

THE IDEA OF DEATH IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HEGEL

ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE

(COMPLETE TEXT OF THE LAST TWO LECTURES OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR
1933-34)*

TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH J. CARPINO

In a passage of fundamental importance in the Preface to the *Phenomenology* (pp. 19-24),** Hegel outlines the major themes of his philosophy and indicates its principal purpose; he enumerates there the principles that lie at the basis of his thought and the principal consequences that flow from them. An understanding of this passage will provide the key to an understanding of the Hegelian system in its totality and to the *Phenomenology* in particular. In addition, this passage will show clearly the primordial role that the idea of death plays in the philosophy of Hegel.

Hegel begins by indicating what the novel and essential content of his philosophy consists in, according to him.

He says this (p. 19, lines 24-27):

In my opinion, which can be justified only through the exposition of the System itself, everything depends (es kommt alles darauf an) on this, that one expresses and understands (aufzufassen) the True (Wahre) not [only] as *substance*, but rather just as much as *subject*.

This phrase is directed first of all against Schelling and his conception of the "Absolute" as "Substance." But that Schellingian conception merely

* Originally published as Appendix II, "L'idée de la mort dans la philosophie de Hegel," in Kojève's *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947; 5th edition), pp. 527-73.

In the following translation numbered footnotes are Kojève's; the translator uses asterisks. Small brackets represent Kojève's use of brackets; text-size brackets indicate the translator's insertions. An attempt has been made to reproduce Kojève's punctuation and sentence structure as closely as possible, with the result that those insertions, in French and in English, may annoy the eye even where they do aid in comprehension. In this matter Kojève himself has been the model, and those who are familiar with the gray and cluttered pages of the original will understand. (Parentheses in the text are always Kojève's.)

** References to the *Phenomenology* (which Kojève's text cites as "PhG") are to the Hoffmeister edition of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1952). Where Kojève's page or line numbers do not correspond (he was using a 1937 edition of Hoffmeister), the 1952 edition's equivalents are substituted. So far as *content* is concerned, Kojève's French version of Hegel determines the translation of quoted passages.

reiterates the Spinozist conception, which, in its turn, represents a radical form of traditional—that is, Greek or pagan—ontology. Hegel therefore places his philosophy in opposition to all those that preceded it (with the sole exception of the philosophies of Kant and Fichte and, to a certain extent, that of Descartes). Following Thales and Parmenides, pre-Hegelian philosophers attached themselves exclusively to the notion of “Substance,” while forgetting that the notion of “Subject” is just as primordial and irreducible.

Philosophy is not only a truth or a true description; it is rather, or should be, a description of the True. Now if Truth (*Wahrheit*) is the correct and complete “revelation” (= description) of Being and of the Real through coherent Discourse (*Logos*), the True (*das Wahre*) is Being-revealed-through-discourse-in-its-reality. It is not enough therefore for the philosopher to describe Being; he must also describe revealed-Being [*l’Être-révélé*] and [must] give an account of the fact of the revelation of Being through Discourse. The philosopher must describe the *totality* of what *is* and exists. Now in fact this totality implies Discourse and in particular philosophical discourse. The philosopher therefore is concerned not only with static-[and-]given-Being (*Sein*) or with the *Substance*, which is the Object of Discourse, but with the *Subject* of Discourse and of philosophy: It is not enough for him to speak of Being that is given to him; he must also speak of himself and [must] explain himself to himself insofar as [he is] speaking of Being and of himself.

In other words, philosophy must explain how and why Being is realized, not only as Nature and as natural World, but also as Man and as historical World. Philosophy may not limit itself to being a Philosophy of nature; it must also be an anthropology; in addition to the ontological bases of natural reality it must investigate those of human reality, which alone is capable of revealing itself through Discourse.

It is by describing the True also as Subject, or in other words, by analyzing the specific characteristics of the human reality, that Hegel discovers the *dialectical* structure of Being and of the Real, and the ontological category of *Negativity* that is at the basis of that dialecticity. And it is in describing the real Dialectic that he discovers the *circularity* of the True and of Truth, and therefore of his philosophy itself.

Hegel says it himself in a passage that follows shortly after the text just cited (p. 20, lines 5-19):

Further, living Substance [i.e., neither static nor given] is Being which is in truth *Subject*; or, what is the same thing,—[living Substance is Being] which is in truth objectively-real only to the extent that substance is the [dialectical-] movement of the act-of-self-positing [*l’acte-de-se-poser-soi-même*] (*Sich-selbstsetzens*) or mediation (*Vermittlung*) with itself of the act-of-becoming-other-to-itself (*Sichanderswendens*). As Subject. Substance is pure *Negativity*, *simple-or-undivided* (*einfache*), and by that very token the dichotomy [*dédoublement*] (*Entzweiung*) of the simple-or-individual, or

the opposing (entgegensetzende) duplication [doublement] (Verdopplung), which is equally (wieder) the negation of that indifferent (gleichgültigen) distinction-or-differentiation (Verschiedenheit) and of its opposite (Gegensatzes). It is only this equality which *re-constitutes* itself, or the reflection within itself in other-ness (Anderssein), which is the True, [and] not the *primordial (ursprüngliche)* unifying-unity as such, that is, [the unity-unifying] *immediate (unmittelbar)* as such. The True is the becoming of itself, the circle which presupposes its final-term (Ende) as its purpose and which has it as [its] beginning, and which is objectively-real only through the realizative-development (Ausführung) and by its final-term.

This very condensed passage implies all the fundamental notions of Hegel's "dialectic" and sums up all there is in his philosophy that is essential and truly new.

If *Substance* conceived as natural static[-and]-given-Being (*Sein*) has Identity (with itself) as its ontological ground, the *Subject* of the Discourse revealing that Being and itself, that is, Man, has Negativity as its ultimate basis. Now the Man who is dominated in his very being by Negativity is not static[-and]-given-Being, but *Action* or the Act-of-positing-itself or of creating itself. And it is objectively-real only as a "dialectical movement," whose result is "mediated" ["médiatisé"] by *negation* of the "given-Being" that serves it as a point of departure. It is Negativity, associated in Being with the Identity of Being, that splits that Being into Object and Subject, in creating [a] Man opposed to Nature. But it is also this same Negativity, realized as human existence in the midst of Nature, that reunites anew the Subject and Object in and through true consciousness, in which Discourse "coincides" with the Being that it reveals. The True, or revealed-Being, is not therefore, as Parmenides and his imitators thought it, the primary and primordial, namely, "immediate" or given and natural identity of being and thought, but [rather, the True is] the *result* of a long active process that begins by *opposing* Man to the Nature of which he speaks and which he "negates" by his action.

The re-establishment of Unity, or the final coincidence of "Substance" and "Subject" is effected in the adequate description of the *totality* of Being and of the Real by "absolute" philosophy (to the elaboration of which is reduced all the human existence of its author—the Wise Man [le Sage]—who ceases therefore to oppose himself actively, as "Subject," to Nature taken as "Substance"). But the totality of the Real implies human reality, which exists only as a creative *movement*. Perfect and definitive adequation of Being (= Substance) and Discourse (= Subject) cannot therefore be effected until the end of times, when the creative movement of Man will have been completed. And that completion is revealed by the fact that Man advances no further and is content to travel again (in his philosophical thought) the road already covered (by his active existence). Thus "absolute" philosophy, or the True in the strong sense of the term, can appear only in the form of a *circular* description of the real Dialectic taken in its totality. That philosophy on the one hand describes the road that leads from the birth of Discourse (= Man) in the heart of

Being (= Nature) up to the advent of the Man who will reveal the totality of Being through his Discourse, and on the other hand it [the “absolute” philosophy] is itself this Discourse that reveals the Totality. But that Totality implies the Discourse that reveals it, as well as the process of becoming of this Discourse. Thus, in arriving at the end of the philosophical description, we are thrown back toward its beginning, which is the description of its becoming. The “final-term” of this described becoming is the advent of absolute philosophy. But that advent is also the goal we pursued from the start, because philosophy is not absolute, it does not describe the *totality*, except to the extent that it itself understands itself as describing its own becoming. But this description can be done only from the point of view of absolute philosophy, which is therefore the “beginning” or the origin of all adequate description. This is to say that just like the Totality it describes, absolute philosophy cannot be objectively realized any more than the other [the Totality] except in and through its “development,” that is, as the *sum total* of its circular discourse forming an indivisible whole, which reproduces the closed dialectic of reality. It is this circularity of philosophical discourse that guarantees its unsurpassable and unmodifiable *totality*, and therefore its absolute *truth*.

Hegel says it himself (p. 21, lines 3-8), in taking up again (after having written an explanatory note) the idea expressed at the end of the passage cited:

The True is the Whole [le Tout]. Now the Whole is nothing but the essential-reality (Wesen) which completes-or-perfects-itself through its development. It must be said of the Absolute that it is essentially [a] *result*, that it is only at the *end* what it is in truth; and it is precisely in this that its nature consists, to be [an] objectively-real-entirety (Wirkliches), subject or act-of-becoming-itself (Sichselbstwerden).

The True, or Being-revealed-through-discourse, is a *Totality*, that is, the sum-total of a creative or dialectical *movement*, which produces Discourse in the midst of Being. The Absolute or the *totality* of the real is not merely Substance, but rather Subject revealing the real perfectly; however, it is such only at the end of its dialectical (= historical) becoming, which concludes with its own revelation. And this revealing becoming [ce devenir révélateur] signifies that the Totality implies *human* reality, which is not a *given* eternally identical to itself, but a temporally progressive *act* of self-creation [auto-création].

This self-creation of Man is effected through the *negation* of the given (natural and human). The human reality, or the Ego [le Moi], is therefore not a natural or “immediate” reality, but a dialectical or “mediated” reality. To conceive [of] the Absolute as Subject (and that is what is essential, according to Hegel), is therefore to conceive [of] it as implying Negativity and as realizing itself not only as Nature but rather more as [the] Ego or as Man, that is, as creative or historical becoming.

And this is what Hegel says (after a new explanatory note) in the sentence that follows after the passage cited (p. 21, lines 27-31):

Mediation is nothing other than [an] equality-with-itself (Sichselbstgleichheit) which moves[-dialectically]; or (even further) it is reflection in itself, the constitutive-element (Moment) of the Ego existing-for-itself, pure Negativity, or [when it is] reduced to its pure abstraction,—*simple-or-undivided becoming*.

And Hegel goes on (after a new note) to say this (p. 22, lines 10-11):

What has just been said can also be expressed by saying that Reason (Vernunft) is a *teleological Action* (*zweckmässiges Tun*).

To say that the Absolute is not only Substance, but also Subject, is to say that the Totality implies Negativity in addition to Identity. It is also to say that Being realizes itself, not only as Nature, but also as Man. And it is to say, finally, that Man—who does not differ essentially from Nature except to the extent that he is Reason (Logos) or coherent Discourse endowed with a meaning that reveals Being—is himself not given-Being, but create-ive Action (= negate-ive of the given). Man is dialectical or historical (= free) movement revealing Being through Discourse only because he lives in function of the *future*, which presents itself to him in the form of a *project* or as a “goal” (*Zweck*) to be realized through action negate-ive of the given, and because he is not himself real as Man except to the extent that he creates himself through such action as a *work* (*Werk*).

It is from [this] introduction into ontology of the fundamental category of Negativity or of Action (*Tat* or *Tun*, which is the “true being of Man”) that flow all the characteristic traits of Hegelian (= “dialectical”) philosophy.

From this results, among other things, a consequence we already know of and that Hegel formulates as follows (p. 23, lines 21-24):

Among the diverse consequences that flow from what has been said, we might take note of that one [which consists in saying] that knowledge is not objectively-real and cannot be exhibited (*dargestellt*) except as Science or as *System*.

“Science” or “System” signifies in Hegel the adequate, and therefore *circular*, description of the completed or *closed* totality of the real dialectical movement. And in fact, as soon as we introduce Negativity or *create-ive* Action into given-Being, we cannot make any pretense to *absolute*, or *total* and *definitive*, truth except by admitting that the creative dialectical process is *completed*. Now a description of the *completed* dialectical process, that is, of the process that ends up in a term whose negation is no longer the creation of a *new* term [—such a description] can indeed be only *circular*.¹

¹ According to Hegel *no* truth is possible before the completion of the dialectical (= historical) process. But that consequence is necessary only if we admit the dialecticity of the *totality* of Being. By admitting, on the contrary, that Negativity occurs only in human reality and that *given* Being is ruled only by Identity, we can maintain the traditional notion of truth at least in relation to Nature and to the *past* of Man.

And finally, in concluding the passage (pp. 19-24) in which he exposes briefly the essential traits of his System as a whole, Hegel says that we can sum up all that he asserts concerning the dialecticity of Being by saying that the Absolute is *Spirit* (Geist).

Hegel expresses himself as follows (p. 24, lines 7-16 and 27-30):

[The fact] that the True is objectively-real only as System, or that Substance is essentially Subject, is expressed in the representation (Vorstellung) which speaks of (ausspricht) the Absolute as [being] *Spirit*,—a most sublime concept, and [one] that belongs peculiarly to modern times and to its [Christian] religion. Only spiritual-being (das Geistige) is *objectively-real-entity* (das Wirkliche): it is [on the one hand] essential-reality or *entity-existing-in-itself* (Ansichseiende); [it is on the other hand] the entity-which-relates-itself [to itself and to others] (das sich *Verhaltende*) and the *specifically-determined-entity* (das *Bestimmte*), *other-being* (*Anderssein*) and *being-for-itself* (*Fürsichsein*); and [it] (das Geistige) is finally] the entity-which-remains-in-itself (in sich selbst Bleibende) in this specific-determination or in its being-outside-itself (Aussersichsein); that is to say that it [das Geistige] is *in and for itself* (*an und für sich*) . . . Spirit which knows-or-is-aware-of itself [as being] thus developed (entwickelt) as Spirit, is *Science*. It [Science] is the objective-reality of Spirit and the realm that it constructs [for] itself in its own element.

