

Redeeming Modernity: The Ascent of Eros and Wisdom in Hegel's Phenomenology

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A central feature of Hegel's philosophy is that it does not embrace a cumulativist conception of historical existence. Hegel's historicism is not the optimistic liberal account of a Condorcet, the belief that history is marching gradually but steadily forward. Hegel does not embrace a stage theory of history in which one era is seen as manifestly and decisively outmoding its predecessors in a relentless and triumphant advance. Instead, Hegel believes that we live in an age of uncertainty and even despair in which reason can often appear to support nothing but arid materialism, while nobler feelings are incapable of finding rational grounds for their conviction. Indeed, although differing from them profoundly in other respects, in his evocation of the historical present as a series of sharply contrasting and apparently irreconcilable alternatives, Hegel's historicism has an initially apocalyptic quality that more closely resembles that of Nietzsche and Heidegger than the textbook liberal progressivism. Mankind, Hegel believes, stands at a fateful crossroads. Modern reason has delivered us to a troubling threshold in which the old world is passing irrevocably away while the new world is not yet visible. Only this future, whatever it may be, can redeem the alienation, drift and frivolity of the present.

I

These alternatives are brought out in two passages of remarkable poetic power in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—doubly significant, since it is also a preface to the Hegelian system as a whole. I will refer to them as Images One and Two (Hegel 1975; bracketed references are by section number). There was a time, Hegel tells us in Image One, when the

richness of experience—the “abundant wealth of thoughts and pictures”—lay beyond the realm of earthly existence in heaven [8]. The mind shied away from the confusion of the profane and transitory earthly realm, preferring to keep its gaze fixed on the celestial kingdom to which the earth was attached by a “thread of light.” It is characteristic of Hegel’s style that, instead of distinguishing at this point (as he will later) between the classical, Christian and other religious accounts of super-sensible transcendence, he conflates them for now in a single allegory of celestial ascent. At this point, he is leading the reader toward a general reflection on modernity and the earlier moral and philosophical standpoints against which it defines itself. Concerned for now with guiding the reader to the first rung on the ladder to the Absolute, he does not ask us to reflect at this point on the profoundly different and in some ways contradictory accounts of transcendence given by, on the one hand, classical metaphysics *sub specie aeternitatis* and, on the other hand, the God who creates the intelligible whole out of nothing. That will come in due course. For the time being, we are offered a general *mentalité* that embraces the classical, Christian and feudal world-views taken together as a civilizational conglomerate, what Arthur Lovejoy calls the Great Chain of Being (Lovejoy 1936, 293-98).

For many eons, Hegel goes on, the mind resisted studying the earthly on its own terms. Finally it was “compelled” to introduce the rational clarity that had hitherto been exclusively reserved for the celestial realm into the “dullness and confusion” of the earthly and the sensuous. This reversal of values, in which the earthly now becomes the mind’s exclusive concern, telescopes the transition from the Great Chain of Being to modernity. For Hegel, modernity can be variously evoked as the Enlightenment, the Baconian physics of matter in motion, the verification of mental representations through their empirical correlates given in sense data, along with their broader cultural corollaries including the rise of commerce, individual autonomy and political liberalism. As we will see, central to these various manifestations of the new civilizational conglomerate is the ontological privileging of the unencumbered Hobbesian and Cartesian subject—a subjectivism that underlies both modern science with its empiricist epistemology and the political liberalism of the social contract with its enshrinement of the rights of man, and modern Romanticism’s exploration of the inner life of the self with its unique emotional and aesthetic stories. All of these forms of subjectivism are gathered by Hegel under the phenomenon of “consciousness.” For Hegel, consciousness is always the consciousness that a subject has

of an object, which in turn presupposes the categorical fixity of that division between the perceiving subject and the object perceived.

With the rise of modernity, then, mankind has veered to the opposite extreme, from excessive otherworldliness to an excessive immersion in the realm of earthly “experience.” Modernity begins as a great quest to retrieve the wealth of thoughts and pictures previously fenced off from human existence in the divine incorporeal Beyond and bring it down to everyday corporeal reality. In its fixation on the earthly and the empirical, however, modernity has progressively impoverished those treasures of speculative theorizing and sublime art, cutting human experience off from the transcendental. Now mankind stands in urgent need of a Promethean effort to re-connect itself to the spiritual realm, an effort that will match the difficulty and intensity of the original modern quest to liberate ourselves from the authority of heaven. For, just as bringing the wealth of heaven down to earth has in the long run robbed it of its spiritual significance by reducing it to the materialistic and the measurable, so has the realm of divine transcendence been robbed of the *Gestalten*—the speculative and aesthetic “shapes”—that previously articulated and enriched it. Earthly experience has been reduced to a frequently crass subjectivity and utilitarianism, while the divine realm, seemingly discredited by modern rationalism, survives only in the barest and most impoverished outline of abstraction, an empty and groundless longing for what can never return. This agonizing contradiction between crass sensuousness and empty sublimity sums up the crisis of the modern age (see Abrams 1973, 121-22, 185, 293).

Echoing Schiller and anticipating Marx, Hegel depicts the spirit of modernity as a revolutionary, corrosive and destructive dynamic whose powers of analytical dissection break down and cast aside all previous traditions and customary bonds (Schiller 1965, 112-13; Gadamer 1971, 107-15). Hegel gathers these powers together under the term *Verstand*, the analytical “understanding” that accompanies the modern ontology of “consciousness” (see Marx 1975, 180-84; Taylor 1975, 14-15; Smith 1989, 184-86; Dallmayr 1993, 33). This brings us to Image Two [11]. The modern spirit, Hegel says, has “broken with” the old feudal and classical conglomerate. It turns back against the world and relentlessly subdues it, “dissolving” one remnant after another of the Great Chain of Being. As the comforting contexts of traditional faith, authority and culture “gradually crumble,” there is widespread boredom, frivolity and foreboding, a feeling that we are adrift in a world increasingly bereft of its moral moorings. By the same token, however, our anxiety over the

disintegration of the inherited world of tradition bespeaks our tacit awareness that “something unknown” is “approaching.” Just as a child gestates over a long period of “nutrition in silence,” so mankind has enriched its organic heritage through its long odyssey from ancient to modern times. But, just as a child is suddenly thrust into a strange new world and must struggle for breath, so must the approaching new epoch undergo the traumatizing pains of birth. The work of the Enlightenment in dissolving traditions, carried out gradually over many years, is suddenly interrupted by a sharp jolt. The “flash” of the “sunrise” brings the form and structure of the new world into view at a single stroke. Hegel’s imagery here evokes the French Revolution and the spread of the doctrines of the social contract and the rights of man to the rest of Europe by the Napoleonic wars. The sunlight of the Enlightenment, *la Lumière*, whose rays have spread gradually for decades, is suddenly concentrated into the “flash” of torches and gunpowder—as well, perhaps, into the flash of electricity that so entranced the French about the legend of Benjamin Franklin, new world democrat and natural scientist who was known as the Electric Ambassador, and whose famous experiments were immortalized by the lightening bolts painted by David on the ceiling of the Jeu de Paume when the National Assembly took it over. For, as another American beloved of France, Thomas Jefferson, had observed, science and political freedom must progress together, each contributing to the liberation of the intellect (Jefferson 1998, 143-51).

