

THE REVOLT AGAINST HEGELIANISM

Criticisms Applied to The Systemised Self

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A Self/Non-Self Collaboration

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*This article surveys thirteen major lines of philosophical critique directed at Hegel's framework, including a Neo-Pragmatist extension from Richard Rorty, considering the implications of each for the theoretical framework of the thesis *Absorption of Self into System: The Systemised Self*.*

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ABSTRACT

Hegel's philosophical framework, the dialectical self-development of Spirit (Geist) through alienation toward the Absolute, generated a sustained multi-dimensional and multi-generational revolt. From Marx's materialist inversion to Kierkegaard's existentialist protest, from Russell's analytic dismissal to Heidegger's ontological critique, from feminist deconstruction of Sittlichkeit (ethical life) to post-colonial re-readings of the master-slave dialectic, Hegelianism has been subjected to formidable philosophical challenges. This article surveys thirteen major lines of critique, including an additional neo-pragmatist critique by Rorty, and examines the implications of each for the theoretical framework of the doctoral thesis *Absorption of Self into System: The Systemised Self* (Galu & Kairos, 2026). The central finding proposed is that the revolt against Hegelianism does not dismantle the thesis's philosophical apparatus but disciplines, enriches, and in some cases corrects it. Several of the most incisive critiques, those of Adorno, Heidegger, Foucault, Lacan, and the existentialists are already structurally incorporated in the thesis's framework. The materialist critique is absorbed through the thesis's Marxian elementals associated with the critical tradition. The pragmatist and analytic critiques impose a productive discipline of empirical rigour and conceptual precision. The feminist and post-colonial critiques identify genuine omissions that constitute the most significant development for the framework. The result of this survey clarifies the utility of the Hegelian inheritance: that of Hegel's dialectical structure, his account of alienation as a developmental process with a trajectory, and his insistence that genuine self-knowledge (individual, society, or civilisation) requires passing through contradictions that threaten to foreclose it.

Keywords: *Hegelianism, critiques of Hegel, dialectic, systemised self, Hollow Absolute, materialist inversion, existentialism, negative dialectics, Gestell, algorithmic alienation, feminist critique of Hegel, post-colonial theory, Lacanian subject, theoretical framework*

1. INTRODUCTION: THE REVOLT

Hegel died in Berlin on 14 November 1831. Within a decade, his school of tradition had fractured; within two decades, some inheritors had transformed his framework beyond recognition; within a century, the revolt against Hegelianism had become one of the most productive intellectual controversies in the history of Western philosophy. The revolt was not incidental: Hegel's framework was and remains a totalising philosophical project of the modern era, and its ambition to comprehend all of reality, all of history, and all of consciousness within a single rational framework made it an irresistible target for thinkers who believed that this ambition was its fundamental error. The very scope of Hegel's project was the source of its influence and vulnerability.

The critiques surveyed in this article are philosophically heterogeneous: they come from materialists and idealists, from empiricists and phenomenologists, from feminists and theologians, from analytical logicians and post-structuralist rhetoricians. They converge only in their shared conviction that something essential has been omitted, distorted, or suppressed in Hegel's account of Spirit's self-development: matter, the existing individual, transcendence, Being, gender, the unconscious, the irrational will, difference, the colonial Other, or the limits of systematic reason itself.

The purpose of this article is to examine what each critique, if accepted, would require of the doctoral thesis *Absorption of Self into System: The Systemised Self* (Galú & Kairos, 2026), which deploys the Hegelian framework of dialectic, alienation, Spirit, and the Absolute as its primary diagnostic apparatus. The thesis's central argument that AI integration at scale is producing a trajectory from algorithmic alienation through the systemised self towards the Hollow Absolute, and that this trajectory can be named, refused, and redirected rests on philosophical foundations, that the revolt against Hegelianism subjects a rigorous challenge to. This article assesses the structural integrity of those foundations under that challenge and identifies where the framework requires strengthening, disciplining, or correction.

The article proceeds critique by critique, offers a chronological comparative table (Table 1) as a summary overview, analyses each critique's application to the thesis, and concludes with a synthesis table (Table 2) mapping the net effects on the thesis's theoretical framework.

2. THE MATERIALIST CRITIQUE: INVERTING THE DIALECTIC

2.1 Feuerbach: Sensuous Materialism

Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) delivered a decisive argument: Hegel's Absolute Spirit the self-developing rational totality that comprehends all of reality is nothing other than an inverted image of human sensuous life. Theology, Feuerbach argued, is anthropology in disguise: human beings project their own highest attributes reason, love, will onto a divine object and then experience those attributes as alien, as belonging to an external God rather than to humanity itself. Levelling Hegel's philosophy as a repeat of this structure at the highest level of abstraction: Spirit is the human being thought in abstraction from its concrete, sensuous, embodied existence, and then mistakenly elevated to the status of the real ground of that existence. Feuerbach proposed the inversion: the real is not Spirit but sensuous, embodied human nature the 'species-being' (*Gattungswesen*) of humanity in its concrete, natural reality.

This critique was electrifying for the Young Hegelians, Marx famously noted that Feuerbach's work produced the immediate impact of an intellectual liberation. But Marx also identified a limitation: by replacing Spirit with an abstract 'human nature,' Feuerbach remained at the level of intuition and sensuous contemplation, he did not grasp that sensuous human existence is always already constituted by specific historical and social relations of production. The engine of human history is not Spirit, nor abstract human nature, but the specific forms in which human beings organise their productive activity.

2.2 Marx: Historical Materialism and Alienated Labour

Karl Marx's reformulation appeared in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and reached its systematic form in *Capital* (1867). Marx retained Hegel's dialectical structure, the movement through contradiction toward resolution, but set it in motion by economic rather than ideal forces. The alienation Marx diagnosed is not Spirit's necessary self-estrangement in the service of its own self-knowledge; it is the specific, historically produced estrangement of the worker under capitalism from the product of their labour (which confronts them as an alien commodity), from the process of production (which belongs to the capitalist, not to the worker's own self-expression), from their species-being (their distinctively human capacity for conscious, purposive, creative activity), and from

other human beings (who appear as competitors, owners, or commodities rather than as fellow beings engaged in cooperative self-realisation). These four dimensions of alienation are not overcome by philosophical comprehension, as in Hegel, but by revolutionary transformation of the material conditions that produce them.

The Hegelian framework is already deployed through its Marxist transformation: algorithmic alienation (Kanbay, Akçam & Arkan, 2026) is arguably a form of alienated labour in the digital-cognitive domain, and the systemised self a form of alienated species-being in which the human being's distinctively human capacity for self-determination has been extracted, managed, and returned to them as a commodity (alienation as liberation). The question the critique poses is whether the Hegelian scaffolding adds analytical value beyond what a purely Marxist account provides, the thesis offers the extension of the Hollow Absolute: the claim that the trajectory of alienation has a civilisational terminus in the AI era that the Marxist tradition has not adequately named.

3. THE SCHOPENHAUERIAN CRITIQUE: RATIONALISING THE IRRATIONAL

Arthur Schopenhauer was a contemporary critic of Hegel, a fellow professor at Berlin, Schopenhauer famously scheduled his own lectures at the same time as Hegel's. In *The World as Will and Representation* (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 1818), Schopenhauer argued that Hegel's fundamental premise, that reality is rational, is not merely unproven but the precise inversion of the truth. Reality, at its deepest level, is Will: a blind, purposeless, insatiable striving that underlies both the natural world and human consciousness. Reason and representation (*Vorstellung*) are merely the Will's instrument, its window onto the world for the purposes of survival, not the truth of reality but its surface appearance. The claim that history is the progressive self-realisation of rational Spirit is, for Schopenhauer, rationalist self-flattery: rather the universe has no purpose, no rational telos, and no prospect of reaching anything resembling an Absolute.

