

Introduction

HEGEL ARGUES that our ability to relate to ourselves as independent centers of experience and action depends upon the existence of enduring channels of mutual recognition between ourselves and other selves. Our basic capacity to live in a way that *actively recognizes* others *as* independent centers of experience and action in their own right, and our corresponding capacity to relate to these independent others *as actively recognizing us* in turn, are for Hegel indispensable conditions for our having the kinds of self-identities we have as selves.

An essential part of my concern in this book is to articulate, elaborate, and defend this thesis concerning the centrality of mutual recognition for the constitution of human selfhood. I am especially concerned to show that, for Hegel, this fundamental “intersubjectivity” at the core of human existence permeates all dimensions of our experience, and thus forms the basic element, not only of our relationship to our own identities as selves, but of our relation to the world as well. I argue that the concrete world, as we experience and engage with it in our everyday lives, is permeated through and through by our involvement in enduring practices of intersubjective recognition, and so to understand the world in its concreteness requires an understanding of these practices whereby we as selves come to exist for one another *as selves*. Thus, I will be arguing that many of the aspects of our relationship to ourselves and to the world that we usually take to be immediate and thus independent of our relations to other selves—our experience of our own bodies, our experience of the feelings, desires, and ethical compulsions that move us to act, our direct perceptual encounter with concrete objects in the world, indeed our very capacity to experience objects *as* objects in the first place—are on Hegel’s account implicitly mediated on all sides by our concrete, practical involvements in intersubjective recognition. This, as I argue in the first chapter, is one of the central implications of Hegel’s thesis concerning the primacy of “spirit,” which, in its famous formulation as the “I that is ‘We,’ and the ‘We’ that is

T” (*PbS* M177, W/C127), names nothing other than the actuality of intersubjective existence as such.

In exploring the manner in which relations of intersubjective recognition structure our self-identities and our relations to the world, I am at once concerned to develop an extended Hegelian account of a very specific intersubjective institution, an institution that arises out of what is arguably the most foundational, comprehensive—and, from a developmental perspective, the most vital—form of recognition in which we as humans engage: namely, our recognition of other selves *as family*, or, we might say, as our proper *relatives*, as those particular individuals with whom our particular identities as selves and as agents are most thoroughly and inextricably bound up. Rather than conceiving of the institution of the family as answering primarily to natural, reproductive, or economic needs, I follow Hegel in conceiving of it as rooted most essentially in an original and distinctive experience of mutual recognition, an experience that answers above all to existential needs that are constitutive of us in our ongoing project of affirming and maintaining our identities as selves in the face of a natural world that is indifferent to us.

In elaborating Hegel’s view, I come to argue that in the familial sphere there is a unique way in which our self-identities become thoroughly—and, to a large extent, unconsciously—wedded to the self-identities of particular other selves. Through intimate familiarity, we come to internalize the particular perspectives of these other selves, along with their particular manner of interacting with us and with the world, into our most basic ways of relating to ourselves as selves and agents, such that we implicitly carry these others around with us in all of our dealings. These particular others are *thereby* affirmed and recognized as having an incomparable status in our lives, constituting for us an indispensable, local nexus of coexistence in terms of which we come to make sense of ourselves and the world at large. At the same time, we experience these others as those particular selves who have likewise internalized *us* in this thoroughgoing manner, such that we find ourselves uniquely reflected and recognized in *their* ways of being, and we experience our own incomparable status and our own indispensability in and through them.

On Hegel’s account, then, we thus encounter the world, not simply as singular selves existing in separation from all others selves, but essentially as “co-selves” participating in a localized, tightly knit intersubjective network. We encounter the world, not just as individual “I’s,” but just as primordially as a familial “we.” Whether or not this profound way of being experientially intertwined with particular others is limited to relationships we would typically call familial, it seems clear that it is in the familial sphere above all that it finds its proper home, and so the study of the family thus becomes, in Hegel’s philosophy, a crucial part of the study of the underpinnings of self-identity and experience generally.