The gestation of the new epoch (“something unknown” that is “approaching”) requires a sharp jolt of revolution, war and terror. We are again struck by the apocalyptic tension in these images, the sense of an eschatological reversal in which the darkness, confusion and anxiety of the present—precisely through being driven to their extreme—will usher in the new realm of light. Hegel’s imagery of a child born in the morning of a new age after a period of lengthy gestation anticipates Nietzsche’s imagery of the Three Metamorphoses and Heidegger’s evocation of the Advent of Being. Although Nietzsche and Heidegger are severely critical of the metaphysical account of Being in which, they contend, Hegel’s phenomenology eventually culminates, it is important to recognize that Hegel shares with his successors an ontology of Being that, in its most primordial and inward substructure, is premised upon strife. The ontological core of Hegelian phenomenology is summed up in the formulation that Truth is the unity of subject and substance [17], an ontology in which Being is understood primarily in terms of strife. Images One and Two are propaedeutics for Hegel’s own point of departure and claim to originality as a thinker.

Modern scientific rationalism has dissolved the old world. Romanticism heralds the advent of the new, but only as a vague and contentless yearning. Typically, Hegel does not tell us specifically what or who he means by Romanticism. He is not interested in a detailed intellectual history, or in the biographies of individual poets and artists, but (as before with his evocation of the old civilizational conglomerate) in the general *mentalité* variously expressed by such figures as Schlegel, Schleiermacher and Novalis, to whom we can add English poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge who were influenced by the German Romantics (Kaufmann 1966, 25, n. 16; Abrams 1973). According to Hegel, the Romantics have an authentic intimation of the higher spirituality that modern rationalism has turned its back on. But because the realm of evidence, experience and content have been conceded to that specifically modern form of rationality, the Romantic counter-reaction cannot re-claim the totality of experience for itself, but is reduced to floating alongside the modern world like a disenchanting specter. Viewed across the steely barrier erected by empiricism, the old world of communal heritage seems to be cut off from us forever, as we venture into ever more desiccated reaches of isolated individualism, profit and the search for purely personal aesthetic escapes so as to anaesthetize our immurement in an anxious, crass and philistine age. The Romantics, Hegel observes, equate knowledge of the whole with a *feeling* about the whole, a rapture over the way in which the whole always eludes complete empirical specification [7]:

The beautiful, the holy, the eternal, religion, love—these are the bait required to arouse the desire to bite; not conceptual rigor, but ecstasy; not the cold march forward of necessity in the subject matter, but the ferment of enthusiasm.

The Romantics try to recapture the richness of past, originally unified ways of life in order to oppose the barrenness of the world as it is progressively stripped of its enchantments by science. Fretting that modern mankind has forgotten the divine and is mired in the “dirt and mud,” the Romantics want to tear people away from their preoccupation with the “sensual” and with their private affairs as liberal individualists. Left to itself, however, their effort is doomed to mere archaizing, atavism and nostalgia for moonlit abbey ruins. Because they reject the canons of evidence and causality, the Romantics, having begun by rebelling against the barrenness of the scientific world-view, end up with a “feeling” about the divine that is equally barren. Repudiating his own earlier writings on the disjunction between scientific understanding and the divine, Hegel now argues that to separate God

from rationality reduces God to an arbitrary caprice, no more nor less valid than any other spontaneous effusion [10]:

When this non-conceptual knowledge of substance makes a pretense of having drowned the self in the depths of sheer Being, and of philosophizing in all holiness and truth, it hides the truth from itself. Instead of devotion to God, on the contrary, by spurning all measurable precision and determinateness, it merely gives free rein to the contingency of its content, and lets capriciousness be lord.

The attempt to rescue faith by insulating it from the claims of reason ends up paradoxically undermining faith in the eyes of thinking people by reducing it to a mere “enthusiasm.” Hegel had made precisely this rescue effort in his own early theological writings. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* constitutes a decisive break with that position (Hegel 1970, 303-13; consider also M. Rosen 1982, 78-84).

Romanticism has “depth” and “divinity,” meaning that it yearns to transcend the finite, concrete and the merely empirical. Its polar opposite is “science” (*Wissenschaft*). This is a term which, in this context and for much of the time in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel identifies with a specifically modern canon of rationality—the Hobbesian and Cartesian subject who begins by doubting all received opinion and tradition, and who seeks clear thinking through mental representations that are strictly correlated with the evidence received through the senses, unclouded by what Hobbes derided as the “powers invisible” of piety, Aristotelian teleology or other instances of “absurd” and “insignificant speech” whose existence cannot be verified empirically (Hobbes 1972, 100-110). But Hegel also identifies *Wissenschaft* with its broader and older meaning of earned knowledge about the good life and what the classics took to be a super-sensible realm of eternally perfect archetypes that endured beyond all transitory becoming, and in which transitory phenomena participated to achieve whatever degree of solidity and integrity of which they were capable. Hegel quite deliberately plays upon the ambivalent meaning of *Wissenschaft*, because one of his major claims is that his phenomenology relieves us of the harsh necessity of rejecting the older wisdom in favor of the newer scientific rationality. *Geist* embraces both and does justice to both.

