

**HEGEL'S DOCTRINE OF REFLECTION:
BEING A PARAPHRASE AND A
COMMENTARY INTERPOLATED
INTO THE TEXT OF THE SECOND VOLUME
OF HEGEL'S LARGER LOGIC, TREATING
OF "ESSENCE"**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649600748

Hegel's Doctrine of Reflection: Being a Paraphrase and a Commentary Interpolated into the Text of the Second Volume of Hegel's Larger Logic, Treating Of "Essence" by William T. Harris

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Cover @ 2017

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WILLIAM T. HARRIS

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BY
WILLIAM T. HARRIS,
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NEW YORK:
D APPLETON AND COMPANY,
1, 3, AND 5 BOND STREET.
1881.

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TO
JAMES S. GARLAND,
WITH WHOSE KIND ASSISTANCE THIS WORK
HAS BEEN COMPLETED,

Je dédicte

THESE PAGES.

WILLIAM T. HARRIS.

TO THE READER.

This translation and paraphrase of the second volume of Hegel's larger *Logic* is herewith submitted to a small circle of students who sympathize with an attempt to interpret in English the subtle and fruitful thoughts of Hegel on the subject of the categories of Reflection—showing their genesis from the experience which the mind makes of the transitoriness of the world of sense-objects, and showing, at the same time, the limits of the validity of those categories. It is by no means a complete elaboration of the whole book—some parts being less than a fluent translation, and lacking commentary altogether, while others are believed to be fairly adequate. The translator's commentary is included in parentheses. The work was begun and continued under the auspices of the "Kant Club" of St. Louis, Missouri, and has been used as a hand-book by that club. The translator hopes to add, from time to time, more commentary to this volume, and has promised to write for it an introduction which will attempt to deduce the point of view for "Essence," from that of "Being," which Hegel treats in the first volume. A paraphrase of the third volume, treating of the Syllogism, Teleology in Nature, and the absolute Ideal of the World or the Personality of the Absolute—which Hegel discusses under the subjects of "Subjectivität," "Objectivität," and "Idee"—is in progress, and may be given to the same public that this volume reaches.

The reader will find it profitable to study these pages in connection with the exposition of "Essence" given in the smaller *Logic* of the *Encyclopædia* of Hegel, as found in the elegant and exact rendering of Mr. Wallace of Oxford University.

It is needless to say that this book will in no wise supply the place of a continuation of the famous "Secret of Hegel" by Dr. Stirling, which gives a translation of, and an exhaustive commentary on, the greater part of the first volume of the larger *Logic*. This paraphrase undertakes a sort of auxiliary work that will be unnecessary when we receive the continuation of that work from its author.

May 1, 1881.

ESSENCE.

The truth (*i. e.*, the outcome) of being is essence.

Being is the immediate (*i. e.* the first phase of things), since knowing ought to recognize the true, that which being is in and for itself, it does not stop with the first phase of things and its determinations (its belongings), but it transcends this with the assumption that behind this first phase (being) there is something else, something deeper than being, that which constitutes the background, the truth of being. This investigation is a process of mediating the knowing; for it does not find essence as something direct, a first phase, but it begins with something else, with being as a first phase, and has a preliminary way or road to travel, namely, to proceed beyond being, or rather to descend into it. First, upon collecting itself, returning within itself (*Erinnern*, re-collecting itself) from immediate being (first phase of things)—through this mediation, it finds essence. Language has in the verb *Seyn* (being) adopted for the past tense the word *gewesen* (been); (*Wesen* denotes essence); for *Wesen* (essence) is past being, but a timeless past.

This movement, represented as the progress of the activity of knowing, may appear as an activity that is merely subjective, external to being as such, and in no wise concerning its real nature; but this beginning from being, and this progress which cancels the same and arrives at essence as a mediated knowing, is an activity appertaining to being itself. It has been already demonstrated (in the first book of this logic) that it (being) re-collects itself (*erinnert*), and, through this return into itself, becomes essence. (Every form of being—every category thereof—presents some form of relation to the without or the beyond, which, when traced out, as it has been done by the author in Volume I., relates back to the beginning, thus resulting on every hand in the category of self-relation, which is essence.)