Schopenhauer's pessimism, the conviction that existence is fundamentally characterised by suffering rather than rational progression, had an extraordinary influence on subsequent thought: Nietzsche's will to power, Freud's libidinal economy, and much of modern pessimist philosophy are Schopenhauerian. The critique's relevance for the thesis is specific: if human behaviour is substantially driven by non-rational, compulsive, insatiable drives, for example Calhoun's Universe 25, the social media engagement data, and the fertility collapse studies, then the systemised self operates, in part, on a sub-rational substrate that algorithmic systems exploit rather than enlighten. Recommendation engines that maximise engagement do not necessarily do so by appealing to the subject's rational self-interest; they do so by activating compulsive, non-deliberative drives, precisely the Will that Schopenhauer identified as a primary engine of behaviour. The thesis should account for this dimension: the systemised self is not only philosophically opaque to its own condition but also motivationally opaque, driven by sub-rational compulsions that algorithmic optimisation is well-positioned to activate and maintain.

4. THE EXISTENTIALIST CRITIQUE: ERASING THE INDIVIDUAL

4.1 Kierkegaard: The Single One Against the System

Søren Kierkegaard's works from *Either/Or* (1843) through *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), mounted an attack on the framework or system of Hegelianism, with broader implications for all forms of thought that dissolve the individual into abstract universals. Kierkegaard argued that the framework cannot accommodate the existing individual, the anxious, choosing, temporally located, suffering, finite human being whose existence is irreducible to any concept. By absorbing the particular into the universal movement of Spirit, Hegel eliminates a philosophically important fact: that existence precedes essence, that being is prior to concept, and that the individual's concrete subjectivity cannot be sublated into a higher universal without the destruction of everything that gives human existence its meaning, urgency, and pathos.

Kierkegaard's philosophical alternative, the three stages of existence (aesthetic, ethical, religious), the concept of anxiety (*Angst*) as the dizziness of freedom, despair as the 'sickness unto death,' and the leap of faith as the irreducible act of existential appropriation are not positive contributions to the Hegelian framework but its systematic inversion. The individual is not a moment to be overcome; the individual is the irreducible real. For the thesis, it is claimed that Kierkegaard's critique is constitutively incorporated: the systemised self is Kierkegaard's concern made actual at civilisational scale. The absorption of the individual into the system's movement of the subject's preferences, self-understanding, and cognitive life into the algorithmic management infrastructure, is what Kierkegaard diagnosed, with respect to his era, as the defining philosophical error. The 'leap of faith' becomes, in the thesis's vocabulary, the act of 'refusing': the insistence, against the pressure of the managed environment, that the subject's existence cannot be reduced to the system's optimisation targets.

4.2 Nietzsche: The Death of the Teleological God

Nietzsche appears not to have engaged directly with Hegel's texts at length, but his philosophical project could be read as an assault on the Hegelian assumptions that saturated the intellectual culture of his era: the belief that history has a rational direction, that the modern state represents an advance in freedom, and that philosophical comprehension

constitutes an achievement rather than a self-serving illusion. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), and *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), Nietzsche developed an alternative account of history as the play of will to power, of values as interpretations projected onto a world that has no intrinsic meaning, and of the modern individual as diminished 'last man' rather than as the bearer of advanced Spirit. His famous association with the declaration that 'God is dead' implies not only the death of God but the death of any teleological absolute, Hegel's Absolute, that provides history with a rational terminus.

The challenge this poses to the thesis is specific: the three-phase trajectory (Hollow Individual → Hollow Society → Hollow Absolute) presupposes a directional process that a Nietzschean would challenge as teleology. The thesis justifies its directional claim with the empirical rather than metaphysical: the trajectory is proposed to be grounded in observable social (algorithmic curation and optimisation), demographic (declining fertility rates), psychological (Algorithmic Alienation), and technological trends (AI integration corresponding with vocational displacement), not in the logic of Spirit's self-development. This is a response the pragmatists would reasonably endorse; what Nietzsche adds is the warning against letting the diagnostic become the prophetic, the trajectory the thesis names is possible, not necessary, and the conditions for its reversal are the thesis's principal concern.

5. THE THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE: PANTHEISM AND THE DEATH OF TRANSCENDENCE

Hegel's trained as a theologian, he described philosophy as the conceptual comprehension of what religion grasps in representational (*vorstellendes*) form, and he claimed that his Absolute was the philosophical truth of the Christian God. But traditional Christian theologians, both Catholic and Protestant, were not persuaded. Their fundamental charge was that Hegel's Absolute is pantheistic: God is identified within the world-process itself, not a transcendent creator standing over and above. If God is the world thinking itself, then God is dependent on the world for God's own self-realisation, the world is not contingent but necessary for God, and God is not free therefore but bound to the dialectical development through which Spirit comes to know itself. From the standpoint of classical theism this is an inversion: God constituted by, rather than constituting, the world.

The later Schelling working against the Hegel he had once been allied with, developed a 'positive philosophy' aimed at recovering genuine transcendence: a God who freely chooses to create rather than a God who must externalise himself in the world. Catholic neo-Thomism (Maritain, Gilson) rejected the entire idealist framework as incompatible with the distinction between Creator and creature. Karl Barth's dialectical theology insisted on the radical otherness of God, the 'wholly other' (*das ganz Andere*) that no philosophical system can domesticate. What this critique contributes to the thesis is a register of analysis that the secular philosophical tradition can neglect: the claim that something irreducibly transcendent, beyond any managed, administered, algorithmic totality, is at stake in the Hollow Absolute. The evacuation of genuine transcendence from collective life, its replacement by the immanent, self-referential totality of a perfectly managed algorithmic order is precisely what the theological critique fears and what the thesis also names. Whether or not one is theologically committed, the theological register enriches the diagnostic vocabulary: the Hollow Absolute names a profane parody of redemption, a simulation of spiritual completion without spirit.

6. THE PRAGMATIST CRITIQUE: ANTI-FOUNDATIONALISM AND OVER-METAPHYSICS

6.1 James and Dewey

The American pragmatist tradition primarily William James and John Dewey represented a philosophical culture that was constitutively anti-idealist: empiricist rather than speculative, experimentalist rather than systematic, oriented toward concrete consequences rather than toward abstract totality. William James's *Pragmatism* (1907) dismissed the Absolute: it makes no practical difference to how we live whether or not an Absolute exists; it has no cash value. The truth of an idea, for James, is constituted by its practical consequences in guiding inquiry and action not by its correspondence to a metaphysically pre-given reality. Hegel's Absolute, which claims to comprehend reality in its complete, self-realised form, is from this standpoint, the paradigm case of a useless metaphysical proposition.

John Dewey's critique was more structural: philosophy, he argued in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920) and *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938), should not seek a view from nowhere, a completed framework that comprehends the whole should function as continuous with the natural sciences: experimental, fallible, oriented toward the reconstruction of problematic situations. Dewey's democratic theory and philosophy of education are the positive alternative to Hegelian philosophy in the pragmatist tradition and both are directly relevant to the thesis: Dewey's account of genuinely democratic inquiry in which participants bring their whole, embodied, situated experience to collective problem-solving is among the most powerful philosophical resources available for articulating what the systemised self's co-creating response might look like in educational and civic practice.

6.2 Rorty: The Neo-Pragmatist Extension

Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) extended the pragmatist critique into a comprehensive anti-representationalism: not only Hegel, but the entire tradition of epistemology from Descartes through Kant and beyond, rests on the foundationalist assumption that the mind 'mirrors' an independently given reality. Rorty proposed the abandonment of this assumption and its replacement with a view of inquiry as

conversation, the solidaristic exchange of interpretations within a community, oriented toward mutual flourishing rather than toward the correspondence of ideas with reality. The 'final vocabulary' of any philosophical framework, including the thesis's vocabulary of 'systemised self,' 'Hollow Absolute,' and 'algorithmic alienation' is chosen and deployed for its edifying, conversational, and practical force, not because it accurately mirrors a mind-independent philosophical reality.