As the *Phenomenology of Spirit* attempts to demonstrate at length, modern science grew out of the older and more expansive wisdom of the pre-modern epoch, and, after traversing the modern epoch of man’s alienation from nature and communal heritage, will return to its moorings

in the older wisdom while transforming, and being transformed, by it—preserving the rigor of modern Cartesian subjectivity with the expansiveness of the Platonic search for the Good (consider S. Rosen 1974, 52-62; Gadamer 1994, 21-30; Shklar 1976, 113-21; Schelling 1942; 1984, 146-53). Thus, when we encounter Hegel's strictures on Romantic rapture and his contrasting praise of "science," we must bear in mind that, however much he may appear in the first instance to be embracing the modern concept of science as against the Romantic protest, his long-range aim is to bring these two *Gestalten* together. Hegel's "shapes of consciousness" are the historicized analogy to the Platonic Forms, a term which in Greek (*eidos*) literally means the visible "shape" or "look" that we glimpse through the accidental or perishable aspects of a phenomenon. The purpose of the dialectic of Spirit is to show how that permanence of self-identity which, for the classics, resided in a realm of eternal metaphysical archetypes, for Hegel descends into the realm of becoming and develops its permanence immanently and progressively through—and embodied as—time (consider the discussion in S. Rosen 1974, 143). The "absolute Wissenschaft of Spirit" is not a pan-logistic attempt to impose Cartesian logical formalism on all possible phenomena, but rather an attempt to show how Being's evolution out of the passive cycles of nature into self-expression through its human intermediaries in the realms of culture and civic life reconciles the eternity of classical metaphysics with the time-bound processes of modern physics, so that the visible presence of the (now historicized) Forms as "shapes of consciousness" is the "result" of a dialectic of self-development (consider Fackenheim 1967; Gillespie 1984, 122-23).

At first sight, the two world-views face each other as if across a battlefield, the rigor of science versus the sublimity of the poet [14]: "One side parades its wealth of material and its intelligibility. The other side scorns this intelligibility, at any rate, and parades its immediate rationality and divinity." If Romanticism possesses depth of feeling and infinite longings for wholeness, science (as Hegel puts it) has spread, extension, and is concerned with the finite. Like Romanticism, therefore, it too is superficial and one-sided. Romanticism yields to the "uncontrolled ferment of substance," achieving a rapturous "intensity without content." It reacts to the spiritual poverty of modern science by opposing to its empty flatness an equally false extreme of empty depth, "sheer force without spread." Science, on the other hand, breaks life up into a multiplicity of concrete phenomena, thereby sacrificing the "force" of their underlying unity, and in this way counterposing to Romanticism's empty emotional depth an empty empirical breadth. But in so brutally ranging the defects of the two "shapes" alongside one another,

Hegel also limns their respective virtues, and prepares the ground for his argument that the “power of *Geist*” must draw upon both—Spirit must have spread as well as depth. Spirit will be shown to possess all of the yearning breadth and scope of Romantic Being, that intimation of the ineluctable mystery of existence that draws away from our empirical measurements to hide in the play of its inner contingency. But at the same time, Spirit must also extend itself *into* bodily, measurable, finite phenomena. Precisely so that the Spirit of all history, culture, learning and civilization can “lose itself” in the open horizons of the Romantic scope of Being without losing the precision of the heterogeneous distinctions among its densely articulated and layered structures of meaning, Spirit must at the same time instantiate itself in the “measurable precision and definiteness” of the empirically observable world. Otherwise, Spirit will be packed off into a beautiful but groundless ethical ideal or a religious or poetic transport floating above reality. The Romantics believe that by simply turning away from science, they attain a “holy” revelation and an unreflecting, spontaneous union with the transmundane [6]:

The Absolute, on this view, is not to be grasped in conceptual form, but felt and intuited. It is not the conception of the Absolute, but the feeling and intuition of it, that determine what is said and find expression.

But, according to Hegel, if we sacrifice the Concept (*der Begriff*)—that dimension of Spirit’s self-overcoming and self-development that includes the empirical precision and the causal and deductive necessity that are privileged by science—our revelation remains arbitrary and impotent. Romanticism tries to evade the power of science by conceding its validity so long as it is confined to the realm of the finite—the essential compromise between reason and faith or beauty developed by Kant and Schiller (consider Schiller 1965, 112-13; see also Beiner 1983, 12-19). But, as Hegel will try to persuade us, the “determinate” fixity that science seeks to measure is the result of infinity itself, as it reveals itself in successive shapes over time. In contrast with both classical and Enlightenment reasoning, Hegel’s phenomenology attempts to prove that the unified knowledge of the world sought by science is intimately connected with the scope of faith, and the intelligibility of religion with science.

Science and Romanticism must each reclaim what they have conceded to the other. But it would be fair to say that Hegel is more sympathetic to Romanticism in the sense that, while it stands in need of the heterogeneous content and articulation that only science can provide, it possesses an intimation of the scope and breadth of Spirit that science altogether

misses. Romanticism requires scientific supplementation in order for Spirit to become fully conscious of itself. But science, left to itself, cannot even fathom what it lacks. These considerations enable us to place in broader context the two images we have been considering so far—the ascent to celestial transcendence by the “thread of light” linking Experience to the Divine (Image One), and the “sunrise” of the coming epoch after the “crumbling” of the present is galvanized into birth pangs by a “flash” (Image Two). We now understand more clearly how these two images are telescoped genealogies of the shapes of consciousness—indeed, telescoped rehearsals of the entire phenomenology of spirit—from the respective standpoints of Romanticism and Science, the two dominant and ostensibly antagonistic world-views of our present disenchanted age. Hegel sees in the Romantics’ yearning for content without the rigor of knowledge a symptom of the crisis of modernity but also a sign of the prospects for its overcoming. For it is precisely the impoverishment of symbolic experience relentlessly pursued by empirical science that provides Romanticism with “the bait that arouses the desire to bite.” The “bite” of empirical reductionism and crass utility goads Romanticism to fulfill its contrarian yearning for the divine and the sublime by trying to recapture the fading civilizational conglomerate of the Great Chain of Being. Romanticism fulfills its longing to escape the arid utilitarian “desert” of the modern present through a hermeneutical openness to the past by “recollecting” the whole rich panoply of “thoughts and pictures” that crowd the pre-modern era [13]:

While the new world makes its first appearance merely in general outline, as a whole veiled in simplicity, the wealth of its previous existence is still present to consciousness in recollection.

With this passage, Hegel gives Romanticism the upper hand, not for what it is now, but for what it can become. Science has disintegrated the old world. The new world lies over the horizon, but is so far a bare abstraction “veiled in simplicity,” most poignantly evoked today by the Romantics’ edifying generalities (“the beautiful, the holy, the eternal, religion, love”). But the desire to “bite” at the “bait” of the current impoverishment enables Romanticism to evolve beyond itself toward Spirit through the process of *Erinnerung*—the “recollection” of the whole vast panoply of past shapes of consciousness, raising them to self-consciousness and thereby re-claiming them as the organically integrated personality of the coming “sunrise.” Here, too, it is important to note, we receive our first intimation of the non-linear structure of the *Phenomenology’s* outward historical chronology. To amplify an earlier observation, despite a superficial resemblance to the conventional textbook “march of ideas,” Hegel’s phenomenology is not a stage theory in

which the present trumps the past. Instead, it is best understood as a continuous cycle of re-engagement between an initially and ostensibly subjective modern consciousness and the organic heritage of shapes of consciousness accumulated so far by Spirit.

