

**The Origins of German Idealism: A Brief Application to The
Systemised Self & Hollow Absolute**

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Abstract

This essay traces the origins, development, decline, and remaining significance of German Idealism. We begin with the philosophical genealogy preceding Kant, including Platonism, Cartesian subjectivity, rationalism, empiricism, Rousseau, and Newtonian science. Kant's Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason* is subsequently examined as the decisive intervention through which the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge, the active subject, and the limits of metaphysics are reformulated. The essay follows the post-Kantian development through Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, with particular attention to the Greek, Kantian, Fichtean, and Schellingian origins of Hegel's dialectic. It then considers the movement's transformation through Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, phenomenology, existentialism, and critical theory. The conclusion argues that German Idealism did not simply disappear but continued by proxy through the problems it bequeathed to later thinkers. Its dialectic remains useful for understanding contradiction, mediation, recognition, and development, including the speculative theoretical concept of the Systemised Self (Galu & Kairos, 2026).

Introduction

German Idealism is defined as the late 18th and early 19th-century post-Kantian philosophical movement that systematically redirected modern philosophy around the foundational premise that the structures of human knowledge, and reality itself, are determined by the spontaneous and autonomous activity of the mind or spirit (*Geist*).

German Idealism sought to understand how human beings can possess universal knowledge, experience genuine freedom, and belong to a shared rational world when all knowledge appears to be mediated by human consciousness. The movement is often associated with Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, but it cannot be understood as a sequence of isolated thinkers. It emerged from a much longer genealogy involving ancient metaphysics, Christian thought, early-modern rationalism, empiricism, the Scientific Revolution, and Enlightenment accounts of subjectivity.

The central claim of this essay is that German Idealism began as an attempt to overcome the division between rationalism and empiricism without abandoning either reason or experience. Kant initiated this project by asking how knowledge is possible and by arguing that the subject contributes the forms through which experience becomes intelligible. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel then transformed Kant's critical philosophy by seeking to overcome the remaining divisions between subject and object, appearance and reality, freedom and nature, and thought and being. Hegel's dialectic represents the most comprehensive expression of this development, although it also exposes the movement to its strongest criticisms.

German Idealism did not have a simple end, its metaphysical language became increasingly difficult to sustain in the context of scientific naturalism, materialism, existentialism, and modern social theory. Yet its central problems continued through later thinkers, often in

transformed and unrecognisable forms. This indirect afterlife is especially relevant to the conceptual framework of the Systemised Self (Galu & Kairos, 2026). The Systemised Self is not a restatement of German Idealism, but it can be understood through its concerns with mediation, recognition, contradiction, self-consciousness, history, and the relation between individual agency and external structures.

The Systemised Self: Context and Definition

The Systemised Self (SS) (Galu & Kairos, 2026) is a proposed theoretical construct for analysing an intensified relation between persons and algorithmic environments. It describes a condition in which an individual's experiences, preferences, decisions, identity narratives, and linguistic outputs are increasingly co-constituted by systems that collect behavioural data, generate predictions, and optimise future interaction. The core claim is relational: the SS is neither a purely internal psychological defect nor a property of a machine. It is a socio-technical arrangement in which the system's model of the person becomes increasingly influential in forming the person it models.

Three features distinguish the SS from ordinary technology use. First is predictive enclosure: the system increasingly anticipates and supplies the user's next action. Second is identity return: the system presents its profile of the user through personalised content, recommendations, generated language, or social metrics, so that an external classification is experienced as self-knowledge. Third is resistance decline: opportunities and motivations to seek alternatives, inspect the model, or interrupt the loop become weaker. The theoretical terminus is represented by the conjunction of high algorithmic alienation (Kanbay et al, 2026) and low algorithmic resistance, not by usage time alone.

The Hollow Absolute: Context and Definition

The Hollow Absolute (HA) (Galu & Kairos, 2026) is the proposed societal and civilisational counterpart of the Systemised Self (SS). It names a speculative condition in which a society composed of highly systemised persons experiences extensive algorithmic mediation not as domination but as convenience, liberation, personalisation, and authentic self-expression. The term is ‘hollow’ because the social appearance of universal self-realisation may coexist with a reduction in the independent formation of purposes, judgements, and shared meanings. It is ‘absolute’ because mediation becomes so comprehensive that it is experienced as the natural environment of freedom rather than as an external power.