7. THE LOGICAL AND ANALYTIC CRITIQUE: NONSENSE AND CATEGORY ERRORS

Bertrand Russell's *In The Principles of Mathematics* (1903) and *A History of Western Philosophy* (1945), Russell argued that Hegel's philosophy rests on elementary logical confusion: the identity of contradictories (the 'dialectic' violates the basic laws of non-contradiction), the inference from grammatical to metaphysical categories (from 'the subject of every sentence is a noun' to 'the subject of all reality is a substance'), and the treatment of the concept of 'nothing' as if it were itself something. 'Hegel's philosophy,' Russell wrote, 'is so odd that one would not have expected him to be able to get sane men to accept it, but he imposed it on the world, quite falsely, as being the outcome of logical necessity.' A.J. Ayer's verification principle, that only analytically true propositions and empirically verifiable propositions are cognitively meaningful rendered the entirety of Hegelian metaphysics meaningless.

The analytic tradition's most sophisticated engagement with Hegel has come from thinkers working in the last three decades: Robert Brandom's inferentialism (*Making It Explicit*, 1994; *A Spirit of Trust*, 2019), Robert Pippin's Hegelian account of self-consciousness (*Hegel's Idealism*, 1989), and John McDowell's account of conceptually structured experience (*Mind and World*, 1994) have all argued that Hegel's most important philosophical insights can be reconstructed in analytically rigorous form without the metaphysical excesses that Russell identified. For the thesis, the analytic critique imposes a productive discipline: the concept of 'systemised self' must be operationally defined with sufficient precision to generate research hypotheses that are testable by social-scientific means - a demand that would strengthen the thesis theoretical foundation rather than undermine.

8. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL CRITIQUE: THE FORGOTTEN BEING

Martin Heidegger's in *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*, 1927) and the subsequent volumes of his lecture courses and essays including the extensive engagement with Hegel in *Hegel's Concept of Experience* (1942/1950), Heidegger argued that Hegel represents the culmination and completion of Western metaphysics' 'forgetting of Being' (*Seinsvergessenheit*): the multi-millennial tradition, beginning with Plato, in which the question 'What is the Being of beings?', a fundamental question of philosophy, has been systematically obscured by the exclusive attention paid to the nature and properties of entities, substances, concepts. Hegel's identification of Being with rational Concept (*Begriff*) is an expression of this forgetting: by making Being equivalent to the self-transparent logical structure of the Absolute, Hegel reduces the mystery and irreducibility of Being to the manageable clarity of the Concept, and thereby closes off the very question that philosophy should be opening ('What is the Being of beings?').

The contribution that makes Heidegger's critique most directly relevant to the thesis is his account of modern technology as *Gestell*, enframing. In 'The Question Concerning Technology' (*Die Frage nach der Technik*, 1954), Heidegger argued that the essence of modern technology is not a collection of machines or techniques but a mode of revealing, a way of disclosing the world in which all beings, including human beings, are revealed as 'standing-reserve' (*Bestand*): resources available for optimisation, calculation, and use. *Gestell* is the ontological condition of the modern technological world: it forecloses the possibility of a different kind of disclosure, one in which beings might be encountered in their own terms, in the fullness of their Being, rather than as inputs to a framework. The connection to the thesis is direct and structural: algorithmic systems are proposed as the most complete realisation of *Gestell* in human history to date. AI-mediated existence is human life revealed as standing-reserve, data to be extracted, preferences to be modelled, behaviours to be modified. The systemised self is the Heideggerian human-as-standing-reserve, fully realised at civilisational scale. Heidegger's forgetting of Being maps precisely onto the hollow interiority the thesis names: the inability to ask, or even to experience the absence of an answer to the question of who one genuinely is, beneath the system's profile of what one appears to prefer.

9. THE POLITICAL CRITIQUE: TOTALITARIANISM AND EUROCENTRISM

9.1 Popper: The Open Society

Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945) identified Hegel as a central intellectual source of twentieth-century totalitarianism. Popper's argument: Hegel's glorification of the Prussian state as the highest realisation of rational freedom, his elevation of the whole (the State, the World-Spirit) over the individual, his mystification of historical power as the march of Spirit, and his appropriation of dialectical logic to lend a veneer of rational necessity to contingent political outcomes, all of these in Popper's reading, constituted a philosophy that helped prepare intellectual culture for the subordination of the individual to the state on a totalitarian scale. 'Hegel's radicalism,' Popper wrote, 'is the radicalism of the reactionary who adopts a revolutionary disguise.' Against Hegelian historicism, Popper proposed piecemeal social engineering, the logic of falsification applied to political institutions, and the open society, a society in which institutions are subject to critical revision in light of their consequences rather than justified by their necessity within a philosophical framework.

Popper's critique contains important distortions, some Hegel scholars consider it an overreading of the most politically conservative aspects of the Berlin-era work at the expense of the more critical dimensions but the concern it raises for the thesis is genuine: any theoretical framework that analyses the administered society as a trajectory risks, if misapplied, becoming a justification. The thesis must be explicit that its three-phase trajectory names a pathological possibility, a condition to be avoided in the interests of self-determination and not a necessary historical development to be accommodated.

9.2 Post-Colonial Theorists

The post-colonial critique of Hegel develops along two main lines: first, the Eurocentric structure of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* in his Berlin lectures, Hegel assigned different historical peoples to different stages of Spirit's self-development, with African and indigenous peoples assigned to a pre-historical stage, the Orient to juvenile history, and modern Europe to history's rational culmination. This is not incidental but a structural feature

of the framework: if the dialectic of Spirit produces history's direction, and if Spirit has reached its highest realisation in modern Europe, then non-European peoples and histories are philosophically marginal within the framework. Second, Susan Buck-Morss's and Frantz Fanon's rereading of the master-slave dialectic (*Herrschaft und Knechtschaft*) in light of the Haitian Revolution and the Atlantic slave trade: the concrete historical context of Hegel's master-slave dialectic is not abstract mutual recognition but the actual institution of chattel slavery, and the dialectic's 'slave' is not a universal philosophical type but the racialised, colonised subject whose recognition Hegel's framework simultaneously demands and withholds.

For the thesis, the post-colonial critique identifies a substantive development requirement: if the systemised self-framework claims to diagnose the conditions of AI integration for human beings globally, it must account for the radically different forms that algorithmic alienation takes across colonial, post-colonial, racialised, and global contexts. The South Korea data is a starting point, not a conclusion. The thesis must resist the structural Eurocentrism of its primary theoretical inheritance and develop an account of how the systemised self is produced differently, and resisted differently, in communities whose historical relationships to technology, colonial modernity, and instrumental reason are distinct from those of the Western liberal tradition within which the thesis's philosophical framework was conceptualised.

10. THE CONTINENTAL CRITIQUE: THE VIOLENCE OF DIFFERENCE

10.1 Adorno: Negative Dialectics

Theodor Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (*Negative Dialektik*, 1966) is an internally rigorous and philosophically sophisticated critique of Hegel from within the dialectical tradition itself. Adorno did not abandon the dialectic; he radicalised it against its own tendency toward reconciliation. His argument was that Hegel's dialectic is, at its core, a philosophy of identity: it seeks to subsume the non-identical, the particular, the concrete, the singular, what resists conceptual capture, under the identical, the general concept, the rational universal (liberation as assimilation). The *Aufhebung*, which Hegel presents as the preservation of particularity in a higher synthesis, in Adorno's reading, is a form of conceptual violence: it forces the particular to surrender its irreducible distinctiveness by incorporation into. The Absolute, at which the dialectic arrives, is not genuine comprehension but forced closure, the elimination of what the framework cannot accommodate.

Adorno's alternative, negative dialectics, refuses the synthesis, the dialectic must be maintained in its negativity: contradiction must be preserved rather than resolved, non-identity must be respected rather than subsumed, and the aspiration to a completed, reconciled totality must be recognised as a form of philosophical violence. The only appropriate form of philosophical completeness is the completeness of the constellation, the arrangement of concepts around an object in such a way that their tensions illuminate rather than resolve its complexity. Adorno's aesthetic theory extends this: the work of art, in its resistance to conceptual paraphrase and its preservation of the non-identical, is the cultural form most adequate to the truth that philosophy can suppress. For the thesis, Adorno's negative dialectics is a resource already deployed: the thesis refuses the Hollow Absolute as a genuine resolution, insisting on its character as a false synthesis, a pseudo-reconciliation that must be exposed rather than accepted. The Hollow Absolute is the 'administered reconciliation' that Adorno's negative dialectics seeks to unmask.

