

**Dieter Henrich, *Das Andere seiner selbst. Die Logik der Entwicklung Hegels von Schellings Identitätssystem zur Theorie des absoluten Geistes (Jena 1801-1805)*, Niklas Jaenecke (ed.), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 2026, pp. 252, € 39.00, ISBN 9783465046615**

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“Das Absolute ist Geist. Und es ist Geist insofern, als es sich in seinem Anderen zu sich selbst verhält” (p. 226).

In *Das Andere seiner selbst*, Dieter Henrich offers a masterful reconstruction whose guiding ambition is to illuminate the genetic and conceptual process by which Hegel’s system takes shape in the Jena years through the progressive reconfiguration of identity and otherness that finds its culmination in the notion of *Geist*.

This work is structured in two major parts. The first is devoted to the emergence and immanent articulation of the *Begriffsform* and its relation to the *Systemform* in Hegel’s thought. Then Henrich examines the theoretical horizon of the Jena constellation and the tensions underlying Schelling’s *Identitätsphilosophie*, showing how, from within them, the conditions arise under which the Hegelian *Begriffsform* becomes capable of sustaining a form of self-relation adequate to speculative thinking. The second part shows how Hegel, moving from Schelling’s *Identitätsphilosophie*, progressively recasts the Schellingian notion of the Absolute conceived as immediate identity through determinations in which the finite is posited, negated, and driven to its self-sublation. This trajectory leads from the logic of finitude to the dialectical genesis of absolute spirit.

*Das Andere seiner selbst* is neither a monograph in the conventional sense nor a linear exposition of doctrines, but the edited presentation of a highly stratified manuscript whose composition extends across several phases and whose final form emerges from the conjunction of distinct textual layers.

The work appeared posthumously in 2026, three years after Henrich's death, with a preface by Manfred Frank.

At the very outset of the work, Henrich contends that Hegel's philosophy cannot be grasped if one begins from the formulas through which it has most often been transmitted. The point is not simply that such formulas remain overly general, but that the conceptual movement underlying them must be retrieved: they are to be understood as *Résuméformeln*. The question, accordingly, lies not in how Hegel's system in its final form is to be read, but in disclosing the conceptual movement through which it is brought forth.

Henrich therefore accords a pivotal role to the relation between *Begriffsform* and *Systemform*, excluding any model in which the former is subordinated to the realization of a predetermined *Systemform*. This possibility is precluded by the fact that systematic form arises only through speculative thinking, namely from the inner logic and dialectical unfolding of the *Begriffsform*, and cannot be grounded in any external foundation.

Henrich accordingly rejects the assumption that transformations within the system were driven primarily by reflection upon its architectonic organization.

For this reason, the priority of the *Begriffsform* over the *Systemform* does not merely indicate a temporal sequence, but articulates the claim that the dynamic of Hegel's dialectic – even in its *Prinzipform*, in the determination of the Absolute – must be sought in the unfolding of conceptual form. The inquiry must therefore concern not a synoptic account of the system as a finished edifice, but the formal articulation through which conceptual development attains systematic configuration. In the *Begriffsform* an immanent monism is already at work – not imposed from without, but constitutive of its very structure – and with it the problem of thinking the unity of the Absolute with the finite together with the differentiation of the finite within the Absolute. The first part culminates in a reconstruction of the Jena constellation, where the theoretical tensions surrounding Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie* define the horizon within which Hegel's project takes shape.

The second part opens with the section *Die Identitätsphilosophie als Theorie von Entwicklung und Erkennen*, in which Henrich examines Schelling's *Identitätsphilosophie*: absolute identity is

conceived through its constitutive relation to its internal differentiation, while *Erkennen* is understood as a moment of the Absolute's relation to itself.

The transition reconstructed by Henrich from Schelling to Hegel does not arise from a repudiation of identity, but from a rearticulation of the conceptual form in which identity is to be thought. Crucial to Schelling's position is not simply the thesis of absolute identity, but the articulation of identity as *Sich-selbst-Gleichheit*. Henrich emphasizes that this expression becomes necessary once identity is interpreted as the *Relationalität* of an otherwise relationless Absolute. This implies that absolute identity must be thought in its necessary relation to *Duplizität* without relinquishing its pure *Sich-selbst-Gleichheit*. Accordingly, everything finite is to be understood and constructed as "Identität in der Duplizität" (p. 125).