To say that the Absolute is Spirit is to affirm the *dialectical* structure of Being and of the Real taken as a whole or as an integral totality. For Spirit is, at the same time, [all of the following:] Being-in-itself (Identity, Thesis, given-Being, Nature), Being-for-itself (Negativity, Antithesis, Action, Man), and Being-in-and-for-itself (Totality, Synthesis, Work, History = "movement"). Being dialectical *totality*, spiritual-entity is objectively-*real*-entity, and it alone is this. For concrete reality implies *everything* that is, in whatever manner: [and that means] the natural World as much as the human or historical World and the Universe of discourse. Subject and Object, Thought and Being, Nature and Man are but *abstractions*, when we take them in isolation, just as isolated discourses and particular thingish [chosistes] entities are *abstractions*. Only the *sum total* of Reality, revealed through the *sum total* of Discourse, [only such a sum-total] is an objective-Reality; and this *sum-total* in a double sense—that is, the natural World implying the Man who speaks of it—is precisely what Hegel calls "Spirit."

To study the Real philosophically by conceiving [of] it as Spirit is not, therefore, to limit oneself, as did the Greeks and the philosophical tradition, to the phenomenological, metaphysical, and ontological description of given-Being and of the natural [and] "eternal" Cosmos, but [it is rather] to extend this triple description to the create-ive Action which is Man, and to his historical World. And it is thus alone that the described Real appears as dialectical or "trinitary," namely, as "spiritual."

Now the Man that Hegel has in mind is not the one that the Greeks thought they had perceived and that they bequeathed to philosophical posterity. This pretended Man of the ancient [or Greek] tradition is in fact a purely natural (= identical) being, who has neither freedom (= Nega-

tivity), nor history, nor individuality properly speaking. Just like the animal, he can only "represent," in and through his real and active existence, an eternal "idea" or "essence," given once and for all and remaining identical to itself. Just like the life of an animal, his empirical-existence is absolutely determined by the natural place (*topos*) that he occupies for all time in the midst of a given [and] unchanging Cosmos (his occasional "swerivings" being but the effect of "chance"). And if he differs essentially from the animal, it is solely by [virtue of] his thought or his coherent discourse (*Logos*), whose appearance in the Cosmos, moreover, could never be explained. But this Discourse negates nothing and creates nothing: It is content to reveal the given real (*error* remaining in fact inexplicable). Discourse—that is, Man—is therefore incorporated into given-Being. And what there is, in the final analysis, is this one and unique Being, which thinks itself eternally in its given totality. Or better, as Spinoza will say later, what there is in the final analysis—is [a] God who is Substance.

The Man that Hegel analyzes is on the contrary [that] Man who appears in the Judeo-Christian prephilosophical tradition, the only [one that is] truly anthropological. That tradition has maintained itself in the course of "modern times" in the form of "faith" or "theology," [forms] incompatible with ancient and traditional science or philosophy. And it is that [Judeo-Christian] tradition that transmitted to Hegel the notion of the *free historical Individual* (or of the "Person"), [a notion] that this latter [Hegel] was the first to analyze *philosophically*, by trying to reconcile it with the fundamental notions of the pagan philosophy of Nature.² According to that Judeo-Christian tradition, Man differs *essentially* from Nature, and he differs from it, not in his thought alone, but by his very activity. Nature is a "sin" in Man and for Man: He can and must *oppose* himself to it and *negate* it in himself. Even while living in Nature, he does not submit to its laws (miracles!): To the extent that he is opposed to it and negates it, he is

² As a matter of fact, Hegel was preceded along this way by Descartes (first attempts at a Christian *philosophy*), Kant, and Fichte (Christian philosophers par excellence). But these three attempts at philosophical anthropology failed because their authors did not dare abandon the traditional idea (and in the last analysis "pagan" or "naturalist" [idea]: Identity!) of the *immortality* of Man or of the "soul."—With his notions of "monad" and of "sufficient reason," Leibniz is a precursor of the Hegelian notion of Spirit, that is, of a *totality* [which is] at the same time "subjective" and "objective." But Leibniz did not see the essential difference that obtains between Nature and History, and there is in Leibniz no anthropology properly so-called (i.e., explicit [anthropology]).—As for Hegel himself, he did not succeed in *reconciling* his ("dialectical") anthropology with the traditional ("identical") philosophy of Nature. He refused, rightly, to apply to Man the "naturistic" categories of the Greeks, and he rejected their pseudo-anthropology. But, wrongly, he also abandoned their philosophy of nature, in trying to apply to the *sum-total* of the real (as much human as natural) his own dialectical categories, which are in fact specifically and exclusively anthropological.

independent in the face of it; he is autonomous or *free*. And by living "as a stranger" in the natural World, by being opposed to it and to its laws, he creates there a new World that is his own; a *historical* World, in which man can be "converted" and can become a being radically *other* than what he is as a given natural being (Anderssein). In this *historical* World, and through this *free* "conversion," man is not any sort of representative of an eternal or immutably given "species": He is created, he creates himself, as an *individual* unique of its kind.

When Hegel says that all of his philosophy is nothing else but an attempt to conceive Substance as Subject, he means therefore that that philosophy has for its principal goal to render an account of the existence of Man in the natural World, Man being conceived in the same fashion as the Judeo-Christian anthropological tradition conceives [of] him. And that is precisely why, in the text cited, Hegel makes use of the word "Spirit" in order to sum up the whole of his philosophy. For he is concerned to underscore the Judeo-Christian origin of the *anthropological* notion of "Geist" and to oppose that "modern" notion to the whole ancient or pagan tradition, which is a tradition of the [one] sole "Substance" or of *natural* given-Being (Sein).

But if, according to the cited text, Hegel detaches himself from the pagan philosophical tradition and accepts the Judeo-Christian anthropological tradition, he underlines in this same text [the fact] that he also separates himself from this latter tradition on a point of extreme philosophical importance.

The fact is that the Judeo-Christian anthropological tradition is an essentially religious tradition, namely, theist (and "theological"). To be sure, the Judeo-Christians discovered the "spirituality" (= dialecticity) of Man, which is to say his freedom, his historicity, and his individuality. But for them "spirituality" is realized and manifests itself fully only in the beyond, and Spirit, properly so-called, truly "objectively-real" Spirit, is God: [i.e.,] an infinite and eternal being. Man himself, made in the image of God, is truly "spiritual" only to the extent that he is eternal, and he is eternal or "immortal" by the every fact that he is Spirit. Man *really* transcends the natural World in this sense, that he lives also in a *transcendent* World (and not only in a "transcendental" historical World that is *immanent* to Nature). This [transcendent] World is *beyond* Nature, which among other things implies Man taken in his empirical-existence (Dasein); but this World is said to be more "objective" and still more "real" than the natural World here below. Man penetrates into it after his death, never more to leave it; and he also participates in it while living, by having been in it already before his birth. [Kojève is doubtless referring here to intra-uterine baptism.] To say that Man has an "immortal soul" (which is precisely the Spirit in him) is to admit the reality of that transcendent World; and to admit that reality is to affirm the immortality or the infinitude of Man. Now this [transcendent] World does not depend on Man: It is *given* to him once and for all, being "prior"

and essentially immutable in itself. It is on the contrary temporal Man who depends absolutely on this transcendent World: The historical World that Man creates in the here-below is in fact but a reflection in spatio-temporal Nature of the eternal World of the beyond. This eternal World is therefore not properly speaking human: It is *beyond* the free historical individual, just as he is beyond animals and things. This infinite and eternal World is a *divine* World, and its one and unique totality, which is Spirit, is not Man but God. Man gains access to God only *after his death*, and it is then alone that he realizes and fully manifests his "spirituality."

Now according to Hegel "spiritual" or "dialectical" being is necessarily *temporal* and *finite*. The Christian notion of an infinite and eternal Spirit is contradictory in itself: Infinite being is necessarily "natural" given-[and-]static-Being; and created or create-ive, "dynamic," namely, historic or "spiritual" being, is necessarily limited in time, which is to say [that it is] essentially mortal. And the Judeo-Christian tradition did indeed finally take account of the matter. By admitting the immortality of the soul, it admitted the reality of the divine World that is the "natural place" of Man after his death (that death nullifying him as the integrating element of the natural and human World here below). And by the force of the logic of things, Christian thought had to subordinate immortal Man to his eternal infinite transcendent God. It had to give up human freedom and therefore the true historicity and individuality of Man. At one stroke, the three fundamental anthropological (= dialectical) categories were applied literally only to the true Spirit, which is God: For Christian theological thought, Jesus Christ is the only free historical Individual properly speaking, the freedom, historicity, and individuality of the ordinary man being no more than simple effects of divine "grace," that is, [effects] of a trans-human action of the trans-mundane God. But even in applying these categories to the eternal God-Man one runs up against insurmountable difficulties. The Christ is truly autonomous only to the extent that he is God. But being God he can be nothing other than the one and unique Being who thinks himself while remaining eternally identical to himself. Instead of a free historical Individual we have therefore that Substance-Absolute that Parmenides already had in view, that Spinoza rediscovered, and that Schelling revived at the very moment at which Hegel was elaborating his "dialectical" or anthropological philosophy.

Hegel wanted, from the start, to apply to Man the Judeo-Christian notion of free historical Individuality, unknown in pagan antiquity. But in [the course of] philosophically analyzing that "dialectical" notion, he saw it implied finitude or temporality. He understood that Man could not be a free historical individual except on condition of being *mortal* in the proper and strong sense of the term, that is, finite in time and conscious of his finitude. And having understood that, Hegel denied survival: The Man that he has in mind is real only to the extent that he lives and acts in the midst of Nature; outside the natural World he is a pure nothingness.

But to deny survival is in fact to deny God himself. For to say that Man, who *transcends* Nature effectively to the extent that he negates it (by Action), annihilates himself nonetheless as soon as he situates himself *outside* it by dying in it as an animal—to say that is to say that there is *nothing* beyond the natural World. The would-be “transcendent” or “divine” *non-natural* World is in reality only the “transcendental” (or speaking) World of historical human existence, [a world] which does not go beyond the temporal and spatial framework of the natural World. And “God” is objectively real only at the interior of this natural World, where he exists solely in the form of the theological discourse of Man.

Thus, Hegel does not accept the Judeo-Christian anthropological tradition except in a radically secularized or atheistic form. The Spirit-Absolute or the Subject-Substance, of which Hegel speaks, is not God. The Hegelian Spirit is the spatio-temporal totality of the natural World and implies human Discourse revealing this World and itself. Or better, and what is the same thing, Spirit is Man-in-the-World: the mortal Man who lives in a World without God and who speaks of all that exists in it and of all that he creates in it, including himself.

And this is what Hegel says implicitly at the end of the passage cited. He says there that “Spirit” is “Science,” that “Science” is the only “objective-reality” of Spirit. Now this “Science” is nothing else but Hegelian philosophy, which appeared in the midst of the natural World at the end of the historical becoming of Man. Spirit is therefore nothing other than the spatio-temporal totality of the natural World, to the extent that it is entirely revealed through the discourse of the perfect (= satisfied) man or of the Wise Man [le Sage], this discourse being itself a simple integration of the true meaning of all the discourses spoken by men in the course of History. Or better still: The Spirit that the Judeo-Christians called “God” is in reality Hegelian philosophy, to the extent that the latter is absolutely *true*, that is, to the extent that it reveals correctly and completely *all* that has been, is, and will be.

Now according to Hegel, the discursive revelation of Being is possible only if the revealing or speaking being is essentially finite or mortal. Hegel’s Spirit is not therefore truly a “divine” Spirit (because there are no *mortal* gods): It is *human* in the sense that it is a discourse that is immanent to the natural World and that has for its “support” a natural being limited in its existence by time and space.

When Hegel says that the essential content of his whole philosophy can be summed up by saying that it interprets Substance as Subject or [that it] conceives the Absolute as Spirit, that signifies that this philosophy must above all philosophically render an account of itself as a Discourse revealing in a complete and adequate manner the totality of Being and of the Real. It achieves this by explaining how and why Man comes to speak in a coherent fashion of himself and of the World in which he lives and that he creates. And that explanation is a phenomenological, metaphysical, and

ontological description of Man understood as free historical Individual. Now to describe Man as a free historical Individual is to describe him [thus]: as “finite” in and through himself, on the ontological level; as “worldly” or spatial and temporal, on the metaphysical level; and as “mortal” on the phenomenological level. On this last level, Man “appears” as a being who is always conscious of his death, [who] often freely accepts it, and, aware of what he is doing, sometimes inflicts it on himself. Thus the “dialectical” or anthropological philosophy of Hegel is in the final analysis a *philosophy of death* (or, what is the same thing: of atheism).

Analysis of the passage of the Preface to the *Phenomenology* in which Hegel outlines the major themes of his philosophy shows clearly the primordial role that the idea of death plays in that philosophy. Acceptance without reserve of the fact of death, or of human finitude conscious of itself, is the ultimate source of all of Hegel’s thought, which does no more than draw out all the consequences, even the most ultimate, of the existence of this fact. According to that thought, it is by voluntarily accepting the danger of death in a Struggle for pure prestige that Man appears for the first time in the natural World; and it is by resigning himself to death, by revealing it through his discourse, that Man arrives finally at absolute Knowledge or at Wisdom, in thus completing History. For it is by starting out from the idea of death that Hegel works out his Science or the “absolute” philosophy, which alone is capable of philosophically rendering an account of the fact of the existence in the World of a finite being conscious of its finitude and sometimes disposing of it as it likes.

Thus, Hegel’s absolute Knowledge or Wisdom and the conscious acceptance of death understood as complete and definitive annihilation are one and the same. Hegel says it himself in so many words in another passage of the Preface (p. 29 ff.), [which is] of absolutely pivotal importance. And it is only in reading this truly remarkable passage that we grasp the ultimate themes of Hegel’s thought, understand its true significance, and take account of all its import.