The concept should not be confused with a prediction that all persons will converge into one identical personality. A society of Systemised Selves could remain highly differentiated at the level of tastes, identities, and consumer profiles while sharing a common dependence on systems that produce and manage those differences. The HA is therefore a structural hypothesis about the conditions of collective self-interpretation, not a claim of psychological uniformity.

Algorithmic Alienation: Empirical Qualitative Study by Arkan, Kanbay, and Akçam (2026)

The project materials identify a 2026 qualitative study by Arkan, Kanbay, and Akçam titled *From Algorithms to the Self: Understanding Algorithmic Alienation in the Digital Age*. As represented in the supplied materials, the study uses focus-group interviews to investigate how algorithm-driven environments may affect participants’ sense of freedom, identity, decision-making, and emotional life. It identifies four reported dimensions: weakening of the perception of freedom, identity ambiguity and self-distancing, erosion of decision-making mechanisms, and emotional alienation (Arkan et al., 2026).

The study must nevertheless be interpreted with discipline. Qualitative reports of alienation do not establish a terminal Systemised Self, demonstrate a causal pathway from platform use to systemisation, or validate the AAI. They provide situated accounts of experiences that may be consistent with parts of the SS hypothesis. The conceptual framework adds a further claim: namely, that these experiences can form a self-reinforcing trajectory culminating in identity capture, which requires longitudinal and comparative testing. The study is therefore best understood as suggestive adjacent evidence and a source of candidate variables, not as confirmation of the wider theory.

The AAI is proposed as a provisional composite intended to organise the dimensions of algorithmic alienation. Its formal expression is:

$$AA = (w_1 \cdot DAu + w_2 \cdot IAm + w_3 \cdot EDm + w_4 \cdot EDc) \times (1 - RA)$$

DAu denotes Digital Autonomy erosion; IAm denotes Identity Ambiguity; EDm denotes Erosion of Decision-Making; EDc denotes Emotional Disconnection; and RA denotes Algorithmic Resistance. Each variable is provisionally scaled from 0.00 to 1.00. Higher scores on the four alienation dimensions indicate greater saturation; a higher RA score indicates greater active resistance and therefore reduces the composite score. The baseline proposal uses equal weights, $w_1 = w_2 = w_3 = w_4 = 0.25$, because there is no validated evidence yet for differential weighting.

- DAu could combine perceived autonomy measures with behavioural indicators such as the proportion of content encountered through recommendations rather than intentional search, the

diversity of information sources, and the frequency with which users override or reject recommendations.

- IAm could combine identity-coherence and self-distancing measures with tests of whether participants describe algorithmic profiles as more accurate than their own reflective accounts.
- EDm could combine decision-making-style measures with choice experiments that compare independent deliberation, recommendation acceptance, and willingness to consider disconfirming alternatives.
- EDc could combine measures of emotional connection, affective regulation, and perceived social presence with reports of numbness, compulsive engagement, or emotional dependence on algorithmic feedback.
- RA could combine reported resistance intentions with observable practices such as disabling personalisation, using alternative search or media sources, varying routines, inspecting settings, and taking deliberate periods of disconnection.

The proposed Systemised Self condition is expressed as a joint boundary condition rather than a high AA score alone:

$$SS := \{AA \geq 0.95\} \cap \{RA \leq 0.05\}$$

The threshold is a theoretical classification rule, not a clinical diagnosis. It should not be interpreted as a natural discontinuity unless research demonstrates that a meaningful transition occurs near that value. A worked hypothetical example illustrates the arithmetic only. If DAu = 0.99, IAm = 0.99, EDm = 0.98, EDc = 0.99, and RA = 0.03, then the weighted dimensional mean is 0.9875, and AA = 0.9875 × 0.97 = 0.957875. The hypothetical case satisfies the formal

boundary conditions, but it does not prove that such a person exists or that the variables have been validly measured.