This hermeneutical re-engagement is sparked by the stark and equally unsatisfying alternatives posed by the alienation of Spirit from itself in the present. As recollection softens and eventually dissolves the fixed division between subject and object characteristic of consciousness by reclaiming this organic heritage, we will garner fresh energies and insights as we enter the coming age with which the current antagonism between analysis and feeling can be mediated and reconciled. Indeed, the current antagonism between Romanticism and Science crystallizes the entire inward and outward course of Spirit's history to date, an inward current of immanent reconciliation and communality intertwining with an outward track chronicling the aggressive pursuit of freedom through the transformation of nature. When these two currents are brought together, no fundamental conflicts will remain. Modern mankind's alienation from the all-encompassing cycles of traditional wisdom and authority as we struggled to carve out our autonomy and freedom as individuals will subside as Spirit returns to the communal harmony of its starting point—but only after nature and culture have been transformed by the pursuit of freedom so as to provide a haven for the noblest versions of modern individualism, dignity and freedom from superstition and despotism (see Kelly 1978, 113-15; Avineri 1972, 44-48, 180-84, 228-29; Dallmayr 1993, 33).

II

Earlier, I suggested that Image One (the “thread of light”) deliberately conflated classical, Christian and feudal conceptions of a hierarchy leading us up from the here and now of fleshly and sensual existence toward the super-sensible realm of celestial transcendence. Not for the only time in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel evokes Platonic images of the simultaneous ascent of the mind and the passions toward their joint objects of longing, a progressive ascent that actualizes our capacity for happiness by sublimating the passions as energies for cultivating our moral and intellectual virtues as we rise toward the eternal Good. Plato characterizes this ascent as an erotic one—not in the sense of carnal desire, but in the sense that eros, properly understood, is a structured longing, a longing for immortality, in the pursuit of which we aim to perfect our virtues of character and, through achieving that inner harmony of the affects, achieve the fullest and most lasting

kind of satisfaction (consider Plato, *Symposium* 201a-212a). By attributing to Romanticism the hunger to bite at the bait of the modern world's impoverishment, Hegel selects it as the contemporary avatar of this erotic longing for a completion not yet at hand. This is another reason why it is fair to say that, in diagnosing the virtues and liabilities of both science and Romanticism, the Romantics come out a little ahead of the game. It is here, Hegel implies, that we will today find the traces of that erotic longing for completion through union with the beautiful and the good that Plato identified as the motive both for wisdom and for aesthetic and emotional fulfillment.

It will be useful at this point to re-examine Hegel's version of this ascent: (1) We once had knowledge of, and a feeling of union with, the "Immediate Being" of the eternal, with which the earthly realm was connected by a ladder of enlightenment. The "heavens were adorned" with the "thoughts and images" generated by this fecund union of what we moderns now experience as the divided standpoints of science and beauty. The celestial realm is the object both of the philosophical longing for knowledge and of the religious craving for unity with God—the distinction between reason and revelation is not given to us in immediate experience, but emerges only over the eons as the Spirit of history develops itself by generating such distinctions. (2) By following the "thread of light" by which mundane phenomena are able to participate in the eternal celestial truth, mankind looks back down at the profane world and sees it for the tawdry and chaotic morass that it is. The diminution and stigmatization of the apparent world in contrast with the shining purity of the real world of celestial truth causes mankind to flee from the former and cling to heaven. As a consequence, the thread of light that began by providing a solid connection between the apparent world and the real world—by showing how the eternal truth is instantiated in the transient phenomena that participate in the higher archetypes—ends by draining the apparent world of any connection with the divine, reducing it to a realm of ignorance, woe and oppression. (3) But then—Hegel tells us in an arresting passage—"the eye of Spirit had to be forcibly turned to the things of this world and held there" so as to *re-introduce* the "order of thought" into the "dullness and confusion of the earthly."

Hegel's metaphor of "the eye of Spirit" clearly induces us to reflect on the Platonic Socrates, whose preferred metaphor for intellection was the eye of the soul, and it thus exemplifies Hegel's hermeneutic of "recollection." Socrates had argued that intellection was more closely analogous to sight than to any other sense because the Forms constituted the moment of

visible “presence” by which the eternal and super-sensible Good is instantiated in transient becoming. The instantiation of the eternal in the transitory is also allegorized as the power of the Sun (the analogy in the realm of visible phenomena to the Good in the realm of the intelligible) to summon all phenomena toward a fruitful completion (*telos*). Further, in the Image of the Cave in the *Republic*, Socrates argues that the philosopher must be compelled to forsake the happiness that he finds when he climbs out of the Cave of ignorance into the Sunlight of the Good, sacrificing a measure of his own happiness out of a sense of duty to his fellow citizens trapped by their ignorance in the gloomy recesses below. Likewise, Hegel is suggesting, with his plain references to the Platonic imagery, that “Spirit’s eye” must be “forcibly turned” from its fixation on the Divine and its attention re-directed to the earthly and “held there.”

But there is a crucial difference between Hegel’s re-enactment and the Platonic original. It is revealed by the small but telling detail that, whereas for Plato in the Image of the Cave, the potential philosopher must be forcibly “turned” in order to face upward toward the sunlight, for Hegel, the eye of Spirit must be understood as being forcibly “turned” to forsake the celestial realm of eternal light that it has already attained. In other words, whereas for Plato, the philosopher must compromise his ascent to the truth in order to be philanthropic toward those left behind in the Cave, for Hegel, the spirit of philosophy must return to the Cave both out of philanthropy and out of a pursuit of the truth. For Plato, the summons toward the Good forcibly turns us away from our commitment to the Cave; later, having achieved a measure of transcendence, we must compromise our happiness and effect a partial return to the twilight. For Hegel, in order for Spirit’s odyssey to be fully actualized, the “turning” must be viewed as a summons downward from the heaven of reified metaphysical transcendence into the well-springs of historical action out of which the metaphysical realm originally developed.