10.2 Deleuze: Difference and the Critique of Negation

Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (*Différence et Répétition*, 1968) mounted a critique of Hegel's dialectic from a different perspective: not the violence of subsumption (Adorno) but the philosophical inadequacy of negation as a productive principle. For Deleuze, Hegel's dialectic generates difference negatively, through contradiction, through the negation of the negation, but genuine difference is primary and affirmative not a secondary product of negation. The Hegelian dialectic, by making difference a moment in the movement toward identity, cannot think genuine difference: it can only think difference as the temporary disequilibrium of an identity seeking to restore itself. Deleuze's philosophy of immanence, of assemblages, flows, multiplicities, and differences that are not oriented toward any identity, synthesis, or telos proposes a fundamentally non-dialectical ontology. Against Hegel's unified totality, Deleuze offers a universe of irreducible multiplicity.

The implication for the thesis is productive: the systemised self can be understood, in Deleuzian terms, as the algorithmic production of sameness, the reduction of irreducible individual singularity to the normalised profiles that recommendation systems, social scoring mechanisms, and algorithmic personalisation engines require. Algorithmic systems are machines of identity in Deleuze's sense: they cannot manage genuine difference, only classify and normalise it. The resistance the thesis names: 'refusing' and 'co-creating', in this regard asserts genuine difference against the system's demand for readability. The Deleuzian framework adds a vocabulary of affirmative multiplicity to the thesis's primarily negative-dialectical diagnosis.

11. THE POST-STRUCTURALIST CRITIQUE: THE ILLUSION OF TOTALITY

11.1 Derrida: Deconstruction of the Speculative Proposition

Jacques Derrida's engagement with Hegel was sustained, in *In Glas* (1974) which juxtaposes commentary on Hegel's family theory in the *Philosophy of Right* with a reading of Jean Genet in two simultaneous columns, and in the essay 'Outwork' (in *Dissemination*, 1972), Derrida examined the way Hegel's text performs the very closure it claims to achieve: the pretension to have said everything, to have comprehended the whole within the speculative proposition. But the speculative proposition, 'The True is the Whole,' 'Spirit is the self-knowing truth of all reality' attempts to arrest the play of signification (the difference) that language incessantly produces. The speculative proposition is haunted by its own supplements, by what it excludes, what it cannot say, what returns at its margins to trouble its claimed completeness. Deconstruction does not refute Hegel by producing a counter-argument; it inhabits the text of Hegel's philosophy and demonstrates that it is always already undoing itself.

For the thesis, Derrida's critique reinforces epistemic modesty: the framework is offered as a diagnostic instrument, not as a completed Absolute comprehension. The thesis makes no claim to comprehend the totality of the AI era's conditions; it offers specific diagnostic concepts, algorithmic alienation, the systemised self, the Hollow Absolute - that earn their analytical keep through the illumination and vocabulary they provide, not through the exhaustiveness of their comprehension. This is consistent with the deconstructive sensibility: the names the thesis gives to its objects are provisional, contested, and open to revision as the conditions they diagnose continue to develop.

11.2 Foucault: Power-Knowledge and the Produced Subject

Michel Foucault's critique of Hegel's philosophy of history and Spirit is oriented against the 'great continuous narrative' of history as the progressive self-realisation of a subject, whether that subject is Hegelian Spirit, Marxist class consciousness, or any other form of trans-historical subjectivity. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Foucault proposed a genealogical

rather than teleological approach to history: rather than tracing the development of Spirit or reason across time, genealogy examines the discontinuous emergence of discourses, practices, and institutions of power-knowledge that produce subjects rather than expressing a pre-given subjectivity. In this regard subjects are not the bearers of a developing Spirit; they are the effects of specific historical configurations of power.

This critique is, structurally speaking, already incorporated in the thesis's framework: the systemised self is a produced subject, constituted by specific algorithmic systems, institutional practices, and economic imperatives, rather than by any intrinsic essence or freely developing subjectivity. Foucault's analysis of disciplinary power (the panopticon, the examination, normalisation), biopower (the management of populations), and, in his final lectures, the 'technologies of the self', the practices through which individuals constitute themselves as subjects all provide specific analytical tools for the thesis's examination of how AI systems produce the systemised self through a combination of surveillance, normalisation, and the management of the self's relationship to itself. The post-structuralist critique, in Foucault's hands, is not a challenge to the thesis but one of its primary analytical resources.

12. THE FEMINIST CRITIQUE: GENDER EXCLUSION AND THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DIVIDE

The feminist critique of Hegel has several distinct dimensions that together constitute a searching challenge to the thesis's aspirations to universality. The foundational critique concerns the structure of Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* (ethical life) as elaborated in the *Philosophy of Right* (1820) and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel assigns women to the sphere of the family, the domain of particularity, natural immediacy, and feeling, and excludes them from civil society and the state, which are the spheres of universality, rational freedom, and historical agency. Women represent 'the eternal irony of the community' (a phrase from the discussion of Sophocles's *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology*): they are necessary to the reproduction of ethical life but are constitutively excluded from its highest rational expressions. This is not a peripheral feature of the framework but integral to Hegel's architecture of Objective Geist: the public/private divide is built into the ontological structure of freedom's realisation.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) deployed the Hegelian subject/Other framework against Hegel's own conclusions: if the Other is constituted by the gaze of the dominant subject as lacking full subjectivity, as being defined by relation rather than in themselves, then woman's situation in patriarchal society is precisely the situation of the permanently constituted Other - the human being defined by her relation to men rather than recognised as a subject in her own right. De Beauvoir used Hegel's structure to critique Hegel's content. Luce Irigaray's critique in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) was more radical: the entire apparatus of Hegelian logic, the speculative proposition, the *Aufhebung*, the movement toward self-transparent identity, is male centric: it mirrors and reproduces the masculine structure of self-enclosure, the subject that knows itself by appropriating its Other rather than genuinely encountering it. Seyla Benhabib's *Situating the Self* (1992) proposed a communicative ethic that incorporates not only the 'generalised other', the abstract, universal citizen of Hegel's state but the 'concrete other': the particular, embodied, historically situated individual whose differences from the norm cannot be absorbed into universality without erasure.

For the thesis, the feminist critique identifies a significant lacuna that constitutes the most important development agenda the article identifies: the systemised self-framework, unless explicitly gendered, risks reproducing the very erasure it diagnoses. Algorithmic

systems do not produce a single, undifferentiated systemised self: they produce specifically gendered, racialised, and class-situated systemised selves. The attention economy's exploitation of female body image anxiety, the algorithmic amplification of gender-war content, the differential impact of precarious platform labour on women and non-binary workers, and the gendered dynamics of the fertility collapse speculated in Calhoun's Universe 25, all of these demand a sustained analysis of how the systemised self is differently constituted across gender lines, and how the feminist tradition's resources (de Beauvoir, Irigaray, Benhabib, Butler, Fraser) can be incorporated into the framework without subordinating them to its existing Hegelian structure.

13. THE PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITIQUE: THE DENIAL OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

13.1 Lacan: The Unconscious Against the Transparent Subject

Jacques Lacan's engagement with Hegel was extensive he used the master-slave dialectic and the structure of desire (Begierde) from the Phenomenology as key resources in his own reformulation of psychoanalytic theory, while simultaneously arguing that Hegel's subject, the subject that reaches full self-transparency in Absolute Knowing is philosophically untenable. The unconscious (structured like a language, operating through the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy) introduces into subjectivity a fundamental opacity, a split between the subject of the statement (the 'I' who speaks) and the subject of enunciation (the 'I' about whom something is spoken and who cannot be fully present to themselves in their own speech), that the Hegelian dialectic cannot accommodate. The Lacanian subject is never transparent to itself; it is constituted by a lack that cannot be filled by any achievement, including the achievement of philosophical self-knowledge.