The text of this passage can be translated somewhat as follows (p. 29, line 23, to p. 30, line 15):

The activity (Tätigkeit) of separation (Scheidens) is the force and the work of the *understanding* (Verstandes), [that is,] of the power (Macht) [which is] the-most-worthy-of-awe (verwundersamsten) and the greatest [of all], or better still, [of the] absolute [power]. The circle which is at rest [by being] closed in itself and which holds (hält) its constitutive-elements (Momente) as [does a] substance, is immediate relationship (Verhältnis) and consequently not at all (nicht) worthy-of-awe. But [the fact] that the accidental (Akzidentelle) as such separated from its periphery (Umfange), [that] the entity-which-is-bound (Gebundene) and which is objectively-real only in its connection (Zusammenhang) with something-else, achieves an empirical-existence (Dasein) of its own and a separate-or-isolated (abgesonderte) freedom, [all that] is [the expression of] the prodigious (ungeheure) power of the Negative; it is the energy of thought (Denkens), of the pure abstract-Ego (Ichs). Death,—if we wish so to

call that unreality (Unwirklichkeit)—is what-there-is-that-is-most=terrible (Furchtbarste), and to sustain [maintenir] death is what requires the greatest force. Powerless beauty hates the understanding, because it [the understanding] demands (zumutet) this of it; which it [beauty] is not capable of. Now the life of the Spirit is not [that] life which shudders (scheut) before death and [merely] protects itself (rein bewahrt) from wasting-away (Verwüstung), but [it is] that [life] which supports death and conserves (erhält) itself in it. Spirit achieves its truth only in finding itself in absolute rending (Zerrissenheit). It [Spirit] is not this [prodigious] power by being the Positive which turns away (wegsieht) from the Negative, as when we say of something: this is nothing or [this is] false, and having [thus] gotten rid of it (damit fertig), we pass on therefrom to something else; no, Spirit is that power only to the extent that it contemplates the Negative full in the face (ins Angesicht schaut) [and] abides (verweilt) with it. This abiding-with [séjour-prolongé] (Verweilen) is the magical-force (Zauberkraft) which transposes (umkehrt) the Negative into given-Being (sein).—This [power of Spirit, or this magical-force,] is the same thing as what we called above [p. 19, line 27] the Subject, which, by giving in its [own] element an empirical-existence to specific-determination, dialectically-suppresses (aufhebt) abstract Immediateness (Unmittelbarkeit), that is, [an Immediateness] only *existing-as-a-given-being* in general (nur überhaupt *seiende*), and [which] is precisely thereby [par cela même] true-or-genuine [vraie-ou-véritable] (wahrhafte) Substance, [that is,] given-Being or Immediateness which does not have Mediation (Vermittlung) outside it, but which is itself that Mediation.

In order to understand the somewhat enigmatic beginning of this passage, [which is] otherwise perfectly clear and univocal, we must have the following before our minds.

Philosophy is the search for Wisdom, and Wisdom is the fullness of self-consciousness. By aspiring to and in laying claim to Wisdom, Hegel intends therefore, in the last analysis, to take account of himself and to give an accounting of his self [se rendre compte et rendre compte de soi]: [an account, that is,] of what he is and of what he does. Now his activity, the one to which his truly human existence reduces itself, is that of a philosopher or of a Wise Man [un Sage], who reveals by his discourse the being that he himself is and [also the being] that he is not. In philosophizing, Hegel must therefore above all give an account of his own philosophical discourse. Now in [the course of] observing this discourse, Hegel notes that we have here not a question of some passive given, but [rather that it is a matter] of the result of an “activity” which can be called a “labor” [“travail”] and which requires a great “force,” provided by what he calls here the “Understanding.” He declares therefore that the Understanding is a “power,” and he says that it is truly “worthy of awe.”

It is apparent that “Understanding” signifies here what is truly and specifically human in Man, because it is the faculty of discourse that distinguishes him from animals and from things. It is also what is essential in every philosopher, whoever he may be, and therefore in Hegel himself. The whole question is to know what it is. Hegel tells us that the Understanding (= Man) is an “*absolute power*,” which manifests itself in and

through “the activity of *separation*.” or even better, as [the] “act-of-*separating*” (*Scheiden*). But why does he say that?

He says it because the activity of the Understanding, that is, human thought, is essentially *discursive*. Man does not reveal instantaneously, as in a lightning-flash, the totality of the real: He does not grasp that totality in one single concept-word. He reveals one by one, by isolated words or partial discourses, the elements constitutive of the totality, by *separating* them from it in order to be able to do so; and it is only the sum-total of his discourse, extended in time, that can reveal the total, indeed the simultaneous, reality. Now in fact, these elements are *inseparable* from the whole that they constitute, by [virtue of] being bound up among themselves by spatial and temporal, namely, material, interconnections, which are indissoluble. Their *separation* is therefore indeed a “miracle,” and the power that effects it well merits being called “absolute.”

The absolute force or power of Understanding that Hegel had in mind was in the final analysis nothing but the power or force of *abstraction* that we find in Man.

Whenever we describe any isolated object, we abstract from the rest of the universe. In speaking of “this table” or of “this dog,” for example, we speak of them as though they were alone in the world. Now in fact, as real things, the dog and the table occupy at a given moment quite determinate places in the real World, and they cannot be separated from what surrounds them. But man, who isolates them through his thought, can, in that thought, [re-]combine them as he sees fit. He can, for example, place this dog under this table, even if in fact they are separated at this very moment by a distance of a thousand kilometers. Now this power that thought has to separate and recombine things is in effect “absolute,” because no real force of connection or repulsion is sufficiently powerful to oppose it. And that power is not at all fictitious or “ideal.” For it is in separating and in recombining things in and through his discursive thought that man forms his technical projects, which, once realized through work, really transform the aspect of the natural [and] given World by creating therein a World of culture.

Generally speaking, when we create the *concept* of a real entity, we detach it from its *hic et nunc*. The concept of a thing is that thing itself as [en tant que] detached from its given *hic et nunc*. Thus, the concept “this dog” differs in no respect from the real concrete dog to which it is “related,” except that this dog is here and now, while its concept is everywhere and nowhere, always and never. Now, to detach an entity from its *hic et nunc* is to separate it from its “material” support, [which is] determined in a univocal manner by the rest of the given spatio-temporal universe, of which that entity is a part. That is why that entity can be altered or “simplified” as we wish, after it has become a concept. It is thus that this real dog is, as concept, not only “this dog,” but beyond that [it is, as concept] “any dog” [“un chien quelconque”], “dog in general,” quadru-

ped," "animal," etc., and even simply "Being." And once again that power of *separation*, which is at the source of [all] the sciences, arts, and crafts, is an "absolute" power, against which Nature can oppose no effective resistance.

It is not correct, however, to say that the real entity [which has] become a concept is situated outside time and space. Aristotle was right in pointing out that the platonic "ideas" exist only in "material" spatial and temporal things, of which they are the "essences" or "entelechies." The absolute power of the Understanding goes so far as to *separate* an "essence" from its natural support: The essence "dog" is separated from this dog that runs and barks here and now. But it cannot transport it [the essence] into a world [that is] so to speak "hyper-celestial," beyond space-time. Once detached from its natural support, the "essence" becomes "meaning" or "idea." But the "meaning" does not float in the void: It is necessarily the meaning of a *word* or of a *discourse*—[words or discourses] pronounced, written, or only thought, but existing always in the midst of the spatial and temporal world. The concept is not an "idea" or a "meaning" [merely], but [it is rather] a *word-having-a-meaning*, or a coherent *discourse* (Logos). Thus, the absolute power of the Understanding does not *separate* the essence-idea from its natural support except to attach it, as meaning-idea, to the specific support of a discourse that is itself also [something] here and now (since it is a discourse-endowed-with-a-meaning only to the extent that it is comprehended by some *concrete* man).

But it remains no less the case that the *separation* of the "essence" from its *natural* support is not an event that takes place spontaneously in the midst of Nature, but [rather it is] the result of an "activity" of the "Understanding," or of a "labor" that requires a "force" endowed with an "absolute power." Now we can indeed say, with Hegel, that this power is "worthy of awe" and that the principal task of philosophy or of Science is to take account of it.

But the philosophical precursors of Hegel went amiss in [their attempts at] responding to the question posed, [and] in explaining the miracle in question. They saw and posed the problem wrongly. They spoke of the "Subject" in general or of "Thought" as such, in asking themselves how and why Being is also concept, that is, [by asking] why and how it can have a *meaning*; but they forgot to say that there are also discourses endowed with a meaning, [words] that men speak, write, or think in space and time. By thus simplifying the problem they arrived, to be sure, at a result. Parmenides affirms the identity of Being and Thought; Aristotle speaks of a Being that thinks itself eternally in its totality; Spinoza, taking his inspiration from Descartes and [in turn] inspiring Schelling, says that Thought is an attribute of Substance. Hegel does not contest this result of the philosophy that preceded his own. He says only that the relationship between Being and Thought, which that [preceding] philosophy had in view, was nothing very remarkable. In order truly to give an account of the relation-

ship in question, it would have sufficed to identify, with Hegel, Concept and Time; or, what is the same thing, to affirm the *temporality* of Being itself. For the *concept*, or more precisely the *meaning* of Being, differs in no respect from Being itself, except for the absence, in the *meaning*, of the *being* of that Being. And the same holds for the meaning of any thing that *is*, since Being is the integration of *all* that *is*, in such a way that the meaning "Being" is an integration of all meanings in general. The *essence*-meaning of a thing is, as we say, that very thing minus its *existence*. Now the "subtraction" that removes the being from Being is nothing other than Time, which makes Being pass from the present, in which it *is*, into the past, in which it *is not* (is no more), and in which it is therefore only pure *meaning* (or essence without existence). And since this is no *new* Being that *is* in the present, but [rather only] an "old" or *past* Being, we can say that Being is an essence that has acquired [an] existence; or, what is the same thing, [we can say] that the being is not Being solely, but [also] Concept; or, what is again the same thing, [we can say] that Being has a *meaning* to the very extent that it *is* (as Time). In the same way, since it is the same past Being that is in the present and will be in the future (or, *not being* as yet, it is also essence without existence), we can say that Being has a *goal* (this goal, which is the transformation of the future into the present or the grant of existence to essence, which is besides nothing but the transformation of the present into the past, that is, of Being into Concept): [all of] which we can express also by saying that the very being of Being has a meaning; or, what is the same thing [we can say] that Being has a *raison d'être* (that *raison* being the thought of being by Being [la pensée de l'être par l'Être]). Thus, if Being and Time are but one, we can say that Being coincides with Thought, that it thinks itself eternally, and that Thought is the attribute of its Substance or, if we prefer, [that Thought is] its "goal."

Hegel himself would also agree to putting it that way. Except that for him, this relationship between Being and Thought in the midst of the "sphere" of Parmenides, or of the Aristotelian "Circle" (which Hegel evokes in the text cited), or [in the midst] of the Spinozan and Schellingian "Substance" (of which he speaks as well) [—Hegel would insist that this relationship] has nothing "miraculous" about it. For this relationship is "immediate," says Hegel. Now "immediate" signifies, in Hegel, "natural," or "given." And in fact *this* relationship presupposes no "activity," no "labor," no "force" or "power." For there the "essence" is not *separated* from its "natural" support: The essence of Being subsists in Being itself and in it alone, in the same way as the essence of the dog subsists uniquely in the dog (and that is why there cannot be tables, for example, in *this* Being—that is, [there cannot be any] *artifacts*). There is here neither action nor labor nor power, because given Being remains as it is given, in its immutable identity with itself.

What is "miraculous," on the contrary, is precisely the *separation* that

the Understanding effects. For it [the separation] is effectively “against nature.” Without the intervention of the Understanding, the essence “dog” would exist only in and through real dogs, which would in return determine it in a univocal manner by their very existence. And that is why we can say that the relationship between the dog and the essence “dog” is “natural” or “immediate.” But when, thanks to the absolute power of the Understanding, the essence becomes meaning and is incarnated in a *word*, there is no longer any “natural” relationship between it and its support; otherwise, words that have nothing in common among them insofar as [they are] phonetic or graphic spatio-temporal realities, whatever they may be (dog, chien, Hund, etc.), [—otherwise these words] could not serve as support for one sole and selfsame essence, having all one single and very-same meaning. There has been, therefore, a *negation* here of the given as given (with its “natural” relationships between essence and existence); that is, [there has been] *creation* (of concepts or of word-having-a-meaning, which as words have nothing to do, by themselves, with the meaning that is incarnate in them); in other words [there has been] *action* or *labor*.

Now if the traditional conception of [the conjunction] Being-Thought takes account of the *possibility* of a discourse revealing the meaning of what is, by explaining how and why Being has meaning, it does not say how and why discourse becomes *real*, that is, how and why we manage in fact to “disengage the meaning from the being” and to incarnate it in a collection of words that have nothing in common with that meaning and that have been created out of whole cloth with an eye to that incarnation. Now it is precisely the reality of discourse that is the miracle that philosophy must explain.

What is miraculous, says Hegel, is the fact that some thing that is really *inseparable* from [some] other thing achieves nevertheless a *separate* existence; or better yet—that a simple attribute or “accident” becomes an *autonomous* reality.

Now the essence is a “bound-entity,” [tied] to its support, and it is “objectively-real only in its connection with something-other” than itself, that is, with its support. Nevertheless, the Understanding succeeds in *separating* the essence from its natural support and procures for it “an empirical-existence of its own” by incarnating it in a spoken, written, or thought word or discourse. And that “empirical-existence” of its own of the essence that has become meaning is also its “separated-or-isolated freedom.” For the meaning embodied in the word and in discourse is no longer subject to the necessity that rules essences bound to their respective natural supports [that are] determined in a univocal manner by their *hic et nunc*. Thus, for example, the meaning embodied in the word “dog” can continue to subsist even after dogs have disappeared from the earth; it can (by being transmitted by radio, for example) overcome obstacles [that would be] insurmountable for a real dog; it [the word] can be placed where there would be no room for the latter [the real dog]; and so forth. And it is this “separated freedom”

and the “absolute power” from which it flows that condition the possibility of *error*, for which pre-Hegelian philosophers could never account. For this “Freedom” allows the meaning embodied in words to be combined otherwise than the corresponding essences, bound to their natural supports, would be.

It is this “activity,” capable of *disengaging* the meaning from Being, of *separating* essence from existence and of embodying the meaning-essence in discourse [—it is this] that is the miracle for which philosophy (or more precisely, Science and Wisdom) is supposed to account. And it was in [the course of] seeking to account for it that Hegel discovered (or made precise) the fundamental (ontological) category of *Negativity*, which he calls here the “Negative” [le “Négatif”], or the “negative-or-negate-ive-entity” [l’“entité-négative-ou-négatrice”]. This Negativity is “the energy of thought,” which disengages the meaning from Being by separating essence from existence. It [this Negativity] is what is “the energy of the pure abstract-Ego” engendering “thought,” that is, the Understanding and its discourse. Now whatever people may sometimes have said, discourse does not fall from heaven, and it does not float in the void, “above the waters.” If it [that is, discourse] expresses a “thought” that belongs properly to an “Ego,” this Ego has necessarily an empirical-existence in the natural spatio-temporal World, being a *human* Ego. What is an “abstract-Ego” (Ich) on the ontological level (this Ego being the form under which Negativity subsists in Identity or in given-Being) is the human “personal-Ego” (Selbst) on the metaphysical level: It is the Man who “appears,” on the phenomenological level, as a free historical *speaking* individual.