For Plato, the philosopher’s ascent toward the sunlight of happiness and his return to his philanthropic duty to his fellow citizens in the Cave is a recurrent cycle, one that can occur in principle in any place and in any epoch, under the aspect of eternity. Moreover, only a very few people, the true natural aristocracy comprised of the lovers of wisdom, are equipped to make this ascent and return, with little hope offered that the philosopher’s dutiful return to the Cave will result in any widespread or permanent transformation of the benighted conditions of everyday life for the majority. In contrast, Hegel is arguing that the entire human species makes this ascent up

the Divided Line from fleshly and sensuous experience toward the light of the truth. Moreover, this ascent is not re-enacted recurrently under the aspect of eternity. Instead, the ascent is enacted one time only, and it entails not only the transcendence of the philosophic few, but the actual transcendence of past ignorance and oppression by the collective progress of mankind as a whole. In sum, the teleological ascent from becoming to the eternal Good is replaced by the teleological progress of history. Everyone will emerge from the Cave “into the spiritual daylight of the present” [177].

The ambition of the Hegelian enterprise—its assimilation of the classical account of the cosmos as an ordered whole to the ontology of Spirit as a self-making dynamic—is further manifest in Hegel’s allusion to one of the best-known examples of Aristotelian teleology [12]:

When we want to see an oak with its massive trunk, its spreading branches and foliage, we are not satisfied to be shown an acorn instead. In the same way, science, the crowning glory of the world of Spirit, is not found complete in its origins.

Aristotle’s point is that the purpose of the acorn is to develop into its telos, the fully-grown oak tree. It exemplifies his general teaching that the closer a being comes to achieving the stability of its visible presence, the more successfully it instantiates the eternal stability of the cosmos, and the more fully it actualizes its natural potential. Nature, in other words, is most informatively and intelligibly approached in terms of form, structure and the visible completion of entities, not in terms of the sub-phenomenal genesis that Heracleitus and many of the pre-Socratics identified with physis (Aristotle, *Physics* 196a-25, 196b10, 198a5-15; see also Plato 1988, 889-90; 1986, 152-53).

Hegel’s friendly gesture in this passage toward the chief metaphysician of the West is meant to show how the phenomenology of Spirit’s self-development out of this sub-phenomenal genesis *results* in the progressive actualization and completion of this Aristotelian movement from genesis to final end. Thus, in one sense, it is as true for Hegel as it is for Aristotle that Being is most informatively and intelligibly approached in terms of the form and structure of visible completion, but with the crucial difference that this plenitude of presence is the result of the underlying dynamic of genesis. The pre-Socratics understood the visible presence of beings as emerging out of, and passing back into, chance and happenstance (*tuche*), the invisible matrix of origination. But they had no doctrine to explain how these entities might interact and combine progressively over time to generate new, hitherto unknown and unknowable phenomena. Plato and his successors tried to

bridge the chasm between the invisible origins of the Heracleitean concept of *physis* and the static permanence of the Parmenidean identification of Being with the eternal and unchanging One by means of a phenomenology of participation in which beings developed out of the realm of becoming toward the realm of permanent Being by instantiating the heterogeneous yet permanent stable archetypes of the Ideas (consider the argument in Friedländer 1973). Hegel undertakes his own grand synthesis of the two major ontologies of antiquity, analogous to the Platonic synthesis but derived from historicist premises. The dialectic of Spirit shows how phenomena emerge from the invisible origins and participate progressively in the Absolute, instantiated in the “shapes” that make up the tapestry of Spirit’s completed odyssey. Being and becoming are reconciled by historical phenomenology.

In this connection, we can add a further observation about the crucial role played by Hegel’s hermeneutic of “recollection.” Here, too, another Platonic problematic is quietly assimilated to the dialectic of Spirit and its difficulties supposedly resolved. In the *Meno*, Plato asks how it is that a person comes to learn anything (Plato *Meno* 81b-e). If knowledge is derived from the eternal structure of the cosmos, then surely it should be fully manifest to us already, since we ourselves are a part of that ordered whole and are intelligible in terms of its structure. Why, therefore, do we need to learn? On the other hand, if human beings, owing to their mortality, vices and other frailties, are cut off from the realm of the immortal, then how could any amount of effort at learning bring together finite and imperfect beings with immortal and perfect ones? Plato’s answer is to suggest that, when we learn, say, a Euclidean proof, we are not forging access to the realm of the eternal through an effort of will, since imperfect beings could not force their way into the realm of perfect beings. On the other hand, we are not granted immediate insight into the eternal—an effort at study is required. Plato concludes by arguing that, before we were born into the realm of mortal becoming, perishability and impermanence, our souls—the only immortal aspect of our otherwise finite natures as humans—resided with the other eternal beings and thereby possessed perfect knowledge. Being born as human amounted to almost, but not quite, severing that link. The soul retains a fragile and attenuated but still reliable connection to the immortal beings that were its first home. When we study and learn, therefore, we are in effect “remembering” a part of that perfect knowledge that the perfect part of us possessed before being immured in our bodily shells.

Hegel is suggesting, in effect, that the teleology of historical progress more successfully and plausibly demonstrates the actualization of this Platonic doctrine of “recollection.” It is no longer necessary to posit the existence of a transcendental empyrean realm beyond time and change, and further to posit a particle of this immortal realm in ourselves (the soul), in order to explain how finite beings can participate in a knowledge of the infinite. If all phenomena are time-bound, then our knowledge cannot leap beyond the limits of time, change, variability and perishability. From a Platonic perspective, Hegelian knowledge resides entirely within the realm of becoming. But, Hegel would argue, the decisive superiority of the dialectic of Spirit resides precisely in this collapse of the infinite into the finite, and the resultant immanentization of the telos in the temporal currents of accident and mutability. For now, at the end of the process, it is possible for us to understand retrospectively how the entire human species—not just the privileged philosophic few—are now poised to “remember” the infinite wisdom they have currently “forgotten.” This wisdom is not merely speculative: It is the concretely actualized outcome of the entire previous eons-long pursuit of freedom, enlightenment and happiness, embodied in the living structures of the modern state, culture, education and religion. When the consciousness of the modern individual is sparked by the impoverishment of the present divide between science and the divine to remember this heritage, Spirit will complete its own evolution by breaking the final crust dividing itself as rigor from itself as love. The spirits of all human beings, mediated by the states and cultures in which they live, will join the Spirit of all existence in which they are enfolded, and the wisdom they raise to consciousness will not exist across a divide between the mortal and the immortal, nor will it remain an uncompleteable quest. Wisdom will fully reside, and will be fully grasped and lived, in the dawning new era.

Unlike the static archetypes of classical wisdom, moreover, the emerging wisdom of the new era will continue to pulsate with the underlying indeterminacy and dynamism of Spirit, a Heraclitean whole that has been eidetically articulated by the time it reaches the end of its teleological development. Spirit is a dynamic equilibrium shot through with contingency, in which the difference between entities is what establishes, through their mutual tension of resistance, the achieved identity of each. For we must continue to bear in mind that, in trying to demonstrate how phenomenology synthesizes Being with becoming, Hegel insists that the full scope of both realms must be preserved without sacrifice.

