discourse, new forms of political subjectivity that we are looking for after the demise of identity politics, have to get rid

of human-centered and dialectical thinking of the relation between self and the other. And rather; consider the self and the other in terms of their absolute otherness and constitutive self-relation.

The Political Motivations Behind the Thesis

There are many political motivations that have directed my reading of Charles Taylor's and Jean Hyppolite's interpretations of the differential structure underlying the subject in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Among them, the leading one is to understand the philosophical and the historical roots of the appropriation of the difference into political discourse on identity.

Today, the difference has come to be articulated into political discourse as the expression of certain "subject positions" that manifest the desire for the identification with a generalized identity in the representational space. The desire is for being recognized as an independent subject and it motivates the quest for visibility, for a sense of being acknowledged, for association and affiliation³. As Benhabib states, "every search for identity includes differentiating oneself from what one claims to be not, identity politics is always and a necessarily a politics of the creation of difference".⁴ Such proliferation of different identities that has been glorified in the age of identity politics has rightly been considered to be a requirement for

³ The idea of desire for affiliation is brought to prominence by Edward Said in order to indicate a major change in the passage from traditional to modern and more complex society. As Said implies the patterns of 'filiation' (heritage or descent) that had acted as a cohering force in a traditional society were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain in the complexity of contemporary civilization and were being replaced by patterns of 'affiliation' – one's desire for "worldliness", to feel at home. Here, it is important to note that Said's analysis of patterns of "affiliation", that he developed regarding the "worldliness" of subjective experience, has tremendous impact on the certain strands of the postcolonial studies that concentrate on the constitution of postcolonial subjectivities (Said, 1983, 40).

⁴ Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 3.

democratization and social justice.

The central argument of this thesis is to argue that the prevalent modes of thinking and representation of the difference have disregarded the tension that is implied by thinking of the impossibility of representing the non-representable difference (singularity) that resists the political discourse that is predominantly shaped by the language of the power. Once enabling the articulation of the social, cultural, representational and symbolic demands of non-hegemonic identity groups into a larger political framework with the aim of possible democratization of the relational context, it is very important to note that today identity politics has lost its transformative and deconstructive potential.⁵ While identities are formed initially in order to render the experience of difference visible, and to change, if not radically transform, the present sets of relations among identity groups; identity politics has ended up with essentializing the difference and reducing it to a legitimate source of political contestation among different identity groups.⁶

In parallel to this, the proliferation of new manifestations of difference does not necessarily promote diversity, plurality and genuine respect and tolerance toward otherness in many contexts; rather it ends up with essentializing the experience of difference by articulating it to the grammar of identity; and reifying the subject by leaving the historical conditions of its constitution out of analysis.

Today, identity politics is at an impasse. But before discussing the current impasse of identity politics with regard to its own foundations, let us take one step

⁵ What I problematize in this thesis is, certainly, not the increasing visibility of different identities, or the importance of communicability of the experience of difference for democratization of the relation in public space; rather what I discuss is that the articulation of difference into political discourse requires more than the representation of the experience almost in a marketable item for consumer society. What is attempted here is the possibility of any future political thinking that articulates the difference into political discourse without reducing it to the logic of the same/identity.

⁶ The political contestation between Muslim minorities and conservative-right politics in Europe is the best example that I can refer to illustrate how identity groups have turned into competitive political agents.

further to see the greater picture: Last twenty years have witnessed major historical and political mutations, to use Laclau's terms⁷, with regard to which we need to think the prevalence of identity politics: Emergence of "new social antagonisms" born out of social, economic and cultural re-constellations due to the changes in the balances of power almost everywhere in the world, the strong tendency of global capitalism to appropriate particular and concrete experiences of differences and convert them into new products within the global market⁸; falling behind the universalist claims of equality and liberty that is accompanied with the weakening of the real socialism and consequent rising of global capitalism.

All these transformations bring about the different conflicts and the problems to the front, and they mobilized the different branches of the contemporary political theory in order to develop necessary conceptual and effective framework to understand, if not to change, the emergence of all these historical phenomena. Accompanying these transformations, a radical change in our understanding of the subject has occurred: The subject has come to be ultimate reference point of the "oppositional political formations"⁹ that have predominantly relied on identity-claims. These identity-claims encompass racial, ethnic, cultural, gender based and sexual orientation informed identity groups' demands for the recognition of their distinctive histories and traditions as well as the preservation of their different beings.¹⁰

Considering the current political milieu where intolerance, violence and discrimination toward otherness are rampant more than ever, it is necessary not to underestimate the validity of identity-claims that speak out the differences and

⁷ Ernesto Laclau, *The Making of Political Identities*, Verso, 1994, p. 3.

⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject, The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, Verso, 1999, p. 223-4; David Ruffalo, *Post-Queer Politics*, Ashgate Publishing, 2009, p. 92.

⁹ Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments" in *The Identity in Question*, ed. John Rachmann, Routledge, New York, 1995, p. 200.

¹⁰ Thomas R. Kearns and Austin Sarat (ed.), *Cultural Pluralism, Identity Politics, and the Law*, p. 4.

otherness that has been suppressed and rendered invisible in the political discourse.

In this regard, the central aim of this thesis is not to underestimate the validity of these identity claims; but to draw attention to a certain characteristic of identity politics: Today identity-claims are informed by a certain presupposition regarding the subject: Self-presence and the unity of the subject are presupposed in the constitution and the political functions of identities. And yet, it is no longer the self-legislating, autonomous modern subject whose experience of its own subjectivity is marked by the experience of its own groundlessness, of its own emergence as rupture¹¹ that grounds the political discourse. Identity politics is informed by a certain interpretation of the subject – a subject whose experience of modernity, the experience of incompleteness, groundlessness and constitutive self-relation that is marked by the infinite work of difference is no longer taken into consideration.

Rather, it is the post-modern subject whose experience of subjectivity goes through its own representation and self-expression of its experience of difference. Its experience of difference is no longer an aspect of its constitutive self-relation; rather the experience of difference is framed as an attribute of the subject that enables the subject to reconstitute itself by appropriating it. In this view, the unity of the subject is presupposed and difference is articulated into the constitution of subject as a *predicate* of the subject. Out of this relation between identity and difference, subject is reduced to be a “subject position” – a product of contingent articulations of subject’s preferences, desires in positing itself. “Constitutive incompleteness”¹² of

¹¹ Jean Luc-Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, Stanford University Press, 1993, p. 140. In Nancy’s account, the emergence of modern subjectivity implies an absolute rupture. Thinking the emergence of the subject as a rupture enables us both to think the subject both in term of its relation to nothingness, its being open to absolute negativity; and in terms of its absolute freedom to legislate itself.

¹² I am borrowing the term from Laclau’s *Emancipations*, Verso, 1996, p. 98. And the idea of “constitutive incompleteness” is also valid in Jean Luc-Nancy’s account of “relation” that is constitutive of the subject. Nancy argues that concerning modern subjectivity, the relation is the incompleteness of the relation itself. “In spite of the dialectic”, the modern subject inscribes the

identity has been left out of political imaginary; and the subject has come to be thought ultimately *in terms of* its concrete representations of difference.¹³

What is striking for me is that, with identity politics, the subject did not lose its central role. Quite the contrary: The subject that is now expressed in terms of identity has been glorified as the source and the bearer of the meaning. Here, a series of reductions that have been operated on the subject are worth to mention:

The more we utilize the language of identity to express the experience of difference; the more we reduce the experience of subjectivity to the logic of identity, and we restrict our definition of subjectivity to the generalized categories of identity that are defined collectively. Singularity of the subject is replaced by the individuality of the identity in the struggle for recognition.¹⁴ And the more we think of subjectivity in terms of individual identity, the more we restrict the realm of subjectivity to the representations and the expressions of the psychological experiences of the human subject. The result of this radical transformation in our understanding of subjectivity are manifold: First, today we end up with the glorification of human subject that can only articulate its singularity to the political discourse by means of expressing its particularities – its being different than others. The more we urge to articulate ourselves as different, the more we lose the language to experience the unique singularity of our existence, the marginal experience of difference becomes integrated into the average modes of living that is well recognized, propagated and affirmed by the power, and we become more “look like” each other. In the name of difference, we end up being all the same.

marking of infinite self-relation, of the difference. In the third chapter of this thesis, I will discuss non-dialectical understanding of relation provided by Jean Hyppolite’s interpretation of the constitution of subject in the Hegel’s *Phenomenology*.

¹³ Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, Verso, 2000, p. 1, 30.

¹⁴ Jean Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, Stanford University Press, 1993, p. 83.

Second, the appeal to the human experience that is prevalent in the political discourse on identity has remarkable exclusionary implications: There may be some who are considered to be belonging to a particular identity, community but still may not conform to the established terms and codes of experiences and interpretations of difference. This is one of the fundamental reason behind the identity-claims' losing their democratic and emancipatory potential: Defining the borders of an identity with regard to collective sharing of similar experiences implies a certain disregard, if not the exclusion, of the marginal experiences that born out of intersection of different belongings. Intra-group inequalities and relations of power can hardly find space in the political discourse of a suppressed identity.¹⁵

Non-democratization of political identities and movements is basically due to the act of defining the borders of identity: The borders of identity, on the basis of which the political struggle for recognition is shaped, may serve for foreclosing critical stance and discussion. Identity-claims are formed with reference to the experience of the ones endorsing specific principles and engaging only in prescribed political actions that are compatible with the generalized claims of identity. This very act of defining the limits of identity and belonging may result in a policing operation; and may results in the catastrophic transformation of democratic aspirations into a mimicking of the politics of the sovereign.¹⁶

Third, the most significant result of reducing the experience of subjectivity to

¹⁵ The visibility of intra-group inequalities is a burning issue specifically in the political communities whose political priorities have already been set. When collective identity becomes the ultimate expression of the experience of difference, there remains no room to voice the demands of those who are still repressed, exploited and subjected to violence within the community that struggles for its political and democratic rights *as* community.

¹⁶ One of the first studies that highlight the danger awaiting some strands of the identity movements is Shane Phelan's *Identity Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Limits of Community* (1989). Phelan recalls the experience of some feminist groups in the US of 1970s that does not open the limits of its identity to a critical discussion, eventually slides into reproducing relation of domination and suppression within the identity group.

an individual expression and representation of difference is the erasure of contradiction from our political imaginary: Insofar as the relation between identity and difference is considered in terms of the dialectics of intersubjective recognition, the contradiction that underlies both constitutions of subjectivity and of intersubjectivity is rendered invisible. When contradiction is rendered invisible, what is social is transformed into a totality of individual identities that are to relate each other in a supposedly neutral community of reconciliation and harmony. Disregarding the contradictory articulation of difference into the political discourse, identity-claims have ended up with the disavowal of political conflict, and thereby reproducing communitarian politics that presuppose a homogenous social space of docile bodies upon which the policies of neoliberal power can be smoothly implemented.¹⁷

Considering all these causes behind the current impasse of identity politics, this thesis aims at discussing the philosophical background of the transformation in our understanding of subjectivity. The guiding thread of our discussion will be a critical assessment of the articulation of difference that underlies the contemporary transformation of the subject.

¹⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject, The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, Verso, 2000, p. 223.

CHAPTER II

CHARLES TAYLOR'S INTERPRETATION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF SUBJECTIVITY IN HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY*

In the growing literature on the politics of identity and difference, few thinkers have received as much scrutiny as Charles Taylor. His "Politics of Recognition" (1989) has been the subject matter of numerous studies, utilizing both critical and non-critical discussion on multiculturalism, identity politics, pluralism, diversity and democratic rights, to note some.¹⁸

Upon detailed study on the secondary literature on Taylor's political philosophy in English, one is surprised by the relatively less number of the works on Taylor's reading of Hegel's philosophy, than those discussing the political implications of Taylor's more recent works on the identity politics specifically in Western contexts. Little of the current works provide critical assessment of the fundamentals of Taylor's thinking of identity and difference by calling the underlying philosophical assumptions into question.

The task I undertake in this chapter is to locate Taylor's views on identity politics into a possible discussion of the philosophical background of his analysis. My central argument is that Taylor's distinct interpretation of Hegel's subjectivity in terms of dialectical relation between self and other has been the paradigm-setting understanding of identity and difference for contemporary identity politics.¹⁹

¹⁸ Charles Taylor, ed. Ruth Abbey, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 5; Jiirgen Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in Constitutional States," *European Journal of Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (1993), p. 128; Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader, ed. David Theo Goldberg, Blackwell Publishers, 1994, p. 25.

¹⁹ The idea that Taylor, with his distinct interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of subject, has set the

In our discussion, I will be particularly addressing the issues around which Taylor developed his distinct interpretation of the differential structure underlying the subject in Hegel's philosophy. Modern subject – subject in its unity, conceives the subject as self-presence, as the synthesis of radical freedom and expressive unity, reconciliation; overcoming of contradiction in the dialectical relation between self and other. Taylor, I would claim, takes the subject as absolute. He interprets Hegel's Absolute subjectivity by following certain threads in Hegel without paying attention to the more unsettling and disruptive tendencies in Hegel's formulation of the subjectivity. In the second chapter, I will concentrate on Hyppolite's interpretation of Hegel, which is exactly along the points of the disruptions and the impossibility of the subject's absolute unity. For Hyppolite, Absolute is not subject, but it is Time. Not unity, but fragmentary structure of the subject and impossibility of any appropriation of difference into the dialectical unity of the subject.

In what follows, we will be showing how and in what ways Taylor's interpretation of Hegel's subject, the modern subject in terms of its unity, its dialectical synthesis and the overcoming of internal contradiction (the opposing sources of its own existence) have grounded the contemporary understanding of difference as distinctness, and identity as the "end result" of synthetic unity of self and otherness. This chapter will be an attempt of a critical discussion of Taylor's interpretation of Hegel's theory of the subject. The central motive of such a critical discussion is to explicate philosophical roots of contemporary political discourse on difference and otherness in order to be able to think alternative philosophical and critical interpretations.

theoretical paradigm for contemporary multiculturalism and identity politics, is also explicitly stated by Craig Calhoun in his "Charles Taylor on Identity and Social Imaginary" that Calhoun also delivered as speech in Social Science Research Council Meeting in Pittsburgh, US, November 20, 1999.

The Modern Subject: Desire for Unity and Radical Autonomy

For Taylor, it is of historical necessity that we need to discuss Hegel's philosophy insofar its fundamental motivation is to respond to a historical transformation. This transformation is what Taylor calls "epochal turn"²⁰ or the "modern shift".²¹ Among several ways to read this modern shift and its deep impacts on almost every field of life, Taylor offers to read the modern shift as "epistemological revolution with anthropological consequences":²² "We might see it (the modern shift) as a revolution in the basic categories in which we understand the self".²³

For Taylor, it is the change in the definition of subject that lies at the epicenter of the modern revolution, of the historical mutation that is reflected in Hegel's philosophy.²⁴ With the modern shift, the understanding of subject had been radically changed in such a way that, one of its fundamental markings, its relation to the world, had also come to be expressed in different ways.²⁵

To put differently, it is the modern shift after which the terms of general understanding of being human and of the relation to the world had been fundamentally changed²⁶: "The modern subject is self-defining, where on previous

²⁰ Here it is important to note Taylor's interpretation of the movement of history in terms of "epochal turns". As opposed to the idea of dialectical progress and movement of history, viewing history as epochal turn.

²¹ In his *Hegel*, Taylor provides extensive analysis on "the modern shift" and the emergence of the modern subject with presenting the historical, material and philosophical sources that causes the major historical transformation in our understanding of life and Being. (Hegel, 1975, p.24).

²² Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 4.

²³ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 5.

²⁴ This is also why the transformation of understanding of subjectivity lies at the very center of our analysis. Similarly, a certain repetition of Taylor's philosophical gesture will guide our problematic in the current chapter.

²⁵ In this regard, Reiner Schürmann's arguments in his "Anti-Humanism. Reflections of the turn towards the post-modern epoch" are important in order to clarify the relation between certain view of history and the predominant interpretation of subjectivity of the age. Reiner Schürmann, "Anti-Humanism. Reflections on the turn towards the post-modern epoch" in *Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 12, number 2, pp.160-177.