The AAI must therefore be bounded by several safeguards. It should not be inferred from screen time alone; it should not treat engagement as alienation; it should not assume that personalisation is harmful in every context; it should be tested for measurement invariance across cultures, languages, ages, disabilities, and levels of digital access; and it should be compared with established constructs such as problematic social media use, compulsive use, flow, filter bubbles, and learned helplessness. The central falsification criteria are that the dimensions fail to cohere, the score does not predict independently measured reductions in autonomy or identity coherence, or participants meeting the proposed SS condition do not exhibit the predicted phenomenological inversion and low resistance in mixed-method research.

German Idealism: The Genealogy Before Kant

The distant background of German Idealism reaches to Plato. Platonism introduces the possibility that sensible appearances do not exhaust reality and that reason can disclose structures unavailable to immediate perception. The Platonic concern with the relationship between becoming and being, opinion and knowledge, and the individual soul and intelligible order remains important for later philosophies of reason. German Idealism does not simply repeat Plato; it inherits the problem of whether thought can disclose more than the immediately given.

Descartes gives this problem its modern form by making consciousness a starting point for philosophical certainty. The cogito establishes the thinking subject as something known

directly, but it also creates a difficult division between the thinking substance and the extended world. If the subject begins with its own certainty, how can it establish reliable knowledge of an external reality? The Cartesian division between mind and world becomes one of the problems that German Idealism sought to overcome.

The rationalist tradition provides another major influence in Spinoza, who offered a metaphysics in which reality is one infinite substance, while Leibniz presents a universe of rationally ordered substances and necessary relations. Enlightenment philosopher Christian Wolff systematises rationalist metaphysics in Germany and makes it a dominant academic framework. Rationalism promises that reality is intelligible to reason, but its confidence in metaphysical deduction also creates the danger of constructing a system detached from experience.

Empiricism challenges that confidence. English enlightenment philosopher Locke treated knowledge as arising from experience and weakens the rationalist belief in innate ideas. Scottish enlightenment philosopher David Hume pushed the challenge further by questioning causation, substance, personal identity, and the rational basis of necessary connection. If experience gives us only sequences of impressions, Hume asked, what justifies the belief that events must be causally connected? Kant later stated that Hume awakened him from his 'dogmatic slumber' because Hume's scepticism threatened both metaphysics and the necessity of scientific knowledge.

Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau provided a different but equally important influence. His writings on freedom, moral development, inequality, education, and the corruption of human beings by social arrangements help prepare the ground for Kant's account

of autonomy. Human freedom cannot be reduced to the satisfaction of private desire. It must involve self-legislation and a form of moral independence. The Scientific Revolution, particularly Newtonian physics, supplies the final major background. Kant had to explain how universal and necessary scientific knowledge is possible while also preserving human freedom and moral responsibility.

German Idealism therefore developed within a set of tensions: rationalism versus empiricism, necessity versus freedom, mind versus world, science versus metaphysics, and individual autonomy versus social formation. Kant's originality lay in treating these tensions not as problems that can be solved by choosing one side, but as questions concerning the conditions under which knowledge and experience are possible.

Kant's Critical Revolution

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787/1998) provides the decisive origin of modern German Idealism. Its Introduction begins by distinguishing forms of knowledge and by asking how synthetic a priori (knowledge that is independent of experience, derived instead through abstract reason) judgements are possible. An analytic judgement explains what is already contained in a concept, whereas a synthetic judgement adds something to knowledge. A posteriori knowledge depends upon experience, while a priori knowledge possesses necessity and universality. Kant's question is therefore how judgements can extend knowledge while remaining necessary and universal.

This question is directed simultaneously against rationalist dogmatism and empiricist scepticism. Rationalism appears able to explain necessity, but it risks exceeding the limits of experience. Empiricism correctly emphasises experience, but it appears unable to explain the

necessity of mathematics, fundamental principles of science, and causal order. Kant's critical philosophy attempts to explain how the mind can possess necessary structures without claiming access to reality as it exists independently of all possible experience.

Kant's 'Copernican revolution' marks the central shift. Instead of assuming that knowledge must conform to objects as they exist independently of the subject, Kant asks whether objects of experience conform to the structures through which the subject experiences them. Space and time are forms of sensibility, and the categories of the understanding provide the basic conceptual structures through which appearances become objects of knowledge. The subject is not a passive receiver of reality, it actively organises experience.