Indeed, when we look more closely at Hegel's allusion to Aristotle, we recognize that it is not strictly parallel. For Aristotle, the fully visible oak exhausts the potential of the acorn for actualization—strictly speaking, the oak is the acorn. Insofar as the acorn “is” at all, insofar as it participates in nature conceived in terms of permanence, it is no more than a way-station toward the tree. So thoroughly does Aristotle identify the visible completion with the nature of a being that the primordial colloquial sense in which the term *physis* (a cognate of the verb *phyein*, meaning “to grow”) evokes fecundity and teeming fruition is almost entirely paved over by his physics. Indeed, Aristotle argues in Book II of the *Physics* that the pre-Socratics' identification of nature with genesis and chance (*tuche*) is literally unintelligible (“without logos”), since it attempts to derive the intelligible from the unintelligible, or, what amounts to the same thing, claims that there are causes without antecedent causes. But when Hegel assimilates the example of the oak tree to his own dialectic, he is careful to remind us that we are not exclusively interested in the stable perfection of the fully grown tree, but in the “massive trunk, its spreading branches and foliage” as well. In other words, even in endorsing Aristotle's privileging of the eidetic clarity of the *nunc stans*, the moment in which the visible phenomenon most closely approximates the eternity of the Unmoved Mover, Hegel partly shades his example away from the stable presence of the tree down into its darker undergrowth, the vigor of its unseen sap, the rustling and pulsating foliage that intimate how the tree is as much rooted in its vibrant and invisible genesis as in its transient moment of completion in the sunlight. Hegel's formulation of the Truth as the unity of subject and substance is precisely premised on the account of *physis* as an uncaused cause, a spontaneous or “self-moving” event, that Aristotle pronounced as being “without logos.”

Hegel's assimilation of the Aristotelian example—adapting it but also subverting it—is a small but revealing example of how philosophy, in Hegel's judgment, needs to reconcile the holism of the Romantics with the measurable precision of modern science and the classical physics on which it is distantly but unquestionably based. In his own peculiar philosophical lexicon, unlike anything that comes before or after, Hegel moves like quicksilver between the recondite technical language of modern rationalism and the moodiness of his contemporary Hölderlin. For Hegel, the dialectic of Spirit does not require us to make a division (as had Aristotle) between the eternal and the temporal dimensions of nature and harden them into a dichotomy, with the consequence that the temporal dimension is increasingly stigmatized as a fallen, privative realm of mere accident and mutability, while the most

permanent—and therefore, in the classical sense, most natural—dimension of a phenomenon floats away from the phenomenon we actually observe and experience into the super-sensible realm of the eternal tree and other such ghostly archetypes.

Because Hegelian phenomenology is time-bound, it encompasses not only the final telos, but the whole rich loam of flowering, growth and decay out of which the telos emerges. Hegel's subtle emendation of the Aristotelian example is especially worth bearing in mind when we remember that, when Heidegger comes to argue that Hegelian phenomenology is, at the end of the day, and despite its best intentions, undermined by its attempt to retain a link with the Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics of presence, he too uses examples of trees, flowers and plants. Whereas Hegel attempts a synthesis between his own phenomenology and classical metaphysics by purporting to assimilate the latter to the former, arguing that the latter is more successfully demonstrated by the former than Plato and Aristotle were capable of doing for themselves, Heidegger by contrast almost forsakes the visible presence of the tree entirely for its invisible roots, descending much deeper than had Hegel into the temporal sub-structure and implying that the Question of Being cannot even be adequately posed until we part company with any such Hegelian hope for a synthesis between phenomenology and metaphysics.

III

We are now in a better position to synthesize the ascents sketched in Images One and Two. Hegel's claim that the mind must be compelled to turn away from the Good and return to worldly experience is the corridor between the two images. Heaven, having drained the apparent world of a permanence that is now entirely trans-worldly, floats away from the earth and leaves it bereft of order and purpose. Because heaven has drained the world of transcendence, leaving only matter-bound "experience" in its wake, knowledge is subsequently reduced from the trans-worldly to the "opposite need"—knowledge is reduced from celestial contemplation to the unencumbered Cartesian subject, which becomes the sole criterion for sure and certain knowledge, a knowledge restricted to the representation of sense-data. Science saves the world from the chaos resulting from heaven's departure through an "order based on thought." The price we pay for this modern order is that we "wander in the desert" of empiricism, a realm of dry facticity bereft of wholeness and repose. Romanticism betokens an ever more intense longing for a recovery of that lost sense of solid being now banished to a celestial realm that modern empiricism appears to have refuted decisively and

irrevocably. In our inchoate longing to find the “thread of light” back to the lost richness of heaven stirs an eros for the recollection of our vanished riches.

This takes us to the threshold of one of Hegel’s most provocative insights, one echoed more or less consciously by his successors including Nietzsche and Heidegger. For the ancients, according to Hegel, the “immediacy” of natural being—the sense that the cosmos is a harmonious structure of permanence and repose that offers a mooring for human aspirations for happiness—was a spontaneous and effortless given. They looked into nature, and nature looked back with a friendly visage. As the ancients reflected upon this intuition of substantive repose, harmony and beauty, they were led from that spontaneous intuition to the complex speculative systems of first philosophy, including the Platonic Ideas and Aristotelian substance. The naive experience of reconciliation with nature gave rise to the self-conscious search for deeper knowledge. For us moderns, the situation is the exact reverse. For us, it is philosophy itself which must consciously regenerate the lost immediacy of content and “restore the feeling” of reconciliation with the world. As philosophy crystallized and evolved into science, it progressively corroded and drained away the richness of naive immediacy given to us prior to reflection. Now the world is barren, but an enormous complex of thought structures from Plato to Kant fills the void. Hence, philosophy must find a way to regenerate the enchantment that philosophy itself has destroyed. As Nietzsche was to put the same paradox from a considerably more pessimistic vantage point than that of Hegelian *Wissenschaft*, modern man must “learn to forget.” How can we consciously will ourselves to naiveté, to wholeness and a lack of coruscating self-awareness? The prospects for educational and civic wholeness in the modern world are corollaries of the same dilemma. How can we consciously will ourselves to re-inhabit the “aesthetic democracy” of the Greek polis, a sublime blend of the chthonic and the Olympian that enveloped the Greeks in a seamless intersubjectivity, but which our modern criterion of rationality has split asunder into such antinomies as nature and freedom or happiness and virtue? “Science” in the broader sense played upon by Hegel must aim for a realistic but non-reductionist psychology and a social and political ontology that, in its mediating cultural and civic forms, will commingle the communitarianism of the ancients with the individual autonomy of the moderns. But how?