²⁶ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self, The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge University Press,

views the subject is defined in relation to a cosmic order”.²⁷

Here it is remarkable to note that in Taylor’s account, the relation between subject and the world is discussed in terms of the relation between self and the cosmic order. Taylor argues that it is the immediate relation of the subject with the cosmic order that is dismantled by the modern shift:

... (w)e can say that the view of the subject that came down from the dominant tradition of the ancients, was that man came most fully to himself when he was in touch with cosmic order, and in touch with it in the way most suitable to it as an order of ideas, that is, by reason. ... We might say that on this view, there is no notion of the self in the modern sense, that is, of an identity which I can define for myself without reference to what surrounds me and the world in which I am set.²⁸

The pre-modern understanding of the subject, Taylor argues, was accompanied with a holistic understanding of the subject and the universe. The pre-modern “worldview” was defined with regard to the certain sets of prescribed rules and established norms that would also determine the experience of life as “the meaningful order”.²⁹ In this experience of meaningful order, the world had come to be understood as the totality of complex sets of relation between different parts and by being a meaningful sum of the different parts. The world was already understood in terms of the categories of meaning, manifesting a rhythm of divine life, unity of human life and nature, “order of Ideas or archetypes”.³⁰ What had been changed with the modern shift, in Taylor’s account, is this understanding of the world that embodies self-evident signification by itself:³¹ “ ... man was defined in relation to an order that transcended him and was in

1989, p. 111; Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 9.

²⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 5.

²⁸ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 6.

²⁹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 5.

³⁰ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 5

³¹ Here it is important to note that Taylor, in his account of the world, does not refer to the problem of

many ways incommensurable with him, but rather what they themselves yearned for, unity with self and communion with nature”.³²

For Taylor, the pre-modern subject is defined in terms of total dependence and immanency to the world; and it is also inflicted with the infinite desire to go back to the primary unity with nature. What distinguishes the modern subject is that for it, the objective reality, the nature, the world, even God, is in doubt.³³ For the modern subject, Taylor argues, there is no longer objective reality that can be defined in its own terms. The world no longer embodies self-evident meaning; it is the subject that defines the terms by means of which it makes sense of the world:

The modern idea of a subject as an independent existent is just another facet of the new, strong localization. We can now think of ideas as being “in” this independent being, because it makes sense to see them as here and *not elsewhere*. And reciprocally, the notion of a separation requires some new sense of locale. The shift from Platonic ideas to Cartesian “ideas” is perhaps the most eloquent illustration of the change I’ve been describing. For the first, Ideas are ontic, the basis of reality; for the second, they are the contents of mind.³⁴

In Taylor’s account of the modern shift, the subject has undergone the necessary experience of separating itself from the world³⁵ and from the already given definition and expressions of its own self.³⁶ For Taylor, the separation of the subject from the

“production of the world”. Instead, his reading of the shift from pre-modern to the modern “worldview” highlights the role of the subject (that is already defined *as* human subject) as the source of meaning of being in the world.

³² Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 25.

³³ Here Taylor certainly refers to Descartes’ *cogito* that is considered to constitute one of the origins of the modern subject by providing the fundamental epistemological principle, that defines modern sense of self and relation to world in terms of clarity, distinctiveness and self-evidence of consciousness despite every activity of consciousness is marked by “doubt”. In his *Philosophical Arguments* (1995), Taylor provides more extensive interpretation of the Cartesian subject.

³⁴ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self, The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 188.

³⁵ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self, The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 189.

³⁶ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self, The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 188.

pre-modern “universe” results in a new positioning of the subject: It is the new understanding of the subject, in Taylor’s words, that stands as the center and ground of the relations with the world. Out of its experience of separation from the world, the modern subject emerged as self-defining and autonomous subject.³⁷

Taylor argues that the Cartesian notion of the subject was already inflicted with the duality between subject (consciousness) and object (world): The Cartesian subject stands over against an objectified world, whose objectivity is also given in the unity of consciousness and awareness of the subject. For Taylor, subject-object dualism that marks the modern subject (that is inherited from the Cartesian subject) implies an absolute freedom of the subject as well as a mechanistic understanding of the world: “Dualism on the one hand attributes all the functions of intelligence to a mind which is heterogeneous from body; so that matter is left as something which is to be understood purely mechanistically.”³⁸

The dualistic perception of the relation between subject and the world, which was inherited from Descartes’ philosophy, implies both absolute independence of consciousness as well as the reduction of the material production of the world to the mechanic perception of everything that is external to consciousness³⁹. Here it is important to note one of the central motivations of Taylor’s interpretation of the modern subject: For Taylor, the subject-object duality that was inherited from Descartes’ philosophy could be overcome with Hegel’s philosophy of the subject. In other words, Taylor argues that Hegel’s subject is what enables the overcoming the duality of the subject and the world.⁴⁰ And therefore, Hegelian notion of the subject is

³⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 66.

³⁸ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 82.

³⁹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self; The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 299, 301.

⁴⁰ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 82; Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern*

the accomplishment and the full realization of the modern subject.

In this regard, Taylor argues that there are two fundamental aspirations of modern shift that has inspired Hegel's account of the subject: The aspirations for "expressive unity" and "radical autonomy".⁴¹ In what follows, I will be explicating Taylor's discussion of these two conflicting, yet inseparable aspirations of the subject with regard to his distinct interpretation of the Hegel's subject, as "embodied subject".⁴²

Taylor first uses the notion of "expressive unity"⁴³ with reference to German Romantics' response to the Enlightenment view of the subject – a subject that is considered both as subject and object of an objectifying scientific and rational analysis. In Taylor's account, Romantic aspiration for the unity of subject was framed as opposed to atomist and utilitarian strand of Enlightenment. For the German Romantics, the atomist and the utilitarian view propounded the subject of egoistic desires, for which the surrounding world and other subjects were merely the means of self-fulfillment and self-realization. The German Romantics were against the objectification of human nature, against the analysis of human mind into different faculties, of human into soul and body, against a calculative notion of reason⁴⁴. Human life was seen as having a unity rather analogous to that of a work of art, of

Society, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 6.

⁴¹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 14; Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 4.

⁴² Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 14.

⁴³ The notion of expressive unity, in Taylor retelling, is defined as an aspiration of Hegel's philosophy to overcome the "traumatic experience of existence" that the human subject has gone through. The trauma is the experience of the separation of consciousness from the nature – which would later be reflected in the Hegel's *Phenomenology* under the chapter of "unhappy consciousness" (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁴⁴ The similar interpretation of German Romantics with regard to their aspiration for the unity of subject is also valid in Fredrick Beiser's discussion of the Romantic Movement as one of the most powerful source of the Hegelian philosophy. Fredrick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The concept of early German romanticism*, Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 102.

which every part or aspect only found its proper meaning in relation to other parts.⁴⁵ If not considered in its meaningful unity, human life in this view would be distorted and hindered and the subject would not experience self-fulfillment and self-realization.⁴⁶

Here a further remark on the impacts of Herderian anthropology on Taylor's reading of the modern identity is necessary: Taylor holds that Herder and other *Strum and Drang* philosophers were critical of the modern subject⁴⁷ for it had debarred notions like meaning, expression, purpose as inappropriate and inadequate descriptions of objective reality and confined them to a mental life of subjects.⁴⁸ Being always transcends the meaning that is subjectively defined; therefore the categories of meaning should not be solely thought in their abstract forms, rather they should be realized in order to embody meaning.⁴⁹ However, Taylor also warns us against a possible misreading: It would be absolutely wrong if Herderian view of the subject were considered as opposed to the modern subject. For Taylor, though Herderian anthropology breaks with modern science concerning the objectification of human subject, it is modern in the sense that it incorporates self-legislating and self-defining subjectivity.⁵⁰

Referring to Herder's view on the realization of form, Taylor argues that the

⁴⁵ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 30.

⁴⁶ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 2.

⁴⁷ For a more detailed reading of Herder's theory of meaning and interpretation on Hegel's theory of subject and on the contemporary hermeneutics, see J.G. Herder, *Another Philosophy of History and Selected Political Writings*, trans. Ioannis Evrigenis and Daniel Pellerin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), p. 97.

⁴⁸ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Taylor, Hegel, p. 18. Tracing the roots of the notion of expressive unity, Taylor argues that Herder's theory of interpretation and his argument for "radical difference" constitutes one of the important sources of what he would later call expressivist theory. For Taylor's more detailed discussion of Herder's theory of subject and of interpretation, see the second chapter of Taylor's *Hegel*.

⁵⁰ In this regard, it is significant to remark that the idea of expressive unity is related to the subjective grounds of meaning. The core of the Romantic critique is that the modern subject is the source of the meaning of its own existence. How can subject be the ground of the meaning of its own existence? Can subject be the ontological foundation of meaning? Yes the modern subject is the ground of meaning.

human life needs to be determined through being expressed by the human itself. Taylor offers to think of human subject as a realization of form or essence.⁵¹ Taylor argues that the realization of essence is the subject's self-realization, so that the subject defines itself in relation to something, which unfolds from itself. It is the self-determination of the subject that implies radical autonomy insofar the subject is the absolute self-legislating, self-constituting and self-expressing unit.⁵² In Taylor's account, the modern subject determines itself in its own constitution and in its own appropriation as subject. In this regard, the expressive unity means a meaningful totality of both the subject itself (which would be incorporated into Hegel's philosophy as "integrity" or "inner integrity of the self") and the relation between the subject and the world. Taylor puts remarkable emphasis on this "imperious desire" of the modern subject to unite with the world: "The expressive theory points us towards a fulfillment of man in freedom, which is precisely a freedom of self-determination, and not simply independence from external impingement".⁵³

Here, Taylor remarks the affinity between two desires of the modern subject: The desire of the modern subject to be an expressive unit is also accompanied by the desire for radical freedom – the subject's absolute capacity of representing and expressing, therefore of producing meaning.

In Taylor's effort to trace the idea of "meaningful unity" of the Hegelian view of subject, the central themes of Taylor's interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of subject come forward. The most remarkable of them is the idea of self-expression. The idea of self-expression, whose roots Taylor traces to the *Sturm and Drang* criticism of Enlightenment, occupies a central place in Taylor's later political

⁵¹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 16.

⁵² Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 18.

⁵³ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 5.

thoughts on the human subject's experience of authenticity and concrete difference in modern society. In his recent elaborations on the possible political outcomes of revoking the modern notion of "authentic selfhood", Taylor proposes the idea of one's self-expression as constitutive of one's identity in a complex society.⁵⁴ He argues that self-expression, one's expression of its subjective stand, deliberately chosen attributes, tendencies and properties are necessary steps within the course of self-realization and self-fulfillment of subject:⁵⁵ "We discover what we have in us to be by becoming that mode of life, by giving expression in our speech and action to what is original in us".⁵⁶

Here it is remarkable to note that Taylor's interpretation of the modern subject in terms of its "being capable of making sense of its life" and expressing itself is based on remarkable presuppositions. Here it can be argued that Taylor's interpretation of the modern subject presupposes an essential understanding of the subject: Before philosophical reflection penetrates into immediacy and spontaneity of it, the subject has something essential and original in it. For Taylor, there is an inalienable essential nature of the subject that cannot be thoroughly deconstructed, despite of the serious attacks by the deconstructive attempts on the expressive potentiality of the subject.⁵⁷

The idea of self-expressing capacity of the subject implies a political transformation of the common space in which the subject expresses, therefore articulates its own experience "authenticity".⁵⁸ The idea proposes by Taylor is that

⁵⁴ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge University Press, p. 40.

⁵⁵ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 40; Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 59.

⁵⁶ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 61.

⁵⁷ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 59.

⁵⁸ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, p. 26.

what the subject appropriates and incorporates into mechanisms of production of meaning, should be expressed and represented by the subject in order to be visible in the public space, thereby in order to be recognized by “significant others”. The relation between self-expression and visibility has been thoroughly explicated by contemporary theorists of communicative action and public space.⁵⁹ I argue that in Taylor’s account of the modern subject, the experiences of groundlessness, fragmentation, dispersion of the subject are transformed into the language of the infinite demands for unity, gathering, appropriation and self-presence, self-expression.⁶⁰

The modern subject, in Taylor’s account, is also marked with a fundamental aspiration for radical freedom, the freedom that underlies modern view of human subject in its fullest self-consciousness, self-legislation and free self-determination. The aspiration for radical freedom was framed in Taylor’s account as a fundamental desire of modern subject. Subject aspires to be autonomous, and self-legislating, so that it recovers from the crisis of the modern turn, the crisis of having no outer source of justification, meaning and legislation, but being obliged to generate the meaning of its own being.

In exploring the understanding of subject in relation to its aspiration for freedom, we are confronted with a significant dilemma – a dilemma which was the burden of German Romantics and which they could attempt, but not resolve: One the one hand, the subject in its unity, expressive fullness, self-presence; on the other hand radical freedom in terms of self-determination. There is deep affinity as well as irresolvable tension between these two ideals, and in Taylor’s account of Hegel’s

⁵⁹ Remarkably there is a strong affinity between Taylor’s interpretation of expressivist theory and Jürgen Habermas’s theory of communicative action. Due to limits of the present study, I will only be contented with remarking the affinity between two contemporary philosophers.

⁶⁰ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 12.

subject, the subject encompasses both of them simultaneously. Hegel developed a theory of subject in which he tried to think the possible ways to synthesize the desire for expressive unity and the desire for radical autonomy.⁶¹

For Taylor, the central preoccupations of Hegel's subject, is to unite and to synthesize these two sources of life and thought.⁶² With the aim of overcoming the internal contradiction that disables post-Kantian philosophers to unite reason, "pure rationality" in Taylor's terms with radical freedom. And Taylor argues that it is Hegel's philosophy, that with "no desire to sweep these aside and return to an earlier phase", that transcends the oppositions between two vestiges of the modern shift.⁶³ What aspects of Hegel's philosophy did enable this unification of these competing tendencies of the modern subject?

Overcoming Contradiction and the Dialectical Unity of the Subject:

Identity and Difference

The idea of the unity of the subject is of recurring interest in contemporary politics of identity and recognition. In what follows, I argue that Taylor's interpretation of the modern subject in terms of its dialectical unity and its overcoming of contradiction underlies our contemporary understanding of the subject.

Today, the subject is glorified. No longer political and historical agency, the subject is celebrated as dialectical unity; its appropriation of internal contradictions was appropriated into political discourse as the source of signification and meaning, therefore it was granted a central role in the experience of beings as a whole. We are

⁶¹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 49.

⁶² Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 49.

⁶³ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 82.

living at a time when the subjective marks of distinctness and being different than others have become more significant than ever. The modern subject, once grounding history and political action, has now come to be thought in terms of identity, of distinct difference than others. The more the subject has come to be expressed in terms of its determinate difference, the faster the categories of meaning are left to be empty signifiers, and the more the subject urges to accumulate the signs of its distinctness.

Taylor's interpretation of Hegel's subject brings some aspects of the modern subject to the front: It is the subject of synthesis, resolution, harmony, self-possession, self-definition, self-centering and self-presence. In other words, Taylor reads the modern subject in terms of its capacity for unity, reconciliation, synthesis, overcoming of contradiction.⁶⁴

In his philosophical narrative of Hegel's subject, Taylor particularly emphasizes the subject's capacity for synthesis, the overcoming of contradiction and opposing sources of its existence. The contradictions that are inherent in the constitution of subject and these contradictions are transferred into higher level of unity, into higher level of consciousness:

As an attempt to realize the synthesis between rational autonomy and expressive unity, Hegel's work aims to overcome the oppositions in which these two terms in one form or another stand over against each other, such as opposition in us between freedom and nature, or that between individual and society; the seemingly unbridgeable gulf between the knowing subject and his world, or the even more unbridgeable one between finite and infinite spirit, man and God.⁶⁵

For Taylor, the overcoming of the contradictions, the dualities between these simultaneously relevant and fundamental sources of life is the ultimate motivation of

⁶⁴ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 110; Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p.22-3.

⁶⁵ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p.14.

Hegel's philosophy of the subject. In Hegel's philosophy "each term in the dichotomies show itself to be not opposed to but identical with its opposite."⁶⁶ And Taylor's emphasis is on the dialectical synthesis by overcoming the contradictions in a higher synthesis. In other words, his emphasis is on the sublation, *Aufhebung*, on the possible and necessary resolution of the conflict and difference in an economy of the same:

The unity of man and the world, of finite and infinite subject, does not abolish the difference. Not only is its unity hard-won out of difference; as man struggles to rise to the level where the unity can be grasped; but the ultimate unity retains the difference within it.⁶⁷

This is the fundamental argument of Taylor's interpretation of the dialectical constitution of the Hegel's subject: By overcoming the internal contradiction that is posed by two sources of its subjectivity, the subject emerges as subject of unity and self-realization. It is the dialectical relation by means of which, the contradictions, as the manifestations of the negativity in Hegel's philosophy, are resolved in a higher unity. In other words, the positing of the parts of the dialectic in contradistinction to each other is the manifestation of the negativity:

Opposites negate each other, and since everything that exists there is opposition, we can also say that within everything there is negativity. In particular Hegel links negativity to the subject, whose nature is to return to itself (self-consciousness) through its opposite. So Hegel says, "that substance "as subject is ... pure, simple negativity."⁶⁸

In Taylor's interpretation of the Hegelian subject, negativity is articulated into the constitution of the subjectivity in such a way that its manifestation, the contradiction is overcome *within* the unity of the subject.