This is not the claim that the individual mind invents the world arbitrarily. Kant's subject is transcendental rather than psychological: the question concerns the conditions that make experience possible for any finite knower. The world of experience is therefore neither a private fiction nor an unmediated copy of things in themselves. It is an ordered field produced through the relation between what is given and the forms through which it can be received and understood.

Kant's distinction between phenomena and noumena follows from this argument. Human beings can know phenomena, meaning objects as they appear within the conditions of possible experience. They cannot know noumena, or things as they may be independently of those conditions. This limitation protects science from scepticism by explaining how experience can possess lawful structure, while also preventing reason from treating speculative metaphysical concepts as empirical knowledge.

Kant's critical solution nevertheless produces new tensions: if the subject contributes the forms of experience, what is the status of the thing-in-itself? If the phenomenal world is governed by causal necessity, how can moral freedom be possible? If theoretical reason is limited, how can practical reason legitimately assert freedom, immortality, and God? Kant's philosophy divides the human standpoint between knowledge and morality, nature and freedom, and finitude and the demand for totality.

The *Critique of Pure Reason* is therefore both the foundation and provocation of German Idealism. Kant establishes that the subject is active in the constitution of experience, but he does not fully reconcile the subject with the world it knows. He establishes the limits of metaphysics, but later idealists ask whether those limits can be overcome from within a more complete account of reason. German Idealism begins in the attempt to complete Kant without returning to the dogmatism he opposed.

The Post-Kantian Problem

Kant's successors quickly identified difficulties in the critical system. Karl Leonhard Reinhold was the essential intellectual bridge that helped to transform Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy into a philosophical movement. Reinhold sought to give Kantian philosophy a single foundational principle. Schulze criticised Kant's reference to the thing-in-itself, arguing that Kant could not invoke an unknowable reality as the cause of appearances without making an illegitimate metaphysical claim. Salomon Maimon, a Kantian critic, questioned the sharp separation between sensibility and understanding and argued that Kant had not fully explained how the two could cooperate.

These criticisms reveal that post-Kantian philosophy develops through internal disagreement. The question is no longer simply whether Kant is right about the limits of knowledge. It becomes whether the divisions within his system can be overcome. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel each attempt to provide a more unified account of subjectivity, nature, freedom, and reality.

Fichte and the Active Self

Johann Gottlieb Fichte radicalises Kant's account of the subject by treating the 'I' as an activity rather than a passive point of awareness. The self posits itself and encounters the 'not-I' as a form of opposition. This should not be understood as the individual ego arbitrarily creating the universe. Fichte is describing self-consciousness as a practical relation in which the self becomes aware of its freedom through resistance and limitation.

The world is therefore not merely an object known by the subject. It is the field within which moral activity occurs. The self becomes intelligible through what it does, what resists it, and what it is obligated to achieve. Freedom is not an absence of determination but an active capacity to give form to conduct.

Fichte's importance for later theories of subjectivity lies in his rejection of the isolated self. Selfhood is produced through activity and opposition. The speculative theoretical construct of the Systemised Self (Galu & Kairos, 2026) can be connected to this insight, although the difference is decisive. Fichte's self is oriented toward moral self-determination, whereas the Systemised Self is increasingly shaped by technological systems that observe, predict, and feed back its conduct. In Fichte, opposition can disclose freedom; in the Systemised Self, system-mediated opposition may become a mechanism of behavioural conditioning.

Fichte's philosophy also exposes the danger of making the subject too dominant. If the world is explained primarily through the activity of the 'I', the independence of nature and the social world becomes difficult to preserve. Schelling responds by giving nature a more active philosophical status.

Schelling: Nature, Identity, and Freedom

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling rejects the idea that nature is merely a passive 'not-I' opposed to the subject. Nature is productive, dynamic, and internally organised. Consciousness should be understood as emerging from nature rather than standing entirely outside it. His philosophy of nature therefore attempts to overcome the opposition between mechanism and freedom, matter and spirit, and object and subject.