The miracle of the existence of discourse, of which philosophy must render an account, is therefore nothing else than the miracle of the existence of Man in the world. And as a matter of fact we can apply to Man himself the passage from Hegel that I have [heretofore] interpreted in reference to Discourse. For Man is *also* a “bound-being” that is “objectively-real only in its connection with something-else”: he is nothing without the animal that serves him as support, and he is pure nothingness outside the natural World. Yet nevertheless he *separates* himself from this World and *opposes* himself to it. He creates [for] himself “an empirical-existence of his own,” essentially different from every purely natural empirical existence. And he acquires [for] himself “a separate-or-isolated freedom,” which permits him to move and to act completely differently from the way in which the animal that incarnates him would have moved and acted, if that animal did not incarnate Negativity and were not therefore an Ego who thinks and who speaks. Endowed with an “absolute power,” which becomes in him an effective “force” [which is] “worthy of awe,” Man produces, in [or through] “activity,” or a “labor” [which is] rational or penetrated by the “Understanding,” a real World contrary-to-nature, created by his “separated freedom” for his *own* “empirical-existence”—the technical or cultural, social or historical World.

Therefore, just like the discourses that he utters, Man is not a *given-Being*, nor [is he] the “accident” of a “Substance.” He is the *result* of effort by an absolute *power*, and he is that power itself: He is *Negativity* incarnate, or, as Hegel says, “negative-or-negate-ive-entity” (das Negative). It is only by comprehending Man as Negativity that we [can] comprehend him in his “miraculous” human specificity, making of him an Ego who thinks and speaks, or who “separates” the essence from its natural or given “connection” with existence.

We know, besides, that on the ontological level, Negativity is actualized as negative or creative *Act* (in order to subsist as “abstract-Ego”). We also know that on the metaphysical level “the *true being* of Man is *his action*,” and that it is in it alone that “Individuality is *objectively-real*” (*Phenomenology*, p. 236, lines 25-26). And we know, finally, that on the phenomenological level it is through the action of the *struggle* that Man “manifests” himself for the first time in the World of natural “phenomena,” and that it is in consequence of the action of *labor* that Understanding “appears” in this World with his thought and his words.³

Now Negativity, taken in isolation, is pure Nothingness (on the ontological level). This Nothingness nihilates as [the] Action (of the abstract-Ego) in Being. But Action nihilates by annihilating this Being, and therefore [also] by annihilating itself, since without Being it *is* only Nothingness. Negativity therefore is no other thing than the *finitude* of Being (or the presence in it of a genuine future, which will never be its present; and

³ Hegel says so, in Section A of Chapter IV of the *Phenomenology*. See above, the translation printed [as] “By Way of Introduction.” [That is, “In Place of an Introduction,” the first chapter of the English translation of Kojève’s *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, edited by Allan Bloom, translated by James H. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969).] Action reverses the “natural” course of Time in which temporal given-Being or [Being] having a meaning endures. It [i.e., Action] introduces the primacy of the *future* in Time, in which Being *is* and is *given* only in the present. For the present of Action is the realization of a project for the future [d’un projet d’avenir]: In and through Action (or better, *as* Action), the future has a *real presence* in Being. Now the future is *also*, like the past, the nothingness of being [le néant de l’être], that is, its *meaning*. But this meaning was not and is not really attached to present or given existence. That is why it can in some manner be directed away from its “natural” existence (of which it would be the essence) and oriented toward an “artificial” existence, which is that of discourse (of which it will be the meaning). And it is as a *project in discourse* [projet discursif] that the future is *really present* as the future. To be sure, the project *realizes* itself in the present, and it is in the past as already *realized*. But the present, and therefore the past, of the project are penetrated and determined by the future, which subsists in it in the form of discourse. The real created by Action is therefore a real revealed by thought or the spoken word [parole]. It is Action (= Man) that creates the World dominated by the future, the World of Science and the arts, in the midst of a natural World dominated by the present (to the extent that the World is inanimate or “material”) and by the past (to the extent that the World is living).

Action [therefore] is essentially *finite*. That is why (on the metaphysical level) the historical World, created by Action, has necessarily a beginning and an end. And the entity that is Action in its very being “appears” (on the phenomenological level) to itself and to others as irremediably *mortal*.

That is why, in the text cited, Hegel can call *Death* the “unreality” that Negativity or the “negative-or-negate-ive-entity” *is*. But if Man is Action, and if Action is Negativity “appearing” as Death, [then] Man is, in his human or speaking existence, only a *death*: [a death] more or less deferred, and conscious of itself.

Therefore: to render an account, philosophically, of Discourse, or of Man as speaking, is to accept without flinching the fact of death, and to describe, on the three philosophical levels [i.e., the ontological, metaphysical, and phenomenological], its significance and import. Now that is precisely what philosophers before Hegel had omitted doing.

Hegel was not surprised at this. For he knew that death “is what is most terrible” and that acceptance of death is “what requires the greatest force.” He says that the Understanding requires that acceptance. For the Understanding, through its discourse, reveals the real and reveals itself. And since it [the Understanding] is born of finitude, it is only by thinking death and by speaking of it that it is truly what it is: discourse conscious of itself and of its origin. But Hegel knows also that “powerless beauty” is incapable of bowing to the requirements of the Understanding. The esthete, the romantic, [and] the mystic flee the [very] idea of death and speak of Nothingness itself as of something that *is*.

Now, says Hegel, the “life of the Spirit” is not that [sort of life] “which shudders before death and preserves itself from wasting away, but [rather it is] that [sort of life] which supports death and maintains itself in it.” The point is, that Spirit is Being revealed by speech [la parole], and the life of the Spirit is the existence of the philosopher or of the Wise Man [le Sage], conscious of the World and of itself. Now it is only in becoming conscious of his finitude, and therefore of his death, that man truly becomes conscious of himself. For he *is* finite and mortal.

In addition, Spirit “achieves its truth only by finding itself in absolute rendering.” For once again, Spirit is the Real revealed by Discourse. Now Discourse is born in the Man who opposes himself to Nature, or who negates—in Struggle—the given animal that he is himself, and through Labor, the natural World that is given to him. It is from this “rendering” of the Real into Man and Nature that the Understanding and its Discourse are born, which reveal the Real and thus transform it into Spirit. This *opposition*, this conflict between Man and the given Real, manifests itself first by the *erroneous* character of human revelatory [révélateur] discourse, and it is only at the end of times, at the termination of History, that the discourse of the Wise Man *re-joins* reality. For it is [only] then that we can say that “the Spirit re-discovers itself,” and that it “achieves its truth,” which is the adequate revelation of reality. But it rediscovers itself only in

and through that “rending” [“*déchirement*”] that is manifested in the many forms of error in the course of the historical process. And this process is that of a series of generations that follow each other, that are born, therefore, and [that] die, in time.

It is death that engenders Man in Nature, and it is death that makes him progress to his final destiny, which is that of the Wise Man fully conscious of himself and therefore fully conscious of his own finitude. Thus, Man does not arrive at Wisdom or at the fullness of self-consciousness so long as, in the way of the vulgar, he feigns an ignorance of the Negativity that is the very source of his human existence, and that is manifest in him and to him, not only as struggle and labor, but moreover as death or absolute finitude. The vulgar treat death as something of which one says: “It is nothing, or it is false”; and by turning away from it most quickly, they hasten to pass on to the order of the day.⁴ But if the philosopher wants to attain to Wisdom, he must “look the Negative full in the face, and [must] abide with it.” And it is in discursive contemplation of Negativity revealing itself through death that the “power” of the Wise Man, conscious of himself, [and] who incarnates Spirit, is manifested. Hegel says that it is this “abiding” with the Negative that is “the magical force that transposes the Negative into given-Being.” He alludes, in saying that, to what is, according to him, the birth of Man in the World.⁵ For it is in the Struggle [to the death, for pure prestige], that the power of the Negative mani-fests itself [se mani-feste] through the voluntary acceptance of the risk of life (the Master) or through the anguish inspired by the conscious apparition of death (the Slave), [it is only in the Struggle] that Man creates his human being, by thus transforming, as if by “magic,” the Nothingness that he is and that is manifest to him and through him as death, into a negate-ive *existence*, of the warrior and of the laborer, creators [both,] of History. It is this “abiding” with death that *real-izes* Negativity and inserts it into the natural World in the form human *being*. And it is by taking up again, in his discourse, this anthropogenetic contact [ce contact anthropogène] with death, that the Wise Man transforms the *nothingness* of an *erroneous* description of Man into the revealed *being* that *truth* is.

This “magical force,” Hegel continues, is what he previously (p. 19) called the “Subject,” or the “abstract-Ego” of the “Understanding.” That is to say that thought and the discourse that reveals the Real are born of the negate-ive Action that *real-izes* Nothingness by nullifying Being—the given-being of Man in the Struggle, and the given-being of Nature through

⁴ This theme has been taken up again by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*, Vol. I: das Man und das Gerede.

⁵ Hegel speaks thereof in Section A of Chapter IV [of the *Phenomenology*]. See the translation of that section, printed above [as] “By Way of Introduction.” [This note refers to an earlier section of the book, from which the present essay is taken.]

Labor (which results, moreover, from the real contact with death in the Struggle). This is to say, therefore, that the human being itself is no other thing than that Action; he is [a] death that lives a human life.

The being of man, being thus, if we wish, a deferred death, or an affirmation of Nothingness through the negation of the given—or better yet, *creation*—is not therefore a *given-being*; he is not, like the natural being, the “immediacy *which-exists-as-a-given-being*.” On the contrary, he exists humanly only to the extent that he “dialectically-suppresses” or “mediates” that natural “immediacy” through negate-ive Action. That “immediacy” has “mediation outside itself,” for it is *Man* who negates or transforms Nature by his Labor and in his Struggles, and it is *human* discourse that reveals it. Man, on the contrary, negates *himself*; it is he *himself* who creates and transforms himself; he is *himself* the “mediation” of given-being through active, and therefore discursive or revelatory, negation. And that is why Man is unique in being a being who reveals Being and who is conscious of *himself*. Or, what is the same thing, the human being, to the extent that he implies the consciousness of and the will for his [own] death, is a being “mediated” by Negation—that is, a *dialectical* being.

Such is the meaning of the cited passage from the Preface to the *Phenomenology*. Interpreted on the ontological level, this passage signifies that it is not the (infinite) *Totality* of Being (or the One-which-is) that reveals itself to itself, but that this *Totality* is revealed by one of its (limited) *parts*, which also reveals itself. Metaphysically speaking, the passage signifies that Spirit, that is, the Being that reveals itself to itself, is not God, but Man-in-the-World. For the part [of Being] that reveals Being is the *human*, essentially *finite*, being, who creates himself in time through the active negation of Being, and who, being Negation or Negativity, annihilates himself after having *endured*. And this revelation of Being by the temporal and temporary human being is a *discursive* or “dialectical” revelation, which unfolds itself in the time in which it was born and in which it will one day disappear. In this discursive revelation, the human being *relates himself* to the totality of given-Being, first through negate-ive *action* and the *erroneous* discourse that flows from it, but finally through the *adequate* discourse that is born of the passive *contemplation* of the Wise Man who, being “satisfied” by given-Being, ceases to negate it, transform it, and to “disfigure” it, even if this be only in his discourse.

And it is a curious thing, a thing that Hegel does not say in the cited passage, but that follows from the whole of his System: This “satisfaction” (Befriedigung) of the Wise Man, which presupposes his perfect awareness of the World and of himself, does not itself attain its perfection and fullness except in and through the awareness of death.

In effect, Man can be satisfied only in being *aware* of his satisfaction, that is, *aware of himself* as satisfied. Now if Man is essentially finite, he cannot be fully aware of himself except by taking cognizance of his death.

It is therefore only by knowing himself to be irremediably *mortal* that the Wise Man can attain the fullness of satisfaction.

Looking at the matter more closely, we realize that this ultimate consequence of Hegelianism is psychologically less paradoxical than it seems at first glance. To be sure, the idea of death does not add to the *well-being* of man; it does not make him *happy*, and procures no *pleasure* for him, nor any *joy*. But it is unique in being able to *satisfy his pride*, that is, in being able to procure for him precisely that "satisfaction" that Hegel has in mind. For Hegelian "satisfaction" is nothing else than the full satisfaction of the human and anthropogenetic desire for Recognition (*Anerkennen*) of man's desire to see all other men attribute an absolute value to his *free historical individuality* or to his *personhood* [*personnalité*]. Now it is only by being, and by feeling to be, mortal or finite—that is, by existing and feeling himself to exist, in a universe without a beyond and without a God—that Man can affirm and make known his liberty, his historicity, and his individuality, [all] "unique in the world."

The cited passage from the Preface to the *Phenomenology* puts fully in evidence the decisive role that the idea of death plays in the philosophy of Hegel. I would like, nevertheless, to cite a series of other texts that make possible [a further] precision of the Hegelian notion of death. For various reasons, however, I will draw them only from the *Phenomenology* and from earlier writings.

The theme of death appeared already in the fragment on love of 1795, translated in Appendix I (see above, pp. 510 ff.)*

In this fragment love appeared to Hegel as what there is that is most human in man; the "lover" is man viewed as human being. Hegel underlines the essential difference that subsists between the death of man and the [mere] "ending" or "corruption" of a purely natural being; he speaks of a plant—but he could just as well have spoken of an animal or of an inanimate thing. The difference resides in the fact that the end of the natural being is determined by the general laws of nature, that it is imposed in some manner from without by the rest of the universe, by what is "foreign" to the finite being itself. In contrast, the death of man must therefore be understood as an end that is "immanent" or "autonomous," that is, voluntary or willed, and hence, [as] conscious.