⁶⁶ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p.15.

⁶⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 118.

⁶⁸ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 110.

To put differently, in his interpretation of the Hegelian subject, Taylor highlights the *dialectical* relation between self and the other that underlies the emergence of subjectivity. In and through the dialectical relation, the contradiction that the other poses is overcome within the ultimate unity of the subject.⁶⁹ The end result of the dialectical relation between self and the other is the appropriation of difference within the unity of the subject⁷⁰ - a self-sovereign subject whose sovereignty, for Taylor, comes from its demands for being recognized as an independent subject:⁷¹ “Man cannot remain a simple “I”, simply self-identical, because he needs external things, external life, to live. He is a being of desire. But in consuming what he desires, he seems to overcome this foreign reality and recover integrity”.⁷²

The most famous example of dialectic of this form is that of the master and the slave by means of which Hegel explicates the phenomenological emergence of subject as self-consciousness.⁷³ The dialectic of self-consciousness is exemplified by Hegel with master-slave relation constitutes its own parts –in contradiction to each other. In Taylor’s interpretation, the contradiction that underlies the relation between self and the other is framed as in follows:

⁶⁹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 118.

⁷⁰ Remarkably Taylor does not provide an extensive interpretation of the master-slave dialectics of the Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. Rather, we argue that what Taylor does is to incorporate his interpretation of the constitution of subjectivity in Hegel’s philosophy in terms of the dialectical relation between self and the other; to the contemporary politics of recognition and difference.

⁷¹ In his “From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism Without Reserve”, Derrida deconstructs the metaphysical idea of self-sovereign subject that emerges as a result of its overcoming of internal contradiction. Derrida suggest a radical thinking of the experience of sovereignty: “For sovereignty has no identity, is not self, for itself, toward itself, near itself. (...) It must expend itself without reserve, lose itself, lose consciousness, lose all memory of itself and all the interiority of itself; as opposed to *Erinnerung*, as opposed to the avarice which assimilates meaning, it must practice forgetting, the active *Vergesslichkeit* of which Nietzsche speaks; and, as the ultimate subversion of lordship, it must no longer seek to be recognized.”, Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 265.

⁷² Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 152.

⁷³ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford University Press, 1974,

Men strive for recognition, for only in this way can they achieve integrity. But recognition must be mutual. The being whose recognition of me is going to count for me must be one that I recognize as human. The operation of reciprocal recognition is therefore one that we accomplish together. Each one, says Hegel, accomplishes for himself what the other tries to achieve in relation to him. My interlocutor sees in me another, but one which is not foreign, which is at one with himself; but this *cancelling of otherness* is something that I must help to accomplish as well.⁷⁴ (Italics are mine)

Here, I argue that Taylor's interpretation of the constitution of subjectivity in the *Phenomenology* in terms of a dialectical relation between self and the other has tremendous implications for his political thinking of the difference:

First, Taylor equates self-consciousness with human subject and interprets the movement of consciousness in terms of a social relation among the human subjects. It can be argued that such a reduction of subjectivity to the concrete experiences of human subject is a result of a certain exclusion of the question of temporality from Taylor's interpretation of the Hegelian subjectivity. As I try to show in Jean Hyppolite's interpretation, Hegel's subjectivity might also be interpreted not solely in terms of anthropological subject, but also in terms of the subject-structure that locates the subject into its relation to Time and History.

Second, as implied in the quotation above, Taylor defines the intersubjectivity in terms of an accomplishment and final realization of each self. I argue that Taylor's definition of the Hegelian intersubjectivity in terms of accomplishment implies a disregard of the infinite work of the negativity in Hegel's philosophy –of which Jean Hyppolite reads as the ultimate manifestation in the Hegelian notion of “unhappy consciousness”. The unhappy consciousness is an advanced form of self-consciousness in which self-consciousness undergoes an experience of impossible accomplishment as well as impossible attainment to the Absolute knowledge.

⁷⁴ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 153.

Moreover, the idea of “final accomplishment” has significant impacts on the prevalent understanding of relation between identity and difference: Today, difference is expressed in terms of “otherness” that is articulated into political discourse with the anticipation of its ultimate overcoming. In other words, our imaginary of the ultimate democratic relation is predominantly defined with regard to annihilation of otherness and its inclusion into our language of self for the sake of the dominance of the same. The politics of recognition is by definition hostility to the being of the other, insofar it aims “ultimate accomplishment” of cancelling the irreducible alterity of the other.

And my final remark is based on the first two points: Thinking of the relation of intersubjective recognition in terms of its “peaceful” mutuality, as Taylor interpretation proposes, disregards the *paradoxical* characteristics of relation between self and the other.

In Taylor’s interpretation, the paradoxical relation between self and the other (that also manifests itself in terms of the experience of death and finitude) is disregarded; and instead the dialectical relation of “mutual recognition” between two self-defined subjects, two essences are framed as the condition of non-hostility, tolerant and democratic relation to the otherness.

The interpretative choices of Taylor in his reading of the constitution of subjectivity in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* can also be discerned when the terminology he uses is taken into consideration. It is striking to note that, despite the otherness is reduced to an attribute of an accomplished and self-realized self, in his interpretation of the experience of “otherness”, Taylor brings the concepts of “love”, “sympathy” and “tolerance” to the front.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 67, This idea of thinking the unity of the subject as well as the intersubjective relation in terms of good will and the positive intent of the subject that aspires for loving the other and “to be loved by the other” is also valid in the contemporary

“Spirit”, Absolute and the Ultimate Realization of the Subject

Charles Taylor’s interpretation of the differential structure underlying the Hegel’s subjectivity that favors dialectical overcoming of contradiction has also remarkable implications on his reading of the movement of history as the ultimate realization of the Subject. In what follows, I will try to explicate how and in what ways Taylor’s interpretation of the constitution of subjectivity in the *Phenomenology* affect his reading of the historical dimension of the subject.

This higher synthesis, with regard to which the Hegel’s subject is formed, is the cosmic Spirit, *Geist* in the Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. For Taylor, the unity of the subject is meaningful when its absolute embodiment in a higher form of its subjectivity is at stake.

I argue that this is the point where the fundamental stake of Taylor’s interpretation of the Hegelian subjectivity reveals itself: The Hegelian subject, as Taylor interprets, can be defined both in terms of its embodiment within the cosmic spirit, *Geist*, and in its infinite struggle to overcome this embodiment and to unite with the Spirit and to attain the Absolute knowledge:⁷⁶

efforts of reading the Hegel’s *Phenomenology* in terms of “moral grammar of the society”. Remarkably, this idea is also compatible with reading Hegel’s subject in terms of anthropological and psychological experience of the human subject. Axel Honneth’s *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* can be presented as a good example of this kind of interpretation.⁷⁶ These two ideals and demands are the ultimate grounds of human existence. They are contradictory to each other, but still they need to be thought as equiprimordial and simultaneous. In Hegel’s system, the equiprimordiality and the simultaneity of two contradictory determinations (and of the contradictions) of life are grounded within the dialectical movement of consciousness, of history. Taylor argues that the dialectical movement of oppositions are grounded upon Hegel’s “spiral view of history”: In this spiral movement, the oppositions between freedom and unity, between individual and society, knowing subject and its world, even the opposition between human and God, first become sharper as the subject develops, but then they reach their fullest development in which the terms come to reconciliation to themselves. The aspiration is to retain the fruits of opposition, free rational consciousness while reconciling the oppositions within unity. In Taylor’s account, reconciliation of contradiction is the ultimate objective of historical development.

We can say that the subject is both identical with and opposed to his embodiment. This can be because the subject is not defined by Hegel in one dimension, as it were, as a being with certain properties, but in two. He has certain conditions of existence, those of embodiment; but at the same time the subject is characterized teleologically, as tending toward a certain perfection, that of reason and freedom.⁷⁷

What Taylor implies is that the necessary fragmentation of the modern subject, its internal division must be healed in a higher reconciliation. This reconciliation was already at stake and in Taylor's account, it was "fruit of a rational unfolding of purpose which history exhibits and which required to be grasped by philosophy and hence completed."⁷⁸

Hence the principle of reconciliation and synthesis could only be adequately formulated in the language of reason. Thus the major task of philosophy of Hegel is the "overcoming of opposition" through the reconciliation of contradiction.⁷⁹

Here it is very significant to note that, in Taylor's account of this reconciliation and overcoming of contradiction is rendered possible in Taylor's account of Hegel, with a circular movement. But how can the oppositions be overcome and reconciled when each term only comes to be when in opposition to its other?⁸⁰ Hegel's answer is that each term of opposition, when thoroughly understood, shows itself to be not only opposed but also identical with its opposite. Taylor argues that Hegelian logic of this relation is that the very relations of contradiction and identity are inseparably linked to each other. They are in a kind of circular relations. A contradiction rises out of an earlier identity, and this of necessity, the identity could

⁷⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p.21.

⁷⁸ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 76.

⁷⁹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 76 and Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: texts and commentary*, New York, Anchor Books, 1966, p. 20.

⁸⁰ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, p. 15.

not sustain itself on its own, but had to breed opposition.⁸¹ This is Hegel's principle of "identity of identity and non-identity" and Taylor offers to think of this principle with regard to his theory of subjectivity.

At this point, a very important problem of Hegel's theory of subjectivity arises: As I tried to discuss in the paragraphs above, Hegel's theory of subject gives us insight that there is an inescapable conflict in the subject, which we are tempted to call "contradiction" - a constitutive conflict that also motivates the movement underlying the subjective and the intersubjective realm. Is not there any paradox in thinking the principle of "identity of identity and non-identity" if the human subject is marked by a constitutive contradiction?

The response of Hegel's philosophy to this question is that the theory of subject does not only apply to the human beings, but there is also the notion of "cosmic Spirit" or *Geist* as well. *Geist* as subjectivity is quintessentially reason. Here I want to point out a simple grammatical tendency of Taylor's reading: The term *Geist* or Spirit is largely used interchangeably with the word "subjectivity", if not separated from the word "subjectivity" with comma or referred as "*Geist* or subjectivity": The Absolute is the "subject".⁸²

The subject is embodied within a higher form of unity that is formed by the commands of reason, so that it reaches to the level of the Absolute; "That which underlies and manifests itself in all reality, what for Spinoza substance, and came for those inspired by *Sturm and Drang* to be seen as a divine life flowing through everything, Hegel understood as *Spirit*".⁸³

This feature of Spirit of "manifesting itself in all reality" is based on the

⁸¹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, p. 15.

⁸² G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface, p. xxi.

⁸³ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, p. 23.

principle of “necessary embodiment”. The Absolute requires to be embodied through the medium of finite subjects. The relation of embodiment and unfolding of Spirit, in and through which the finite spirits reach to the level of Absolute during the course of their participation, incorporation and embodiment.⁸⁴

The embodiment of Spirit is the founding principle of the world – the universe is the embodiment, without which there is no possibility of particular determination, neither regarding the world, nor the subject⁸⁵. Through the embodiment of particular determinations, *Geist* or subjectivity is to be understood teleological as tending to realize reason and freedom and self-consciousness, or rational self-awareness in freedom.⁸⁶ The infinite Spirit is embodied necessarily in finite spirits; in turn it must have a medium in a finite spirit to be incorporated as part of Spirit. Its localization, realization as determined spatial and temporal determination does necessitate the medium of a human subject who is capable of meaning and expressive activity. This is the Spirit’s activity of “self-positing” as Absolute and cosmic subject.⁸⁷

If the Absolute is the foundation of everything, is *Geist* or subject, the dialectic of identity and contradiction is not of local interest. Rather Taylor argues that on Hegel’s scheme, “it must be of ontological import”. If the absolute is the subject, and everything that is can only be in being related to this subject, then everything is caught up in the interplay of identity and contradiction, which makes up the life of this subject.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 80.

⁸⁵ In Taylor’s interpretation of Spirit, there are two models of embodiment. One is Aristotelian derived notion of life which can only be in a living body. The other is that of the expression of thought, which requires a medium. These two models of embodiment come together in the notion of a mode of life, which properly expresses what I am as human subject as *this* subject, as member of *this* community. Here, I confine my discussion on the embodiment models to stating that the principles of embodiment is linked to the expressivist view of life.

⁸⁶ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, p. 26-7.

⁸⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 103-4.

⁸⁸ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 104.

The human subject, in Taylor's reading of Hegel's subject, serves to be a vehicle for the mediation of Absolute or Spirit: "Our conception of spirit and its self-realization must have a place for reason if man is to be vehicle of cosmic spirit and yet retain his freedom".

For Taylor, this is the central insight which "Hegel alone of his generation saw in full clarity and worked out to its full conclusion"⁸⁹ Without it, Romantics either fell into the despair of exile in God-forsaken world, or recovered unity with nature and God only in the twilight zone of intuition and fantasy.⁹⁰ Hegel, while opposing Romantics claim of power of fantasy and endless creativity, insists that the final synthesis be one which reason could encompass. The desire to ground the absolute subject upon reason is the ultimate difference that separates Hegel's view of unity and synthesis from those of the Romantics. For Taylor, Hegel already had developed the conception of the subject as essentially expressive unity and infinite activity. This is the cosmic subjectivity that Hegel develops in which he also depicts the infinite activity within encompassable form.⁹¹

In Hegel's solution and synthesis, the problem of death is still at stake as a irresolvable source for experience of negativity. In the Preface of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel likens the analytic power of the understanding to the power of death, the power to wrench things from the unity of life. But Hegel argues that the way to reconciliation with spirit, is not to flee death as a certain "powerless beauty" but to "hold it fast", to "bear it and maintain oneself in it" to sojourn with it. "This sojourning is the magic power which returns it to being."⁹²

The Absolute is the cosmic subject that is both identical and non-identical to

⁸⁹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 48.

⁹⁰ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 48.

⁹¹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 120.

⁹² Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 48

the world. The subject is non-identical to the world and the unbridgeable gap in between is incorporated into Hegel's philosophy as a gap to be fulfilled through the act of reason, the rational activity. And in this non-identity of the subject to the world emerges an experience of fragmentation, dispersal, loss, anxiety and a certain experience of "unconscious" which *Geist* had to overcome to be itself, to be Absolute and the omnipotent agent of self-conscious reason.⁹³

The life of the absolute subject is reflected in Hegel's philosophy as a process, a movement in which it posits its own conditions of existence and then overcomes the oppositions that are born out of these conditions in order to attain self-fulfillment and to experience itself in its totally fullness and unity. Here, we can see how Hegelian view of absolute subject has been developed as a response to Romantic ambition to disregard the experience of emptiness, lack, loss from the experience of subjectivity, rather to express the subjectivity in its unity and full presence. The finite subject and the absolute subject are motivated by the same principle of attaining self-presence, self-fulfillment and self-realization.

In the Preface of *Phenomenology*, Hegel puts that this self-realization of absolute subject, its self-positing is the process of mediation between "itself and its development into something different".⁹⁴ The Spirit cannot exist "immediately", the absolute requires to be mediated, in so far as it exists only by negating its own negation. This is the point Hegel makes in positing that Spirit is not a given and predetermined truth or absolute, rather it is a "result" or a outcome of a process of self-realization and "it is only in the end what it is in truth".⁹⁵ Spirit is something that is the result of a process of recovery from loss, dispersal and fragmentation; it

⁹³ Charles Taylor, *Hegel* p. 105.

⁹⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface, p. 28.

⁹⁵ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 105.

essentially comes to be out of a “process of self-loss and return”.⁹⁶

Since the Spirit is the cosmic subject, the mediation and the dialectical overcoming of inherent contradiction becomes a cosmic principle. Every single determination is subject to the principle of mediation and dialectical operation of overcoming contradiction. This is the ultimate objective of the project reflected in Hegel’s philosophy.

Here it can be argued that Taylor makes a very important remark regarding the problem of “externality” in Hegel’s philosophy: It is only “pure externality” in Taylor’s account, that can claim separate existence, independent from the dialectical operations of the consciousness. However this does not mean that the pure externality is not articulated with the relations of mediation. The world is also the embodiment of *Geist*. However Taylor’s remark concerns the status of the world in Hegel’s philosophy, not over against the subjective stand, rather as the ultimate horizon and spatial context that accommodates the “unfolding of Spirit”, of the self-realization of cosmic subject.⁹⁷

In Taylor’s account, the Absolute subject realizes itself in and through the process of mediating itself. Each and every finite determination of the subject can only realize itself in and through its embodiment into the Absolute subject. And the Absolute relates to these finite determinations through mediation. That is simply why for Taylor, “everything is mediate” in Hegel’s philosophy⁹⁸ and nothing can exist on its own. The relations of mutual recognition sustain each moment of mediation. In Taylor’s account, the intersubjectivity that is constituted with the dialectical relation between self and the other reveals the ultimate manifestation of the negativity. It can

⁹⁶ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 106.