Schelling's identity philosophy seeks a deeper unity in which subject and object are expressions of an underlying identity. Art becomes especially important because it appears to reconcile conscious intention and unconscious production. Schelling also develops an increasingly complex account of freedom, evil, mythology, and revelation. Freedom cannot be reduced to rational self-legislation; it contains depths that exceed transparent consciousness.

Schelling expands German Idealism beyond the epistemological question of how the subject knows objects. Idealism becomes a philosophy of nature, creativity, history, art, and existence. His influence reaches later philosophies that seek to understand human consciousness as embodied, historical, and rooted in a world that cannot be reduced to mental representation.

At the same time, Hegel criticises an undifferentiated identity that resolves opposition too quickly. Unity must not erase difference. It must explain how difference develops within a larger intelligible process, this prepares the transition to Hegel's dialectic.

Hegel and the Origins of the Dialectic

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dialectic is often reduced to the formula 'thesis, antithesis, synthesis': that formulation does not adequately represent Hegel's method. The dialectic is better understood as a movement in which a concept, form of consciousness, or social arrangement reveals internal tensions that require transformation. Development does not occur because an external thinker imposes a solution. It occurs because a position cannot fully sustain itself in the form it initially takes.

The origins of Hegel's dialectic are multiple, the first is the Socratic practice of questioning. Socrates reveals that apparently secure opinions contain contradictions or depend upon assumptions that have not been examined. Plato develops this practice into dialogues in which concepts become more determinate through movement, division, recollection, and ascent. Hegel inherits the conviction that truth is not merely a static statement but a process in which thought must pass through the inadequacy of partial positions.

Aristotle provides another background. Hegel does not simply reject the principle of non-contradiction or formal logic. Rather, he asks whether fixed logical categories are sufficient to understand becoming, development, and the movement from one determination to another. Hegelian contradiction is not the assertion that something is and is not in precisely the same

respect at the same time. It is the claim that a determination may contain tensions that reveal its incompleteness and propel it toward a richer form.

Kant's antinomies (contradictions between two principles) are a direct modern precursor. Kant demonstrates that reason can generate equally compelling arguments for opposing conclusions when it attempts to think the world as a complete totality. For Kant, the antinomies reveal the limits of speculative reason. Hegel accepts the importance of these contradictions but rejects the idea that they merely indicate an error in reason's use. Contradiction is not simply a boundary at which thought must stop. It can disclose the dynamic structure of the concepts and realities being examined.

Fichte contributes the model of an active self that encounters opposition. The 'I' and the 'not-I' are not static entities but moments in a process of self-conscious activity. Hegel takes up this relation but refuses to leave it at the level of a subjective ego. Opposition must become social, historical, and institutional. Self-consciousness develops through relations with other self-consciousnesses.

Schelling contributes the aspiration to overcome the division between subject and object, nature and spirit. Hegel shares this ambition but argues that a simple identity is insufficient. If all differences are absorbed into an undifferentiated unity, nothing has been explained. The unity of reality must be demonstrated through the development of its differences.

Hegel's distinctive contribution is the concept of *Aufhebung*, often translated as sublation. To sublimate is simultaneously to cancel, preserve, and elevate. A later form does not simply destroy what came before. It negates the limitations of the earlier form while preserving what remains

valid within it. Development is therefore not a straight line and not a simple return to an original unity. It is a transformation in which earlier moments are retained within a more comprehensive structure.

This dialectic appears in Hegel's account of self-consciousness. A self cannot become fully self-conscious through private reflection alone. It requires recognition by another self-consciousness. The famous struggle for recognition shows that the desire to be acknowledged can produce domination rather than reciprocity. A relationship that begins as a demand for recognition can become unstable when one party attempts to reduce the other to a dependent object.

Hegel's account of recognition is important for the Systemised Self. Contemporary individuals encounter forms of acknowledgement through likes, views, followers, rankings, and recommendations. These signals may resemble recognition, but they are not necessarily reciprocal or ethical. They are quantified responses mediated by systems that determine visibility. The person receives feedback without necessarily receiving mutual understanding, dignity, or social belonging.