To get some further perspective on the underlying philosophical import of Hegel's account of the family, a fruitful comparison can be made with Hegel's well-known account of the form of recognition at play in the master/slave relationship. On the one hand, Hegel's account of the master/slave relationship articulates a particular, historically specific social institution, and so this account might be read as an attempt to make explicit the underlying logic and tensions at work in this specific institution.¹ On the other hand, however, this account also concerns constitutive existential or ontological issues with which *all* selves, qua selves, must reckon, and from this perspective the particular form of recognition that underlies the master/slave relation serves to make intelligible certain *universal and necessary potentialities of our existence as intersubjective beings*.² For instance, on Hegel's account the master/slave relation arises necessarily out of the self's constitutive need to affirm its absolute independence in the face of selves who would contest it, and Hegel argues that it is the self's finite "thingliness"—that is, its living body—that leaves it vulnerable to the contesting, objectifying gaze of the other in the first place (*PhS* M186–87, W/C129–31). It seems that, insofar as our bodily externality commits us to the realm of "being-for-others," and insofar as our actual independence is bound up with the recognition of other selves, we can never entirely have done with the basic possibilities of domination and submission that lie at the heart of the master/slave relation. Though we as modern readers may have never been pure masters or pure slaves in the course of our lives, and though we may be involved in other, more sophisticated forms of recognition that are not reducible to mere domination/submission relations, assuming the stance of the master or slave in certain limited ways—in relation to our spouses, our parents or children, our bosses or employees, our teachers or students—seems to be an original, irreducible possibility that is always on the horizon for us. One need only consider the various ways in which Hegel's analysis of the master/slave dynamic has been taken up by Marxists, existentialists, feminists, and psychoanalysts to see how thoroughly versatile this dynamic is for interpreting wide ranges of human experience beyond the "purer" and more blatant historical cases of outright human enslavement.³

We should note, too, that on Hegel's account the master/slave relationship concerns, not only on the self's relationship to itself, to its own corporeity, and to other selves, but also its relation to the world generally. The slave experiences himself as a contingent and marginal perspective in comparison to his master, whom the slave recognizes as the central and essential perspective. But, on Hegel's account, the master is, for the slave, the absolute perspective in relation to which *all* things get their meaning, and so, in conjunction with this intersubjective system of recognition, the slave comes to experience the *world in general*, not as an open field of opportunities to express his own individual freedom and agency, but rather as a fundamentally constricting and

alienating prison in which the master's desires alone dictate what matters. That is, his predominant and general experience of the world as alienating, as something that does not reflect or "recognize" his own independent initiatives as an agent, is systematically correlated to his recognition of another self as his absolute master.⁴ Thus, we have here a total "self-other-world" system, and if the master/slave dynamic is, as I suggested, a universal and necessary potentiality of our *intersubjective* being, this dynamic is, at once, a universal and necessary potentiality of our *being in relation to the world* as well.

I would suggest that the *familial* form of intersubjective recognition has a similar status in Hegel's thought, and that it ought to be similarly understood as an original and relatively autonomous self-other-world system. On the one hand, Hegel's account of the family articulates a particular kind of relationship that is typical of certain historical instantiations of family life. For instance, his account of the family in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is meant to shed philosophical light on the form of family life that he takes to be typical of an early period of the Ancient Greek world, whereas in the *Philosophy of Right* he discusses a more modern, nuclear form of family that is similar in its basic structure to the form that has been typical of countries in the modern Western world. But, on the other hand, the underlying logic of recognition that is at work in these accounts (and, part of my goal in Part II will be to show that this underlying logic is essentially the same in both accounts, despite some of the important differences in some of their details) is structured in terms of certain basic existential or ontological issues that concern us all as intersubjective beings confronted with a world.⁵ "Being in a family" is, at this level, meant to be conceived as a universal and necessary way in which human selves take up and negotiate these more foundational issues. Just as we are alive to domination and submission as basic potentialities of our existence as selves, so too are the distinctive forms of intersubjective recognition that are characteristic of the familial sphere as Hegel describes it posited as original, irreducible potentialities of relating to self, other, and world that are always on the horizon for us.