⁹⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 106.

⁹⁸ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 106.

be argued that, in Taylor's interpretation, the constitution of intersubjective recognition is sustained by the principle of mediation of Absolute subject - The absolute subject's desire to mediate itself in order to fully realize itself.

At this point, I argue that it is Charles Taylor's interprets the Absolute in Hegel's philosophy with the subject. The next parts of the current chapters will be devoted to the discussion on how Taylor posits the other, central problematic of Hegel's philosophy following his interpretation of Hegel's Absolute as absolute subject. The main focus of discussion will be on the problem of intersubjective recognition and subjective experience of difference.

Among Hegel's immense and extremely complicated analysis of the modern shift, history and politics in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in accordance with the aim of this thesis, I will only discuss its certain aspects, particularly those related with the experience of subjectivity, identity and difference. Charles Taylor's interpretation and articulation of certain Hegelian themes (identity, difference, recognition, desire, intersubjectivity and freedom) will constitute the main focus of my discussion in what follows.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit*, written at the end of the Jena period (1806-1807) is without any single objection considered to be the epic narrative of Western subjectivity. For Taylor Phenomenology has the aim of taking the reader from the ordinary consciousness to the threshold of the true scientific inquiry.⁹⁹ The background story is the Spirit's story of coming to know itself and the vehicles of this self-knowledge are the finite spirits, the human subjects as the finite beings. *Phenomenology* tells the story of the movement of consciousness moves towards self-consciousness and then towards absolute consciousness, the self-knowledge of Spirit

⁹⁹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 127.

in a dialectical schema. But for Taylor, Hegel had another task in his mind while telling the story of development and movement of consciousness: To incorporate the problem of finitude into the story of the unfolding of the infinite and the Absolute subject. Here is the first stake of Taylor's interpretation of *Phenomenology*: to read *Geist*'s development towards self-knowledge in terms of the internal confusions, misconceptions, and truncated visions of finite subjects; therefore to express the ultimate unity and synthesis between the finite and infinite subjects.

I argue that this is the fundamental argument underlying Taylor's interpretation of the Hegel's subject: Taylor places the experience of the human subjects at the center of his analysis of the dialectical development of the relation between finite subjects and the Absolute subject. His principal reference points in framing the problem of finitude are the individual human subjects.

Taylor reads the Hegelian subject in *Phenomenology* solely in terms of anthropological expressions of individual experience of consciousness and of subjectivity.

Taylor replaces the notion of "finite subjects" with "individual subjects" and frequently uses the term of "ordinary consciousness" interchangeably with the individual human consciousness. The shift of the emphasis, from the notion of finitude of subject to the notion of ordinary consciousness is remarkable in these sentences:

Our ordinary consciousness takes us to be individual, finite subjects set over against the world. The perspective of *Geist*, on the other hand, shows us as vehicles of spirit, which is also expressed in the world, so that this world is no longer distinct from us. But how can we induce ordinary consciousness to budge from its perspective and take on the higher one?¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 128.

Concerning Taylor's emphasis on the self-definition of the modern subject, the notion of experience appears of having great relevance. For Taylor, "the modern subject has to cope with certain universal facets of experience".¹⁰¹ Taylor frames the experience of subjectivity as the experience of being human. The human subject makes sense out of the world in accordance with the vicissitudes of its own mental and emotional state. In Taylor's account, the experience of subjectivity is defined in psychological terms.¹⁰²

Needless to say, such a shift in the conceptual framework has significant outcomes as it had resulted in the tremendous shift of emphasis in Taylor's reading of Hegelian subjectivity. The first outcome is that the problem of finitude has been left behind in Taylor's subject-centered reading of experience of the development of consciousness.¹⁰³

Finally, it can be safely argued that Taylor's articulation of the concepts of finitude and experience change the entire focus of his interpretation. Rather than reading *Phenomenology* in terms of phenomenological investigation of how and in what ways the experience of external reality have come to possible, it can be argued that Taylor interprets the *Phenomenology* as an anthropological and epistemological narrative of the subjective experiences of the self –that are described by Taylor in terms of their psychological effects on the human subject. Framing *Phenomenology* as an anthropological story of experiences of consciousness puts forward the human subject as the absolute agent of this experience, and thereby states the subject-centered understanding of political discourse.

¹⁰¹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 166.

¹⁰² Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self, The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 174.

¹⁰³ Charles Taylor's articulation of the concepts of human subject and identity, with displacement of the notions of finitude and experience are remarkable all throughout the fourth chapter of his *Hegel*.

Deconstructing anthropological subject and thinking subjectivity without reducing it to the human subject. Rather, thinking the subject-structure that is enabled by the Hegel's distinct thinking of the subject in its relation to Time and History. Such a deconstructive work also brings the question of possible relation between phenomenological and "anthropological" reading of the *Phenomenology* in a novel sense. What does phenomenological investigation mean? Why is it necessary to read the Hegel's *Phenomenology* in terms of the phenomenological experience, what does such a reading entail in terms of subjectivity? These are the questions that I will be searching the answers for in the next chapter on Jean Hyppolite's interpretation of the Hegel's subjectivity.

CHAPTER III

JEAN HYPPOLITE'S INTERPRETATION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF SUBJECTIVITY IN HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY*

Published almost three decades before Charles Taylor's *Hegel*, Jean Hyppolite's *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*¹⁰⁴ had proposed radically different interpretation of Hegel's subjectivity. In bringing these two fundamentally different interpretations of Hegel's subjectivity, those of Charles Taylor's and Jean Hyppolite's, into a possible dialogue, is to bring out the political implications of each account's appropriation of the differential structure that constitutes the subjectivity in Hegel's *Phenomenology*.

Here is the fundamental argument underlying my discussion of Hyppolite's interpretation in its contradistinction to that of Taylor's: The disregard of the question of the relation between self and the other, that is accompanied with an exclusion of the question of the relation of subject and Time from the contemporary thinking of the identity, has resulted in certain reduction of Hegel's notion of difference to a necessary "medium" of a dialectical relation between self and the other that has ended up with the sublation (*Aufhebung*) of difference into the unity of the subject. Consequently, the subject is presupposed in its unity, its self-referential identity and the self-expression of its experience of difference.

The aim of this chapter is to bring out Hyppolite's non-dialectical interpretation of the relation between self and the other that in turn enables us to

¹⁰⁴ Most of Jean Hyppolite's reflections on the *Phenomenology* are to be found in his *Genesis and Structure of Phenomenology of Spirit*, published in post World War II France (1946). Just three years before the publication of *Genesis and Structure*, Hyppolite's own translation of the *Phenomenology* into French was published. The translation was published gradually, between 1939 and 1942.

reconsider the current impasse of our political thinking of identity and difference. In this regard, I will try to bring out the fundamental stakes of Hyppolite's *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* regarding the constitution of the subject in the Hegel's *Phenomenology* and articulate them in a possible discussion with Taylor's interpretation of the question that is at stake.

“Experience” and the phenomenological development of subjectivity

The first movement of Hyppolite's *Genesis and Structure* is to explicate “meaning and method” of the *Phenomenology*. Hyppolite states that Hegel gives us the clue for understanding the meaning and the phenomenological method (“the technique of phenomenological development” in Hyppolite's words) in the Introduction part of his *Phenomenology*.¹⁰⁵

Hyppolite claims that in the Introduction to *Phenomenology*, Hegel “poses and locates the problem as well as the means to solve it”:¹⁰⁶ It is the problem of knowledge, particularly the knowledge of the absolute that is at stake in the *Phenomenology*: “Instead of presenting knowledge of the absolute in-and-for-itself, Hegel considers knowledge as it is present in consciousness, and it is from considering the self-criticism of this phenomenal knowledge that he rises to absolute knowledge”.¹⁰⁷

What is implied in the passage is that the *Phenomenology* is not the narrative of the experience of absolute in the consciousness; insofar the absolute is not given to

¹⁰⁵ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 4.

the experience of consciousness; but rather it is the narrative of the ways through which the consciousness develops and finally reaches to the knowledge of the absolute. This attaining of the knowledge of the absolute in-and-for-itself is possible through the “overcoming” of the earlier forms of experience of consciousness.¹⁰⁸

Here, it is necessary to point out a distinct emphasis of Hyppolite’s reading of the development of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*: What enables the movement of consciousness at the end of which it attains absolute knowledge is its “self-criticism of phenomenal knowledge”.

Hyppolite implies that it is the self-criticism of the knowledge that arises out the experience of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*.¹⁰⁹ There is no external source of the motivation for the consciousness to develop, to move beyond itself; rather it is its own *critique* of its own experience that propels it to the movement towards absolute knowledge.¹¹⁰

The “self-criticism of consciousness” is the first manifestation of the negativity in Hyppolite’s reading of the movement of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. And it is discussed as an experience of “inner contradiction” that simultaneously enables the consciousness and disables its unity with the object of consciousness by limiting the experience of the phenomenon in its fullness and totality.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Further explication on the “overcoming “ of earlier forms of consciousness will be provided in the following parts of this chapter at where I will be dealing with Hyppolite’s interpretation of Hegel’s notions of negation, mediation and *Aufhebung* regarding the movement of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*.

¹⁰⁹ Hyppolite, following Hegel defines the phenomenological experience as the experience of consciousness. Hyppolite’s reading of the phenomenological experience will be elaborated in the next section of this chapter.

¹¹⁰ The “self-criticism of consciousness” will be a recurrent theme in Hyppolite’s text, insofar as it is so in the *Phenomenology*. In the chapters in which Hegel explicates on the dialectics, the theme will be presented in terms of self-negating activity of consciousness, as negation of determinateness, negation of negation.

¹¹¹ The idea of internal limit of the experience of phenomenon will be elaborated in the following parts

Finally, he (Hegel) specifies the technique of phenomenological development, showing how this development is the work of consciousness engaged in the experience and how the (internal) necessity of this development can be thought out retrospectively by the philosophy.¹¹²

At this point, it is remarkable to note that Hyppolite's emphasis is on the interiority of the principle that motivates consciousness to move towards its higher forms in the course of the *Phenomenology*. In Hyppolite's reading, the development of consciousness does not ensue an outer force, external movement or activity; rather, as Hyppolite highlights, it is necessitated by an inner contradiction. The inner contradiction turns out to be an internal necessity of the phenomenological development of subjectivity in Hyppolite's reading.

Hyppolite highlights that Hegel's aim in the *Phenomenology* was to show how and in what ways phenomenal knowledge is necessarily linked to absolute knowledge.¹¹³ The *Phenomenology* is the philosophical narrative of the experience of consciousness and the peculiar ways of consciousness through which this relation between phenomenal and absolute knowledge becomes possible within the course of the development of consciousness.¹¹⁴

And Hyppolite argues that in Hegel's system, the knowledge of the absolute appears as the end point of a development¹¹⁵ – development that is specific to the

of the chapter – particularly when I discuss Hyppolite's reading of the subject and the object of consciousness in terms of their finitude.

¹¹² Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 5.

¹¹³ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 6. Hyppolite introduces Hegel's idea of linking absolute knowledge in its relation to phenomenal knowledge as counterposed to Schelling's philosophy of Absolute which presupposes separation between consciousness and Absolute, subsequent to his distinction between subject and object of knowledge (*Genesis and Structure*, pp. 6-8). Yet, due to the limits of the present study, yet I am obliged to leave Hyppolite's critical analysis regarding Schelling and Hegel's views on Absolute without elaborating on it further.

¹¹⁴ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, p. 4- 5.

¹¹⁵ In his reading of the dialectical movement of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, Hyppolite raises critical questions concerning the teleological view of the movement of consciousness in parallel to his critique of teleological reading of the Hegel's history. This point will be touched in the following parts

consciousness. In the course of this development, consciousness goes first through the critical apprehension of its own experience, and therefore, of phenomenal knowledge. Then by way of this self-critical experience of consciousness, consciousness acquires its self-knowledge out of which also emerges the absolute knowledge.¹¹⁶

As I have already noted above, Hyppolite argues that it is Hegel's philosophy of phenomenal knowledge and his study of subjective conditions of phenomenal knowledge that differentiates Hegel's account of subjectivity from the philosophies of his ancestors. Hyppolite argues that it is Hegel's concept of experience through which Hegel's philosophy of subject can be best examined.¹¹⁷ Moreover, it is Hegel's concept of experience, Hyppolite argues, upon which Hegel grounds the link between phenomenal knowledge and absolute knowledge.¹¹⁸

Hyppolite repeats similar argument in his *Logic and Existence*.¹¹⁹ For Hyppolite, what Hegel had in mind in his *Phenomenology* was to think the link between phenomenal knowledge and the absolute knowledge, as well as to reduce the gap between Absolute and ordinary consciousness that was inherited from Kant's theory of knowledge and Absolute. Hyppolite argues that, in *Phenomenology* Hegel's project was to solve the problem and constitute the necessary link that ties ordinary consciousness to the knowledge of Absolute.

For Hyppolite, Hegel had accomplished his project of reaching absolute

of this chapter.

¹¹⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 7.

¹¹⁷ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 8.

¹¹⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*, published in French, in 1953. The English translation was published as late as in 1996. As Gilles Deleuze remarks in his illuminating review of the book, what Jean Hyppolite does in his *Logic and Existence* is to trace the roots of Hegel's phenomenological research within Hegel's *Logic* and to prove any possible link between two major texts of Hegel with regard to understanding of difference, transcendence and subjectivity (Deleuze, 1954).

knowledge in his *Logic*. Hyppolite maintains: “Hegel’s *Logic* starts with an identification of thought and the thing thought. The thing, being, is not beyond thought; and thought is not a subjective reflection that would be alien to being.”¹²⁰

Hyppolite argues that this identification of thought and being in Hegel’s philosophy was sustained with Hegel’s peculiar notion of experience that Hegel developed in the *Phenomenology*. Hyppolite argues that it is by means of “recollection of experience” that *Phenomenology* demonstrates that knowledge and the Absolute coincide.¹²¹ As I already stated above, for Hyppolite, the relation of coincidence between knowledge and Absolute was grounded upon the necessary development of consciousness.

Frequently used notion of “phenomenological development” in *Genesis and Structure* refers to emergence and formation of experience of phenomena within consciousness¹²². Referring to Hegel, Hyppolite defines the phenomenological development in the *Phenomenology* as the “work of consciousness engaged in experience”.

For Hyppolite, it is the experience that offers itself to consciousness and with its becoming present in consciousness, it is also what grounds and constitutes consciousness. In other words, for Hyppolite, it is the happening of experience that opens up consciousness. Consciousness works through the experience and this experience, for Hyppolite, must be comprehended as a whole. It is the totality of experience with which consciousness works through.¹²³

¹²⁰ Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, SUNY Press, New York, 1997, p. 3.

¹²¹ Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, SUNY Press, New York, 1997, p. 4.

¹²² Hegel’s “phenomenological method” and “technique of phenomenological development” are thoroughly discussed by Hyppolite, particularly in his discussion on the narrative characteristic of *Phenomenology*, and on the relation between history and phenomenology.

¹²³ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 10.

Proposing to think about the phenomenological method to understand the emergence and the development of subjectivity in *Phenomenology*, Hyppolite's argues that the experience (experience of consciousness of which emergence is the subject matter of phenomenological research) is ontologically prior to any form of subjectivity.

Concerning Hyppolite's interpretation of the constitutiveness of the experience for the very activity of consciousness, one point is very important to highlight: In Hyppolite's interpretation of the concept of experience, it is not consciousness that grounds the experience. On the contrary: It is the experience in its totality – that underlies the emergence of subjectivity. In other words, for Hyppolite, in the *Phenomenology*, the experience is ontologically prior to the emergence of knowledge, and of subjectivity.¹²⁴

Consciousness cannot be separated from what for it is its object, from that which it takes to be the true. But if consciousness is the consciousness of the object, it is also consciousness of itself. These two moments lie in it and are different: '[Consciousness] is consciousness both of what for it is the true and of its knowledge of that truth.' But these two moments are related, and this relation, precisely, is what is called 'experience'.¹²⁵

The experience is the experience of consciousness. The experience of consciousness reveals itself as the relation between consciousness and its object, the phenomenon. In Hyppolite's interpretation of the concept of experience in the *Phenomenology*, the phenomenological development does not regard the development of the content of experience; rather it is the development of the form of consciousness to which every

¹²⁴ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.171. Hyppolite explicates the priority of experience to the emergence of consciousness and self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology* in the later chapters of the *Genesis and Structure*.

¹²⁵ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 23.

distinct experience of consciousness corresponds.