In addition, Hegel says that man is *individual* only to the extent that he is mortal. If Spirit (which is called love here) were infinite or immortal, it would be rigorously one. If Spirit realizes itself as multiple, in the form of human beings who differ from one another and of whom each lives an

* This refers to an earlier section of the book from which the present essay is taken. The "fragment on love" in question can be found in English in *G. W. F. Hegel: Early Theological Writings*, translated by T. M. Knox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 302-08.

individual life that is his own—[if this be so] it is solely because the human or “spiritual” beings, namely, the “lovers,” are mortal.

In the same way, the “autonomy” or the *freedom* of the human being is linked to death. To say of a being that it is “autonomous” is to say that it is mortal.

Finally, the same fragment also contains the idea of the historical survival of man in the here-below. Men are separated and annihilated definitively in and through death; but they live humanly and remain socially united in and through their children (thanks to education and the historical tradition, as we shall see later). The child implies and presupposes the death of the parents; but in spite of the “negation” that separates them, there is [an] “identity” between the generations that succeed each other. And that [identity] is precisely what we call History. Or, if we prefer, it [this process] is the “total,” “synthetic,” or “dialectical” existence of the human being in which the thesis of the “united” (Identity) and the antithesis of the “separated” (Negativity) coincide in the synthesis of the “re-united” (Totality). The *historicity* (or the dialecticity) of Man is therefore inseparably around to the fact of his death.

All the principal themes of the Hegelian philosophy of death are found therefore already in one of his first writings. And all these themes will be taken up again, rendered more precise, and developed, in the later writings.

The theme of the essential difference between the death of man—which is death properly so called—and the death-corruption of a merely living being is taken up again in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*.

Hegel says this there (p. 69, lines 12-16):

What is limited to a natural life cannot by itself go-beyond (hinausgehen) its immediate [or given] empirical-existence (Dasein); but it is driven beyond (hinausgetrieben) this existence by something-else [than itself], and this fact-of-being-wrested[and-projected]-beyond (Hinausgerissenwerden) is its death.

Once again the “end” of the natural being is presented as an exterior law passively submitted to. The natural being is essentially “given,” that is, “static,” or “identical” to itself: Any radical change, which is something other than the “development” of its given or innate “nature,” is imposed on it from outside and signifies its annihilation. Man, on the contrary, can spontaneously transcend himself and can go by himself beyond his “innate nature,” even while remaining what he is, that is, a *human* being. But for the animal that serves him as support, that transcendence signifies death. However, in the *human* animal that death is no longer exterior: He is himself (as man) the cause of his death (as animal). It is only this “autonomous” or “spontaneous” death that can be conscious and also freely accepted or willed (the risk of life). And it is alone [, this conscious dying,] that is truly human, humanizing, or anthropogenetic.

Being a negate-ive being, man would be able to go beyond himself indefinitely (without ceasing to be Man, without having need of becoming a “*Super-man*” [un “*Sur-homme*”). It is only the end of the anthropophoric

animal that puts a terminus to human self-transcendence. That is why the death of man is always in some way premature and violent, in contrast to the “natural” death of animals and plants, which have completed the cycle of their evolution. And that is also why human transcendence can be realized as a single and unique History, despite (or because of) the succession of generations, which remain absolutely separated from each other in the plant and animal realm.

Hegel says it in his *Jena Lectures* of 1803-04 (Vol. XIX, last sentence of Note 4 [on p. 222])*:

The individuals are first of all themselves this death in-the-way-of-becoming (werdende), . . . but in their act-of-becoming-dead (Totwerden) they contemplate at the same time their act-of-becoming-alive. The [human] infant is not, as in the animal relationship, the existent kind [genre], but the parents [recognizing themselves in him . . .].

As we shall see again, it is the self-negate-ive act, that is, [an act that is] free and historical, interrupted by the death of the animal that incarnated it, which prolongs it, which achieves and perfects itself in and through the infant educated or created as human through that very act.

But man would not have been able to negate himself or to transcend himself if he were not finite or mortal. The humanity of man *presupposes* therefore the finitude of the animal that incarnates him, and consequently it presupposes the death of the man himself. And on the other hand, man also *provokes* the death of the animal by transcending, through negate-ive action, his given “nature”: In the extreme case, he risks his life and has himself killed without a valid biological reason. We can therefore say that man is a mortal *sickness* of the animal.

And Hegel actually says so.

We find the following passages in the *Lectures* of 1803-04:

To the extent that the universal system raises the animal at the interior of itself up to the point at which its universal-entity is fixed by opposition (gegen) to its difference [which distinguishes it from all that is not it], exists for itself (and) does not coincide with that difference, it is *sickness* which is posited, in which the animal would [go] beyond itself. [But] to the extent that it cannot organize the universality for itself, without relating it to the animal process, . . . it does no more than to pass into its death [Vol. XIX, p. 174, lines 28-35].—With sickness the animal passes beyond the limit of its nature; but the sickness of the animal is the becoming of the Spirit. *In sickness, the universal-entity . . . has isolated itself*; which is what . . . can end only with death, [Vol. XIX, p. 186, lines 12-15 and 18].—The fixed universality of sickness only nullifies the infinitude of opposition (Gegensatzes) and [it] transforms itself (geht über) in death; the universality of Spirit [on the contrary] acts in such a way that the opposition is maintained (bestehen), to the extent that that universality

* For references to “Vol. XIX,” see J. Hoffmeister’s edition of *Jenenser Realphilosophie I: Die Vorlesungen von 1803-04* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1931).

has dialectically-suppressed (aufgehoben) opposition in itself [Vol. XIX, p. 189, lines 4-7].

Sickness and the death of the animal are but an abortive attempt at self-transcendence. Sickness is a discord between the animal and the rest of the natural world; the sick animal is, so to speak, dislodged from its "natural place" (topos), from the *hic et nunc* that fixes its particularity and distinguishes it from everything that is not it. Now to detach [something] from the *hic et nunc* is to universalize [it], to transform [it] into a *general* notion or [into] a concept. But the animal is absolutely determined by its *topos*. To dislodge it therefrom is to nullify it, is to render it sick unto death. For in contrast to Man, the animal cannot "organize the universal in itself, without relating it to the animal process": To put it another way, it [the animal] cannot develop the particular entity that has become a concept by its detachment from its given *hic et nunc* into a universe of discourse (which it will transform by action into a real technical and historical real world). But Man can do so only because the animal that incarnates him is susceptible of being dislodged from its *topos* by sickness and death.

It is through sickness that the animal tries in some way to transcend its given "nature." It does not succeed in this because that transcendence is equivalent, for it, to its nullification. But the success of Man presupposes that attempt, and this is why the sickness that leads to the death of the animal is "the becoming of the Spirit" or of Man. (Spirit is not therefore an eternal and perfect God who incarnates himself, but a sick and mortal animal who transcends himself in time.)

The universality that manifests itself as sickness is "fixed"; which is to say that it is not synthetic, total, or dialectical. It simply destroys the "opposition" of the Particular and the Universal by nullifying the particularity of the animal in and through death. The "universality of the Spirit," by contrast, i.e., that [universality] that manifests itself as human existence, maintains the opposition of the Particular and the Universal, by "dialectically suppressing" these opposites, that is, by synthesizing them in the totality of Individuality. For the *universality* of discourse and of rational action is effectuated in and through the *particularity* of a human individual. But once again, this free historical individuality presupposes the *opposition* of the Particular and the Universal, which is manifested as the sickness and death of animality, which is also that of Man.

That's why Hegel can say, in the *Jena Lectures* of 1805-06 (Vol. XX, p. 164, lines 8-9):*

The animal dies. [But the] death of the animal [is the] coming to be of [human] consciousness.

* For references to "Vol. XX," see *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, edited by J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1967), a reissue of Hoffmeister's *Jenenser Realphilosophie II* (1931).

In short, Man is the mortal sickness of Nature. And that is why, being necessarily a part of Nature, he is himself essentially mortal.

In the writings of his youth, Hegel attached the *freedom*, the *historicity*, and the *individuality* of Man to death. And this triple theme is also taken up again and made precise in his later writings.

Let us consider, first of all, *freedom*.

In many instances Hegel identifies freedom and Negativity. He does so in a particularly clear way in the *System of Morality* (of 1802?), in which he writes, for example, this:

The negative-entity (das Negative), which is to say (oder) freedom, which is to say crime [Title of § 2; Vol. VII, p. 450] [p. 446].—That negative-entity, or pure freedom, undertakes (geht auf) therefore the dialectical-suppression (Aufhebung) of the objective-entity in such a way (so), that it . . . makes of the negative-entity the essential-reality (Wesen), negates, as a consequence, reality in its [given] specific-determination (Bestimmtheit), but fixes that negation [Vol. VII, p. 452, lines 28-32] [p. 448, lines 28-32].*

Freedom, which is the realization and the manifestation of Negativity, consists therefore in the act of negating the real in its given structure and in maintaining the negation in the form of a work [œuvre] created by that active negation itself. And that freedom, which is Negativity, is the “essential-reality” of Man.

But Negativity taken in itself is no other thing than Nothingness, which can “manifest” itself as death. And Hegel consistently says so in many instances.

Thus for example in the *Lectures* of 1805-06, where he writes in a marginal note (Vol. XX, p. 166, the last three lines of Note 2):

Its result:—*death*, pure *Negativity*, immediate *Non-being*.

If therefore, on the one hand, freedom is Negativity, and if on the other hand, Negativity is Nothingness and death, there is no freedom without death, and only a mortal being can be free. We can even say that death is the final and authentic “manifestation” of freedom.

Now Hegel by no means shrinks before that consequence; he expressly accepts it, as is shown for example in the following passages, drawn from the *System of Morality* of 1802 and from the *Lectures* of 1803-04:

This negative Absolute, pure freedom, is in its appearance-or-manifestation (Erscheinung)—death; and through the faculty (Fähigkeit) of death the Subject demonstrates (erweist) itself as free and as absolutely raised above all constraint (Zwang). The Subject is the absolute act-of-constraining (Bezwungung); and because

* For references to “Vol. VII,” see G. Lasson’s edition of Hegel’s *Schriften zur Politik und Rechtsphilosophie* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1923). Page and line numbers in large brackets refer to this edition; those in small brackets (or in parentheses) are Kojève’s originals.

this act is absolute, . . . it is the concept of itself, therefore infinite, and the opposite (Gegenteil) of itself, that is, absolute; and the pure Particularity which is in death, is its proper opposite, [that is] Universality. There is therefore freedom in the act-of-constraining only through the fact that it has for its end (geht auf) purely the dialectical-suppression of a [given] specific-determination . . . , and therefore through the fact that this act, considered in itself, behaves (sich hält) in a purely negative (rein negativ) manner; [Vol. VII, p. 370, lines 10-14, 20-25, 27-28] [p. 366, lines 30-34; p. 366, line 39 - p. 361, line 4; p. 367, lines 7-8].— . . . the supreme abstraction of freedom, that is, the relationship of constraint (Bezwingens) pushed unto its dialectical-suppression, that is, free violent death [Vol. VII, p. 389, lines 17-19] [p. 385, lines 16-19].*—*This simple absolute point of Consciousness [= Man] is the absolute-being (absolutsein) of the latter, but [taken] as a negative-or-negate-ive-entirety; or [in other words], it is the absolute-being of the individual [taken] as such, as a particular-isolated-entirety (Einzelnen). It is the freedom of its caprice (Eigensinns). The particular (Einzelne) can transform itself (sich machen) in this point; it can, in-an-absolute-manner, make abstraction of all, abandon all; it cannot be rendered dependent, [it cannot] be held (gehalten) by anything; it can detach from itself every specific-determination by which it ought to have been grasped (gefasst), and [it can] realize in death its absolute independence and freedom, [it can realize itself therein] as absolutely negative-or-negate-ive Consciousness. But death has in it contradiction in relationship to life [Vol. XIX, p. 218, lines 1-12].—Its [= the particular's] particular-isolated (einzelne) freedom is [nothing except] only its caprice,—its death [Vol. XIX, p. 232, last line of Note 2].*

It is therefore indeed death—by which is to be understood a death that is voluntary or accepted in full awareness of what is involved—which is the supreme manifestation of freedom at least of the “abstract” freedom of the *isolated* individual. Man could not be free if he were not essentially and voluntarily mortal. Freedom is autonomy in the face of the given, that is, the possibility of *negating* it such as it is given, and it is solely through voluntary death that a man can escape the confinement of *no matter what* given (= imposed) condition of existence. If man were not mortal and if he could not give death to himself without “necessity,” he would not escape rigorous determination by the given totality of Being, which in this case would merit being called “God.”

The essence of individual freedom is therefore Negativity, which manifests itself in its pure or “absolute” state as death. And this is why, when “pure” or “absolute” freedom is realized on the social level, in the course of the second stage of a genuine Revolution—that is, [a revolution] negate-ive of the social given—it must necessarily manifest itself as a collective violent death or “Terror.”

Hegel says so quite clearly in the Section of the *Phenomenology* that is devoted to the analysis of Revolution (p. 418, line 37 - p. 419, line 5):

* The preceding passages from “Vol. VII” are not from the *System of Morality* of 1802 but from Hegel’s essay “Über die wissenschaftlichen Behandlungsarten des Naturrechts,” also of 1802.

The unique work and action of general (allgemeinen) Freedom are as a consequence *death*; to wit, a *death* which has no compass (Umfang) nor internal completion-or-accomplishing (Erfüllung), for what is negated (in and through this death) is the non-completed-and-accomplished point of the absolutely free personal-Ego (Selbsts); it is therefore the coldest death and the most pointless, with no more significance-or-importance than the act of cutting a cabbage in two, or than a gulp of water.

[It is] in the flatness of this syllable [that] consists the wisdom of [revolutionary] government, [it is to it that can be reduced] the understanding [which permits] the general will to be accomplished (vollbringen).