If, therefore, the absolute was defined on a former occasion as being (*Seyn*), now it is to be defined as essence. The scientific knowing (*Erkennen*) cannot on any account remain at the standpoint of the multiplicity of existences (the first phase of particular being,

Daseyn), nor any more at the standpoint of being (pure abstract being); it is impressed with the conviction that this pure being, the negation of everything finite, presupposes (implies) an activity of re-collection, which has, by abstraction, ascended from immediate particular existence to pure being. Being by this process has come to be defined as essence, as such a being from which everything definite and finite has been abstracted (removed by negation). Thus this being is a somewhat devoid of determination (particularity), a simple unity, from which everything definite has been removed by an external process (*i. e.*, by the abstract reflection of the thinker); to this unity, definiteness or particularity was already something foreign (external), and it remains as something standing over against it after this act of abstraction; for it has not been annulled absolutely, but only in relation to this unity (*i. e.*, the act of reflection has not discovered the negatoriness in particular things—that is, their transitory nature—but in this analytic process of arriving at pure being it arbitrarily separates the determinations from being as a substrate, and holds them apart). It has already been mentioned above that if the pure essence is defined as the including comprehension of all realities (*Uebegriff aller Realitäten*), these realities underlie the nature of the determinateness and of the abstracting reflection, and this including comprehension reduces them to an empty simplicity. Essence is, according to this view, only a product, an artificial result. This external negation, which is abstraction, merely removes the determinateness of being from it, and what remains is essence; it merely places them somewhere else, and leaves them existing as before. According to such a view, essence would be neither in itself nor for itself (*i. e.*, neither an independent being nor a totality, but merely a phase of something else, or, what is worse, an arbitrary abstraction); it would depend on another—*i. e.*, on external, abstracting reflection; and it would be for another, namely, for the abstraction, and, besides this, for the particular existence which had been separated from it, and which remained over against it. Taken in this sense essence is, therefore, a dead, empty abstraction from all determinations.

Essence, however, as we find it here (as a result of the discussion of the categories of being), is what it is, not through an external act of negation (abstraction), but through its own negativity, the infinite movement of being (“infinite:” that is returning into itself, the categories of being have all been traced through relations to others, back into relations to themselves. Dependence always implies self-de-

pendence, which is independence; because that which depends has its being in another, and really depends on its own being in this other). It is being in and for itself (independent and total); absolute being in itself, since it is indifferent towards all determinateness of being (*i. e.*, towards all that belongs to the first phases of things), all other-being (dependence on others), and relation to another, is entirely annulled; it is, however, not merely this being in itself, for as such it would be only the abstraction of the pure essence; but it is likewise essentially being for itself (*i. e.*, a being which realizes itself in others dependent upon it—others which manifest it), it is itself the negative activity which performs for itself this cancelling of the other-being, dependence upon others, and the characteristics which it receives through others.

Essence as the perfect return of being into itself (*i. e.*, the first phase of things traced out through its relations into a totality, so that the whole stands in self-relation, is essence) is, at first, undefined, for the determinateness of being are cancelled in it; it contains them in itself—but not in a form in which they are explicitly stated. Absolute essence, in this simplicity, has no particularity (*Daseyn*). But it must pass over into particularity (*i. e.*, a correct apprehension of it will find particularity belonging to it); for it is being in and for itself—that is to say, it distinguishes the determinations which it contains in itself (for this is an active process whose negative relation to itself is an act of distinguishing), since it is a repulsion of itself from itself, or indifference towards itself, negative relation to itself, it posits itself in self-opposition, and is only infinite being for itself in so far as it is the unity of itself with this its difference. Essence is the absolute unity of Being within and for itself; its act of determining remains, therefore, wholly within this unity, and, therefore, is not a BECOMING, nor a TRANSITION, nor are its determinations something other (alien, foreign), nor are its relations directed to another; they are independent—but only thus while they are in their unity with each other. Since essence is in its first aspect simple negativity, the determinateness which it contains only in itself, in its sphere, is to be stated so as to give it its particularity, and its being for itself (its realization).

Essence is, in the entire compass of logic (that is, in relation to the other spheres), the same that quantity was in the sphere of being (quantity as related to quality and to mode). That is to say, essence is absolute indifference toward limits. Quantity is this indifference in its immediateness or first phase, and the limit as regards it is an