The underlying ontological issues that are being engaged in the master/slave relation are fairly obvious and familiar: as I suggested, they have to do with the self's basic attempt to affirm its own independence in the face of its vulnerability to other selves who would contest it. Determining the underlying issues at stake in family life is a little more difficult. It takes some interpretative work both to uncover what familial recognition consists in on Hegel's account, and to make intelligible how this distinctive form of recognition uniquely engages certain foundational issues that structure our basic ways of relating to our own self-identities, to other selves, and to the world generally. One of the main tasks of this book is to undertake this interpretative work. I will demonstrate thereby that for Hegel the question of the meaning of "being in a family" is not, as it might seem at the outset, a merely

marginal issue for philosophy, and one that is independent of Hegel's most basic metaphysical concerns. Rather, genuinely understanding what it is to be in a family involves uncovering basic and indispensable ways in which the human self is—in the very act of maintaining the familial sphere—thoroughly embroiled in responding to such ontological concerns, concerns, for instance, having to do with the question of what it is to be a self, with what it means to be in relation to others, with how the individual self stands in relation to the all-encompassing “spirit” that gives meaning and purpose to all things, with how the self stands in relation to a natural world that is essentially indifferent to it, etc. In the end, we cannot separate our concrete involvements in family life from our being at grips with such core questions, a responsiveness to which is one of our most distinguishing characteristics as self-conscious beings.

We will see that, on Hegel's account, one of the core existential projects of the family is to overcome the alienation and estrangement that we experience in the face of nature—whether nature in the form of our own bodies and desires, or in the form of the given, external world generally. Hegel takes nature to be a domain that is essentially indifferent to our self-determined projects and self-identities, a domain that is plagued through and through with externality, the contingency of existence, and a lack of conscious purpose and meaningful unity. Since for Hegel our experience of all things (our bodies included) is, as I suggested, thoroughly mediated by our involvement in practices of intersubjective recognition, part of what is at stake in the practice of familial recognition is not just the formation of selfhood, but also the generation of a meaningful and coherent experiential world for its members, a human world that is not simply governed by the externality and pointlessness of unconscious natural events and processes. Insofar as they live in recognition of one another as family, family members thus give rise to an enduring and coherent practical environment for themselves, a local space of interaction and coexistence—as embodied, for instance, in the concrete space of a shared household—that they each come to experience as their own familiar and proper *home*. Thereby, the individual who is appropriately recognized by familial others is afforded the possibility of developing a basic and enduring sense of belonging, of having a recognized, stable, and meaningful place in the world; for she is able to experience the external world, through her family members' eyes, not simply as alien—as in the case of the slave before his master—but as fundamentally inclusive of her, as having her own particular identity and agency already ingrained within its texture. I will show that this basic, existential experience of being at home, as uniquely generated by distinctively familial practices of recognition, functions for Hegel as an original modality of our experience of the world generally, a modality that is more basic than our more detached, “objective” experience of the world as a set of external objects standing out before us.

To say that the institution of the family is most essentially rooted in the self's constitutive project of overcoming ontological alienation is not at all to deny the fact that family life itself can and often does generate its own forms of alienation and dislocation. Various twentieth-century schools of psychotherapy—for instance, the psychoanalytic, existentialist, and family therapy schools, among others—have clearly demonstrated that problematic family relations are a key factor in the etiology of many of the most common and debilitating mental and emotional illnesses that we as humans develop, thus suggesting that family life can also be the site of tragic *failures of recognition* which, rather than promoting a secure sense of self-identity and an overcoming of ontological alienation, can have the effect of making it impossible for members to develop healthy ways of relating to themselves, others, and the world. From the perspective of Hegel's account of the family, it seems that it is precisely *because* familial forms of intersubjective recognition are so crucial in the formation and maintenance of human self-identity, and *because* they are crucial for our basic existential project of being at home in the world, that such conflicts and failures of recognition within the family can come to have such a devastating impact on our very identities as selves and as agents. Exploring the ontological significance of family life in the way I have suggested above could thus help us to understand, not only the nature of the *ideal* family in which familial forms of recognition are *successful* in creating a sense of ontological security for its members, but also the distinctive, metaphysical significance of the *failed* or “dysfunctional” family in which members *lay claim* to distinctively familial forms of recognition from one another but, for one reason or another, fail to have these claims honored. Thus, in the course of this book I will also discuss some of the ways in which Hegel's account of the nature and significance of family life intersects with the sorts of accounts of family life that we find in the schools of psychotherapy mentioned, and I will be suggesting that some of the insights into dysfunctional forms of familial recognition that these schools uncover can help us to extend and explore some of the implications of Hegel's own account of the family.