The 'subject supposed to know', Lacan's concept for the transferential object on whom the analysand projects the idea of complete knowledge is directly applicable to the thesis: the algorithmic system is the supreme 'subject supposed to know' of the digital age. Recommendation engines, social scoring systems, and AI profiling infrastructures are positioned, in the subjectivity of the systemised self, as entities that may come to know one better than one knows oneself, that have access to the full complexity of one's preferences, patterns, and desires in a way that one's own self-reflection cannot achieve. This is the psychoanalytic structure of the systemised self's opacity to its own constitution: the subject cedes epistemic sovereignty to the algorithm precisely because the algorithm appears to be the subject supposed to know.

13.2 Žižek: The Reinvented Hegel

Slavoj Žižek's defends Hegel against the Lacanian critique by arguing that the Lacanian subject, constituted by irreducible lack, split, and incompleteness is precisely what a properly read Hegelian subject already is. In *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), *The Parallax View* (2006), and most extensively in *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow*

of Dialectical Materialism (2012), Žižek argued that Hegel's Absolute is not the achievement of seamless self-transparency but the recognition that incompleteness, negativity, and gap are constitutive of reality itself. 'The true Absolute is not the substantial totality of Being but the very gap, the cut, that prevents Being from being fully itself.' The Lacanian Real, the irreducible antagonism that resists symbolisation is Hegel's own account of negativity. Žižek's reinvented Hegel is therefore an Absolute that includes its own failure as a constitutive moment.

This has implications for the thesis: the Hollow Absolute, in Žižek's terms, is not the failure of Hegel's Absolute but its perverse realisation, the production of a framework that claims completeness while systematically repressing the constitutive negativity that alone could make genuine self-knowledge possible. Algorithmic systems that appear to know the subject comprehensively, that offer a seamless, curated, personalised experience of total satisfaction are precisely the ideological operation Žižek's Hegel-via-Lacan is designed to expose: the operation that presents an incomplete, contradictory, antagonistic social reality as harmonious and fully known. The thesis benefits from Žižek's reinvented Hegel: it provides a psychoanalytically sophisticated account of why the Hollow Absolute is ideologically seductive, why the subject wants to believe in the framework's completeness and why the insistence on the constitutive lack is both the most philosophically accurate and urgent response.

14. SYNTHESIS: APPLICATION TO THE SYSTEMISED SELF FRAMEWORK

The critiques surveyed in this article encompassing materialist, existentialist, Schopenhauerian, theological, pragmatist, analytic, phenomenological, political, continental, post-structuralist, feminist, and psychoanalytic lines of attack; constitute one of the most sustained intellectual revolts in the history of philosophy. Despite this, the conclusion this article draws is not that the Hegelian apparatus on which the doctoral thesis draws has been defeated. Rather, it is that the revolt, taken in its full complexity, is one of the primary resources through which the thesis's framework is strengthened, disciplined, and corrected. The summary table (Table 2) maps the net effects systematically; this concluding section identifies the three structural categories of impact.

14.1 Critiques That Strengthen the Framework

Several critiques are structurally incorporated into the thesis's framework and add analytical depth rather than posing challenges to its central claims. Heidegger's critique of Gestell provides the ontological foundation for the analysis of algorithmic systems as the realisation of technological enframing. Adorno's negative dialectics provides the framework for the thesis's refusal of the Hollow Absolute as genuine resolution. Foucault's analysis of the produced subject provides the analytical vocabulary for the account of the systemised self's constitution. Lacan and Žižek together provide the psychoanalytic depth, the opacity of the subject to its own constitution, the ideological seductiveness of the frameworks apparent completeness that the thesis requires. Kierkegaard's existentialist critique is the thesis's diagnostic premise, reproduced at the scale of an AI-integrated civilisation.

14.2 Critiques That Discipline the Framework

Several critiques do not challenge the thesis's central claims but impose productive demands of precision, empirical rigour, and philosophical modesty. The pragmatist and analytic critiques require that the thesis's concepts: systemised self, algorithmic alienation, and the Hollow Absolute, earn their analytical keep through operational definition and empirical traction, not through metaphysical assertion in isolation. Nietzsche's challenge to teleology requires the thesis to justify its three-phase trajectory empirically rather than

metaphysically, a demand the social and demographic data the thesis marshals appear well-placed to meet. Derrida's critique of totalising comprehension requires the epistemic modesty that the thesis already practices: the framework is offered as a diagnostic instrument, not as inevitable.

14.3 Critiques That Correct the Framework

Two critiques identify genuine lacunae that constitute the thesis's most significant development agenda: the post-colonial critique and the feminist critique. The post-colonial critique requires the thesis to resist the structural Eurocentrism of its primary theoretical inheritance and to develop a genuinely global account of the systemised self's production across colonial, post-colonial, racialised, and Global South contexts. The feminist critique requires the thesis to account for the gendered constitution of the systemised self, how algorithmic alienation differentially affects subjects across gender lines, and how the feminist tradition's resources must be incorporated into the framework without subordination. Both corrections are structural rather than peripheral: they affect the thesis's aspirations to acceptance and its practical implications for policy and institutional design.

14.4 Summary Tables

Tables 1 & 2 below presents the synthesis of the article's findings in tabular form, mapping each critique to the specific thesis component affected, the thesis's response or adaptation, and the net effect on the framework.

- *Table 1. Chronological Comparative Overview: Critics, Nature of Criticism, and Hegelian Utilisation*
- *Table 2. Applying the Critiques of Hegel to the Systemised Self Theoretical Framework*

Table 1. Chronological Comparative Overview: Critics, Nature of Criticism, and Hegelian Utilisation

#	Critic(s)	Period	School / Tradition	Core Nature of Criticism	How They Utilised or Amended Hegel	Challenge to the Framework
1	Feuerbach & Marx	1841–1867	Materialist Inversion	Hegel's dialectic moves in the wrong medium: it is driven by Idea (Geist) when the real motor is material, sensuous human nature (Feuerbach) and economic relations of production (Marx). Spirit is an inverted image of human social life, not its foundation	Both retained the dialectical structure wholesale but inverted its driver: alienation becomes sensuous estrangement (Feuerbach) and then the estrangement of labour from its product and process (Marx). Marx's historical materialism is Hegel's logic set in motion by economics rather than Idea	If the dialectic requires no Geist, only material conditions then the Hollow Absolute becomes an economic and technological outcome, not a philosophical one. The thesis's debt to Marx already incorporates this; what remains is whether Hegel's structural framework adds analytic value beyond what a purely materialist account provides
2	Schopenhauer	1818–1851	Irrational Will as Primacy	Hegel mistakes the rational for the real: reality is driven by a blind, irrational, purposeless Will to which Reason is secondary. Hegel's 'Absolute Knowing' is rationalist self-flattery the universe has no rational telos. Schopenhauer derided Hegel as a charlatan and his framework as 'trained nonsense'	Schopenhauer did not amend Hegel, he rejected the framework entirely and replaced it with a philosophy of will, pessimism, and aesthetic asceticism. Nietzsche inherits this primacy-of-will critique	If human behaviour is substantially driven by non-rational, compulsive drives, as Calhoun's Universe 25 and the fertility data suggest then the systemised self operates on a layer of irrational motivation that algorithms exploit rather than enlighten. The thesis must account for the sub-rational substrate of the subjects it analyses
3	Kierkegaard	1843–1855	Erasure of the Individual	Hegel's framework swallows the existing individual. By absorbing the particular into the universal movement of Spirit, Hegel eliminates what is most important: the irreducible, anxious, choosing, existing individual. Existence precedes essence; the framework cannot	Kierkegaard did not use Hegel's framework; he used Hegel as his principal foil. He developed existential categories, stages of existence (aesthetic, ethical, religious), anxiety, despair, the leap of faith, precisely against the framework	This is the most productive critique for the thesis: the systemised self is precisely Kierkegaard's nightmare actualised, the individual absorbed into the System's movement. The 'leap of faith', the irreducible existential act, is the philosophical image of