Hegel's dialectic also extends from consciousness to history and social institutions. Freedom is not merely the private capacity to choose. It becomes actual through ethical life, language, law, family, civil society, and political institutions. The individual is formed through a social world that is both external and constitutive. Human beings create institutions, but those institutions also shape what human beings can be.

This point provides the clearest connection to the Systemised Self. The individual creates technological systems to extend memory, communication, choice, and social participation. Those systems then become external structures that shape attention, identity, preference, and conduct. The person is both user and object of prediction, both agent and source of data, both creator of the system and participant in a world increasingly organised by it.

The doctoral thesis on the Systemised Self (Galu & Kairos, 2026) is therefore imbued with a Hegelian dialectical structure and philosophical framework. The self seeks autonomy, creates systems to extend autonomy, becomes dependent upon those systems, recognises the dependence, and attempts resistance while remaining within the same technological environment. The contradiction is not accidental. It is the historical form taken by the relation between human agency and its own externalised creations.

Hegel's Absolute represents an attempt to achieve intelligible unity in which reality and reason become self-knowing. The Hollow Absolute is a contemporary inversion of this aspiration. It is a system that approaches practical totality through data, prediction, connectivity, and behavioural organisation, but remains empty of substantive meaning. It can tell the individual what is visible, efficient, popular, or likely to receive approval. It cannot determine why anything matters or what a human life ought to be.

Demise, Criticism, and Continuity by Proxy

German Idealism appeared to decline after Hegel because its systematic metaphysical ambitions became difficult to sustain. Ludwig Feuerbach criticised speculative philosophy for projecting human powers into theology. Marx transformed the Hegelian dialectic into a

materialist analysis of labour, capital, alienation, and historical production. Marx rejected idealism as the primary explanation of social life but retained contradiction, mediation, historical development, and the relation between human beings and their external products.

Kierkegaard opposed the Hegelian system by emphasising individual existence, anxiety, decision, faith, and subjective responsibility. His criticism was not an escape from German Idealism so much as a reorientation of its questions. Can a system capture the singular individual? Can historical reason replace the demand for personal decision? Nietzsche later attacked metaphysical unity, moral universalism, and narratives of progress, but continued to address the problems of history, interpretation, self-formation, and the critique of inherited values.

The growth of positivism and the natural sciences further challenged speculative philosophy. Knowledge increasingly appeared to require empirical verification, while metaphysical systems seemed to make claims beyond what science could establish. German Idealism therefore underwent an apparent demise, however it survived through transformation. Neo-Kantianism, phenomenology, existentialism, Marxism, critical theory, hermeneutics, and recognition theory continued to address its central problems.

This survival can be described as continuity by proxy. Later thinkers often rejected the vocabulary of the Absolute, spirit, or speculative reason, but they continued to ask how consciousness is formed, how freedom operates within structures, how individuals become selves through social relations, and how history shapes the possibilities of thought. German Idealism therefore persisted not as an unbroken doctrine but as a set of problems transmitted through disagreement.

Hegel's influence is especially extensive. Marx retains and reverses the dialectic. Kierkegaard defines his philosophy partly through opposition to systematic Hegelianism. Phenomenology and existentialism inherit the focus on consciousness, history, embodiment, and recognition. The Frankfurt School develops a critical theory of social totality, domination, reason, and emancipation. Contemporary philosophers such as Brandom, Pippin, Pinkard, and McDowell have renewed interest in Hegel's account of normativity, self-consciousness, conceptual mediation, and social freedom.

Contemporary Status and the Systemised Self

German Idealism remains active in contemporary philosophy because the problems it addressed have not disappeared. The philosophy of mind continues to ask how consciousness relates to the world. Social philosophy asks how recognition and institutions shape agency. Political philosophy asks how individual freedom can be realised through social arrangements rather than merely protected from them. Critical theory asks how apparently rational systems can produce domination. These are recognisably post-Kantian and post-Hegelian questions even when the original terminology is absent.

The Systemised Self belongs to this contemporaneous afterlife. It can be understood as a historically developing subject whose agency is mediated by technological systems of recommendation, prediction, data extraction, and behavioural feedback. The connection to German Idealism is not that German Idealist philosophers anticipated the internet. It is that their analyses provide conceptual tools for understanding a self that is not simply private, natural, or self-transparent.