On Hegel's account, our recognition of others as family, and our recognition of ourselves as fundamentally related to these others, is not itself the product of conscious, reflective insight. Rather, we *immediately find ourselves* immersed in familial forms of recognition, and *find* our identities and our experiential horizons *already* informed by them, before we are in a position to take it upon ourselves to reflect upon them as such. It is not that it is impossible for individuals to reflect on, consciously own up to, or voluntarily transform their family bonds and their ways of identifying with them. Hegel's point is just that this sort of reflective distance, this self-conscious relation to the nature and import of one's involvements, is not originally *constitutive* of the distinctive sorts of experiential bonds that allow other selves to exist for us *as family* in the first place. If we were fully conscious of, and reflectively dis-

tanced from, all of our ways of being engaged with others and the world, we could never have the distinctive, immediate, and affectively based experience of familial relatedness that Hegel describes. Therefore, his account of the family is, at once, an account of the role that this essentially unreflective and unconscious dimension of intersubjective recognition ought to play in our overall conception of human existence. Focusing on Hegel's conception of the family thus provides us with a privileged site for engaging with an important, but insufficiently explored, side of Hegel's overall vision of human life and its intersubjective basis: namely, the irreducibility of affective, unconscious, and unreflective experience.⁶

There are various ways in which we reflect upon our participation in practical systems of intersubjective recognition, and thereby make them an express topic for self-conscious, rational investigation and deliberation. Of course, whenever we enter into the forum of open political debate about substantive public policies or laws, or whenever we make conscious decisions to enter into, reshape, or break off from particular relations with particular other people, we are expressly taking aspects of our intersubjective dealings into our own hands, and we thereby make these dealings more directly answerable to our own needs, interests, and values as individuals and as groups. Indeed, some of our intersubjective institutions—such as contracts, whether at the interpersonal level, or the so-called social contract that constitutes the basis of the state in early modern political thought—are the sorts of entities that could not *exist* if they were not endorsed, at least in principle, in a deliberate, reflective, and self-consciously avowed manner. However, there are also crucial and pervasive dimensions of our participation in intersubjective interaction that are, for the most part, not expressly reflected upon and owned up to in a self-conscious, rational fashion, or that are so foundational for, and constitutive of, our basic orientation in the world that we typically take them to be self-evident, background features of our experiential landscapes, rather than matters to be questioned and deliberated about.

As an obvious example, consider the case of a community's language. Language clearly exists only within the space opened up by intersubjective interaction. Indeed, it is arguable that language is one of the constitutive elements of any intersubjective space, in that it is one of the most crucial ways in which selves express themselves *as selves*—as opposed to expressing themselves merely as natural, living creatures more generally—and so is one of the most important things that *enables* the recognition of selves as selves in the first place. As a native speaker of my language, however, this intersubjective medium through which I interact with other selves is so much a part of my own unreflective habits of speaking, hearing, reading, and thinking—indeed, it mediates my very relationship to myself—that for the most part it tends to go unnoticed, and it does not generally occur to me to reflect on and investigate it expressly as such. While it is true that I, in the living flow of speaking

and hearing others speak, am constantly alive to the particular imperatives of semantics, grammar, and pronunciation that are specific to my language, I do not typically attend to these imperatives as such in a conscious, reflective manner, and in most cases I would be hard-pressed to spell out their content in fully conscious terms. What I possess in this habitual, unreflective, and operational way constitutes, for me as well as for my fellow interlocutors, the presupposed background upon which alone the particular communicative interactions we engage in—for instance, our particular conversations about the weather, about music, or about the legitimacy of some new social policy—can actually take place.