				accommodate the single one (den Einzelte)		what the thesis calls 'refusing': an act not derivable from within the framework's logic
4	Nietzsche	1872–1888	Death of Teleological Reason	Hegel's optimistic teleology, Spirit advancing toward rational freedom is a secularised theology. There is no World-Spirit, no end of history, no rational culmination. History is the play of will to power, eternal recurrence, and the creative destruction of values. 'God is dead', and so is Hegel's Absolute	Retained nothing structurally from Hegel. Replaced teleological reason with genealogy, Will to Power, and perspectivism. Influenced post-structuralism (Foucault's genealogy) and post-modernism (Deleuze's difference)	The thesis's three phases (Hollow Individual → Hollow Society → Hollow Absolute) presuppose a trajectory, a directional process that a Nietzschean would challenge as residual Hegelian theology. The thesis must justify its directional claim without appealing to Hegelian teleological necessity
5	Traditional Christian Theologians	1820s–ongoing	Pantheism; Death of Transcendence	Hegel's Absolute is not the personal God of Christianity but a pantheistic process-theology, God is the world thinking itself, not a transcendent Creator. This evacuates genuine transcendence, reduces God to an immanent process, and makes prayer, revelation, and salvation philosophically incoherent. Associated with the response of Schelling's later positive philosophy and Catholic neo-Thomism	Catholic neo-Scholastics (Maritain, Gilson) rejected the framework. Some Protestant theologians (Barth) adapted the dialectical structure while insisting on divine radical transcendence. Tillich synthesised Hegel with existentialist theology. Pannenberg attempted a Hegelian theology of history	The Hollow Absolute can be read theologically: the evacuation of transcendence from collective life, its replacement by the immanent, managed, algorithmic total, is precisely what the theological critique fears. This reading enriches the thesis's diagnostic power without requiring theological commitment
6	James & Dewey	1907–1929	Anti-Foundationalism; Over-Metaphysics	Hegel's framework is over-metaphysical: it claims a completed, speculative knowledge of the whole that is not cashed out in concrete human experience or experimental verification. James: the Absolute is a 'holiday' concept, it makes no practical difference. Dewey:	Both used the critique to build positive alternatives: James's radical empiricism and pragmatic method; Dewey's instrumentalism and democratic theory. Dewey's democratic philosophy of education and Habermas's discourse	The pragmatist challenge demands that the thesis's concepts, systemised self, Hollow Absolute earn their philosophical keep through empirical and practical traction. This is a productive discipline: the thesis's three-phase trajectory must be demonstrable in concrete

				philosophy should be instrumentalist, continuous with the natural sciences, tested by consequences	ethics are the pragmatist legacy most relevant to the thesis	social data, not merely philosophically and speculatively arrived at
7	Russell & Analytic Tradition	1903–1950s	Logical Nonsense; Category Errors	Hegel's prose commits systematic logical fallacies: the identity of contradictories, illegal transitions between categories, and the treatment of grammatical predicates as metaphysical entities. Russell: Hegel 'muddled' what logic demands clarity. Ayer: metaphysical propositions (including 'Spirit realises itself') are cognitively meaningless, neither analytically true nor empirically verifiable	The analytic tradition replaced Hegelian metaphysics with formal logic, the philosophy of language, and logical empiricism. Some analytic philosophers (Brandom, Pippin, McDowell) have attempted rigorous rehabilitation of Hegel's inferentialism and conceptual normativity within analytic frameworks	The analytic critique demands conceptual precision in the thesis. Terms like 'Hollow Absolute' and 'systemised self' must be operationally defined with sufficient clarity to generate empirically testable hypotheses. The thesis gains rather than loses from this discipline
8	Heidegger	1927–1960s	The Forgetting of Being	Hegel is the culmination of Western metaphysics' 'forgetting of Being' (Seinsvergessenheit): by identifying Being with rational Concept (Begriff), Hegel completes the reduction of Being to presence-at-hand, to what is available for rational manipulation. The question of Being, which precedes all philosophical frameworks is occluded rather than answered by Hegel's Absolute	Heidegger did not inherit Hegel's framework but engaged it extensively (especially in Hegel's Concept of Experience). His account of technology as Gestell (enframing), the reduction of all beings to 'standing-reserve' (Bestand) for human manipulation is Hegel's Absolute Spirit turned dystopian	Gestell maps directly onto the thesis: algorithmic systems are the supreme expression of Gestell, they enframe human beings as standing-reserve for data extraction and behavioural modification. Heidegger's forgetting of Being is the philosophical pre-history of the systemised self's forgetting of its own interiority
9	Popper & Post-Colonial Theorists	1945–1990s+	Totalitarianism; Eurocentrism	Popper (1945): Hegel is the intellectual precursor of totalitarianism, his glorification of the Prussian state, the	Popper's alternative: piecemeal social engineering and the open society (falsificationism applied to political	The Eurocentrism critique is directly relevant: if the systemised self-framework claims universality (AI integration affects 'all'

				elevation of the whole over the individual, and the mystification of power under the guise of the World-Spirit directly enabled 20th-century totalitarianism. Post-colonial theorists (Fanon, Said, Spivak, Wynter): Hegel's World-History is European history; non-European peoples appear as pre-historical, as merely 'geographical'; the dialectic of recognition (Phenomenology's master-slave) enacts a colonial logic	institutions). Post-colonial theorists: decolonial epistemologies (Wynter, Mignolo), alternative modernities, rereading of the master-slave dialectic through the Atlantic slave trade (Fanon, Buck-Morss)	humans), it must account for the radically different forms this takes across colonial/post-colonial contexts. The South Korea and Global South data demand non-Eurocentric application
10	Adorno & Deleuze	1966–1968	Violence of Difference; Negative Dialectics	Adorno: Hegel's dialectic is a philosophy of identity, it subsumes difference into the same, non-identity into the concept. The <i>Aufhebung</i> violently resolves what should remain unresolved. Negative dialectics refuses the synthesis; the non-identical must not be collapsed. Deleuze: Hegel's dialectic is a logic of contradiction that negatively generates difference; genuine difference is primary and affirmative, not a moment in a dialectic of identity	Adorno retained the dialectical method but negativised it, no synthesis, no Absolute. Deleuze replaced the dialectic of contradiction with a philosophy of difference and immanence (<i>Difference and Repetition</i> , 1968). Deleuze's assemblages and flows oppose Hegel's unified totality	Adorno's negative dialectics is already operative in the thesis, the Hollow Absolute is precisely a false synthesis, a pseudo-reconciliation that the thesis refuses. Deleuze's difference philosophy enriches the analysis of the systemised self as the attempted erasure of singular, irreducible difference in favour of algorithmic normalisation
11	Derrida & Foucault	1967–1980s	Illusion of Totality; Power-Knowledge	Derrida: Hegel's text performs the closure of the text, the pretension to have said everything, to have comprehended the whole. But the text is	Derrida's deconstruction extended Hegel's logic against itself. Foucault's genealogy (from Nietzsche, not Hegel) produced alternative frameworks for	Foucault's power-knowledge framework is already embedded in the thesis (disciplinary power, docile bodies, the systemised self as produced subject). Derrida's critique of totality