Let us sum up the results so far: The “desert” of modern rationalism that is the despair of Romanticism in Image One is expanded into the epoch-shaking “disintegration” that the Enlightenment has visited upon

the world as it willy-nilly and without being aware of doing so ushers in “the sunrise” of Image Two. The two images pre-figure what Hegel will shortly reveal as the central premise of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—the conceptual outline of the Truth of Spirit as the unity of subject and substance. The two images prepare us for this powerfully pregnant, not to say gnomic formula, corresponding respectively to the subjective will-power to dissect the world (Image Two) and the Romantic longing, through hermeneutical recollection, for substantive repose and reconciliation among humans and between humans, the world, and their heritage (Image One). The two images show how the world has been impoverished, but also how this impoverishment is necessary as “bait,” so that, when its corrosive imperative reaches an extreme of alienation and drift, we long all the more keenly for the missing reconciliation. But, in contrast with the trans-worldly reconciliation promised by the traditional classical-Christian conglomerate, the reconciliation emerging today is brought about by the very dynamic of corrosion that sets itself up as the greatest foe of the longing for the divine. Accordingly, the new world (as yet only “something unknown [that is] approaching”) will return to the transcendental while *including* the world as it has been thoroughly disrupted, re-shaped and transformed by modern rationalism—not only in terms of the scientific understanding we bring to bear on it, but including the cultural, civic and political corollaries of the Enlightenment with its core assumption of individual consciousness. Hence, the emerging reconciliation is both a going back and a going forward, or a movement forward guided by a movement back. In keeping with this atavistic and futuristic spiraling, a movement in which Spirit continuously returns to its innermost origins while continuously spreading its distinctions outward and ahead, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—and Hegel’s philosophy as a whole—has a very peculiar structure, one that is far removed from the unilinear chronological movement from past to future with which it is sometimes misidentified.

Spirit is this oscillation between reconciliation and difference pre-figured by the two images. These reflections lead us back to the contrast between the Hegelian ascent and the Platonic one whose pedigree it purports to assimilate. For Plato, the Good draws us—as Diotima puts it in the *Symposium*—“on up.” We want to remain in the empyrean heights, but we have a duty to go back down. For Hegel, on the other hand, the historical process—Spirit—generates the distinction between heaven and earth as one epoch-making way station in its exploration and development of itself. This divide between the divine and the profane constitutes a stupendous gain in the deepening and spiritualization of the human pursuit of freedom. Indeed,

the tension between celestial perfection and earthly woe reveals the future goal of all historical striving in outline: freedom for mankind brought from heaven down to earth. For these reasons, therefore, if we are Hegelians, we cannot want to remain in the sunlight. Indeed, we cannot even wish for there to be a sunlight in the Platonic sense. We don't merely have to return to the Cave, we must want to return. Going back down is not a sacrifice of our satisfaction, but a return to its source.

Philosophy must return to the dynamic origins out of which Spirit develops itself in order to re-invigorate the ideals that otherwise tend to ossify and float off into an abstract realm of the unattainable Beyond. In this respect if certainly not in others, Hegelian wisdom is prospectively more like the wisdom of Nietzsche's Zarathustra than it is Platonic or Socratic. Zarathustra's crisis is akin in several respects to Hegel's diagnosis of the crisis of modernity, and in my view Nietzsche's to some extent justified polemics against his predecessor have occluded certain deep ontological resonances that their philosophies share in common. Zarathustra lives in a cave, but his cave is on a mountain top—he is already on the heights. Like modern philosophy and modern mankind in general, he has been born into a world already thoroughly transformed by knowledge. Zarathustra is benighted, not by the absence of the heights, but by his immurement in the cave of hypertrophic rationality that separates us from "life." Whereas, for the ancients, eros led reason to clarify the perplexities and mysteries of naive longing, for the moderns, eros longs to descend beneath the adamantine overlay of science to re-immure itself in those perplexities. Zarathustra begins with transcendence, and it is sterile. He must go back down into life in order to regenerate his wisdom with the fecundity of becoming. Whereas, for the Platonic Socrates, going back down constitutes a sacrifice of one's happiness and erotic satisfaction in the sunlight, for Hegel and his successors, our erotic longing is for the origins, because the transcendence we possess has become a prison, a dry husk severed from the sap-giving root.

What for Plato is the eternal Good is for Hegel the "result" of Spirit's progressive self-unfolding. For Plato, our inability to achieve union with the Good fully or permanently is an insuperable necessity stemming from the fact that the eternal part of our human nature, the soul, is immured in a transitory part, the "cave" of the body, whose irrational passions dominate most men, and sometimes even the philosophic. For Hegel, by contrast, the problem is not so much our essential incapacity as bodily mortals to live permanently in accordance with the divine spark in the soul that connects the

human intellect to the noetic structure of the cosmos. On the contrary: The problem is that the truth is fully and successfully embodied in every historical epoch. We can attain complete access to it through the spirit of our time. But, having attained union with that truth, we find that the truth tends to reify itself into a fixed polarity between itself and all competing claims, bringing history to a halt—which then occasions a return to freedom, seeking action in order to break down the distinction. Thus, whereas for Plato the problem is that our contact with the permanence of the truth is too fleeting, for Hegel, the problem is that the truth of an epoch takes itself to be too permanent. That is as true today, as we stand at the threshold of the new era, as it has been during similarly momentous civilizational shifts in the past. In order to break down the dichotomy between Romanticism and science, our modern heaven and hell, we have to return to the dynamic interplay of opposites out of which both the modern physics of matter in motion and the Romantics' restless alienation from the world have emerged. If we follow Hegel up the ladder to the Absolute, we will be forced to part ways with common sense and cease seeing culture in terms of combatants glaring at each other across a battlefield. The modern view of nature as a happenstantial flux bereft of purpose is as necessary to the moody sentimentality of modern poetry as it is to the capacity of modern physics to conceptualize anthropocentric, analytically self-referential structures of causality and law-like necessity and thereby repudiate classical metaphysics. Science and poetry, Hegel argues, are battenning off of the same modern ontology of nature as motion.