In his description of the Hegel's notion of experience, Hyppolite highlights the inclusiveness of the concept:

He (Hegel) greatly enlarged the concept of experience of consciousness, from theoretical or moral experience (in the narrow sense of the word) to everything that is actually experienced by consciousness – not only the object of thought or the final goal, but also all manner of living, as well as aesthetic and religious world views which constitute experience in the larger sense of the word.¹²⁶

Concerning the philosophical narrative of the experience of consciousness, Hyppolite highlights that the *Phenomenology* is telling the story of innumerable objects of experience: personalities, objects, and events, anything that have come to emerge in the long history of the world.¹²⁷ The profundity and the inclusiveness of the concept of experience in the *Phenomenology*, enables us to consider the experience as the relation between consciousness and the world.

Hyppolite, in his reading of the phenomenological development, is largely concerned with the changes in the form of the experience of consciousness. What necessitates the change in the form of consciousness is the desire of consciousness to attain the truth and the absolute knowledge of its object:

¹²⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 41.

¹²⁷ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.. Hyppolite highlights that, in the *Phenomenology*, the Hegel's idea of the object of experience is tied to the problem of the empirical subject of consciousness. And yet, *Phenomenology* is not the historical narrative of the objects of experience of consciousness; but rather, in Hyppolite's reading, it is the narrative of the "itinerary of the soul to reach absolute knowledge". Hyppolite defines the task of the *Phenomenology* as "raising the specific I to the 'I' of the humanity" which is, for Hyppolite, accomplished to a certain extent in the "Culture" chapter of the *Phenomenology*. (GS, 42)

Consciousness tests its knowledge in order to render it adequate to that which it holds to be true – a certain world posited as existing-in-itself- but, when its knowledge changes, its object also changes. The latter had been the object of a certain knowledge; this knowledge having become other, the object also becomes other. In testing out its knowledge of what it took as the in-itself, what it posited as being the absolutely true, consciousness discovers the latter to have been in-itself only for it.¹²⁸

This is the point where Hyppolite's articulation of negativity into his reading of the experience of consciousness is remarkable: In the course of the experience, consciousness first attains the immediate knowledge of its object; but as soon as the object is negated in the course of the relation, consciousness loses the truth of the immediate experience of the object itself: "In experience, in the usual sense of the word, consciousness sees what it held to be true and the in-itself disappear, and at the same time it sees a different object appear as though it were a new thing, something discovered."¹²⁹

Negation of the object engenders the new search of consciousness, insofar as consciousness, out of the experience and the relation with its object, attains knowledge both about itself and the object of consciousness.

In the course of the experience that consciousness engages with its object, consciousness loses the truth of the knowledge of its object that it once held immediately true and realizes that it has not reached the knowledge of the thing-in-and-for itself:

"There are two necessities: The necessity of the negation of the object, effected by consciousness itself in its experience, in testing of its knowledge; and the necessity of the appearance of the new object which takes shape

¹²⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 23.

¹²⁹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 24.

though the prior experience.”¹³⁰

The necessity of change, of the movement of consciousness into new forms first results from the negation of the object of consciousness. The object of consciousness, the world is negated by consciousness and this negation is accompanied with the self-negating activity of consciousness (negation of negation). The necessity regards the consciousness’ searching for the truth of knowledge; and what Hyppolite highlights in his interpretation is that, this search of consciousness for the truth of its own knowledge is necessitated with the appropriation of the difference (expressed by the very determinateness of the object negated by consciousness), posited as external and opposed to the consciousness itself.

These two necessities that Hyppolite remarks, also indicate the work of the negative in Hyppolite’s reading of the dialectics of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*: The self-negating activity of consciousness simultaneously happens with the negation of its object of consciousness, consequently with the negation of the very form of the relation that it engages with the object, and finally with the very form of itself.

It (Consciousness) believes that after having disowned its first truth, it discovers a second one, which is completely different. That is why consciousness posits the new truth as contraposed to it, as an object (*Gegenstand*), and not as that which results from the prior movement and is engendered by it (*Entstandenes, no longer Gegenstand*). Experience thus seems to be consciousness to be the discovery of new worlds.

Hyppolite implies that the negation of the object of consciousness enables not only the dialectical movement of consciousness (its dialectical progression into new forms

¹³⁰ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 25.

by means of which it aims to attain absolute knowledge); but also it engenders the appearance of a different object of consciousness, which can be read as a new articulation of the world.

After having shown the early points of Hyppolite's articulation of negativity in his reading of the experience of consciousness with regard to the dialectical movement of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, our aim is to contextualize Hyppolite's distinct interpretation of Hegel's negativity into his reading of the emergence of subjectivity in the *Phenomenology*.

The fundamental question that Hyppolite's articulation of negativity into his reading of Hegel's concept of experience and the phenomenological development of consciousness poses for our discussion is: What does dialectics of the movement of consciousness entail in terms of Hyppolite's reading of Hegel's subjectivity if the dialectic is informed, in Hyppolite's account, by the infinite work of the negative and if the dialectic of consciousness is the dialectic of the infinite?

In this regard, in what follows, I will be first focusing on his reading of the dialectical movement of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. Specifically, I will be discussing Hyppolite's articulation of negativity into his reading of the Hegelian dialectics, particularly with respect to the emergence of subjectivity in and through the movement of consciousness, first its movement from one to another form, then its movement toward self-consciousness and Spirit.

The Forms of Consciousness: Negativity, Mediation and Contradiction

In the *Phenomenology* I have exhibited consciousness in its movement onwards from the first immediate opposition of itself and the object to

absolute knowing. The path of this movement goes through every form of the relation of consciousness to the object and has the Concept (*Begriff*) of science for its result. The Concept therefore... needs no justification here (in the Logic) because it has received it in that work (the *Phenomenology*); and it cannot be justified in any other way than by this emergence in consciousness, all the forms of which are resolved into this Concept as into their truth.¹³¹

These lines from his *Logic* illustrate Hegel's starting point in his philosophical narrative of the movement of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*: The *Phenomenology* starts with the most immediate forms of consciousness, the sensuous certainty. Sense-certainty represents a "not-yet-advanced" form of consciousness.¹³²

For Hegel, the starting point of any philosophical reflection must be the object and the immediate knowledge of it: "The knowledge or knowing which is at the start or is immediately our object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply is. Our approach to the object must also be immediate and receptive; we must alter nothing in the object as it presents itself. In apprehending it, we must refrain from trying to comprehend it."¹³³

Rather than presupposing the truth or the absolute knowledge and consider them as having self-evident reality, a philosophical reflection must start without presuppositions.¹³⁴ The aim of any philosophical reflection, for Hegel, is to demonstrate how and why truth or absolute knowledge is necessitated even when a philosophical reflection starts with a description of the non-mediated knowledge of the world.

In the course of his analysis regarding the reaching to the knowledge of the

¹³¹ G.W.F Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Humanities Press International, New Jersey, 1989, p. 48.

¹³² Hegel himself uses various adjectives to describe the sense-certainty: It is "natural", "ordinary", "everyday" and "non-philosophical" consciousness. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 15.

¹³³ G.W.F Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 58.

¹³⁴ For an extended analysis of "presuppositionless" of Hegel's philosophy, see Stephen Houlgate's reading of the *Phenomenology* as a "presuppositionless logic" and as a "philosophy of knowledge". Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History*, second edition, Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 50.

absolute, Hegel shows how sensuous certainty mutates into a series of more advanced forms of consciousness, and finally into absolute knowledge or speculative philosophy. Hegel defines the role of the *Phenomenology* as to provide justification for the necessity of the movement from ordinary consciousness, the sense-certainty towards absolute knowledge, the unity of the subject and the object of consciousness in the Concept.¹³⁵ These transitions (which compose the movement of the consciousness in their unity), for Hegel, are made necessary by the experience undergone by each form of consciousness itself. As I have already discussed in the light of Hyppolite's reading, the motivation of the change in the form of consciousness and its being propelled into a movement towards absolute knowledge.

For Hyppolite, Hegel's aim was to think the Absolute in its emergence within the consciousness and its necessary appearance as the end point of development of consciousness, as long as the knowledge of the absolute itself is possible only in and through the experience by consciousness.

The experience of consciousness that encompasses all the moments in the movements of consciousness, its struggle to reach to the knowledge of the Absolute, its alterations, transformations, successes and failures, its struggle to transcend its particularity and to reach universality constitutes the subject matter of the

Phenomenology:

Consciousness must become consciousness of Spirit; it must become aware that its object is spirit, that is, itself. In absolute knowledge, truth cannot be such that it leaves certainty out of account (just as certainty without its truth is only abstract), but is the truth that knows itself; it is self-certainty, that is consciousness.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 45.

¹³⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 62.

Here, Hyppolite highlights the centrality of the experience of consciousness for the task of the *Phenomenology*- to reach the absolute knowledge in its immediate universality. In this sense, the absolute and the absolute knowledge in the level of Spirit will be reached by consciousness at the end of the phenomenological development that is only peculiar to the experience of consciousness.

In his interpretation, Hyppolite highlights the logic behind the dialectics of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*: It is negativity that informs the internal logic of Hegelian dialectics of “negation-mediation-abstraction”¹³⁷ by means of which the particularity and determinateness of knowledge is overcome and thereby consciousness is propelled into its movement to the Absolute.

Negation and mediation in Hyppolite’s reading of the development of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* are the acts of consciousness in transcending sense-certainty in order to reach certainty of self, the absolute knowledge as the knowledge of absolute subject. The acts of negation and mediation, (and the negation of negation) within the course of reaching absolute knowledge and immediate truth is demonstrated by Hyppolite as follows:

1. I pose now as truth, and I negate it; it no longer is;
2. I pose as truth that it is not, that it has been
3. In a negation of the negation, I negate this second truth, which apparently brings me back to the first truth.¹³⁸

Here, Hyppolite represents the movement of consciousness in accordance with its experience of finding-and-losing of the truth of its knowledge: First, the truth of the

¹³⁷ Hyppolite underlines that three terms “negation, “mediation” and “abstraction” are synonymous for Hegel. (*Genesis and Structure*, 101)

¹³⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 98.

knowledge that consciousness attains in and through its relation with the world is negated. Then it is the non-truth that consciousness experiences in its relation with its new object engendered out of the change in the form of the relation itself. The momentary absence of truth, consciousness losing of the truth of its experience is what motivates consciousness to move into a new form. Moving beyond its experience of non-truth is the negation of negation, at the end of which consciousness reaches to a higher level.

Hegel strives to explain the basis of his entire philosophical system and to counterpose his conception of the true which includes mediation within it to any system that posits the truth or the true as an immediate, a being, a substance beyond mediation.¹³⁹

Accordingly, the infinite task of consciousness to reach absolute knowledge goes from its self-negating activity in which consciousness first transcends the particularity of its relation to its object, and the immediacy of knowledge that it attains out of this relation (from sense-certainty to perception); then it is propelled into its new form of consciousness in which the externality of its object is transformed into an internal determination; and finally it is moved to another form of consciousness (understanding) in which it turns to be a “reflection of this world back on itself”.¹⁴⁰

The moment of Absolute is the moment beyond negation and mediation of determinateness; it is the moment in which all acts of mediation and negation are appropriated in the unity of Concept (*Begriff*): “From this point on, we are dealing not with a unique and ineffable now or here, but with a now or here that includes mediation with itself, that is a thing including both the unity of universality and the

¹³⁹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 81.

¹⁴⁰ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 97, 103, 118.

multiplicity of specific forms”.¹⁴¹

For Hyppolite, the movement of consciousness is an act of mediation; of negation that enables the movement of consciousness from sense-certainty to the certainty of self in the Absolute. And the moment of Absolute is the end point of the movement of consciousness insofar as it “includes mediation within itself”. By including the mediation within itself and the new forms of consciousness engendered by every act of mediation, the Absolute represents the end point of the dialectics of consciousness in which the negativity is appropriated within the unity and identity of subject and object of consciousness in the Concept.

At this point, Hyppolite’s radical interpretation of Hegelian negativity shows itself as the central paradox of the Hegel’s dialectics in the *Phenomenology*: “Are we then to give up difference as genuine qualitative difference in order to attain unity, or are we to give up unity in order not to lose this difference? With this we are at the heart of the problem of phenomenal identity and reality.”¹⁴²

Here, Hyppolite expresses the fundamental paradox of the relation between negativity and dialectics:¹⁴³ If the negativity is the indispensable and primary principle of the phenomenological development of consciousness, if it is what motivates consciousness to transcend itself towards attaining the knowledge of the absolute, how then is it possible that it is given up in the name of the unity of subject and object of consciousness?¹⁴⁴ Hyppolite’s answer to this question reveals the

¹⁴¹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 98.

¹⁴² Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.128.

¹⁴³ A paradox that still dominates the discussion on the Hegel’s philosophy: Whether the *Phenomenology* is the pinnacle of the thinking the resolution and overcoming of contradiction as being the philosophy of identity and reconciliation; or is it a philosophy in which negativity has found its ultimate expression insofar as it is guaranteed a distinct role as being the fundamental movement of consciousness that enables its dialectics.

¹⁴⁴ Hyppolite’s question also regards the “end of history” debates on the *Phenomenology*. On this issue,

fundamental stake of his interpretation of the negativity: “Hegel’s solution is not to continue to contrapose the two terms but rather to seek their union in a dialectical relation which for him is ‘absolute concept,’ or infinity.”¹⁴⁵ It can be argued that, rather than giving up the work of the negative in the name of the unity of the Absolute, Hyppolite dislocates the movement of consciousness from its teleological structure and relocates into an infinite movement of self-transcendence.¹⁴⁶

Hyppolite’s articulation of negativity into his interpretation of the infinite movement of consciousness (movement of transcendence) poses critical questions for my discussion on the Hegel’s subjectivity: What does such a radical thinking of the negativity (as an insurmountable principle of contradiction) entail with regard to Hyppolite’s reading of the subjectivity in the *Phenomenology*?

In what I have already discussed, the central concern was to explicate Hyppolite’s articulation of negativity into his interpretation of the question of experience as the condition of the possibility of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*.

In what follows, I will try to find answers to these questions out of Hyppolite’s discussion of the emergence of subjectivity in the *Phenomenology*. Particularly, I will proceed with discussion on Hyppolite’s articulation of negativity in his reading of the experience of consciousness as the emergence of the relation between the subject and the world. Then, I will discuss Hyppolite’s interpretation of Master-Slave dialectic with respect to the emergence of intersubjectivity, in order to articulate these two moments in the *Phenomenology*: The relation and the articulation between the

only stating that Hyppolite, as opposed to Alexandre Kojève’s teleological reading of the Hegel’s history in the *Phenomenology*, proposes a Heideggerian interpretation of the history will content us. Hyppolite proposes non-teleological view of history in which he tries to think history as temporal opening of Being. For a more detailed elaboration of Kojève’s account of the subjectivity in the Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, see Judith Butler, *The Subjects of Desire*, Columbia University Press, 1987.

¹⁴⁵ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.128

¹⁴⁶ The idea of infinite transcendence, infinite movement of consciousness is also fundamental to Hyppolite’s reading of “Unhappy Consciousness” in the *Phenomenology*.

phenomenological and the historical dimensions of the emergence of the subjectivity.¹⁴⁷

Master-Slave Dialectic: Relation as Self-Relation, Self-relation as
Relation to the World

In knowing nature, then understanding knows itself; its knowledge of an other is a self-knowledge, a knowledge of knowledge. The world is ‘the great mirror’ in which consciousness discovers itself.¹⁴⁸

Hyppolite begins his interpretation of the movement of consciousness to self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology* with an implicit argument regarding the centrality of the relation between the consciousness and the world to the movement of consciousness: The consciousness discovers itself by means of the knowledge that it possesses in the course of its necessary involvement with the world. It is the consciousness of the object (the world) that turns out to be the consciousness of the self.

Defining the source of self-knowledge with regard to the relation between consciousness and its object, I argue that what Hyppolite does, is to put forward the centrality of the relation between the subject and the world in shaping the movement of consciousness into self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*.

Yet, the footnote of the quoted passage of the *Genesis and Structure* reveals

¹⁴⁷ Undoubtedly, such an idea of experience that is ontologically prior to the emergence of subjectivity is rooted in Heidegger’s philosophy. Though not explicitly referred by Hyppolite, the impact of Heidegger’s philosophy regarding the critique of metaphysics of subjectivity and of presence tremendous in Hyppolite’s effort to think Hegel’s subjectivity beyond as a ground of experience. Further explication of Hyppolite’s subtle references to Heidegger’s philosophy, particularly his thoughts on the historicity of non-foundational subject as well as his critique of Hegel’s subjectivity will be presented in the last chapter of the thesis. Deferring the further explication of Hyppolite’s understanding of phenomenological subject in its relation to history, I can now move to the next move of the *Genesis and Structure*.