On Hegel's account, I argue, all of our more developed and reflectively adopted intersubjective interactions presuppose the existence of such an unreflective intersubjective element—an element that is composed, not only of our fluency in a particular language, but also of our fluency in an intricate web of shared customs, laws, economic institutions, as well as of various cultural and religious practices.⁷ This background element, entrenched in a community's shared way of life, is that *in terms of which* selves are alone able to recognize other selves as selves in the first place, and as such it constitutes the core of what Hegel calls a community's "ethical substance." Exploring the nature of this unreflective, "subterranean" element of our intersubjective existence is an essential part of my concern in this book; for it is precisely by exploring how the exigencies of intersubjective recognition not only occupy us at the reflective level of conscious thought and deliberation, but are internalized, at a pre-reflective level, into our habits, feelings, and into our most immediate and unconscious relations to ourselves and to our situations, that we come to see how thoroughly the intersubjective sphere pervades all aspects of our experience, and, indeed, all aspects of our relationship to the world.

On the basis of these considerations, we can see how an account of the family becomes crucial, for the family is for Hegel that domain of intersubjective life that most fully exemplifies this unreflective immersion in the ethical exigencies of recognition. As Hegel writes in the *Phenomenology*, the family is to be contrasted with the larger political and legal sphere of society, for the latter is "that substance conscious of what it actually does," whereas the former is an "immediate substance or substance that simply is," and so is representative of the "unconscious" (*bewusstlose*) dimension of our intersubjective, ethical existence (*PbS* M450, W/C293–94). Indeed, Hegel here identifies the family with the "element of the [ethical] nation's actual existence" and calls it the "general possibility of the ethical sphere" (*PbS* M450, W/C293–94), thus suggesting that he regards the domain of family life, not merely as one local institution among many others, but as a structurally necessary background condition upon which all of the more developed and reflective practices of intersubjective recognition are founded.⁸ And it is clear that part of what qualifies the family to play this necessary, foundational role, on Hegel's account, is

precisely the *immediate* and thus *unreflective* manner in which selves recognize each other as family. It is precisely because our very identities are so immediately and directly intertwined with the identities of our family members, and because our concrete relations with them so deeply inform our basic ways of comporting ourselves in the world—such that we typically take these relations to be the assumed, familiar, background context for all of our endeavors, rather than matters that need to be questioned and deliberated about as such—that the familial sphere comes to assume the role of a sort of spiritual bedrock upon which all other forms of intersubjective life can develop.

Hegel certainly regards our developed capacities for self-consciousness and reflection as essential to what makes us human, and, indeed, the sort of autonomous reflective ability that is characteristic of critical analysis and philosophical thought is, for Hegel as for Kant, the very pinnacle of human freedom. For Hegel, therefore, the social and political realm, as oriented primarily toward the actualization of human freedom, must also be oriented toward ensuring that our institutions are such as to recognize and foster human self-consciousness and independent critical thought. In this light, then, Hegel's account of the family—insofar as the family is posited as an institution that is *not* primarily grounded in, or oriented toward, a full-blown capacity for self-consciousness—can at once be viewed as a *critique* of the family, or at least as an account that is concerned to reveal the inherent limits that the familial domain places on us as self-conscious selves. And thus part of my concern will be to spell out the nature and implications of these limits.