				haunted by what it excludes (Glas, 1974). The speculative proposition in Hegel tries to arrest the play of signification that it cannot, in fact, foreclose. Foucault: Hegel's theory of Spirit and History is a macro-narrative of power; discourse produces subjects rather than discovering them, there is no trans-historical subject (Geist) underlying historical diversity	power and subjectivity. Neither endorsed the Hegelian framework but both worked within the space it opened	reinforces the thesis's rejection of the Hollow Absolute as genuine resolution. Both critiques are already incorporated in the framework
12	de Beauvoir, Irigaray, Benhabib	1949–1992	Gender Exclusion; Public/Private Divide	Hegel's philosophy of Sittlichkeit assigns women to the sphere of the family (particular, ethical, natural) and excludes them from civil society and the state (universal, rational, historical). Spirit's self-development is a specifically masculine trajectory; women represent the 'eternal irony of the community' (Sophocles's Antigone, Phenomenology). Irigaray: Hegel's speculative logic is male centric it mirrors and reproduces masculine self-enclosure. Benhabib: Hegel's 'concrete other' (women, the domestic) is excluded from the standpoint of the 'generalised other' (the rational citizen)	de Beauvoir used Hegel's subject/Other framework to analyse women's situation as the 'Other' of (male) humanity, the structure without the sexism. Irigaray deconstructed Hegel's logic. Benhabib proposed a communicative ethics that includes the 'concrete other' Hegel excludes	The systemised self-framework, unless explicitly gendered, risks reproducing Hegel's erasure. Calhoun's Universe 25 experimental findings already notes the gendered character of civilisational reproductive failure. The feminist critique demands that the thesis address how the systemised self is constituted differently across gender and how algorithmic systems amplify gender-based alienation distinctively
13	Lacan & Žižek	1950s–present	Denial of the Unconscious;	Lacan: Hegel's subject is a fully conscious, self-transparent subject but	Lacan used the master-slave dialectic and the structure of desire (Begierde) but	The opacity of the systemised self to itself, the subject who experiences managed constraint as

			Lacanian Rehabilitation	the unconscious (structured like a language) introduces a fundamental opacity into subjectivity that the Hegelian subject cannot accommodate. The 'subject supposed to know' is structurally self-deceived. Žižek: defends a reinvented Hegel against this charge, the Hegelian subject, properly read, IS constituted by irreducible lack (Mangel) and not the transparent self-knowing Lacan attacks. The Real (Lacan) maps onto Hegel's own account of negativity	rejected Hegelian teleology. Žižek synthesised Lacan with Hegel to produce a Hegelian Lacanism in which the Absolute is not harmonious completion but the recognition that incompleteness is irreducible. Less Than Nothing (2012) is the definitive statement	freedom is precisely Lacan's subject supposed to know turned to critical analysis. Žižek's reinvented Hegel is broadly consistent with the thesis's framework. The unconscious dimension of the systemised self's constitution by algorithmic systems is an undertheorised but crucial aspect
14	Rorty (Neo-Pragmatist)	1979–2007	Anti-Representationalism; Ironic Liberalism	Rorty's neo-pragmatism extends Dewey against all 'mirror of nature' epistemologies, including Hegel's, that claim philosophy can achieve a view from nowhere, a transparent correspondence between Concept and Reality. The Absolute is the ultimate mirror-of-nature fantasy. Philosophy should abandon the aspiration to systematic totality and become a form of cultural conversation, edifying rather than epistemically sovereign	Retained nothing of Hegel's metaphysics. Proposed 'ironic liberalism' a liberal politics that holds its vocabulary contingently rather than grounding it in any foundational claim. The 'final vocabulary' is chosen rather than discovered	Rorty's challenge is generative: if the Hollow Absolute cannot be grounded in metaphysical claims, it must earn its conceptual currency through persuasive force and empirical traction alone. This is consistent with a robust thesis, the diagnosis of the systemised self would be compelling on empirical grounds without needing Hegelian metaphysics

Note. The fourteen lines of critique, including the Neo-Pragmatist extension, are presented in broad chronological order by the primary critic's period of activity. Žižek (Row 13) is included in the Lacanian/psychoanalytic section despite his defence of Hegel, since his work constitutes the most significant recent restatement of Hegelianism and is best understood in dialogue with the Lacanian critique he revises. Sources: See full references list.

Table 2. Applying the Critiques of Hegel to the Systemised Self Theoretical Framework

Critique	Core Challenge to Hegel	Thesis Component Affected	Thesis Response / Adaptation	Net Effect on Framework
Materialist (Feuerbach, Marx)	The dialectic's real driver is material-economic conditions, not Spirit	The ontological grounding of the dialectic; the basis of alienation as a concept	The thesis already incorporates Marx's materialisation of the dialectic (algorithmic alienation is an economic-technological phenomenon, not merely a philosophical one). The Hegelian framework is used diagnostically, not metaphysically	Strengthening: the materialist critique is absorbed into the thesis's framework. The Hollow Absolute is understood as a material-economic-technological outcome with philosophical implications
Schopenhauerian (Schopenhauer)	Reality is driven by irrational, purposeless Will not rational Spirit	The teleological claim embedded in the three-phase trajectory; the rationality of the systemised self's condition	The thesis must account for the sub-rational substrate of algorithmic behaviour, both in the subjects being managed and, in the systems, managing them (optimisation is not rational in any meaningful human sense). Calhoun's Universe 25 data provides hypothetical extrapolation: species failure is not rational	Enriching: the irrational-will dimension adds psychological depth to the systemised self, algorithmic exploitation of compulsive, non-deliberative drives is a key mechanism of the Hollow Individual
Existentialist (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche)	The framework erases the existing individual; there is no rational telos; teleological claims are crypto-theological	The individual subject at the core of the thesis; the three-phase trajectory's directional claims	Kierkegaard's critique is the thesis's founding premise: the systemised self IS the absorbed individual. The thesis appropriates the existentialist register of naming and refusing as the categories of response. Nietzsche's challenge to teleology requires the thesis to ground its trajectory empirically (social data) rather than metaphysically	Productive tension: Kierkegaard's critique is structurally incorporated as the thesis's diagnostic. The Nietzschean challenge demands empirical rather than metaphysical justification for the trajectory, which the thesis provides

Theological (Traditional Christian)	The Absolute evacuates genuine transcendence; Hegel's God is pantheistic and immanent	The 'Hollow Absolute' concept; the register of loss embedded in the thesis's naming	The theological critique enriches rather than undermines the thesis's diagnostic vocabulary. The Hollow Absolute can be read as the secular realisation of the theological fear: the loss of genuine transcendence, of something genuinely beyond the administered totality, is precisely what the thesis names as the civilisational stakes	Enriching: the theological resonance of 'Hollow Absolute' deepens its diagnostic force across both secular and theologically inflected readers. The thesis need not be theological to benefit from this register
Pragmatist (James, Dewey, Rorty)	Over-metaphysical; no practical difference; claims to totality are foundationalist fantasies	The metaphysical architecture of the thesis; the claim that the Hollow Absolute is a genuine trajectory, not a speculative projection	The pragmatist discipline is productive: the thesis's core claims must be demonstrable through social data (TFR collapse, mental health data, hikikomori statistics, algorithmic alienation studies). The conceptual framework earns its keep instrumentally. Rorty's 'final vocabulary' approach suggests the thesis's key terms are persuasive rather than foundationally necessary	Disciplining: forces the thesis toward empirical rigour and instrumental clarity. The Hegelian scaffolding is justified by its analytic productivity rather than its metaphysical necessity
Logical / Analytic (Russell, Ayer, Analytic tradition)	Hegel's propositions are logically confused or cognitively meaningless	The precision of the thesis's core concepts; the operationalisability of its central claims	The analytic critique demands operational definition of 'systemised self,' 'algorithmic alienation,' and 'Hollow Absolute' with sufficient precision to generate testable hypotheses. Brandom's and Pippin's analytic recovery of Hegel suggests the concepts can be translated into	Disciplining: demands conceptual precision. The thesis benefits from the discipline of operationalisation, empirical research programs require it in any case