¹⁴⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.143.

another significant claim of Hyppolite's reading of the movement of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*:

There is much self-satisfaction in explanation because in explanation consciousness is, so to speak, in an *immediate dialogue with itself* and enjoys only itself; it seems to be dealing with something else, but, in fact, it is engaged and occupied only with itself". Its knowledge of nature is in fact a self-knowledge.¹⁴⁹

How is it possible that immediate dialogue of consciousness also reveals its self-knowledge, if the self-knowledge as self-consciousness is defined in and through the act of self-negating, self-transcending of consciousness?

The idea of "immediate dialogue" of consciousness has also been at stake also in the second chapter of *Genesis and Structure*¹⁵⁰ in which Hyppolite defines the movement of consciousness from sense-certainty to perception as "internal movement" of consciousness. In Hyppolite's interpretation, internal movement of consciousness emerges out of *internal* logic of negation and mediation.¹⁵¹ Self-negating activity of consciousness that is enabled by the dialectics of mediate and immediate forms of knowledge, also informs the movement of consciousness towards its own transcendence, i.e. self-consciousness.

In my view, what Hyppolite implies with putting forward the immediate dialogue of consciousness in the chapter in which he reads the movement of consciousness in terms of the relation between consciousness and the world, is to put

Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 144 quoted from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 127. (Footnote.)

¹⁵⁰ In the second chapter of *Genesis and Structure*, Hyppolite provides an interpretation of the movement of the forms of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. (sense-certainty, perception, understanding – negativity articulated into the act of mediation and negation)

¹⁵¹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 81. In the chapter on "Sensuous Certainty", Hyppolite defines the negation of negation as an internal movement of the immediate that opposes itself to itself, which becomes what it is.

emphasis on the double operation of negativity – both in the formation of consciousness (by means of its “immediate dialogue” with itself¹⁵²) and in its self-transcending movement towards self-consciousness. It is the “work of the negative” that motivates the consciousness to emerge via differentiating itself from its object of knowledge, as well as the relation between consciousness and the world.

In Hyppolite’s interpretation, the movement of consciousness into self-consciousness can neither be interpreted in terms of the subjective categories of the experience of consciousness, nor in terms of the objective conditions of the phenomenon. Rather it is the relation between the subject (as consciousness) and the object of consciousness (the world, the nature, the phenomenality¹⁵³) that motivates the movement of consciousness in Hyppolite’s reading:

We must become aware of the phenomenality of nature. This phenomenality is not, as is often thought, the result of subjectivity of categories (insofar as it is transcendental, this subjectivity is identical to objectivity). On the contrary, this phenomenality – this finitude of our knowledge, we might say- is constituted by the nontranscendental subjectivity of matter, by the passivity, the receptivity which understanding cannot do without.¹⁵⁴

From this passage, two points regarding Hyppolite’s interpretation of the relation between consciousness and the world in the *Phenomenology* can be deduced: First, Hyppolite warns us against a possible danger of sliding into subject-centered interpretation of consciousness-world relation in the *Phenomenology*: In the *Phenomenology*, the object of knowledge, the phenomenon itself is neither pre-given to the relation; nor does totally depend upon the subjective categories of

¹⁵² Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.145.

¹⁵³ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.145. Hyppolite names the object of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* “the world”, the “phenomenality of nature”.

¹⁵⁴ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.145.

consciousness.¹⁵⁵ Rather, Hyppolite highlights, it is the unity of the consciousness and the world (the unity that is sustained by means of their relation in the course of the *Phenomenology*) that enables the simultaneous emergence, as well as the interdependence of the consciousness and the world. Hyppolite interprets the relation between consciousness and the world in the *Phenomenology* as the fundamental constitutive of the subject and the world itself.

Second point that can be deduced from Hyppolite's interpretation concerns the role of the negativity in Hyppolite's reading of the relation in the *Phenomenology*: Hyppolite reads the relation between consciousness and the world with regard to the experience of negativity that express itself as experience of finitude or limit. In and through their relation, Hyppolite reads in the *Phenomenology*, both consciousness and the world reveal how they are marked by the negativity: "Nonetheless, the finitude of our knowledge exists only because understanding conceives the idea of an unlimited understanding but finds itself limited. The object of a finite subject must itself be finite."¹⁵⁶

Here, negativity appears in terms of a limit both to subjective knowledge and to phenomenon itself: The Understanding confronts with its limits in its encounter with the phenomenon. In Hyppolite's reading, the experience of understanding of encountering its own limits in comprehending the phenomenon is also reflected in the appearance of the phenomenon itself. It is the same of "work of the negative", in Hyppolite's reading, that characterizes the experience of the world not in its full

¹⁵⁵ Here, Hyppolite offers us a reading of the concept of the relation in Hegel's that may also help us to understand how our contemporary experience of the world is dominated by the subjective categories of understanding. Rather than a subject-centered understanding of the experience, Hyppolite reads the "relation" in terms of its primordially constitutive character. Such a reading of the relation in the *Phenomenology* would enable us to think the "relation", so that the irreducible experience of the negativity in the relation.

¹⁵⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.145.

presence, but in its contradictory structure, in its “self-related negation”.¹⁵⁷

Hegel’s discussion of the experience of the (supersensible) world as the manifestation of the negativity that is also at work in the overcoming of the determinateness and immediacy of the object of consciousness itself is one of the cardinal issues of the *Phenomenology*.¹⁵⁸ Yet Hyppolite does not provide further explication on the experience of the world. Rather by following the final move of Hegel at the end of the chapter on “Consciousness”, Hyppolite moves to provide an exposition of “more complex movement” – the movement of consciousness to self-consciousness by means of which, I argue, the articulation of negativity in Hyppolite’s account can be discerned.

Hyppolite’s reading of “Self-consciousness” in the *Phenomenology* begins with his remarks on the finitude of the subject that is marked by the negativity: “The finite subject is not limited in the way that an object can be limited: and object does not know its own limit, which is external to it; the subject continually seeks to transgress its limit. It tends toward the infinite, the unconditioned.”¹⁵⁹

The subject transgresses its own limit in order to be able to attain knowledge of its own self. Regarding this process, Hyppolite’s emphasis is on the idea of “limit”: What the above stated quotation implies is, that the knowledge of the self can only be attained as the encountering of one’s own limit. In encountering its own limit, the

¹⁵⁷ In the chapter “Force and Understanding” of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel provides as a detailed analysis of negativity that is at work in the overcoming of the Thing its own determinateness and its appearance as Thing-for-itself. Hegel describes the experience of the object of consciousness in terms of “self-related negation”: “The Thing is posited as being for itself, or as the absolute negation of all otherness, therefore as purely self-related negation; but the negation that is self-related is the suspension of itself; in other words, the Thing has its essential being in another Thing.” (Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 76). Hyppolite does not dwell deep on the issues of appearance of the thing and the supersensible world as profoundly explicated by Hegel in the following parts of the same chapter.

¹⁵⁸ Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 147. In the “Observing Nature” chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel Subjective experience, perception, experience lies primarily at the focus of Hegel’s discussion of the relation between consciousness and nature (the world).

¹⁵⁹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.145.

consciousness gets rid of its passivity, receptivity (which at the same constitutes the finitude of self-knowledge); and becomes an “active consciousness”: “In the *Phenomenology*, self-consciousness appears, in opposition to consciousness, as active consciousness. The positivity of consciousness become negativity in self-consciousness”.¹⁶⁰ Hyppolite had already introduced the idea of the passivity and the receptivity of understanding (which I already discussed with reference to one of the previous quotations from *Genesis and Structure*) as the necessary stage of consciousness that is to be overcome. By means of self-negating activity of consciousness, the passivity and the receptivity of consciousness are overcome, and consciousness experiences its own limits.

The ultimate aim of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, for Hyppolite, is “to accomplish itself”. By confronting its own limits, consciousness in and through its self-negating activity, moves toward the “infinite task of accomplishing itself”¹⁶¹. The task of self-consciousness is infinite and it is impossible to fulfill itself: “It is a task of accomplishment of which is forever deferred”.¹⁶²

Hyppolite’s reading of the genesis and the development of subjectivity in the *Phenomenology* is marked by the infinite work of the negative, as the impossibility of attaining absolute knowledge and the absolute unity of I. Infinite work of the negativity – that never stops at any moment of dialectical resolution.

¹⁶⁰ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.146.

¹⁶¹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.146.

¹⁶² Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.145.

Negativity as Difference: Non-Dialectical Relation and Absolute Otherness

In the previous parts of the thesis, I have already discussed that in Hyppolite's reading of the *Phenomenology*, consciousness is the knowledge of what it negates, the other.¹⁶³ And I have already shown that concerning the genesis of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, Hyppolite puts remarkable emphasis on the role of the phenomenological experience and negativity: consciousness relates itself to its object by means of its self-negating activity, which means, the relation between consciousness and its object, the world is sustained by the work of negativity. In the last section of the chapter, I will be discussing Hyppolite's interpretation of emergence of self-consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Hyppolite's interpretation of the emergence of self-consciousness is particularly important for our discussion insofar as his interpretation of self-consciousness as desire has informed his distinct interpretation of Hegel's subject in its temporal becoming. And it is Hyppolite's definition of self-consciousness that gives us the insight for understanding how and in what terms Hyppolite defines the movement of consciousness to self-consciousness: "Self-consciousness is essentially practical; it is the consciousness of transcending the knowledge of the other."¹⁶⁴

If the consciousness is the knowledge of the other, self-consciousness emerges by means of transcending the knowledge of the other. It is an act of transcendence for

¹⁶³ Upon close reading, it is remarkable that, in the third part of the *Genesis and Structure*, Hyppolite slightly changes his terminology while defining the relation between the subject and the object of consciousness: He starts using "self" and "the other" in order to describe the relation that is constitutive of consciousness. Needless to say, this change in Hyppolite's use of the words is not only a change in his terminology that he uses in depicting the subject of the object of Hegel's philosophical narrative in the *Phenomenology*. Rather, Hyppolite's interpretation of the self-consciousness highlights the act of transcending the consciousness of the otherness – the issue that I will be discussing throughout the section.

¹⁶⁴ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.146.

consciousness to mutate into self-consciousness. As I have already touched upon in our discussion on the movement of consciousness from sense-certainty to perception, and then to understanding, in Hyppolite's account, every act of mutation of consciousness into a different form is an act of transcendence. And this act of transcendence is enabled by the negativity that is the motivating force of the infinite search of Hegel's subject to know itself as itself, in its self-certainty: (...) So in the *Phenomenology* self-consciousness appears, in opposition to consciousness, as active consciousness. The positivity of consciousness becomes negativity in self-consciousness."¹⁶⁵

What Hyppolite implies is that, it is the positivity of consciousness that is transcended in the self-consciousness. It is the certainty of consciousness at a certain moment that is negated throughout the relation with the world. In Hyppolite's reading, consciousness is destined to lose its certainty; the truth of its knowledge and its positivity and it is necessarily propelled into the movement by means of which it transcends the knowledge of the other, the source of its state of uncertainty.

If I make a flash-forward and to look how Hyppolite's articulates the same logic of negativity into his reading of the advanced forms of consciousness, the priority of "constant negation" in Hyppolite's account will be more clearly discerned:

It is here that self-consciousness reaches absolute certainty of itself. It is not only the abstract positing of itself, as in stoicism; it is the positing of itself through the actual negation of all otherness. It is the self-certainty obtained through the annihilation of all the determinants of existence; it is the exploration in depth of subjectivity. For this reason, this happy consciousness, rising above all the vicissitudes of Dasein, will discover its own misfortune and unhappiness, entangled as it is in what it constantly negates.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 146.

¹⁶⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.187.

Consciousness transcends into self-consciousness as a result of its search for certainty that it has lost in its relation to the world. Self-consciousness is the negation of the world that is framed in Hyppolite's reading as "all otherness". The world, the difference and the knowledge of the world are negated by self-consciousness and self-consciousness is entangled in this constant act of negativity, in its relation to the world. Yet, self-consciousness is still bound by the relation to the world that it constantly negates.

After having shown that Hyppolite interprets self-consciousness in terms of constant and infinite negation of the knowledge of the world, I can safely argue that Hyppolite's distinct emphasis on the negativity into the emergence of self-consciousness implies a certain dissolution of the Hegelian relation of coincidence between self and the otherness, insofar as the appropriation of otherness by the self is no longer possible. The questions that Hyppolite's reading of self-transcendence of consciousness and of self-consciousness pose for us are: If Hegel's philosophy of subject is inflicted with the infinite negativity, how should we read Hegel's dislocation of the "Absolute is substance" into "Absolute is subject"? How does Hyppolite resolve the tension between difference that is inflicted by unavoidable work of the negative and the law of dialectics of consciousness that ultimately searches to realize itself in the Absolute? I try to find most of the answers to these questions, if not all of them, in Hyppolite's reading of the Hegel's desire and Master-Slave dialectics, insofar as it is by means of his distinct interpretation of dialectics, Hyppolite articulates the infinite work of the negative into his discussion of Hegel's subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

Repeatedly reciting the Hegelian formulation "Self-consciousness is desire", Hyppolite's first move is to demarcate the line between self-knowledge and

knowledge of the other:

Consciousness was knowledge of an other, knowledge of the sensuous world in general; self-consciousness, on the contrary, is self-knowledge, and is expressed in the identity of I=I (*Ich bin Ich*). The I that is an object is an object for itself. It is simultaneously subject and object; it poses itself for itself.¹⁶⁷

Consciousness, as I have already discussed in the previous parts, is the knowledge of the world (the sensuous world in general); and self-consciousness is the self-knowledge of the origin which has been defined in the Fichte's formulation I=I as identical to self. Hyppolite's remark in the quotation above should not be misunderstood in the light of his previous remarks on the Hegel's project to deconstruct the Fichtean tradition of thinking subject as equal to itself.

Self-consciousness is defined as self-knowledge that is expressed in the equation of I=I, but it can be argued that in Hyppolite's reading, it has gained a radically different articulation:

Unlike Fichte, we do not pose the *Ich bin Ich* in the absoluteness of a thetic act in relation to which antithesis and synthesis would be secondary. The reflection of the I, which takes the sensuous world, the being-other, as its starting point, is the essence of self-consciousness, which, therefore exists only through this movement.¹⁶⁸

It can be argued that in Hyppolite's reading, the negativity is articulated in a radically new way insofar it has changed the very definition of the self; so that the self, the subject can no longer be defined as equal and identical to itself. Rather as Hyppolite implies, Hegel's subject is to be interpreted in terms of the movement of relating, The

¹⁶⁷ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.158.

¹⁶⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 158.

movement of relating is the articulation of negativity into the movement of relation between the subject and the world; it is also the movement of self-constitution of the subject, of its constitutive self-relation. Therefore, I argue that it is the negativity that is articulated into the movement that underlies the emergence of subjectivity, self-consciousness and this articulation of negativity, as desire, changes the very definition of both the relation between the subject and the world and the self-relation itself that is constitutive of the subjectivity:

Self-consciousness, then, is not “the inert tautology, “I=I””; it presents itself as engaged in a debate with the world. For self-consciousness, this world is what disappears and does not subsist, but this very disappearance is necessary for self-consciousness to pose itself. The self-consciousness, therefore, is *desire*, in the most general meaning of the word.¹⁶⁹

Hyppolite highlights that in Hegel’s definition of self-consciousness as desire,¹⁷⁰ there are two objects of desire: While the world, the first immediate object of desire incessantly disseminates and withdraws from the experience of consciousness, the I, the subject recollects, unifies and gather itself (as the fundamental of Hegel’s logic).

The world appears only as a means for the relation, as articulation of negativity and then it disappears in transcending consciousness. But there is another object of desire, which is the self itself. The desire as self-consciousness means that self-consciousness desires to negate itself in order to realize itself in the synthesis and the unity of the self (in the overcoming of difference- *Aufhebung*):

The end point of desire is not, one might think superficially, the sensuous object – that is only a means- but the unity of the I with itself. Self-

¹⁶⁹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.159.