Nevertheless, Hegel continues to view the family as an essential and irreducible sphere of human life, thus implying that the sort of immediate, unconscious experience that is characteristic of the family also has an essential and irreducible role to play in human life generally. For Hegel, I will be arguing, the unreflective dimension of experience is not merely a blind, mechanical, or natural reaction to the world, for it is structured through and through with meanings that are unique to us as spiritual creatures who are engaged in trying to make sense of our lives and of the world. However, these meanings are not grasped as such in a self-conscious, cognitive manner, but rather dwell precisely in our immediate, practical, affective, and perceptual engagements with the world. We are not wholly passive in relation to these meanings, for, indeed, there is a sense in which, on Hegel's account, we ourselves generate them; but this activity of meaning generation necessarily occurs behind our backs, as it were. Not only can we never fully do away with this unreflective, unconscious dimension of our experience—such that our attempts to articulate the full meaning of our experience in conscious, rational terms will always fail to outstrip the depth and richness of our more immediate, lived engagements—but it seems that, for Hegel, there is a certain sense in which this unreflective dimension of experience reveals certain truths about our relation to the world that can *only* be appreciated in this unreflective, lived way. The prereflective

character of our familial bonds can thus be approached as actualizing and revealing certain aspects of our existence and of the import of intersubjective life that cannot be actualized and revealed in other, more self-conscious domains of intersubjective life, and this is in part what accounts for the family's place in Hegel's overall philosophy. For instance, we will see that the experience of "being at home in the world" that stands at the core of familial recognition is, on Hegel's account, precisely the sort of experience that one appreciates first and foremost on the affective plane, and is thus something that can be easily overlooked if we focus exclusively on the reflective dimension of human life.

The idea that the immediately lived, and thus essentially prereflective, character of our experience involves a distinctive form of seeing, and a distinctive form of disclosing the nature of who we are and of our relation to the world—one that is not reducible to or substitutable by the sort of seeing that is at work, for instance, in scientific observation or detached, disinterested rational calculation—has become familiar to us through the work of such twentieth-century thinkers as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.⁹ My contention is that Hegel's phenomenology of ethical experience, and of the unconscious ethical domain of the family in particular, involves a similar insight into the foundational nature of our concrete, lived experience. Indeed, one of the broader methodological concerns at play in this book is that of demonstrating a greater continuity than is commonly acknowledged between Hegel's phenomenological approach and the approach adopted by the existentialists and phenomenologists of the twentieth century. In this respect, my project here has some affinities with the more explicitly existentialist readings of Hegel developed by Alexandre Kojève (who linked Hegel's phenomenology with Heideggerian themes, and who had a direct impact on the philosophies of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty) and Jean Hyppolite, as well as with work on Hegel by such writers as Jacques Derrida, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Merold Westphal, Robert Williams, and John Russon, among others.¹⁰ In the work of such commentators—and particularly in their work on the *Phenomenology*—the seemingly rationalist, or overly intellectualist, project at stake in Hegel's attempt to articulate and develop, in an a priori manner, the underlying "logic" at work in human affairs, is shown to be inextricably bound up with Hegel's unswerving commitment to describing the concrete, lived experience of human practical existence *on its own terms*. Thus, rather than simply imposing, in an external fashion, his independent logical categories onto the interpretation of concrete human affairs, we find, in the Hegel portrayed in these commentaries, a thinker attempting to ascertain what logical (or, we can also say, metaphysical or existential) issues are being implicitly or unconsciously worked out *within* the dynamics of lived experience *as such*, and not merely in our reflective, theoretical reconstructions of such experience.

The tendency to downplay or neglect Hegel's views concerning the importance of our unreflective, affectively based immersion in our community's institutions and customary practices, is widespread in recent scholarly work on Hegel's practical thought. The presumption apparent, for instance, in the work of Frederick Neuhouser, Robert Pippin, and Allen Wood is that only those social involvements that are rooted in some sort of explicit, reflective endorsement are worthy of us as free, rational individuals.¹¹ There is also the common presumption that our unreflective, affectively based commitments are too irrational, too rooted in the immediacy of our corporeal nature, or too episodic to be a proper ground of an agent's practical self-identity and ethical commitments. One of my main goals in focusing on Hegel's account of the family is to counter these presumptions by exploring in depth the rich account of affective life and of affective forms of intersubjective interaction that make up the core of familial ethicality on Hegel's account.