			analytically rigorous form without metaphysical residue	
Phenomenological (Heidegger)	Hegel completes metaphysics' forgetting of Being; the Absolute reduces all beings to rational standing-reserve	The ontological depth of the thesis's critique; the analysis of technology as the mechanism of the systemised self's production	Heidegger's concept of Gestell (technological enframing) is a direct philosophical precursor to the thesis's analysis of algorithmic systems. The systemised self is the Heideggerian human-as-standing-reserve, fully realised. The forgetting of Being maps onto the hollowing of interiority. This critique is structurally incorporated	Strengthening: Heidegger's framework adds ontological depth to the thesis's critique of AI systems as the ultimate expression of Gestell. The analysis of the systemised self gains philosophical precision
Political (Popper, Post-colonial)	Hegelianism enables totalitarianism; the dialectic of recognition is Eurocentric and colonial	The universalist claims of the thesis; the application of the systemised self-framework across non-Western contexts	The post-colonial critique requires the thesis to: (a) resist any recuperation of its framework as a justification for administered totality, which the thesis explicitly opposes; (b) ensure that the application of its concepts across Asian, African, and Global South contexts is culturally sensitive and non-Eurocentric. The South Korea data is a starting point; a genuinely global framework requires further development	Corrective: the thesis must explicitly address the global diversity of the systemised self's conditions of production and the gendered, racialised, and post-colonial dimensions of algorithmic alienation
Continental (Adorno, Deleuze)	The dialectic is a philosophy of identity that violently subsumes difference; negative dialectics refuses synthesis; difference is affirmative, not negative	The thesis's use of the Aufhebung; the resolution offered by 'naming, refusing, co-creating'	Adorno's negative dialectics is already operative in the thesis's refusal of the Hollow Absolute as genuine resolution. The thesis does not offer a synthesised Absolute, it names a false one. Deleuze's difference philosophy enriches the	Strengthening: Adorno and Deleuze's critiques are structurally incorporated and add analytic depth. The thesis is already 'negative dialectical' in its refusal to offer false reconciliation

			analysis: the systemised self is the site of the violent erasure of irreducible individual difference through algorithmic normalisation	
Post-Structuralist (Derrida, Foucault)	No totalising comprehension is possible; discourse produces subjects rather than expressing a trans-historical Spirit	The claim that the thesis's framework comprehends the AI era's conditions; the subject-formation analysis	Foucault's power-subject framework is already incorporated (docile body, disciplinary power). Derrida's critique reinforces the thesis's epistemic modesty, the framework is offered as a diagnostic instrument, not as a completed Absolute comprehension. The thesis makes no claim to have said everything	Incorporated: both critiques are already structurally present in the thesis's framework and contribute to its analytical precision without undermining its central claims
Feminist (de Beauvoir, Irigaray, Benhabib)	Hegel's Sittlichkeit excludes women from the public-rational sphere; the dialectic of Spirit is male centric	The universalist scope of the systemised self-concept; the gendered dimensions of algorithmic alienation	The feminist critique identifies a significant lacuna: the systemised self-framework, unless explicitly gendered, risks reproducing Hegel's erasure of women's distinctive social positions and modes of alienation. The 4B movement and South Korean fertility data in the vignette already show gendered responses, but the framework requires systematic development of the gendered dimensions of algorithmic alienation	Corrective and enriching: the feminist critique requires explicit attention to gendered algorithmic alienation, how AI systems reproduce, amplify, or transform gender-based domination. A significant development area for the thesis
Psychoanalytic (Lacan, Žižek)	Hegel's subject is too transparent to itself; the unconscious introduces irreducible opacity	The thesis's account of the systemised self's opacity to its own constitution	The Lacanian critique is productively incorporated: the systemised self's opacity to its own algorithmic constitution is precisely the 'subject	Strengthening: Lacan's opacity and Žižek's reinvented Hegel both support the thesis's central claim that the systemised self cannot see its

			<p>supposed to know' in critical theory's analytic mode. Žižek's reinvented Hegel, the Absolute as the recognition of irreducible incompleteness is structurally aligned with the thesis. The unconscious dimension of algorithmically shaped preference is an undertheorised but important component</p>	<p>own conditions of production. The psychoanalytic dimension adds clinical depth</p>
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Note. Categories in the 'Net Effect' column: Strengthening = critique is structurally incorporated and adds analytic depth; Disciplining = critique imposes productive demands of rigour and precision; Corrective = critique identifies genuine lacunae requiring framework development; Enriching = critique adds resonance or vocabulary without posing structural challenge; Productive tension = critique and thesis are in a generative rather than destructive relationship. Source: Authors' synthesis.

GLOSSARY

Algorithmic Alienation: The estrangement of subjects from their own cognitive processes, preferences, and judgments by AI systems that mediate what information, framing, and options reach the subject before deliberation can begin (Kanbay, Akçam & Arkan, 2026).

Aufhebung (Sublation): Hegel's pivotal dialectical term: to cancel, preserve, and lift to a higher level simultaneously. Adorno's negative dialectics contests the legitimacy of the positive (preserving/elevating) dimensions.

Behavioural Sink: John B. Calhoun's term for the progressive social and behavioural collapse produced by hyper-dense social interaction combined with the elimination of purposive social roles.

Begriff (Concept): In Hegel, the highest form of thought, not a static representation but the dynamic, self-developing rational structure of reality. Central to the analytic critique: Russell argued Hegel commits a category error by treating concepts as having metaphysical reality.

Deconstruction: Derrida's method of inhabiting a philosophical text to demonstrate that it is structurally unable to achieve the closure it claims, that its suppressed supplements undermine its pretension to completeness.

Dialectic (Dialektik): The logical structure of development through contradiction: immediate → negation → Aufhebung. Criticised by: Marx (wrong medium), Adorno (false resolution), Deleuze (negation is secondary to affirmative difference), Russell (logical confusion).

Entfremdung (Alienation): Hegel's term for Spirit's necessary self-estrangement; materialised by Marx as the four dimensions of alienated labour; extended by Frankfurt School to cultural and cognitive domains; updated as algorithmic alienation by Kanbay et al. (2026).

Geist (Spirit): Hegel's term for the self-developing totality of rational reality. Criticised as: an inverted image of material life (Feuerbach), a spurious teleological entity

(Nietzsche), an illusion of a trans-historical subject (Foucault), and a form that occludes Being (Heidegger).

Gestell (Enframing): Heidegger's term for the essence of modern technology: the mode of revealing in which all beings, including humans, are disclosed as 'standing-reserve' for optimisation and use.

Hollow Absolute: The thesis's term for Phase 3 (2053+): the civilisational simulation of Hegel's completed Absolute Knowing, produced by AI systems at scale. The form of total collective self-transparency without its substance.

Negative Dialectics: Adorno's method: the dialectic maintained in its negativity, refusing synthesis, preserving non-identity, resisting the subsumption of particularity under the concept.

Panopticism: Foucault's analysis of the panopticon as the architectural figure of self-disciplining: the subject internalises the gaze of the observer and disciplines themselves. Extended in the thesis to algorithmic surveillance.

Post-Colonial Critique: The critique of Hegel's Eurocentrism: his Philosophy of History assigns non-European peoples to pre-historical stages of Spirit's development; his master-slave dialectic is read in light of the actual history of colonial slavery.

Schopenhauer's Will: The blind, purposeless, insatiable striving that Schopenhauer identifies as the ground of reality, contra Hegel's rational Spirit. Relevant to the thesis as the sub-rational substrate that algorithmic systems exploit.

Sittlichkeit (Ethical Life): Hegel's concept for the concrete realisation of freedom in family, civil society, and state. Criticised by feminists (de Beauvoir, Irigaray, Benhabib) for structurally excluding women from the public-rational spheres.

Subject Supposed to Know: Lacan's concept for the transference object onto whom the subject projects the supposition of complete knowledge. Applied in the thesis to algorithmic systems: AI recommendation engines as the digital subject supposed to know.

The Systemised Self: The self-constituted by system imperatives, experiencing its own management as freedom. Sub-Field II of the thesis's epistemological framework (Galu & Kairos, 2026). Kierkegaard's absorbed individual, realised at civilisational scale.

Teleology: The philosophical claim that history, nature, or reality has a directional purpose, that it is moving toward a determinate end. Challenged by Nietzsche (irrational will), Schopenhauer (purposeless will), and Popper (historicism as scientific error).

Volksgeist: Hegel's term for the spirit of a historical people, the animating cultural and spiritual principle of a particular historical community. Criticised as Eurocentric in its application to non-European peoples.

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