¹⁷⁰ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 157. It is Hegel’s definition of self-consciousness” as “desire in general” to which Hyppolite refers.

consciousness is desire, but what it desire, although it does not yet know this explicitly, is itself: it desires its own desire. And that is why it will be able to attain itself only through finding another desire, another self-consciousness.¹⁷¹

And as Hyppolite highlights, the ultimate aim of the self-consciousness is to attain its unity, to end the search of the consciousness to realize itself in the Absolute. It desires its own desire, and desire does necessarily relates the self to its exteriority, to outside, to otherness. Desire for the unity of the self, turns out to be the desire of otherness – desire to be desired by another self-consciousness.¹⁷²

Only if there is another desire, desire is able to pose itself and enables the self-consciousness to reach the truth so that self-consciousness will not be isolated in the subjective stage. Desire is always a desire for otherness, desiring the desire of the other:¹⁷³

The condition of self-consciousness is the existence of other self-consciousnesses. Desire is able to pose itself in being, to reach a truth and not merely remain at the subjective stage of certainty, only if life appears as another desire. Desire bears first on the objects of the world, then on life, an object already closer to itself, and, finally, on another self-consciousness. Desire seeks itself in the other: man desires recognition from man.¹⁷⁴

Here, in his reading of the dialectic of self-consciousnesses, Hyppolite's emphasis is on the pluralistic opening of self-consciousness marked by the ineradicable and the

¹⁷¹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.160.

¹⁷² It can be argued that in Hyppolite's interpretation, the constant need of the desire for the negation of itself by the other self-consciousness is grounded in Hegel's understanding of the origin of the desire: nothingness. Hyppolite argues that is the nothingness out of which the subject as the first moment of negation and desire as the infinite movement of negativity emerged. That is why, in Hyppolite's interpretation, the infinite work of negativity shows the subject its originary status as non-determined in the nothingness. (Hyppolite discusses in the "Unhappy Consciousness")

¹⁷³ A similar interpretation of desire as "desiring the desire of the other" can also be found in Žižek's reading of the Lacanian gaze as the manifestation of radical difference that is constitutive of the Lacanian subjectivity: Gaze of the other is what the subject ultimately desires but it is also what the subject will never attain. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, Verso, 2000, p.79.

¹⁷⁴ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.160.

infinite “work of the negative”: Self-consciousness emerges by means of the desire of otherness, as well the necessary desire *for* otherness: There is an infinite movement of desire. The result is tremendous: The unity of the subject is forever deferred:

The being of life is not substance but rather the disquiet of the self... The attributed adjective that recurs most frequently in Hegel’s dialectic is disquiet (*unruhig*). This life is disquiet, the disquiet of the self which has lost itself and finds itself again in its alterity. Yet the self never coincides with itself, for it is always other in order to be itself.¹⁷⁵

In Hyppolite’s reading, negativity is what motivates self to find its certainty and puts the self into a relation with the other. And it is also what annihilates the possibility of relation of the self to itself as a relation of correspondence and coherence. The subject can no longer be conceived in terms of its self-constitution and self-grounding capacity; rather it is the subject of constant negation of its self.

Any search of the self to find its unity and self-certainty results in its entanglement by the alterity- the constitutive otherness. Accordingly, what Hyppolite’s interpretation implies is that its self-relation has turned out to be the relation of non-correspondence and “inner contradiction”:

The other appears as the same, as the self, but the self also appears as the other. Similarly the negation of the other, which corresponds to the movement of desire, becomes self-negation as well. Finally the complete return into the self, while claiming to suppress all otherness, in fact merely leaves the other free of the self and leads back to absolute otherness. Being is then no longer the self. One point is essential in the dialectic, a dialectic easy enough to grasp in the subtle interplay which it presents: otherness does not disappear.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, pp. 149-150.

¹⁷⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.168.

Any attempt of the self to attain its unity and self-certainty via overcoming internal contradiction that comes out of every relation to the world, is doomed to failure insofar as the self can no longer be defined in its own terms. In Hyppolite's interpretation, otherness, defined as the manifestation of negativity and as the movement out which self-consciousness emerges, can neither be eliminated nor appropriated into the dialectical synthesis. Rather it comes to gain the status of inalienable contradiction and difference that is infinitely at work in the constitution of subjectivity and of intersubjectivity.

At this point, we are confronted with the fundamental difference between Taylor's and Hyppolite's account of negation: While Taylor reads the relation between self and other in terms of self-negation of the self and remains contented with applying the work of the negative in the *Phenomenology* to position of subject and the other in a dialectical and representational relation;¹⁷⁷

Hyppolite, in his reading of the dialectic of self-consciousnesses, implies the infinite negativity to the emergence of self and the other. In Hyppolite's reading, as I have already discussed, it is the work of the negative that enables the emergence of the subjectivity and it is what enables the otherness not to disappear –as the negative, in Hyppolite's reading, is infinitely articulated into the Hegelian subject as an irreducible contradiction that is never to be appropriated by the dialectics.

Infinite negativity: The subject's Relation to Time, *Aufhebung* and Unhappy Consciousness

As I have already discussed, Hyppolite reads the emergence of self-consciousness in

¹⁷⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 356.

the *Phenomenology* as the infinite movement of negativity. The negativity is infinitely at stake for consciousness insofar the desire reveals the inexhaustible immediacy and Infinity of the Otherness: “I discover that desire is never exhausted and that its reflection intention leads to me an essential otherness. Yet self-consciousness is also absolutely for itself.”¹⁷⁸

Here, Hyppolite highlights one of the fundamental stakes of his interpretation of the emergence of the subjectivity in the *Phenomenology*: On the one hand, Otherness as desire is revealed as an inexhaustible immediacy and infinity of the negation/negativity that is constitutive of self-consciousness; on the other hand “self-consciousness is absolutely for itself”, which means the movement of self-consciousness turns out to be the self-constitutive movement for itself –a movement that is initiated with the work of the negative and ends with the emergence of self-consciousness as absolute (that is also at stake in Hyppolite’s reading of the Hegelian reformulation of Absolute as Subject).

What I aim to highlight, Hyppolite, in his reading of the Hegel’s self-consciousness, does not disregard this tension; rather he reads the emergence of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* through this tension:

Self-consciousness exists as a negative power. It is not merely a positive reality; a Dasein which disappears and dies absolutely, crushed by what exceeds it and remains external to it; it also is that which at the heart of this positive reality negates itself and maintains itself in that negation. Concretely this is the very existence of man, “who never is what he is,” who always exceeds himself and is always beyond himself, who has a future, and who rejects all permanence except the permanence of his desire aware of itself as desire.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.168.

¹⁷⁹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.166.

Two claims of Hyppolite's reading are manifested in this passage: First, rather than resolving the above mentioned tension between the subject and the infinite movement of negativity that is constitutive of the Hegelian subject; what Hyppolite does is to redefine the subject in terms of the impossibility of its self-referential identity due to the infinite inevitability of desire. Second, it is implied that desire, as a permanent source of the negation of the self, is not a power or an attribute of subject that can be defined in terms of its determinate manifestations.

Here, one point is of the utmost importance to highlight: In Hyppolite's interpretation of the infinite movement of the negativity in the *Phenomenology*, it can be argued that desire is neither an already determined and given source of negativity. Desire, as Hyppolite implies, cannot be presupposed as a self-generating ground of the subjectivity¹⁸⁰. Rather what Hyppolite implies is that, there must be another relation that simultaneously grounds the subject and the desire: It is the temporality, subject's relation to Time, that grounds both the subject and the desire.¹⁸¹

While reading the dialectic of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, Hyppolite disregards the interpretation of desire as self-generating and infinite source of negativity; and consequently, to relocate the origin of the Hegelian desire into the subject's relation to Time. By doing so, what Hyppolite does, is to rethink the

¹⁸⁰ Here, it is remarkable to note that Hyppolite's reading of negativity with regard to the temporality of Subject constitutes a very fundamental critique of Kojève's dialectical thinking of Hegelian desire: It is Alexander Kojève who interprets Hegelian desire in terms of negativity that enables the dialectics of Hegel's subjectivity. However, Kojève does not discuss the origin of the Desire as such; rather he presupposes it as the principle that motivates movement of self-consciousness from abstract negation to determinate negation – a movement that also corresponds to the realization of negativity as *otherness* in and through the dialectic of self-consciousness. See Alexander Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, Gallimard, 1969, p. 8.

¹⁸¹ At this point, it can be argued that Hyppolite dislocates the Hegelian formulation Absolute=Subject, and reformulates it as Absolute=Time. In his interpretation of the Hegelian Absolute subject, Hyppolite highlights that the relation to negativity dislocates the dialectical constitution of the subject. Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.199. Therefore, the Absolute is not grounded upon the self-consciousness; rather there is another relation that simultaneously grounds both subject and the absolute: It is the temporality of Being in Hyppolite's interpretation.

negativity in the *Phenomenology* no longer in terms of the appropriation of its constitutive negativity by the dialectical constitution of subject; but in terms of the temporality of the subject. In order to understand how and in what ways Hyppolite dislocates the dialectics of subjectivity, I will be first discussing his reading of the Master-Slave dialectics. By means of discussing Hyppolite's interpretation of the dialectics in the constitution of Hegelian subjectivity, I aim to bring out alternative reading to the Hegelian notion of "recognition" that is considered to be the founding principle for the contemporary politics of recognition and identity.

In reading the dialectics of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, Hyppolite's first move is to read the emergence of self-consciousness as the manifestation of infinite movement of negativity: "The concept of self-consciousness is indeed "the concept of infinity realizing itself in and by consciousness"; that is, it expresses the movement by means of which each term itself becomes infinite, becomes other while remaining self."¹⁸²

Self-consciousness as desire, always desires to realize itself by means of internalizing what is external to it, and to maintain its permanence by appropriating what it negates. Nonetheless desire, as the manifestation of the "negative power", always defers the unity of self-consciousness. The permanence of desire is the opening of the otherness as an infinite necessity and immanence for the subject. The dilemma is: The failure of self-consciousness to attain its unity, to the knowledge of its own truth is, Hyppolite highlights, the necessary experience of the modern subjectivity and consciousness in the *Phenomenology*.

The experience of being marked by the infinite work of the negative manifested in the inalienability of desire is what retains the consciousness from being

¹⁸² Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.166.

identical to itself infinitely, as well as from grounding itself upon its self-expression and claim for its own identity. What Hegel offers to solve this existential dilemma is the dialectic of self-consciousnesses. In the *Phenomenology*, this dialectic of self-consciousnesses is expressed by the concept of “recognition”:

Self-consciousness, then, comes to exist only by means of an “operation” which poses it in being as it is for itself. And this operation is essentially an operation on and by another self-consciousness. I am a self-consciousness only if I gain for myself recognition from another self-consciousness and if I grant recognition to the other.¹⁸³

Each consciousness desires to be recognized by the other as self-consciousness; the ground of self-consciousness is the mutual recognition of self as an independent self-consciousness. This mutual recognition, Hyppolite highlights, should not be considered as a peaceful process of mutually recognizing each other; rather in Hegel’s account, mutual recognition comes as a result of fight for life and death¹⁸⁴: “The struggle for recognition is a condition of human experience, which Hegel discovered through his study of the conditions of the development of consciousness.”¹⁸⁵

The struggle for recognition, self-consciousness’ struggle to be recognized as an independent self-consciousness by the other self-consciousness, is constitutive for subjectivity, for the life of the subject. In case of not being recognized as consciousness, or being misrecognized, self-consciousness fails to ground itself as self-legislating unity, attain its unity and the truth of consciousness.

¹⁸³ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.166. This idea of “operation” of self-consciousness directed towards the otherness is also repeated in Derrida’s discussion of Georges Bataille’s reading of master-slave dialectics in the *Phenomenology* in “From Restricted to General Economy”, in *Writing and Difference*. Derrida proposes a radical interpretation of Hegelian notion of sovereignty (as the operation of the lordship in the *Phenomenology*) in which the ground of sovereign subjectivity is defined with reference to the experience of “losing itself, losing consciousness, losing the interiority of the self” (Derrida, 1978)

¹⁸⁴ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.168.

¹⁸⁵ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.170.

The mutual recognition of self-consciousnesses is the moment of the emergence of subjectivity in the *Phenomenology*. What Hyppolite puts forward in his interpretation of the emergence of subjectivity in the *Phenomenology* is the ephemeral and the transient character of this emergence, and its being marked by internal contradiction. Hyppolite highlights that in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel describes the internal contradiction that marks the emergence of self-consciousness in terms of the relations of inequality: “Self-consciousness, then experiences the struggle for recognition, but the truth of that experience gives rise to another experience: that of relations of inequality in recognition- the experience of mastery and servitude.”¹⁸⁶

In Hyppolite’s account, mastery and slavery, as two opposing forms of consciousness, represent the moments of determinate negation in the dialectic of consciousness. Master and slave emerge in and through the each other’s act of negation, and subsequently, self-negation.

In Hyppolite’s reading of the master-slave dialectic, the first act of self-negation by means of which two moments of self-consciousness emerge as opposed to each other is the negation of life itself¹⁸⁷. What differentiates master and slave is this very first act of negation of life, i.e. act of risking life by confronting death:

One of the self-consciousnesses rises above animal life; able to confront death and not fearing the loss of its vital substance, it poses abstract being-for-itself as its essence and seems thereby to escape the enslavement of life. This is the noble consciousness, and it is recognized in fact.¹⁸⁸

The first moment of the dialectics between two moments of self-consciousness ends

¹⁸⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.170.

¹⁸⁷ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.171.

¹⁸⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.172.

with their dissociation. While the master prefers self-consciousness to life, the other self-consciousness prefers life to the independency of self-consciousness; and therefore it remains slave consciousness: The slave recognizes the master without being recognized by it.

Conversely, the master is already recognized by the slave and is no longer the abstract concept of consciousness; rather it is the realization of the concept. And by being so, the master does not need to mediate, to negate itself: "The master is master only because only he is recognized by the slave; his autonomy depends on the mediation of another self-consciousness, that of the slave."¹⁸⁹

The dialectic between two moments of self-consciousnesses operates right at this point of their dissociation: Master does not need to mediate its identity as independent self-consciousness; rather it is contented with its self-certainty. Insofar as the autonomy of the master depends on the self-mediating of the slave, his independence is completely relative to the independence of the slave:

The master expresses the tautology of I=I, immediate abstract self-consciousness. The slave expresses the mediation essential to self-consciousness (but which the master fails to notice) and frees himself by consciously carrying out that mediation¹⁹⁰.

The experience of slavery is not the experience of self-certainty insofar as any determinate positivity of self-consciousness is ascribed to it. That is simply why the slave consciousness requires mediation, as the slave strives to attain self-certainty and knowledge of itself through mediation. The slave carries out the mediation that is implicit in the abstract concept of self-consciousness. It is the self-mediating act of

¹⁸⁹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.173.

¹⁹⁰ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.171.

the slave consciousness by means of which self-consciousness grounds itself via relating itself to the other, to the world.

This relating itself to the world is the production of the world when the slave consciousness is concerned. The production of the world is the result of the experience of slave, its necessary involvement with the world: its labor. And contrary to the slave, the master relates both to the slave and to the world by means of the slave's self-mediation: "In relating to the slave who recognizes him, the master also relates through that intermediary to the being of life, to thingness. He relates in a mediated way to both to the slave and to the thing."¹⁹¹

Master negates the world through the intermediary of the slave. What the slave negates is nothing but itself: The slave negates itself, in and through its self-negation, it recognizes itself as slave. The relation of the master to the slave goes through its relation to the life, to the material world by means of which the thingness of the slave is manifested.¹⁹²

The master also relates to the thing through the intermediary of the slave; he can enjoy things, negate them completely, and thus affirm himself completely. For him, the independence of the being of life and the resistance of the world to desire do not exist. The slave, on the contrary, knows only the resistance of that being to desire and cannot, therefore attain the complete negation of this world. His desire encounters the resistance of the real, and he is able only to elaborate things, to work on them¹⁹³.

In and through the act of negating the world by producing it, the slave transcends the relation of inequality and domination between itself and the master. As a result of this

¹⁹¹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.173.

¹⁹² In Hyppolite's reading of the realization of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, the thingness character of the slave consciousness is put forward insofar as this very characteristic of slave is what saves it from the domination of the master.

¹⁹³ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.173.

relation of inequality and domination, one moment in the dialectic of self-consciousness remains dependent to the independence of the other, alien to itself and inessential moment of consciousness:

Recognition is unilateral and partial. The slave acts on himself as the master acts on him: he recognizes himself as a slave. His actions are those of the master; they do not carry their own meaning, but depend on the essential action of the master... The truth of master's self-consciousness thus lies in the inessential consciousness of the slave.¹⁹⁴

Remarkably, the relation of recognition that is generally considered as a fundamental theme of Hegel's dialectics of master and slave, turns out to be a unilateral relation out of which the master gains independence, and the slave remains dependent and alien to itself. Reading the relation of recognition as unilateral and partial, Hyppolite highlights that the master-slave dialectic does not end with the ultimate realization of self-consciousness by means of mutual recognition:

How can slave-consciousness be the truth of self-consciousness when it is alien to itself and when its being life's outside of it? Yet in its development, in its conscious mediation, it genuinely makes independence real. It does so in three moments: *fear, service, and labor*.¹⁹⁵

Concerning the act of transcending the relation of domination and servitude between the master and the slave, Hyppolite's emphasis is not on the dialectical relation of recognition; rather it is on the slave consciousness' movement towards making its independence real.