In treating the family most essentially as "spirit's feeling of its own unity" (*PhR* 158), and thus as a locus of distinctively affective forms of recognition, my project differs markedly from some other recent scholarly work on Hegel's concept of the family. For instance, both Edward Halper and Richard Dien Winfield, in their accounts of the ethical character of familial bonds, rule out feeling as a legitimate ground of ethical obligation, and thereby attempt to articulate the family's ethical claim in terms that are more consistent with the sort of rationally based, reflectively oriented forms of obligation characteristic of Kantian morality.¹² Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos in their co-authored work on the family also tend to neglect the dimension of feeling, and, like Halper, they are concerned to link Hegel's account of the family with his account, in the *Science of Logic*, of the pure logical relationships that underlie all of our thinking.¹³ Such attempts to bring together Hegel's so-called "Real Philosophy" with the *Logic* are certainly of scholarly value, but in abstracting from the rich phenomenological account of the lived experience of mutual recognition that, I argue, thoroughly informs Hegel's insights into the particular logical structure of familial relations, they leave out of account precisely what, to my mind, makes Hegel's account of the family most compelling and worthy of renewed attention.

In focusing on the centrality of intersubjective recognition in Hegel's philosophy, and in interpreting Hegel's concept of spirit specifically in intersubjective terms, this book draws from, and is meant to contribute to, a growing body of recent Hegel scholarship—work, for instance, by Ludwig Siep, Robert Williams, H. S. Harris, Robert Pippin, Terry Pinkard, John Russon, and Paul Redding, among others¹⁴—that has served to bring the intersubjective dimension of Hegel's thought to the forefront. Like Williams,¹⁵ I find it useful to frame Hegel's insights into the significance of intersubjective recognition in terms of philosophical issues that became most explicit and prominent in the post-Hegelian, transcendental phenomenology of Husserl and

Sartre. And like Pippin, Pinkard, and Redding, I frame Hegel's turn toward an intersubjective conception of experience in terms of Hegel's departure from Kant's thesis that all experience is rooted in the transcendental ego's a priori "I think." Despite the growing wave of research on recognition, however, there has yet to be much focus on the thesis I articulated above, namely that, for Hegel (as for the twentieth-century phenomenologists), even our seemingly immediate, prereflective, and preobjective relationship to the sensuous world is mediated through and through by our practical involvements in relations of recognition. In arguing for this thesis, I find some corroboration particularly in John Russon's work, and also in Henry S. Harris's *Hegel's Ladder*, though Harris does not emphasize, as Russon and I do, Hegel's affinities with the later phenomenological tradition *per se*.

In Part I, I set the stage for the book as a whole by offering an extended discussion of Hegel's central concepts of recognition, spirit, and ethicality. I here link Hegel's approach to thinking about intersubjective life most directly with themes at issue in the post-Hegelian phenomenological tradition, and show that Hegel's "social phenomenology" rightfully resists some of the individualistic tendencies of this latter tradition. I here lay out my thesis that, on Hegel's account, our relation to the world in general—our very capacity to experience objects *as* objects—is mediated on all sides by our involvements in systems of intersubjective recognition, and I go on to show, further, that it is primarily in relation to our shared, unreflective practices of recognition—what Hegel calls our ethical life—that this intersubjective sphere of objects is first constituted. In elaborating Hegel's theory of ethical life, I argue that our most immediate, unreflective experience of the world is not first and foremost of a collection of self-contained, isolated things, but rather of a *practical terrain* that *solicits us as agents*, and in particular as agents whose identities have been formed by the ingrained, customary practices of recognition that constitute the ethical substance of our communities. It is for this reason that Hegel speaks of the ethical sphere, not merely as a set of subjective commitments that must be actualized, but as a concrete *world* that already reflects our commitments.

Having laid down this framework, I go on in Part II to explore what makes the familial form of ethical recognition distinct from, and irreducible to, other kinds of intersubjective recognition. I argue that, for Hegel, the inherently particularized character of familial obligation—the fact that I immediately experience my familial obligation as being *exclusive* to *this particular, concrete other*, and not to this other as one representative of a universal type that includes all selves—puts the family at odds with other, readily universalizable sources of normativity. It is for this reason that Hegel treats the family as a relatively autonomous ethical domain unto itself.