In the course of the second stage of the revolution, the revolutionaries who aspire to "absolute freedom" oppose themselves as isolated particulars to the universal incarnated in the State. They oppose themselves to it absolutely, by wanting to negate the given State in an absolute manner, by annihilating it completely. The State cannot therefore maintain itself, the *general* will cannot be accomplished, except on condition that it negate its "particulars" in a manner just as absolute as their affirmation of *themselves* is or would be, through the negation of the *universal* realities. And that is why the "wisdom of the government" manifests itself, in the course of this stage, through the Terror. Now we have seen that death voluntarily faced in a negate-ive struggle is precisely the most authentic realization and manifestation of absolute individual freedom. It is therefore indeed in and through the Terror that this freedom is spread in society, and it cannot be attained in a "tolerant" State, which does not take its citizens seriously enough to guarantee them their political right to death.

Hegel deduces from these analyses that freedom, being essentially Negativity, can neither be realized in its pure state nor willed for itself. *Absolute freedom* (= "non-conformity") is *pure* Negativity, that is, Nothingness and death. Now this latter contradicts life, existence, and being itself. Negativity is something, and not Nothingness, only through Being (= Identity), which it *conserves* even while negating it. Negation (of the given) is *real* only as *creation* (of the new) or [as] accomplished *work* [*œuvre*]. The Revolutionary annihilates himself only to the extent that he succeeds in *conserving* his negate-ive work by attaching it to the identity of being, sustained through [à travers] its negation by memory or tradition.

That is to say that freedom is *realized* only as History, that man can *be* free only to the extent that he is *historical* (= social, = in a state). But inversely, there is no History except where there is freedom, that is, progress or creation, namely, "revolutionary" negation of the given. And since negate-ive freedom implies and presupposes death, only a mortal being can be truly historical.

But History presupposes death, even apart from the fact that it embodies freedom. There is no History except where there is tradition and historical memory on the one hand, and education and resistance to it on the other. Now all this presupposes a succession of generations *which follow each*

other, which come into the world and die in it. For the life of children implies necessarily the *death* of the parents.

Hegel says it with a strange brutality in a marginal note to the *Lectures* of 1805-06 (Vol. XX, p. 202, Note 3):

The savages of North America kill their parents; we do the same thing.

To be sure, the child *educated* by his parents prolongs their social and political action, which is their very being, and he thus assures to them a "survival" in the here-below, which is the only "survival" (albeit limited, in time) that is compatible with freedom. But historical survival conserves the *universality* of individual action, even while nullifying its *particularity*, this nullification being precisely the death of the individual. By educating the child, the parents prepare their own human or historical death, by passing voluntarily from the present to the past.

Hegel says it quite clearly in the *Lectures* of 1803-04 (Vol. XIX, p. 223, lines 18-20, and p. 224, lines 13-22):

In educating the child, the parents place in him their already-formed (*gewordenes*) consciousness, and they engender their death . . .—In education, the *unconscious unity* of the child is dialectically-suppressed; it is articulated in itself, it becomes a *formed-or-educated consciousness*; the consciousness of the parents is the matter dependent on which it forms-or-educates itself. The parents are for the child an obscure unknown presentiment (*Ahnen*) of itself; they dialectically-suppress the simple-and-individual [*and*] condensed (*gedrungenes*) being-at-the-interior-of-itself of the child. What they give to him they lose; they die in him; what they give him is their own consciousness. Consciousness is here the becoming of another consciousness in it, and the parents contemplate, in the becoming of the child, their [*own*] dialectical-suppression (*Aufgehobenwerden*).

History is transcendence (in the here-below). It is the "dialectical-suppression" of Man, who "negates" himself (as given) by "conserving" himself (as a *human* being) and is "sublimated" (= progress) through his conservative self-negation. And this "dialectical-movement" implies and presupposes the finitude of what is "moved," that is, the death of the men who create History.

As finitude or temporality and as negativity or freedom, death is therefore doubly the ultimate basis and the first mover [*mobile*] of History. And that is why the historical process implies necessarily an actualization of death through wars and bloody revolutions.

In the essay on *Natural Right* (of 1802) Hegel affirms resolutely the historical necessity of war (Vol. VII, p. 372, lines 5-8, 16-21, 24-35, and p. 373, lines 21-22) [p. 368, lines 22-26, 33-38; p. 369, lines 1-12, 37-39]:

The positive-aspect (Positive) of the absolute form [= Man] is the absolute customary-morality (*Sittliche*), to wit, the habits [*l'appartenance*] of a people [= State], the particular demonstrating (*erweist*) in a non-ambiguous manner [*its*] union (*Einssein*) with the people only in the negative-aspect, through the danger of death [*which* implies war].—This relationship (*Beziehung*) of [*political*] individuality to

[political, = State] individuality is a relation (Verhältnis), and consequently a double relationship; the one is the positive relationship, the equal and tranquil coexistence (Nebeneinanderbestehen) of the two in peace,—the other is the negative relationship, the exclusion of one individuality by the other; and the two relationships are absolutely necessary Through this second aspect of the relationship is posited the necessity of war for the concrete-form (Gestalt) and the individuality of the customary-moral totality [= the State]. War, [precisely] because there is in it the free possibility not only that isolated-particular specific-determinations might be nullified (vernichtet, but [also] their integrity (Vollständigkeit) [taken] as life, and this for the Absolute itself, that is, for the people [= the State],—[War] preserves the moral (sittliche) health of the people in its indifference in the face of specific-determinations and in the face of [their] becoming accustomed to and of the fixation (Festwerden) of these latter, in the same way as the movement of the winds preserves the [waters of] lakes from stagnation, to which a prolonged calm would have committed them, just as a prolonged peace—or even worse (gar) eternal [peace]—[would have committed the people to stagnation] . . .—[for] what is [—as Man—] negative-or-negate-ive by its nature [which is Action], must remain negative-or-negate-ive and must not become something fixed-and-stable (Festes).

And in the *Lectures* of 1805-06 Hegel insists on the fact that it is indeed the presence of death in wars that makes of them the creative agents of History (Vol. XX, p. 261, line 18 - p. 262, line 2):

The soldier-condition and war are the objectively-real sacrifice of the personal-Self, the danger of death for the particular—this contemplation (Anschauung) of its immediate abstract Negativity; in the same way as war is equally the immediate positive personal-Self of the particular . . . in such a way [that in it] each one, as this particular creates itself (macht) as absolute power (Macht), contemplates itself as [being] absolutely free, as universal Negativity [existing] for itself really against an other (Anderes). It is in war that this is permitted (gewährt) to the particular: it is [a] crime [committed] for the Universal [= State]; the end [of war is] the conservation [mediated by negation] of the whole [= the State] against the enemy, which is ready to destroy this whole. This alienation (Entäusserung) [of the Particular to the Universal] must have precisely this abstract form, to be deprived-of-individuality; death must be received and given coldly; not by a deliberate [commenté] (statarische) struggle, in which the particular perceives the adversary and kills him in an immediate hatred; no, death is given and received in-the-void (leer),—*impersonally*, in consequence of the smoke from the powder [à partir de la fumée de la poudre].

It is therefore indeed murderous war that assures historical freedom and the free historicity of Man. Man is historical only to the extent that he participates actively in the life of the State, and that participation culminates in the voluntary risk of life in a purely political war. Also man is truly historical or human only to the extent that he is a warrior, at least potentially.

Hegel said so in so many words in the *System of Morality* (of 1802?). He again accepts there the irreducible division of society into three “estates” (Stände) or classes: peasants, manufacturers [industriels] and merchants, and the nobility. The first two “estates” work, but they do not struggle and do not risk their lives for the State. The nobility is on the

contrary essentially [a] warrior [class], which permits it to lead an authentically human life, even while remaining idle and profiting from the products of the work of the other classes: "their work cannot be other than that of war, or an educative-formation (*Bilden*) for this work" (Vol. VII, p. 476, lines 16-18) [p. 472, lines 16-18]. Now it is the nobility and it alone, that real-izes History. The other classes only submit to it, and they can only passively contemplate the historical process incarnated in the political and warlike existence of the nobles.

Hegel says it in highly "metaphysical," even Schellingian language—but nonetheless quite clearly—in the following] (Vol. VII, p. 476, line 38 - p. 477, line 8) [p. 472, line 38 - p. 473, line 8]:

The first usefulness [of the estate of the warrior nobility] consists in the fact that it is the absolute real moral concrete-form, by constituting thus for them [= the two other estates] the image of the Absolute [= the State] which-exists-as-a-given-being (*seienden*) and which is moved [-dialectically, = historically, which is] the highest real contemplation that moral nature requires. By their nature, these [non-warrior] estates stop at this contemplation. They do not exist in the absolute concept, by which this [entity], which is posited (*gesetztes*) for consciousness only as an exterior-entity (*Ausseres*), would be their own Spirit, absolute [dialectically]-moving itself, which would surmount (*überwände*) all their differences and [given] specific-determinations. That their moral nature achieves this contemplation,—this advantage is offered them by the first estate [of the warrior nobility].

Later, and notably in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel no longer accepts this "feudal" conception of society. The existence of a class of idle warriors is for him only a transitory historical phenomenon. But the theme of the historical necessity of war is taken up again in the *Phenomenology*.

Hegel says there, among other things, the following (p. 324, lines 10-33):

On the one hand, the community (*Gemeinwesen*) can therefore be organized into systems of personal autonomy and of [private] property, [private] right, real and personal; in the same way, the modes of labor for the primarily particular-and-isolated ends of gain and enjoyment, [such modes] [can] be articulated into associations (*Zusammenkünften*) of their own and [can] become-autonomous. [But] the Spirit of general association [= the State] is *undivided-unity* (*Einfachheit*) and [is] the *negative-or-negate-ive* essential-reality (*Wesen*) of these systems which isolate themselves. In order not to permit them to take root and to become fixed (*festwerden*) in this process-of-isolation, which if it happened, the whole would decompose and the Spirit evaporate, the government must shake up the systems from time to time by wars, to injure and disturb thereby the order and the right of autonomy that are granted them (*zurechtgemachten*), and through the labor imposed [by warfare] to let the individuals know their master, [i.e.,] death, individuals who, by plunging themselves (*sich vertiefend*) in these systems, get detached from the whole and tend towards inviolable [isolated] *being-for-itself* and the security of the [private] person. Through this dissolution (*Auflösung*) of the form of the fixed-and-stable-subsistence [*du maintien-fixe-et-stable*] (*Bestehens*), the Spirit [= State] removes-the-danger of the fall (*Versinken*) into natural empirical-existence (*Dasein*) away from [à partir de] the customary-moral [=historical or human] [empirical-existence], and

it conserves and raises up the personal-Self of its consciousness into *freedom* and into its *force*.

To be sure, this text is found in the Section devoted to the analysis of the ancient State (Chapter VI, A, *a*). Now the Master, the citizen of the pagan State, is by definition idle. Not working, he does not “negate” the Nature exterior to him. His truly human activity, i.e., free or negate-ive, is reduced to the negation of his own innate “nature.” And that negation culminates in the voluntary risk of life, incurred in the struggle for pure prestige, in a purely political war, stripped of every “vital necessity.” The pagan State, in which the citizens are idle warriors, cannot therefore be truly human, i.e., free and historical, except in and through the wars of prestige that it wages from time to time.

The Slave, and the working ex-Slave, can in principle humanize themselves through their labor, without risking their lives. For in working, they “negate” the given and exterior real and, as a consequence, transform themselves. In principle, the State in which the citizens work could therefore renounce wars without decomposing as a State or truly human entity. But in the text cited, Hegel says that in practice a State that is essentially pacifist ceases to be a State properly speaking, and becomes a private industrial and commercial association that has for its supreme goal the well-being of its members, that is, precisely the satisfaction of their “natural,” namely, animal, desires. It is therefore, in the last analysis, participation in bloody political struggle that raises man above the animal by making a citizen of him.

However that may be, the final goal of human becoming is, according to Hegel, the synthesis of the warlike existence of the Master and the life of labor of the Slave. The Man who is fully satisfied by his existence, and who achieves precisely thereby the historical evolution of humanity, is the Citizen of the universal and homogeneous State, that is, for Hegel, the worker-soldier of the revolutionary armies of Napoleon. Therefore it is indeed war (for Recognition) that terminates History and carries Man to his perfection (= satisfaction). Thus, Man can perfect himself only to the extent that he is mortal and accepts, with an awareness of what is involved, the risk of life.

Of course, once the universal and homogeneous Empire is established, there are no more wars or revolutions. Man can live in it thenceforth without risking his life. But the truly human existence is then that of the Wise Man, who limits himself to *comprehending* everything, without ever *negating* or *modifying* anything (except for transposing the “essences” of the real into discourse). This existence is therefore neither *free* nor *historical* in the proper sense of these words, in the sense that Hegel himself ascribes to them when he speaks of Man before the end of History. Freedom and historicity properly speaking are inseparable from death: Only a mortal being can be free and historical, provided that it accept the idea

and the reality of its death and that it be able to risk its life without any "necessity," in function of an "idea" or "ideal."

In fine, human *individuality* is itself also conditioned by death. We can deduce this by admitting, with Hegel, that one can be individual only by being free, and that one cannot be free without being finite or mortal. But this consequence also flows directly from the Hegelian definition of the Individual.

The Individual, for Hegel, is a synthesis of the Particular and the Universal. *Particularity* would be purely "given," "natural," animal, were it not associated, in human *individuality*, with the *universality* of discourse and of action (the discourse proceeding from the action). Now the action of the particular—and it is always a *particular* that acts—is truly *universal* only if it represents and realizes the "general will" of a "community" (*Gemeinwesen*), that is, in the last analysis, of a State. It is only by acting as [a] citizen (*against* his particular "private" interest) that [a] man is truly and really universal, even while remaining particular; it is only in and through the State that human individuality is manifested and effectuated, for it is the State that attributes to the *particular* a *universally* recognized reality and value. But action by and for the State culminates in the risk of (particular) life for purely political (= universal) ends; a citizen who refuses to risk his life for the State loses his citizenship, that is, [his] universal recognition. It is therefore in the final analysis because he is able to *die* that [a] man is able to be an *individual*.