The speculative relevance of the Schellingian notion of identity lies in the fact that its expression in the formula  $A = A$ , which already entails a doubling of terms, is irreducible to mere tautology: the necessity of difference emerges from the self-articulation of identity itself – in Henrich's interpretation, without recourse to a second principle of the kind invoked by Fichte.

Nevertheless, for Schelling this relational articulation does not yield a dialectic of negativity. Difference remains ultimately grounded in the primacy of absolute identity, whereas Hegel radicalizes this intrinsic *Duplizität* into a speculative movement in which identity can no longer be sustained as immediate *Sich-selbst-Gleichheit*, but only through a negativity that takes the form of relation to its other. With this reconfiguration of *Identität* and *Duplizität*, Hegel lays the conceptual basis for the theory of absolute spirit.

From this point onward, Henrich traces Hegel's path from finitude to the notion of *Geist*: the focus is no longer merely the articulation of identity as such, but its bearing on the possibility of determining the finite, which does not present itself as a domain of self-subsistent entities, but is given only where what appears as self-subsistent is at the same time incapable of sustaining itself as such. To be finite is not merely to be bounded, but to subsist in a relation in which whatever is cannot remain simply by itself.

The first moment of this analysis corresponds to what Henrich reconstructs as the *Selbstständigkeit und Vernichtung des*

*Endlichen*. The finite initially presents itself as self-subsistent, yet this claim proves intrinsically unstable. As finite, it stands in relation to what confronts it as its counterpart and cannot maintain an unrestricted independence either with respect to this counterpart or to the Absolute from which its self-subsistence derives. Its claim to self-subsistence therefore already points beyond itself, so that whatever appears as self-subsistent is at once posited and revealed as incapable of absolute self-subsistence. Its determinacy consists precisely in this reference beyond itself, for the finite can be determined only through what it is not.

This gives rise to the movement Henrich characterizes as the *Selbstaufhebung des Endlichen*. The finite does not merely encounter negation; rather, the destruction of its self-subsistence must be understood as its own self-sublation. What initially appeared as the annihilation of the finite by the Absolute is now grasped as a movement internal to finitude itself. The finite is no longer simply confronted with a limit; the negativity through which it is annulled proves to belong to its very mode of being. What appears as limitation thus reveals itself as an instability inherent in finitude itself, one through which it cannot maintain itself in simple self-identity. The negative relation through which the finite is annulled is ultimately disclosed as the finite's own relation to itself.

Henrich's analysis takes a major turn when the other to which the finite is related is no longer thought as merely external. The finite is its own other. It refers beyond itself in such a way that what stands over against it cannot be separated from the way in which it is determined. The formula "das Andere seiner selbst" crystallizes this insight: the finite is what it is only inasmuch as, in relating to an other, it encounters that other as inseparable from itself.

From this configuration, no external transition is required: once the finite is understood as the other of itself, the opposition between self-relation and relation to the other can no longer persist in its previous form.

The speculative progression developed through the preceding determinations finds its subsequent articulation in the notion of *Geist*. The relation to the other, which at the level of the finite appeared as that through which self-coincidence could not be sustained, no longer presents itself as limitation but as the very possibility of self-relation. It is no longer where

the finite loses itself, but where a different form of self-relation first becomes thinkable: the impossibility of remaining with itself now proves to be the very condition under which being with itself can be thought at all.

The central shift lies not simply in the presence of a relation, but in the transformation of its logical form. Relation to the other and relation to oneself no longer stand over against one another as distinct or opposed determinations, nor are they mediated by a third term that would unify them from without. Rather, they belong together in such a way that neither can be thought independently of the other. Self-relation does not precede relation to the other, nor is the latter subsequently integrated into it. Instead, self-relation is actual only insofar as it is itself a relation to what is other, and this relation to the other is nothing other than the relation to itself.

In this sense, *Geist* is not to be read as a substance underlying its relations, nor as a unity that would subsequently include difference within itself. It designates a form in which being with itself is nothing other than this relation. The formula *Bei-sich-sein in seinem Anderen* names precisely this configuration: a being with itself that is not given prior to relation, but only in and through it. To be with itself is to relate to itself in such a way that this relation is mediated through what is other, and that this other is not external to it, but is such that, in relating to it, the relation is a relation to itself.