In chapter 2 of Part II, I show how this "non-universalizability" characteristic of familial ethicality is cashed out in the suggestive account of family

life Hegel puts forward in the *Phenomenology*. I argue here that we can distill from Hegel's odd privileging of the sister-to-brother relationship, as well as from the link he makes between the family and the ethical duty to bury the dead, quite a rich, phenomenologically grounded account of how it is that our self-identities come to be bound up with the unique self-identities of our family members. I show that Hegel sees such binding of self-identities as essential for overcoming the natural externality and alienation that plagues us as selves, thus linking his account of the family to his larger account of how "spirit" actively (but unconsciously) transforms the natural world into the forum for its own self-realization.

In chapter 3 of Part II, I show how the familial obligation to recognize the unique particularity of other selves is discussed in Hegel's account of the modern family in the *Philosophy of Right*. Here I focus on the manner in which spouses transform their natural bodies, and in particular their sexual desires, into vehicles for expressing the special sort of spiritual relations that are constitutive of the familial bond. I show, too, how such "intercorporeal" relations, which grow out of a long-term familiarity with a particular other, stand in contrast to the sorts of contractual relations that serve as one of our main models for conceiving of intersubjective life in the modern world.

In Part III of the book I explore in detail the complex account of feeling that Hegel puts forward in the Anthropology section of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, in order to show how this account sheds light on the unreflective, unconscious character of familial recognition. In chapter 4, I argue that Hegel's account of feeling challenges many of our traditional preconceptions, and in particular the view that feeling is merely a subjective and "inner" state that is to be contrasted with an external and independently existing objective world. I show that feeling is, for Hegel, not simply a subjective state, but rather a manner in which the world's import discloses itself at a prereflective, preconscious level, and thus that feelings are prior to the full-fledged development of the subject/object, inner/outer dichotomies. If we apply this conception of feeling to our interpretation of the familial form of recognition—which, for Hegel, is supposed to be a form of recognition that takes place essentially at the level of feeling—we are thus left with the question of how to make sense of an experiential relation to another self (namely, one's family member) in which this other is not taken simply as an external, empirical object that is opposed to the self's own interiority, but is somehow experienced as being in an immediate, preconscious unity with the self. While Hegel himself does not explicitly spell out the nature and implications of this distinctive, affective form of intersubjective experience, I argue in chapter 5 that making this kind of experience intelligible is crucial to a fuller understanding of his own account of the family. Indeed, it is also crucial to his larger account of the nature and primacy of intersubjective recognition, for this affective form of recognition proves to be an indispensable moment in this larger account.

In this case, by linking Hegel's otherwise independent discussion of feeling to his discussion of the family in particular, I am also able to draw out some dimensions of this account of feeling that would not have been readily apparent otherwise. For though in the Anthropology section of the *Philosophy of Spirit* there are some passing remarks concerning the intersubjective dimension of feeling, this topic is not explored in any systematic way; and so by placing this account of feeling into contact both with his account of the family and with his account of the primacy of intersubjective experience generally, I am able to put forward some substantial suggestions for what an intersubjective theory of feeling might look like for Hegel.

Similarly, in unpacking the implications of Hegel's account of family property, I am able, in the fourth and final Part of the book, to bring out dimensions of the inherently intersubjective significance of ownership that are not readily apparent in the more developed discussion of property that Hegel puts forward in the first section of the *Philosophy of Right*, entitled Abstract Right. For in exploring the precise way in which the family's property serves first and foremost as an embodiment of the distinctive form of mutual recognition that exists between family members, we are able to see more clearly how the institution of property—otherwise treated as what Hegel calls an *abstract* right appropriate to individual, atomized persons—comes to be reconceived as an essential part of our participation in concrete, ethical community with others. Insofar as family property is treated as a direct embodiment of recognition, I suggest that, for Hegel, it constitutes a basic modality of our relation to objects in general, and I thereby show how his account of family property gives us further insight into his overall thesis concerning the primacy of spirit, according to which we as intersubjectively connected agents are responsible for generating an objective world for ourselves that is itself mediated on all sides by practices of intersubjective recognition.