Of course, bad as it may be to be chained to a passive reverence for the Absolute as it is embodied in the doctrines or prejudices of the current epoch, it is equally retrograde according to Hegel to veer to the opposite extreme of a stance of permanent heaven-storming struggle. There is as little room in Hegel's understanding of political and cultural maturity for a Trotsky as there is for a Doctor Pangloss. Permanent revolution is just as sterile as unreflecting reverence. Spirit reconciles us to a world of tensions by showing us how those tensions empower us and provide us with the moral and cultural energies we need to be fulfilled and responsible citizens. What modern subjectivistic consciousness takes to be a series of external impediments or limitations to its egoistic freedom are, properly considered from within the dialectic of Spirit, a life-world of rich energies that express themselves through, and find measure in, our actions as integrated modern personalities. In marked contrast with Marx, for Hegel, the solution to alienation is not to abolish it, but to multiply its sources. Alienation is only burdensome when our self-expression is reduced to one overwhelming Manichean contradiction

between ourselves and the Other—an overbearing doctrine or authority. When the objects through which we can externalize and develop our powers are multiplied in number and content, we enter the earthly kingdom of spirits.

Hegel sums up the relationship between the two images in this way [12]:

The arrival of the new spirit is the product of a widespread revolution in various forms of spiritual culture, the reward of a complicated and tortuous course of development, and after much struggle and effort. It is a whole which, after running its course and laying bare all its content, returns again to itself, and is the resultant simple notion of the whole. But the actual realization of this simple whole is only found when those previous shapes and forms, which are now reduced to its ideal moments, are developed afresh in their new medium, and with the meaning they have thereby acquired.

The Enlightenment culminated in the project of bringing the rationality of heaven down to earth, reducing rationality to what could be observed and measured empirically by an unencumbered subject, and analytically dissecting and breaking down the inherited pre-modern civilizational conglomerate. That task, having revolutionized all forms of life, has now run its course. But what is the final result of that revolution? So far, it is only a “bare abstraction,” whether we mean by this the causal rigor and measurable precision offered by science or the counter-factual longing for spiritual fulfillment intuited by Romanticism. But, at bottom, Hegel reminds us, scientific rationality and the Romantic longing for wholeness cannot be seen as irreconcilable opposites. The achievements of the modern scientific mind, rooted in and evolving out of the earlier speculative philosophy of the ancients, are “the crowning glory of the world of Spirit,” while the Romantic’s yearning for wholeness “misses in the new form” of that emerging wholeness “the expanse of content, and still more the development and cultivation of form by which distinctions are definitely determined and arranged in their precise relations.” According to Hegel, the implicit common ground between the two world-views is the basic principle of intelligibility, or, more generally, Understanding), the principle of identity and difference. Both modern science and Romanticism claim to have understood the whole.

Both lay claim to the emerging new era, glimpsed so far only as a “bare abstraction.” Both claim that their insights possess universal validity and can be universally grasped. Understanding is the seemingly frail tendril that, as Hegel puts it, continues to link the “scientific and the

unscientific consciousness,” and at least holds out the prospect that each can enter the other’s domain.

In these lines, then, we find an outline of the structure of Spirit and the completed course of world history. Reason has devoured the world and broken it down into its constituent elements in its centuries-long pursuit of absolute knowledge. Having “run its course,” it “returns again to itself”—it has achieved the universal general intelligibility that it sought in the first place. But that universal general intelligibility, whether expressed scientifically as empirically verifiable causation or Romantically as an intuition of wholeness, stands over against the world of concrete shapes and forms which it has subsumed under its general determinations. Those shapes and forms, currently cut off from the general account of the whole for which they were meant to provide the evidence, are accordingly frozen in aspic, isolated from each other and from the world as a whole by being reduced to “ideal moments.” In order for the general intelligibility achieved by the modern mind to be “actually realized,” that general mind must re-descend into the world of experience and “develop” those currently isolated moments “afresh.” But those isolated moments must be developed “in their new medium,” that is, shaped in light of the dynamic and on-going alternation between identity and difference that forms the ontological core of Spirit, and whose oscillation between alienation and reconciliation has already been limned by the two images themselves. We cannot literally return to the past, or reclaim it exactly as it once was. The richness of the traditional civilizational conglomerate must be integrated with the dynamic fruits of modernity at its best—the harmony and repose of the world we have temporarily left behind must be recollected so as to contextualize the sometimes overly-aggressive individual autonomy and political and commercial utilitarianism of the present.

Mind returns to its origins so as to re-capture the scope of its original longing for a satisfying account of the whole. It re-integrates the fragmented knowledge of the modern epoch within that immanent continuum of the organic cycles of life, community and culture, but at the same time, that immanent continuum is galvanized and energized by the still-thrusting negativity of the autonomous and skeptical modern consciousness. Not only does adequate thinking in the present continuously re-enact this cycle of alienation and reconciliation as mediated progressively by the organic heritage of recollected cultural shapes, but it unfolds simultaneously as the historical fruition of mankind’s ascent, both collectively and individually. Absolute thinking is both the actual, lived history of the world

and the human species and a cognitive map of the mind's patterns. Spirit is simultaneously the structure of reason, the history of the world, and the psychological history of every living individual as he or she lays claim to the organic *Bildung* of moral energies evolved over the centuries.

Every section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* must be read on these three levels. Each "shape of consciousness" such as, say, Skepticism or the Unhappy Consciousness is, at one and the same time, the crystallization of a precise historical epoch (for example, the late Roman Empire), the crystallization of a moral stance that is to some extent still alive for the present, and a cognitive archetype mapping the operations of the mind. The multi-leveled quality of each shape, the way in which it is both rooted in the past and operative in the present within the totality of Spirit's self-unfolding, explains the notorious obscurity of these passages, and in particular the fact that Hegel often offers no clue, or only vague allusions, about precisely which era he is examining. A few opaque references to the Crusades and to bells and incense must suffice to connect the Unhappy Consciousness with Christianity, while the classical *polis* is situated historically with no more than a few very broad allusions to Homer and Sophocles. The reason is not that Hegel was unclear or wrote in too great haste. He is eminently capable of exhaustive historical precision when he needs to be. The opaque quality of the *Gestalten* set forth in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a hermeneutical requirement of Hegel's aim of displaying them as archetypes of a fully evolved and integrated personality in the *present*—archetypes whose successful recollection has a therapeutic value for the modern reader who raises them to consciousness through reflection on the completed odyssey of Spirit, and not as mere historical information however diverting, instructive or fascinating. Spirit's achievement of wholeness through self-development, Spirit's success in returning home to its origin in the longing for completion by having developed this whole panoply of moral, intellectual, religious and artistic riches, entails and grounds the capacity of modern peoples, and the autonomous individual personalities who make them up, to complete this same journey for themselves. Because the Spirit of the whole world fulfills itself by developing itself through its human agents, we are able to lay claim to this evolutionary heritage and enjoy its fruits in ourselves.

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