Hegel says it in a very clear manner in the *Lectures* of 1803-04 (Vol. XIX, p. 230, line 32 to p. 231, line 10):

This given-being of the dialectical-suppression (*Aufgehobenseins*) of the particular totality [that is, of the Citizen, of the individual] is the totality [taken] as absolutely universal, as absolute *Spirit* [= People, = State]. It is the Spirit as absolutely real Consciousness. The particular totality [that is, the individual] contemplates itself [in the State, as citizen,] as an ideal [totality], dialectically suppressed; and it is no longer particular; it is on the contrary for itself this dialectical-suppression of itself, and it [i.e., "the particular totality"] is recognized [as Citizen], it is *universal* [in so much as [en tant que] Citizen] only as [en tant que] that dialectically-suppressed [totality]. The Totality [= the Universal] in so much as [it is] a Particularity [, that is, Individuality,] is posited in (an) itself as a solely possible totality, not-existing-for-itself, solely [as a totality which,] in its subsisting-in-existence (*Bestehen*), is always ready for death, which has renounced itself, which exists, it is true, as particular totality, —as family, or in [private] property and [personal] enjoyment, but in such a fashion that this [purely particular] relationship [that the family, property, and enjoyment is] is for itself an ideal [relationship] and proves [erweist] itself as [or by] sacrificing itself.

The fact that Individuality implies and presupposes finitude or death can be shown, moreover, in another way.

The Universal is the *negation* of the Particular as Particular. If we want to transform a concrete entity (= a particular) into a concept (= a universal), into a "general notion," we must detach it from the *hic et nunc*

of its empirical existence (this dog is here and now, but the concept "this dog" is "everywhere" and "always"). In the same way, if we want to *realize* individuality by transforming the particularity of existence into human universality, we must *really* detach the man from his *hic et nunc*. But for the human *animal* this real detachment is equivalent to death, for in ceasing to exist here and now it no longer exists at all (as *dead*, this dog is also "everywhere" and "always"). Thus, the real penetration of the Universal into the Particular is the completion of the finitude of this latter, that is, its actual death. And if *human* existence can be universal even while remaining particular, that is, if Man can *exist* as an individual, it is solely because the universality of death can be present in him during his lifetime: ideally, in the consciousness that he has of it; and really, through the voluntary risk of life (the consciousness presupposing the risk).

Hegel insists, on several occasions, on the fact that it is death that is the final manifestation and, if we can say it, the "realization," of the Universal in empirical existence. He says so, among other places, in the *Lectures* of 1803-04, in the *Lectures* of 1805-06, and in the *Phenomenology*:

Death is the aspect of the duplication [dédoublement] of the kind [into] particularity and universality] and the perfect liberation of the constitutive-elements [which are the Particular and the Universal]; [death is] the immediate unity of given-Being (Seins), *but in its concept* [it is] *the universal personal-Self (Selbst), which exists as universal* [Vol. XIX, p. 254, lines 4-8].—In death,—the absolute power, the *master of the particular*; that is to say, the common [= universal] will has become pure *given-Being* [which the cadaver of the citizen dead for the State is] [Vol. XX, p. 225, Note 3].—This Universality to which the Particular succeeds as *such*, is pure given-Being, death; . . . Death is the completion-or-perfection (Vollendung) and the supreme work that the individual as such [that is, as Particular] undertakes for the community [= the State, = the Universal]. [*Phenomenology*, p. 231, lines 31-32 and p. 232, lines 6-8].

Thus, the "faculty of death" (Fähigkeit des Todes) is the necessary and sufficient condition, not only of the freedom and historicity of man, but also of his universality, without which he would not be truly individual.

"The true being of Man is his *action*," says Hegel. Now Action in the realization of Negativity, which manifests itself on the "phenomenal" level as death. Which means, as a conscious and voluntary death, that is, *freely* accepted, without any vital *necessity*. Such an acceptance of death is produced when a man consciously risks his life in function solely of the desire for "recognition" (Anerkennen), solely from his "vanity." The desire for recognition is the desire for a *desire*, that is, not for a *given* (= natural) being, but for the presence of the *absence* of such a being. This desire [for recognition] *transcends* therefore the natural given, and to the extent that it *realizes* itself it creates a trans-natural or *human* being. But the desire *realizes* itself only to the extent that it has more power than the natural given being, that is, to the extent that it annihilates it. The being that annihilates itself in function of a desire for recognition disappears, it is true; but its disappearance is that of a *human* being—it is a *death*

in the proper sense of the term. And it is this annihilation of the animal that is the creation of Man. Man is himself annihilated, it is true, in his death. But so long as that death endures [*dure*] as a conscious will to risk life with a view to recognition, Man maintains himself in empirical existence as a *human* being, that is, [as] transcendent in relation to *given* being, to Nature.

Man appears therefore (or creates himself) for the first time in the (given) natural World as a combatant in the first bloody Struggle for pure prestige. That is to say that a being cannot constitute itself as human except on condition of being finite or mortal (which means "living"). And that is also to say that a being cannot live humanly except on condition of "realizing" his death: becoming conscious of it, "bearing" it, being capable of facing it voluntarily. To be a Man—is, for Hegel, to be able and to know how to die. "The true being of Man" is therefore, in the final analysis, his death as a *conscious* phenomenon.⁶

The idea of the bloody Struggle for recognition, which engenders the relationship of Mastery and Servitude, appeared in the writings of Hegel around 1802 (*System of Morality*, Vol. VII, pp. 445-447) [pp. 441-443]. But it is above all in the *Lectures* of 1803-04 that Hegel insists at length on this idea. The theme returns in the *Lectures* of 1805-06. And in the *Phenomenology* (1806) the notion of the *anthropogenetic* value of the Struggle and of the Risk of life is definitively evolved and formulated in a perfectly clear manner.

Here are, first of all, some passages drawn from the *Lectures* of 1803-04.

Hegel begins by saying that the simple, purely "natural" *possession* that we observe in the animal becomes essentially human *property*—i.e., a *recognized*, namely juridical, possession—only in and through a struggle to the death engaged in with a view to that recognition. It is not in order to really possess the disputed thing that one risks his life in that struggle for pure prestige; it is in order to gain recognition for his exclusive *right* to the possession. And this right does not become *real*, the "legal person" [le "sujet juridique"] (= specifically human being) is not realized, except in and through this risk, and in the last analysis, in and through death.

Hegel expresses himself as follows :

The particular is a Consciousness [= Man] only to the extent that each particularity of his possession (Besitzes) and of his given-being appears as attached to his total essential-reality (Wesen), [as] entailed [impliquée] (aufgenommen) in his Indifference, to the extent that he *posits* each constitutive-element (Moment) as [what is]

⁶ Heidegger will say, following Hegel, that human existence (Dasein) is a "life in view of death" (Leben zum Tode). The Christian also used to say it, a long time before Hegel. But for the Christian death is but a passage into the beyond: He does not accept death properly speaking. The Christian man does not place himself face-to-face with Nothingness. He relates himself in his existence to an "other world," which is essentially *given*. There is not therefore in him any "transcendence" (= freedom) in the Hegelian, and Heideggerian, sense of the term.

himself; for this is Consciousness, the ideal-being of the World. Consequently, [even] the loss [lésion] of one of his particularities is infinite; it is an absolute outrage, an outrage to him [taken] as a whole, an outrage to his honor; and a conflict on the basis of any particular thing is a struggle for the whole. The [disputed] thing, [that is,] the specific-determination, is not at all viewed as value, as thing; it is on the contrary entirely nullified, entirely ideal; there is only the fact that it [the thing] is related to me, that I am a Consciousness, that the thing has lost its opposition over and against me [by becoming my recognized property]. The two [adversaries], who recognize each other and want to know themselves as being recognized mutually as this totality of particulars, [these two] confront each other as this totality. And the significance-and-importance (Bedeutung) that they give mutually to each other is: [a) that each appear [apparaissent] in the consciousness of the other as the one who excludes him from every *extension* of his particularity [that is, from everything that this latter possesses]; [b) that he be, in this, his exclusion [or exclusivity], really [a] totality. Neither can demonstrate it to the other by words, assurances, threats or promise[s]. For language is only the ideal existence of Consciousness, while here objectively-real-entities oppose each other, that is, absolutely-opposed-entities, entities-existing-absolutely-for-themselves, and their relationship is absolutely a practical relationship, [which is] itself objectively-real. The middle-term (Mitte) of their recognition (Anerkennens) must be itself objectively-real. Consequently, they *must-necessarily* (müssen) each injure the other [se léser l'un l'autre]; the fact that each one posits itself as exclusive totality in the [sa] particularity of his existence, must-necessarily become objectively-real; outrage is necessary; [Vol. XIX, p. 226, line 6, to p. 227, line 20].—And that conflict must and should (muss und soll) take place, for the fact that the particular as such is Reason (Vernunft), [an] Indifference, cannot be known except to the extent that each particularity of his possession and of his given-being is posited in that Indifference [?], and [to the extent] that he relates himself to it [each particularity] as [a] whole. This can be shown only to the extent that he engages (daraufsetzt) all his existence for his [sa] conservation [as proprietor], [that] he absolutely does not subdivide himself [se partage]. And the demonstration is completed solely with death [Vol. XIX, p. 226, Note 3, lines 1-7].

But it is not only in order to gain recognition for his property and to gain recognition for himself as proprietor (= legal subject or person) that a man must risk his life in the struggle to the death for pure prestige. He must do it also in view of the recognition of his reality and of his human value in general. Now for Hegel, Man is humanly *real* and really *human* only to the extent that he is *recognized* as such. It is therefore in order to *be* human and in order to manifest himself or *appear* as such that Man must be able to die and must know how to risk his life.

Hegel explains it as follows:

Each one can be recognized by the other only to the extent that his manifold appearance (mannigfaltige Erscheinung) is indifferent in him, [that he] demonstrates himself as infinite in each particularity of his possession and revenges each offence (Verletzung) [by going] as far as the death [of the offender]. And that offence must-necessarily take place, for Consciousness [= Man] must-necessarily have for [its] goal (auf . . . gehen) that recognition; the particulars must-necessarily offend each other mutually, in order to know themselves (erkennen) [and to know] if they are endowed-with-reason [= human]. For Consciousness is essentially such, that the totality of the

particular has opposed itself and is the same in that act-of-becoming-other (Anderswerden), that the totality of the particular is in another consciousness, and is the consciousness of the other and that in this latter is precisely this absolute maintaining of its [own] totality that it has for itself; that is to say [that Consciousness is essentially such] that it must be recognized by the other. But the fact my totality, [taken] as [that] of a particular, is in the other consciousness precisely that totality existing-for itself, [that is, the fact] that it is recognized, respected,—I could not know it except through the appearance of the activity (Handelns) of the other in the face of my totality; and by the same token, the other must at the same time appear to me himself as a totality, just as I appeared to him. If they behave negatively [by avoiding each other], if they leave each other mutually [in peace],—then neither one has appeared to the other as [a] totality, nor [has] the given-being of the one [appeared] as a totality in the consciousness of the other, neither [as] presentation (Darstellen), nor [as] recognition. Language, explanations, promise[s], none of these are that recognition; for language is but an ideal middle-term [between the two]: it disappears as it appears, it is not a permanent (bleibendes), or real, recognition [Vol. XIX, p. 226, Note 3, line 15 to the end].—Each particular must posit itself as totality in the consciousness of the other in such a way that he commits against the other, for the conservation of any particularity whatsoever, all its visible [apparaissante] totality, its [very] life; and by the same token, each one must-necessarily have for [its] goal the death of the other. I cannot know myself in the consciousness of the other as that particular totality [that is, as human individual or person] except to the extent that I posit myself in his consciousness as being, in my exclusion [of him], a totality of exclusion [that is, as] having his death as [my] end. In having his death as end, I expose myself to death, I risk my own life. I commit the contradiction of wanting to affirm-or-impose (behaupten) the particularity of my given-being and of my possession; and this affirmation transforms itself into its opposite, [namely, in the fact] that I sacrifice all that possession and possibility of all possession and enjoyment, [in other words] [that I sacrifice] life itself. In positing myself as totality of particularity, I dialectically-suppress myself as totality of particularity; I want to be recognized in this extension of my existence, in my given-being and [in] my possession; but I transform it in this [sense], that I dialectically-suppress that existence, and I am not recognized in truth as endowed-with-reason [= human], as totality, except to the extent that, by having as end the death of the other, I myself risk my own life and dialectically-suppress that extension of my existence itself, [that is] the totality of my particularity.

This recognition of the *particularity of the totality brings with itself therefore the nothingness of death*. Each one must-necessarily know of the other if he is an absolute Consciousness [= Man]. Each one must-necessarily posit himself in such a relationship over and against the other, that this might come to the light of day; he must-necessarily offend him, and each one can know of the other that he is [a] totality [= individuality or human person] only by forcing him to go to the death (bis auf den Tod treibt); and in the same way, each one shows himself to himself as [being a] totality only by going with himself to the death. If he stops [s'arrête], in himself, this side [en-deçà] (innerhalb) of death, if he shows himself to the other only as committing the loss of a part or [even] the totality of the possession, as [risking] [only] wounds [and] not life itself,—he is then for the other, in-an-immediate-manner, a non-totality; he is not absolutely for himself; he becomes the slave of the other. If he stops, in himself, this side of death and ceases the combat

(Streit) before the putting to death, then he has not demonstrated himself as totality, nor [has he] recognized the other as such . . .

This recognition of the particulars is therefore in itself [an] absolute contradiction: recognition is only the given-being of Consciousness, [taken] as totality, in an other Consciousness; but to the extent that the [first] Consciousness becomes objectively-real, it dialectically-suppresses the other Consciousness [by killing it]; thereby the recognition dialectically-suppresses itself. It does not realize itself, but on the contrary ceases to be [= to exist] to the extent that (indem) it is [= exists]. And nonetheless Consciousness is not [= does not exist] at the same time except as an act-of-being-recognized by an other, and it is at the same time Consciousness only as absolute numerical unity (Eins), and [it] must-necessarily be recognized as such; but this signifies that it must-necessarily have as its goal the death of the other and its own, and it is not [= does not exist] except in the objective-reality of death. [Vol. XIX, p. 228, line 17, to p. 229, line 31, and p. 230, lines 7-17.]

Human reality is therefore in the last analysis “the objective-reality of *death*”: Man is not only *mortal*; he is *death* incarnate; he *is* his own death. And in contrast to “natural,” purely biological death, the death that is Man is a “violent” death, at the same time conscious of itself and voluntary. Human death, the death of man—and consequently all his truly human existence—is therefore, if we prefer, a *suicide*.