This structure is to be understood as one of *Selbstsetzung* – unfolding as *Selbstaufhebung* –, not an external act, but the articulation of a relation in which what is posited and what posits cannot be separated. In relating to what is other, *Geist* posits itself as related to an other and in doing so posits itself as the other of itself. The other is not merely that to which it relates; it is that in which this relation to itself takes place. Only in this sense is relation to the other at once relation to itself.

The instability arising at the level of the finite now shows itself as the condition under which this form of self-relation becomes possible. The finite, as *das Andere seiner selbst*, already exhibits a form in which something is related to itself through what is other, while remaining an incomplete configuration of this structure. Only with *Geist* does this relation become explicit as such: that being with itself is nothing other than self-relation in and through what is other.

Such self-relation comes into view only through the rearticulation of the forms in which identity and finitude were previously determined: essential is not that the opposition between self and other is overcome, but that it no longer holds in the same way. The other does not disappear; it is preserved as a moment belonging to the very form in which self-relation is accomplished.

The notion of *Geist* thus marks not a resolution of the opposition, but a displacement of the very form in which it can be posited. Being with itself is no longer to be thought as immediate identity, but only as a relation that preserves within itself the difference through which it is articulated. Relation to the other no longer stands opposed to self-relation, but belongs to the very possibility of being with itself at all. *Geist* is nothing other than this relation: one whose development culminates in *Absolute Geist*, where being with itself in its other attains its fullest realization.

The distinctive force of Henrich's study is, first of all, the exceptional level at which historical reconstruction and philosophical analysis are made to intertwine. The work does not treat the history of philosophy as a mere succession of positions, nor does it extract from it a set of theses to be evaluated independently of their genesis. Rather, historical knowledge and theoretical insight are brought into a relation of mutual implication. A methodological orientation of this kind was formulated with particular clarity by Vittorio Hösle in *Il sistema di Hegel*, where he argued that "the idea of a sharp separation between historical and systematic work is inadequate to the essence of philosophy" (p. 62). From this perspective, the separation – widely operative in philosophical literature – between the history of philosophy and theoretical or systematic inquiry reveals itself as largely artificial and, in many respects, misleading: their rigid dissociation risks obscuring precisely what calls for philosophical understanding.

Henrich's achievement consists precisely in having carried out this integration at the highest level. The development from Schelling to Hegel is thus not presented as a sequence of doctrines, but as a transformation of conceptual structures whose necessity becomes intelligible only through the reconstruction of their internal tensions. This work offers one of the most compelling accounts of the genesis of Hegelian dialectic: not as a method imposed upon content, nor as a

retrospective logical schema, but as the immanent articulation of forms in which identity, finitude and relation are progressively reconfigured.

It is precisely at this point, however, that a difficulty emerges within Henrich's reconstruction: he locates the emergence of negation in Hegel's system by tracing its origin to a reconfiguration of Schelling's philosophy of identity, which, in his view, would mark a strong discontinuity with Fichte's system. Yet this reconstruction does not seem to do full justice to the Fichtean dialectic operating in the transition from the first to the second principle of the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*.

In Fichte's second principle, the Not-I emerges from the internal development of the same act of self-positing (*Selbstsetzung*) through which the I posits itself in the first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, that is, through a dialectical movement continuous with that very act. Negation is thus not to be regarded as external to this positing but as arising from its internal unfolding and necessity – a logic that cannot be straightforwardly opposed to the Hegelian and instead shows traces of substantial continuity with it: this becomes visible in the structural proximity between Fichte's dialectic of *Selbstsetzung* and Hegel's *Selbstaufhebung*, and consequently between Fichte's Not-I and Hegel's *das Andere seiner selbst*. In both cases, alterity is not simply encountered as an external limit but emerges from within the movement through which self-relation is constituted.

A further consideration concerns the mediating role of Schelling. While Henrich convincingly reconstructs the emergence of Hegelian dialectic from the internal tensions of the philosophy of identity, greater emphasis might have been placed on the extent to which Schelling's own position develops central Fichtean motifs. The transition from Fichte to Hegel thus appears less as a radical break than as a process involving, among other factors, the transformation of structures already at work within the *Wissenschaftslehre* – a process in which Schelling plays a fundamental mediating role. Despite those interpretive reservations, the work stands as a significant contribution to scholarship on German Idealism.

## **Bibliography**

Vittorio Hösle, *Il sistema di Hegel*, La scuola di Pitagora, Napoli  
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## **Useful Links**

<https://www.klostermann.de/Henrich-Dieter-Das-Andere-seiner-selbst>