The self-realization of slave consciousness, that Hyppolite reads as the

¹⁹⁴ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.174.

¹⁹⁵ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.174.

manifestation of the work of the negative, happens in and through slave's relation to life and Being: Its production of the world (its labor) and the fundamental anxiety of its existence: confrontation with death, its finitude.

In the first place, the slave regards the master outside him as his own essence, his own ideal. Insofar as the slave recognizes himself as a slave, he humiliates himself. The master is the self-consciousness that the slave himself is not and liberation is presented to the slave as a form that is outside him.¹⁹⁶

First, the slave produces the world that the master experiences and enjoys; and realization of slave's independence goes through its labor, its act of producing the world. Though being the producer of the world that the master enjoys, the slave still recognizes himself as a slave:

This humiliation (the slave's recognition of his own dependence) and the slave's positing outside himself of an ideal of liberty which he does not find within himself constitute a dialectic that will reappear at the heart of unhappy consciousness when man, as consciousness of nothingness and of the vanity of his life, will stand opposed to divine consciousness. In Hegelian language, the master appears to the slave as truth, but as a truth that is external to him. Yet this truth is also in him, for the slave has known fear, has feared death – the absolute master- and all that was stable within him has shaken."¹⁹⁷

Here, it is remarkable to note that a different relation that opens the slave to its externality is also what enables the slave to be an independent self-consciousness. The truth is external for the slave and the slave is opened to its own externality when it confronts with death. In other words, slave's confrontation with death constitutes the first moment in its attainment of the truth of its self-consciousness.

It is also important that Hyppolite's reading of slave consciousness, attaining

¹⁹⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 175.

¹⁹⁷ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 175.

self-consciousness goes through the experience of dissolution of its subsistence, its interiority and losing of the self. It is the experience of finitude and fear of death by means of which the slave consciousness perceived itself in the totality of its being:

The whole of life appeared before him, and all the specificities of Dasein were dissolved in that essence. For that reason, the slave's consciousness developed as pure being-for-itself but 'such a pure and universal movement, such an absolute dissolution of all subsistence, is the simple essence of self-consciousness, pure negativity, pure being-for-itself, which is in that consciousness itself.'¹⁹⁸

As opposed to the master who did not experience the vicissitudes of existence, the slave experiences the finitude of its existence. In and through the experience of "fundamental anguish" that rises out of the confrontation with death as the ultimate manifestation of absolute negativity, the slave transcends its self-certainty and rises to the level of self-consciousness.

Considering Hyppolite's emphasis on the infinite work of negativity in the movement of consciousness, it can be safely argued that the subjectivity, in Hyppolite's interpretation, emerges by means of two experiences of negativity: First manifested in the labor of the slave, in its act of negating the world, then in the experience of finitude, fundamental anxiety of its existence. By means of these two experiences of negativity, the consciousness moves one step further in its itinerary to reach the Absolute.¹⁹⁹

Hyppolite's reading of the master-slave relation in the *Phenomenology* highlights the internal contradiction of self-consciousness: On the one hand, the slave (as a distinct moment of self-consciousness that strives to realize itself and

¹⁹⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 175.

¹⁹⁹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.177.

finding its truth), in and through its labor and its experience of its own finitude, rises above all determinate forms of its being and transcends itself.

On the other hand, insofar as it remains a part of the dialectical relation, its subjectivity does necessarily refer to being of the master. Hyppolite expresses this contradiction between determinacy and indeterminacy of self-consciousness as follows:

He (the slave) rises above all vanity and poses authentic self-certainty in its sublime grandeur, but at the same time he himself appears as a contingency. By lowering himself he rises, but as soon as he rises and claims to reach that immutable certainty he descends anew. His immutable certainty is in contact with ephemeral life, and the eternity of his thought is a temporal thought of the eternal. Thus the subjectivity of self-consciousness is a double consciousness.²⁰⁰

It can be argued that in Hyppolite's reading, it is the double marking of negativity that constitutes the Hegelian subjectivity: On the one hand, self-consciousness is constituted by the infinite work of the negative insofar as it emerges as a result of transcending all determinate forms of negation.

On the other hand, it is infinitely marked by the materiality that appears in Hyppolite's reading as a limit to its self-transcendence and self-realization. It is the materiality of the world and of otherness that is not appropriated into the dialectic of self-consciousness; rather stands as a source of the dialectical movement of subjectivity:²⁰¹ "At times it places the world in parentheses and rises above all the forms of being that it constitutes; at other times it is itself caught in this world of which it is only a contingent fragment".²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.189.

²⁰¹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.189.

²⁰² Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern

Self-consciousness is the double experience of subjectivity: While striving to transcend its determinate and particular circumstances of being-in-the-world and to reach the universality of the knowledge of the world, its very act of negation goes through the mediation of the world. Therefore, as Hyppolite remarks “self-consciousness is the pain of the consciousness of life which is simultaneously beyond life and in it”.²⁰³

The truth of these two contradictory “poles” of existence is manifested in the unhappy consciousness “insofar as it is the explicit consciousness of the internal contradiction of consciousness”. It can be argued that in Hyppolite’s reading, the emergence of the Hegelian subject is no longer thought with respect to the *dialectical* constitution of the intersubjectivity by means of mutual recognition; rather the emergence of the subject is reflected in the unhappy consciousness – in the experience of subjectivity that is marked by the experience of finitude as well as by the infinite self-transcendence:

Nonetheless, unhappy consciousness, in the strict sense of the term, is the result of the development of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is subjectivity constituted as truth, and this subjectivity must discover its own inadequacy and experience the pain of the self that fails to reach unity with itself.²⁰⁴

Hyppolite’s critical stance towards reading the Hegelian subjectivity in terms of its dialectical constitution is compatible with his rendering of the unhappy consciousness as the fundamental theme of the *Phenomenology*.

It is an unhappy consciousness that suffers from “not having reached the

University Press, 1974, p. 189.

²⁰³ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.189.

²⁰⁴ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.190.

concrete identity of certainty and truth”; and therefore always aims at reaching something beyond itself:

Consciousness of life is a separation from life, an opposing reflection: to become aware of life is to know that true life is absent and to find oneself thrown back on nothingness. This feeling of disparity within the self, of the impossibility of the self-coinciding with itself in reflection, is indeed the basis of subjectivity.²⁰⁵

In Hyppolite’s reading, any reflection of the world implies a split from the world:

Self-consciousness must negate the world and separate itself from the world in order to be able to reflect back on itself. In alienating itself from the world, the self also negates and alienates itself, in other words, the self is also inflicted with the disparity and non-correspondence with itself.

The important point is that Hyppolite interprets the feeling of absolute disparity within the self as the very and only source of the self and the subjectivity.²⁰⁶ Therefore it can be argued that the contradiction that is constitutive of the subjectivity and the subject’s relation to the world finds its ultimate implication in his reading of the unhappy consciousness in the *Phenomenology*.

Unhappy consciousness discovers this contradiction and sees itself as a split consciousness. At times it rises above the contingency of life and reaches authentic and immutable self-certainty; at other times it lowers itself to determinate being and sees itself as a consciousness caught up in Dasein. Changeable, having no essence, “it is the consciousness of its own contradiction.”²⁰⁷

As I have already noted, in Hyppolite’s reading, the Hegelian subjectivity is the

²⁰⁵ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.190-1.

²⁰⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.191.

²⁰⁷ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.194.

unhappy consciousness of its own constitutive contradiction and the infinite movement of negativity marks it: the impossibility of escaping the inherent duality and the split within.²⁰⁸ “It is self-consciousness as consciousness of life and of what exceeds life,” Hyppolite remarks and he proposes to locate the Hegel’s subject into the very oscillation between these two moments: Oscillation between the experience of finitude and the experience of infinite dislocation within self that resists being appropriated by the unity of the self.

This oscillation corresponds to the experience of anxiety that is highlighted in Hyppolite’s reading as constitutive of subjectivity: On the one hand, the self strives to unite itself and realize itself in the truth of its own consciousness (in Reason); while on the other hand the self undergoes the experience of permanent deferral of attaining the unity of self due to the infinite movement of the negativity within the self that manifests itself as internal contradiction and disparity within the self.

I exist only insofar as I am recognized by the other and only insofar as I myself recognize that other. Self-consciousness, thus, is split into its very depths. It stands contraposed to itself, and it experiences itself as another self-consciousness... They stand contraposed to each other in such a way that unhappy consciousness is the continual transition of the self-consciousness to the other.²⁰⁹

In his reading of unhappy consciousness, Hyppolite articulates negativity into the very heart of the self by bringing the internal contradiction of the self to the forefront. The contradiction is not only between self and the other, rather the self internalizes it: In unhappy consciousness, the ultimate contradiction manifests itself as the experience of origin that is manifested as the experience of groundlessness of the

²⁰⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.195.

²⁰⁹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.196.

subject – of originary nothingness.

Unhappy consciousness is the consciousness of contradiction and opposition, due to which the unity of self-consciousness is deferred. It is only with Spirit that opposition entails unity and unity entails opposition; while with unhappy consciousness contradiction finds its ultimate expression:²¹⁰ Being the consciousness of the internal contradiction, unhappy consciousness is the opening of the subject to the ultimate negativity – the nothingness:

By recognizing the duality of extremes, I stand with the nonessential. I am merely nothingness; my essence is transcendent. But that my essence is not in me but posed outside of me necessarily entails an effort on my part to rejoin myself so as to free myself from nonessence.²¹¹

As I have already discussed, the movement of self-consciousness is the unceasing effort of the subject to attain its unity. It is by means of otherness, the irreducible source of the exteriority for the self, that the self confronts with its inessentiality through negating its nothingness. “The I that was to be free has only the consciousness of its nothingness”.²¹² The subject is opened to its nothingness, and it loses its essence and through mediating the negative, the world and the finitude (as the two manifestations of negativity in Hyppolite’s reading), it finally poses its unity at a higher level. This act of negating nothingness is, in Hyppolite’s reading, constitutes the first moment of the experience of liberation, of freedom. It is the emergence of the subjectivity, together with its world, the meaning:

²¹⁰ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.197.

²¹¹ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.197.

²¹² Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.199.

The I grasps itself as finite, and only as finite. But at the same time it is infinite (as it must be if it is genuinely an I), and it aspires to transcend its limit, struggling to rejoin a thesis which is always beyond it. Thus, this whole philosophy of freedom culminates in the irremediable duality of the finite I and the absolute I, in a synthesis which is the ever-renewed effort of the I to attain itself, an effort which, because it is condemned in advance to fail, is merely a false infinite.²¹³

Here, it is important to highlight that, in Hyppolite's reading, this act of transcendence and negating nothingness (by means of the production of the world and the emergence as a subject by means of negating the finitude) is neither a faculty nor a quality of the subject; rather it is "the irremediable duality of the finite I and the absolute I" that emerges out the relation between Being and nothingness: It is the distinct mode of the relation between Being and nothingness that unavoidably forces the I (that Hyppolite frames only as temporal function in the later parts of *Genesis and Structure*) to find its own essence outside of itself and permanently defers its coincidence with that essence.²¹⁴

When self-consciousness fails to coincide with its essence, it moves to relate itself to the nonessential. And it is the moment of liberation of self-consciousness from all determinacy, otherness and contingency. That is also what Hyppolite highlights while defining the experience of freedom in terms of the disarticulation of the relation between self and its essence: "Liberation is *ipso facto* a falling back into the nonessential."²¹⁵ "The whole development of unhappy consciousness expresses the development of subjectivity which renounces itself and which through this self-

²¹³ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.199

²¹⁴ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.208.

²¹⁵ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.198.

negation reestablished an objectivity.”²¹⁶

Hyppolite highlights that subject’s experience of renouncing and surrendering its contingency and its determinate forms is central to the further movement of consciousness:²¹⁷ “Unhappy consciousness must develop to the point of complete self-negation in order that through that negation it may discover its universality.”²¹⁸

In and through its self-negation, unhappy consciousness as the consciousness of internal contradiction, reestablishes the objectivity, the world; but also the relational context between subject and the world. This time, the world is not an in-itself object of consciousness as the object negated in the movement from sense-certainty to perception; but rather it is the world as “universal self-consciousness” by means of which the unity of the subject is finally revealed.

This is a movement of unhappy consciousness towards Reason by means of which “indivisible identity of the subjectivity of the concept and its objectivity” is manifested. It is the identity of the subjective and the objective that is to be achieved at the end of the all movement of the consciousness, and it is also through what Hegel thinks the relational opening of the subject as its temporal opening.

²¹⁶ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p.204.

²¹⁷ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 205. “Specific existence- the subjectivity of self-consciousness cannot for its own self pose itself in its absolute freedom without renouncing that freedom”.

²¹⁸ Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Northwestern University Press, 1974, p. 214.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have proposed a critical discussion of two divergent interpretations of the subject in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

First, I have put forward the certain aspects of the Hegel's subject to which Taylor puts distinct emphasis in his thinking of identity and politics of recognition. My central aim was to complicate the fundamentals of his political thinking of identity and difference, which have set the paradigm utilized in the contemporary political discourse on identity, with his interpretation of the subject in the *Phenomenology*. Though I could be able to bring out the fundamental stakes of Taylor's interpretation of the Hegel's subject, I could have shown the relation between Taylor's reading of the subject and his theory of identity and recognition in a clearer way.

Then I moved to propose a close reading of Jean Hyppolite's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. The fundamental argument underlying my discussion of Hyppolite's interpretation in its contradistinction to that of Taylor's is: The disregard of the question of the relation between identity and the difference is accompanied with an erasure of the question concerning the subject's relation to Time and history from the contemporary thinking of the identity. And this, in turn, has resulted in certain reduction of Hegel's notion of difference to a necessary "medium" of a dialectical relation between self and the other that has ended up with the sublation (*Aufhebung*) of difference into the unity of the subject; and the erasure of the

contradiction from the political analysis.

The theoretical contribution of this thesis is to bring out the disregarded aspects of the relation between self and the other in the *Phenomenology* in the light of Jean Hyppolite's reading of the Hegel's subject.

I claim that Hyppolite's interpretation of the differential structure underlying the subject in the *Phenomenology* in a non-dialectical way may propose a transformative framework for today's political discourse on identity and difference: When difference is no longer appropriated as a necessary medium of unity of the subject and the dialectical development of identity, the otherness is no longer reduced to be a subset of the "same". Hyppolite's reading of the Hegel's subject in terms of its fragmentary structure and of internal contradiction implies irreducible alterity of otherness; as well as the impossibility of essentializing appropriation of the subject into political discourse insofar non-dialectical thinking of the differential structure opens the subject to its own ground, its constitutive self-relation to otherness.

Irreducible otherness and the inalienable experience of difference that disables any fixed and essential notion of identity, also implies a political reconsideration of the ethical question of responsibility towards otherness. And I believe that such reconsideration of the question of subject and the otherness brings a transformative look in contemporary debates on democratization in complex societies, where the issues of democracy are framed as the issues of representation of difference and contestation, if not competition, among different identity groups.

This in turn may enable us to consider the Hegelian notion of intersubjectivity beyond its predominant appropriation as the dialectics between two selves; but rather as the new experience of the "common"- not a community in which the marks of experience of difference are replaced by the representations of difference, but a

community where the absolute irreducibility of otherness is infinitely at stake.

Hyppolite's distinct emphasis on the infinite work of the negative and internal contradiction that underlies the self in Hegel's *Phenomenology* does not only implies an understanding of the subject in terms of its unitary relation with the world; but also enables us to uncover the contradictory structure of the experience of the world. All these discussions are rooted in Hyppolite's interpretation of the Hegelian notion of "negation" and "negativity". And yet, due to the limits of this thesis, I could not discuss Hyppolite's explication of these Hegelian notions.

In this thesis, I could only discuss the articulation of negativity into Hegel's subject as internal contradiction and irreducible experience of difference. And yet, it is very important to note that the negativity in Hegel's philosophy also ground the "production" (negation/negating activity) of the world. Brining two different articulations of negativity, subjectivity and production, into a more comprehensive discussion of the critiques of Hegel's philosophy is a task that I aim at pursuing in my further researches.

Last, the ultimate weakness of this thesis is not being able to trace all these political questions and concerns of mine back to Hegel's own works. In the light of two interpretations of the Hegel's subjectivity, I have gained only certain access to read Hegel's own works. Reading Hegel's own works and handling a broader research on the Hegelian literature (since any exhaustive research on literature seems ultimately impossible when the matter is Hegel's philosophy) in my future studies, I believe, would provide an opportunity to develop my discussions in this thesis in a more rigorous manner.

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