Hegel says it in so many words in the *Lectures* of 1805-06 (Vol. XX, p. 211, lines 34-36):⁷

It appears to Consciousness [= to the man engaged in the Struggle for recognition] [taken] as consciousness, that it has for [its] end the *death* of an other; but [in itself or for us, which is to say, in truth,] it has for [its] end its own death; [it is] suicide, to the extent that it exposes itself to *danger*.

Now it is only in the Struggle for recognition, and solely through the risk of life that this latter implies, that the given (animal) being creates itself as *human* being. It is therefore the very *being* of Man that “appears” or manifests itself as a deferred *suicide* or, as Hegel would say, [a suicide] “mediated” (vermittelt) by the negative Action that engenders a consciousness discursive of the exterior and of itself. Man is a being who commits suicide, or who is at least capable of committing suicide (Fähigkeit des Todes). The human existence of Man is a conscious and voluntary *death* [which is] in the course of coming about [en voie de devenir].

In the *Phenomenology*,⁸ Hegel takes up again and refines the theme of the Struggle for recognition. He insists on its *anthropogenetic* character: It is in and through this Struggle alone that Man can create himself starting out from the animal. And Hegel states clearly that what is important in this Struggle is not the will to kill, but that of exposing oneself to the danger of death without any necessity, without being forced to it as an

⁷ Hegel devotes only two pages there (Vol. XX, pp. 211-213) to the analysis of the Struggle for recognition, and he says there nothing that is truly new.

⁸ See above the translation with commentary of Section A of Chapter IV, printed [as] “By Way of Introduction” (pp. 18-22) [note from the original edition].

animal. It is through the danger of death voluntarily incurred in the Struggle for pure prestige that one attains the *truth* of Recognition. The "truth"—which is to say the revealed-reality, and therefore the reality itself. Now Man is humanly *real* only to the extent that he is *recognized*. It is therefore the human *reality* itself that is constituted or creates itself in and through the voluntary act of confronting death.

Thus, Hegel maintains and re-enforces in the *Phenomenology* the fundamental idea of the Lectures of 1803-04, in which he assimilates the self-creation of Man to the actualization of his death. But he abandons the paradox that he had at first maintained. To be sure, he continues to say that death signifies for man his total and definitive annihilation (cf. *Phenomenology*, p. 145). But he no longer says that the *realization* of Man cannot be entirely accomplished except in actual *death*, that is, precisely through *annihilation*. In the text in question, he says expressly that the mere *risk* of life suffices to real-ize the human being. A being that has voluntarily risked its life, but that has escaped death, can *live* humanly, that is, [can] maintain itself as a man in empirical existence (*Dasein*) in the midst of the natural World.

And it is precisely through the risk of life that Man comprehends that he is essentially *mortal* in the sense that he cannot *exist* humanly outside the animal that serves as a support for his self-consciousness.

The man who has engaged in the Struggle for recognition must remain alive in order to be able to *live* humanly. But he lives *humanly* only to the extent that he is *recognized* by the other. His adversary must therefore *also* escape death. The combat must cease before the putting to death,—contrary to what Hegel had said in the *Lectures* of 1803-04 (Vol. XIX, p. 229).

In those *Lectures* Hegel allowed for that eventuality. It comes about when one of the two adversaries refuses to risk [his] life and submits to the other, by becoming his Slave, that is, by recognizing him without being recognized in return. But to refuse the risk is to remain within the limits of animality. The Slave is not, therefore, a truly human being, and "recognition" by him cannot, consequently, real-ize the humanity of the recognized. Thus, true recognition can be effected only in and through *death*, which *annihilates* the one who recognizes; therefore the recognition itself [is annihilated] and as a consequence [also] the recognized as recognized—i.e., as a truly human being. Hence the paradox.

In the *Phenomenology* Hegel avoids this paradox by admitting the humanity of the Slave, and therefore the anthropogenetic value of his recognition of the Master. But how does he justify the humanity of the being who has precisely *refused* to subordinate his animal life to the human and anthropogenetic desire for Recognition?

The Master is humanized (is realized as Master, that is, as a specifically human being) through the recognition by the Slave, which he imposes on this latter in accepting the *risk* "against-nature" that the future Slave refuses. As for the Slave himself, he is humanized (is realized as Slave,

which is *also* a specifically human mode of being) through the *cognizance* he takes of his essential finitude in experiencing the dread of death, that death appearing to him *in the course of a Struggle for recognition*, that is, as something that is not a purely biological necessity.

Just like the Master, the Slave is conscious of himself, that is, [he is] essentially *human* in his empirical existence. To be sure, at the beginning, at his nascent stage so to speak, the Slave is human only potentially, while the humanity of the Master is "objectively-real," since it is actually recognized. But it remains no less the case that Man creates himself, through the Struggle, at the same time, as Master and Slave, and that the two are specifically human. And they are such, in the last analysis, through the fact that they have both been placed in the presence of their death.

The Slave realizes and perfects his humanity in *laboring* in the service of the Master. But this servile or serving Labor [Travail] has an anthropogenetic virtue only to the extent that it is born of the Dread of death and is accompanied by the consciousness of the essential finitude of the one who serves by laboring.

In contrast to the Master, who remains forever fixed in his humanity as Master, the Slave develops and perfects his humanity, [which was] servile at its origin. He raises himself to [the level of] discursive thought and elaborates the abstract notion of freedom; and he creates himself also as a Citizen who is free and ultimately fully *satisfied*, by transforming the given World through the Labor that he performs in the Service of the community. It is therefore he [the Slave-Citizen], and not the Master, who is Man properly speaking, the individual who freely creates History. But we must not forget to notice that Service and Labor are free and creative only to the extent that they are accomplished within [or in terms of] the Dread that is born of the consciousness of death. It is therefore, when all is said and done, this consciousness of death that humanizes Man and constitutes the ultimate basis of his humanity.

If there is to be murder and bloody struggle for recognition, it is in order that there may be "suicide" or *voluntary* risk of life. But this risk itself, which is actualized in the Master, is there in order that there may take place in the Slave the experience of death, which reveals to him his own finitude. And it is life in the presence of death that is "the life of the Spirit," which is to say, a specifically human life, able to attain its perfection or the fullness of satisfaction.

Man is the only being in the world who *knows* that he must die, and we can say that he *is* the consciousness of his death: Truly human existence is an existing consciousness of death, or a death conscious of itself. The perfection of man being the fullness of consciousness of self, and Man being essentially finite in his very being, it is in the conscious acceptance of finitude that human existence culminates. And it is the full (discursive) comprehension of the meaning of death that constitutes that Hegelian Wisdom that completes History by procuring Satisfaction for Man.

For in attaining to Wisdom, Man understands that it is solely his finitude or his death that assures him absolute freedom, by liberating him not only from the given World but also from the eternal and infinite given—which would be God, if Man were not mortal. And the consciousness of this absolute freedom satisfies the infinite pride of Man, which constitutes the very ground of his human existence and which is the ultimate [and] irreducible motive [mobile] of his act of self-creation.

In a general way, Hegelian anthropology is a secularized Christian theology. And Hegel is perfectly aware of it. He repeats on several occasions that everything said by Christian theology is absolutely true, provided that it is applied, not to an imaginary transcendent God, but to real Man, living in the World. The theologian does anthropology without taking account of it. Hegel merely becomes truly conscious of the knowledge called theo-logical, by explaining that its real object is not God, but historical Man, or, as he likes to say, “the Spirit of the people (Volksgeist).”

Among other places, this conception is clearly expressed by Hegel at the end of the *Lectures* of 1805-06 (Vol. XX, p. 268, lines 7-21):

Religion [in general] is Spirit represented[-as-an-exterior-entity] (vorgestellter): [it is] the personal-Self (Selbst) which does not bring into coincidence (nicht zusammenbringt) its pure consciousness with its objectively-real consciousness, [and] for which the content of the former is opposed [to it], in the latter, as an other-entity [entité-autre]. [In other terms, the Religious [person] is one who does not know that he is speaking in fact of himself when he believes that he is speaking of God] . . . [The] idea of the absolute [or Christian] Religion is this speculative idea that the personal-Self, [or] the objectively-real-entity, is thought [[la] pensée], [that] essential-reality (Wesen) and given-being (Sein) [are] the same thing. This is put [= expressed] in such a way that God, [that is,] the absolute transcendent (jenseitige) essential-reality, [has] become Man, this objectively-real-being here; but also [it is put in such a way] that this objective-reality is dialectically-suppressed, has become a past [reality], and [that] this God, who is [on the one hand a] [given particular] objective-reality and [on the other hand an] objective reality [which has been] dialectically-suppressed or universal, is the same thing as [a] Spirit-of-the-people; it is only as immediateness [that is, as represented (vorgestellt) as a single man named Jesus] that it is the Spirit of the [Christian] community. *That God is Spirit, this is the content of that [Christian] religion.*

Hegel is therefore in accord with Christianity to the extent of saying that the “Absolute,” or the Totality of what *is*, is not Identity, given-Being, Substance, or Nature, but Spirit, that is, Being revealed by the Word [la Parole] or by discursive Reason (Logos). But for the Christian this “absolute” Spirit is a transcendent God, while for Hegel it is Man-in-the-world. And that radical and irreducible difference amounts in the final analysis to this, that the Christian Spirit is eternal and infinite, while the Spirit that Hegel had in mind is essentially finite or mortal. It is by introducing the idea of death that theo-logy is transposed into anthropo-logy. And it is by taking that idea literally, that is, by suppressing the notions of

survival and resurrection that we arrive at the *true* or Hegelian anthropology.

Hegel is perfectly aware of this also, and he says so clearly in [the course of] interpreting the evangelical myth in a marginal note, which relates to the passage cited (Vol. XX, p. 268, Note 3, last two lines):

It is not this man here who dies, but the *divine* [as such]; it is precisely because of that (eben dadurch) that this divine [or this divinity] becomes Man.

Thus, in demonstrating that consciousness, the consciousness of self, the rational will, and discursive reason imply and presuppose finitude or death, Hegel demonstrates that the "absolute Spirit," or the totality of revealed Being, is not an eternal God creating the World out of Nothingness, but *Man*, negating a natural World, given from all eternity, in which he himself is born and dies as historical humanity.

In the final analysis, the God of Christian theology (of ancient or pagan inspiration) is given-Being (Sein), eternally identical to itself, realizing itself and revealing itself in and through a natural World, which only manifests the essence and the power of existing of the Being that *is*. The Man of Hegel, on the contrary, is the Nothingness (*Nichts*) that annihilates given-Being existing as World, and that annihilates itself (as real historical time or History) in and through that annihilation of the given.

The ultimate basis of the natural or "divine" empirical-existence (*Dasein*) is *given-Being* or the power (*Macht*) of subsisting eternally in *identity* with itself. The ultimate basis of human empirical-existence, on the contrary, the source and origin of human reality, is *Nothingness* or the power of *Negativity*, which is realized and is [made] manifest only through the transformation of the given *identity* of *being* into [the] create-ive *contradiction* of "dialectical" or historical *becoming*, in which there is existence only in and through Action (which is, if we prefer, the essential-reality or the "essence" of Man), and in which the agent is not what he *is* (as given) and *is* what he is not (from all eternity). If Nature or "God" is the Being that *is* (as real or "physical" Space), Man is the Nothingness that *annihilates* (as Action or real, "historical," Time) by "dialectically supressing" what *is* and by *creating* what is not. This central and ultimate idea of Hegelian philosophy, the idea that the foundation of the source of objective reality (*Wirklichkeit*) and of human empirical existence (*Dasein*) is the Nothingness that is manifest or that reveals itself as negate-ive or create-ive Action [which is] free and conscious of itself,—that idea is clearly expressed in a beautiful and "romantic" passage in the *Lectures* of 1805-06, which Hegel delivered at the very moment when he was writing the *Phenomenology*.

Here is that passage (Vol. XX, p. 180, line 24, to p. 181, line 8):

Man is this night, this empty Nothingness, which contains everything in its undivided-simplicity (*Einfachheit*): a wealth of an infinite number of representations, of images, no one of which precisely attains to the spirit [dont aucune ne lui vient préci-

sément à l'esprit], or [even more] which are not as really-present (gegenwärtig). It is the night, the interiority-or-intimacy (Innere) of Nature, which exists here:—[i.e.,] [the] *pure personal-Self*. In phantasmagorical representations there is night all around: here there rises up suddenly a head all bloody, there another pale apparition (Gestalt); and they all disappear just as suddenly. It is this night that we perceive when we look into a man's eyes: [we then immerse our gaze] in a night that becomes *terrible* (furchtbar); it is the night of the world which [then] presents itself (hängt entgegen) to us.

Power (Macht) to draw images from that night or to let them fall from in autonomous-positing (Selbstsetzen) [that is, free creation], *interior consciousness, Action (Tun)*. It is into this night that is withdrawn [qui s'est retirée] the entity-existing-as-a-being[which-is]-given (das Seiende); but the [dialectical] movement of this power is equally posited.

The dialectical movement of the power that maintains in Being the Nothingness that Man is,—is History. And that power itself is realized and is manifest as negate-ive or create-ive Action: Action negate-ive of the given that Man himself is, or [the] action of the *Struggle* that creates historical Man; and Action negate-ive of the given that the natural World is, in which the animal lives, or [the] action of *Labor* that creates the cultural World, outside of which Man is only a pure Nothingness, and in which he differs from Nothingness *only for a certain time*.⁹

⁹ Drawn into error by the monistic ontological tradition, Hegel sometimes extends to Nature his analysis of human or historical existence. He says then that *everything that is*, is in the last analysis an annihilation of Nothingness (which, obviously, has no meaning, and ends up in an indefensible philosophy of nature). He says, for example, in the *Lectures* of 1805-06, in [the course of] developing his philosophy of Nature (Schellingian inspiration): "The shadows are Nothingness; by the same token space and time are not;—the same way as in general all is Nothingness" (Vol. XX, p. 80, lines 5-6). Heidegger has taken up again the Hegelian themes concerning death; but he neglects the complementary themes concerning Struggle and Labor; thus his philosophy does not succeed in rendering an account of History.—Marx retains the themes of Struggle and Labor, and his philosophy is thus essentially "historicist"; but he neglects the theme of death (even while admitting that man is mortal); that is why he does not see (and even less [do] certain "Marxists") that the Revolution is not only in fact but also essentially and necessarily—bloody (the Hegelian theme of the Terror).