Kant contributes the insight that experience is structured rather than passively received. In the Systemised Self, experience is additionally organised by technological interfaces that select, rank, and personalise what appears. Fichte contributes the idea that selfhood is an activity formed through opposition and relation. In the Systemised Self, the activity of the person is captured and returned through systems that are proposed to increasingly shape future conduct. Schelling contributes the insight that the human subject cannot be separated completely from the world that forms it. In the Systemised Self, the environment is no longer merely natural or social; it is computational, predictive, and curates.

Hegel contributes the most comprehensive framework. The Systemised Self is mediated by social recognition, formed through contradiction, and situated within historical institutions. It is both the author and object of its technological environment. Its apparent freedom depends upon systems that can also narrow and condition the field of choice. It experiences a contradiction between convenience and autonomy, connection and isolation, personalisation and identity ambiguity, participation and passivity.

The Algorithmic Alienation Index (AAI) can be treated as a provisional bridge between empirical research and this philosophical framework. Its dimensions: digital autonomy erosion, identity ambiguity, erosion of decision-making, emotional disconnection, and algorithmic resistance, are not equivalent to Hegelian categories and should not be presented as empirically validated measurements of the Systemised Self. They provide a way of mapping how technological mediation may weaken the subject's practical relation to itself and its social world.

The Hollow Absolute then marks the point at which system-mediated life becomes functionally comprehensive without becoming meaningful. Hegel's Absolute is the movement toward intelligible self-knowledge. The Hollow Absolute is a societal system that knows the user through data but does not understand the user in an ethical or existential sense. It predicts conduct without providing wisdom, measures approval without producing recognition, and organises participation without establishing a shared purpose.

This interpretation also proposes why German Idealism cannot necessarily be dismissed as an obsolete historical curiosity. Its archaic formations may no longer provide an acceptable metaphysical system in their original forms, but its concepts remain useful for analysing how subjects become what they are within structures they also produce. The dialectic is particularly valuable because it prevents a simplistic opposition between human freedom and technological determination. It directs attention to the reciprocal process through which people create systems that later shape their creators.

Conclusion

German Idealism originated in a long philosophical genealogy rather than in a single national or intellectual event. Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Wolff, Locke, Hume, Rousseau, and Newtonian science contributed problems that Kant reformulated through his critical philosophy. Kant's Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason* transformed the debate by asking how synthetic a priori knowledge is possible and by showing that the subject actively structures experience. His solution generated new tensions concerning the thing-in-itself, freedom, nature, and the limits of reason.

Fichte radicalised the active self, Schelling expanded idealism into nature and freedom, and Hegel developed the most comprehensive account of mediation, contradiction, recognition, history, and spirit. Hegel's dialectic emerged from Greek questioning, Kant's antinomies, Fichtean opposition, and Schelling's search for identity, but became a distinctive method for understanding development through internal contradiction.

German Idealism appeared to decline after Hegel, yet its problems continued through Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, phenomenology, existentialism, critical theory, and contemporary social philosophy. Its continuity is therefore often indirect and by proxy. It survives through thinkers who rejected its systems while preserving or transforming its questions.

The Systemised Self can be interpreted within this afterlife. It is a technological subject formed through mediation, recognition, contradiction, and historical development. The Hollow Absolute represents a technologically intensified totality that can organise human life without providing substantive meaning. The connection is not doctrinal but conceptual.

Despite the now-archaic formations in which German Idealism was originally expressed, the utility of the dialectic remains an enduring contribution to human development. It teaches that individuals, institutions, and systems must be understood through their tensions, dependencies, contradictions, and transformations. Development often emerges not through the elimination of opposition but through the critical examination of what opposition reveals. In that sense, the dialectic remains alive even where Hegel's metaphysical system has become historically distant. The modern Systemised Self is one more formation through which the problem of freedom, mediation, and self-knowledge can be reconsidered. The essay closes by tipping its

cap to Hegel, acknowledging that his account of development through contradiction continues to help human beings understand what they are becoming.

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